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CLASS OF 2013 Young And Smart Leaders On The Rise

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EXCLUSIVE



GEORGIA GROWN

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FLORAL BUSINESS

INSIDE:

THE PUNDIT LOOKS AT
MULTIPLE FORMATS
SUMMER MERCHANDISING
NEW JERSEY PRODUCE
HARMONS • STONE FRUIT
CALIFORNIA BAJA TOMATOES
GRAPES • DRIED PLUMS
UNITED FRESH GALLERY

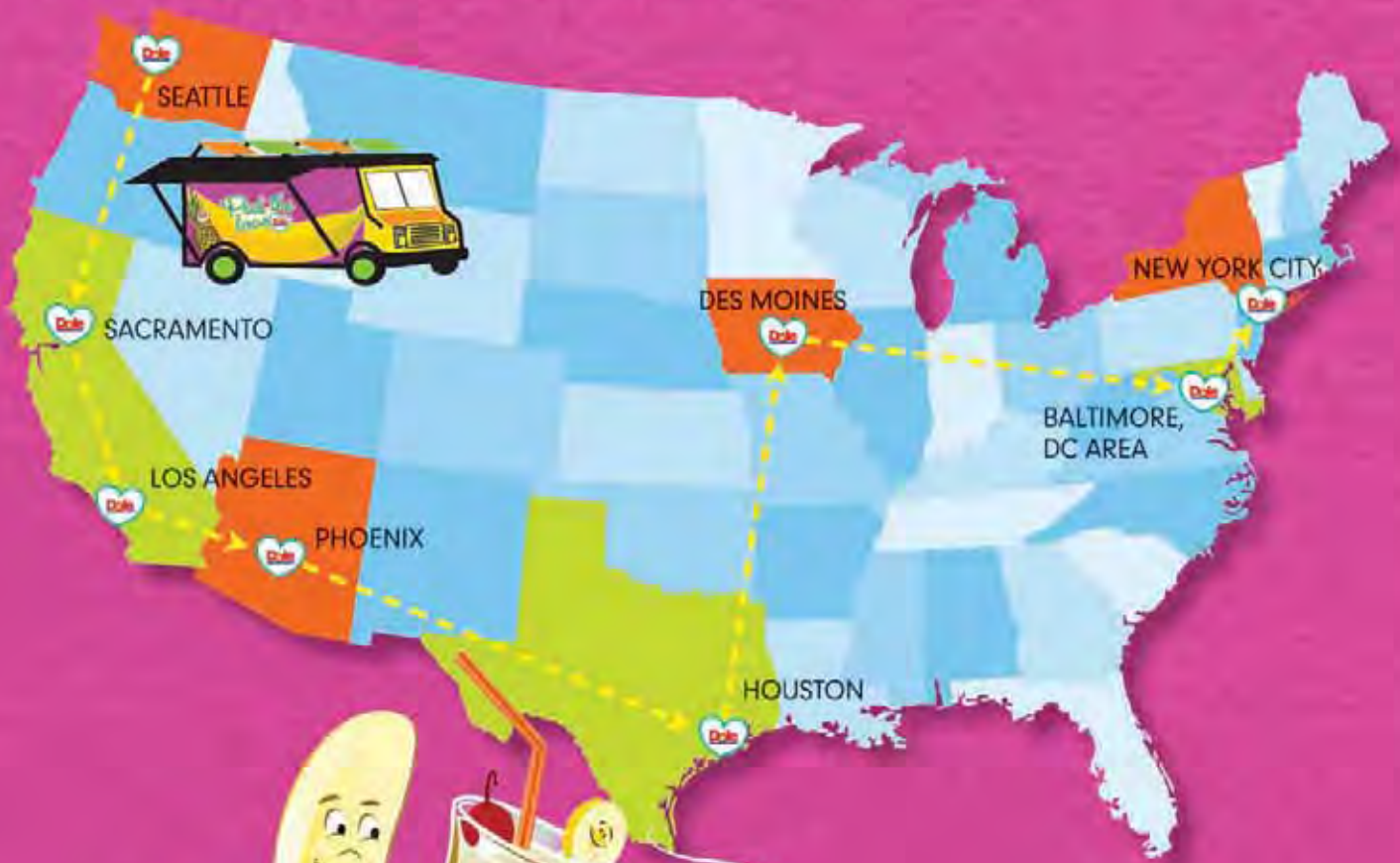
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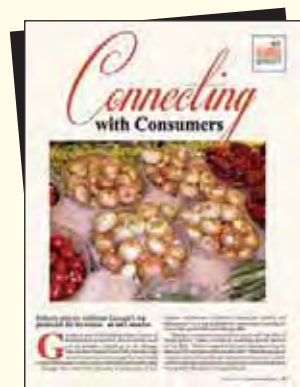
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THIS MONTH'S WINNER



Joseph Ippolito
Sales Merchandiser
Procacci Bros.
Philadelphia, PA

Joseph Ippolito is a retired broker but that doesn't stop him from working part time for Procacci Bros. As a sales merchant, Ippolito travels and advises stores on what produce to buy. "I'm a consultant more the anything else," says Ippolito.

Ippolito has worked for Procacci Bros., located in Philadelphia, PA, for seven years.

"Before that, I worked for myself as a broker and before that, I worked for the old Grand

Union supermarket as a produce manager and supervisor. I did everything there."

Ippolito says he got into the produce industry because of his love for produce. "Fruit and veggies are my pleasure," says Ippolito.

And with reading *PRODUCE BUSINESS* for more than 20 years, this isn't the first time he's won the PB Quiz.

"I think I won the contest before, a long time ago. In the 90's," says Ippolito. "The magazine is outstanding. Very informative. I think everyone should read it."

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

WIN A SURVIVOR'S BACKPACK

No home or car should be without this fully stocked backpack. Unless you live in an area that does not have floods, high winds, earthquakes or even fires, your family or anyone in distress would appreciate having this kit nearby. Included in the backpack: poncho, thermal blanket, respirator mask, medical supplies, and many other must-have items necessary to survive a catastrophe.



QUESTIONS FOR THE JUNE ISSUE

- 1) Sun-Maid has been "America's Favorite" since what year? _____
- 2) What is the slogan for Ocean Mist Farms? _____
- 3) What is the telephone number in California Sun-Dry's advertisement? _____
- 4) Curry & Company is based in which Oregon city? _____
- 5) What is the website address for Jersey Fresh? _____
- 6) Which company has been "sourcing uncommon produce from around the world for more than 25 years"? _____

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

Name _____ Position _____
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PRODUCE BUSINESS is published by Phoenix Media Network, Inc. James E. Prevor, Chairman of the Board
 P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425.
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Enticing your customers with fresh, sweet, delightful berries, day after day.





LENDING A VOICE TO IMMIGRATION REFORM

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



Comprehensive immigration reform is within reach, and this may be the last chance for the produce industry to ensure that this critical issue is addressed. United Fresh is helping lead the charge to secure the stable and legal agriculture workforce that is necessary to the success of our members.

At United Fresh 2013, much of the talk on the trade show floor was about the absolute necessity for immigration reform and the uncertainty facing the fresh produce industry should the legislation fail.

Tom Deardorff, president of Deardorff Family Farms in Oxnard, CA, and vice chairman of the United Fresh Grower-Shipper Board, explained the challenge his operation is facing to meet growing market demands. "We are increasing our organic production capacity, but unfortunately we're running in to situations where we're not planting acres because we know we won't have the labor to harvest them," he said. "So even though there are a lot of positives in the marketplace and demand for what we're producing, we don't even have enough labor to harvest what we would need to meet that demand."

The full Senate is expected to consider the bill in mid-June, setting the stage for meaningful action on immigration reform that is long overdue. The Senate Judiciary Committee approved language on May 23, including a new agriculture worker program — which provides for a market-based federal program to ensure a steady and experienced agriculture labor force. The new agricultural workforce framework was developed through negotiations between key senators, agriculture labor, and the Agriculture Workforce Coalition, of which United Fresh is a founding member.

The new program allows current, experienced agriculture workers to stay in the

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U.S. while adjusting to legal status. It also establishes a future workforce program, which provides employers and employees with flexibility through either an "at-will" or contractual arrangement under a three-year visa program. The new proposal also allows for a transition period from the current H-2A guest worker system to the new program to ensure that employers will not confront gaps in program availability and resulting workforce shortages.

At United Fresh 2013, many industry leaders stepped up and took action. Attendees called their senators and representatives through United's Immigration Call Center to urge their support of comprehensive immigration reform.

Greg Leger, a grower-shipper of watermelon and president of Georgia-based Leger & Son, acknowledged the gravity of the current situation. "We don't harvest with any machinery whatsoever, so everything is done with hand labor. We have to have a strong workforce or else we go broke," explained Leger after he called Congress from the show

floor. "It's very important for all growers to take the time to call, because you can make a difference — every individual can. It's got to start from the ground up, and we're as close to the ground as it gets."

The bill could go a long way in easing the burden on agricultural employers — if it passes. In meeting after meeting on Capitol Hill, United Fresh is hearing that the opposition is sending a tremendous number of letters, e-mails and making phone calls to defeat the legislation. Despite intense opposition, passing comprehensive immigration reform containing a new agriculture guest worker program is still possible — if supporters make sure that congressional offices know there is a real need for this legislation.

United Fresh encourages members and the broader fresh produce industry to contact Congress today. Let them know that a stable workforce is critical to the survival of businesses across the country. We need you to turn this opportunity into reality! Take action today at unitedfresh.org/labor.

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TRANSITIONS

DMA SOLUTIONS IRVING, TX

DMA Solutions, Inc., announces the promotion of **Megan Zweig** to strategic marketing director. In her new role, Zweig focuses on the company's overall client strategy and implementing marketing strategies to elevate DMA's clients. She also takes the lead on the company's internal communications, serving as the senior manager in an effort to maximize DMA's efficiencies, services, employee development and growth.



THE OPPENHEIMER GROUP VANCOUVER, B.C.

The Oppenheimer Group promotes its 15-year veteran, **Ben Vallejo**, to sales manager of the company's Chino Hills, CA, office. Vallejo, who had been a sales representative since 2007, now leads the seven-person team responsible for marketing the company's products in the southwestern U.S., as well as national foodservice business development.



MARKET FRESH PRODUCE NIXA, MO

Market Fresh Produce announces that **Steve Ford** joins the team as director of business development. Ford's background includes over 10 years of successful sales and operations experience with Frito-Lay and most recently with Sara Lee. The addition of Ford allows Market Fresh to continue meeting client expectations and strengthening its talented team of top-flight professionals.



PENNSYLVANIA APPLE MARKETING BOARD HARRISBURG, PA

The Pennsylvania Apple Marketing Board announces its new executive director, **Julie Bancroft**. She brings more than 10 years of experience in all facets of marketing communications, as well as experience in product development and operations. In the coming months, one of Bancroft's priorities will be to meet with industry leaders to develop new initiatives for the board.



FRESHWAY FOODS SIDNEY, OH

Freshway Foods announces **Janet Eastman** as director of marketing. In this role, Eastman will lead the execution of strategic marketing initiatives, oversee public relations activities, and build brand awareness in support of the company's retail and foodservice programs. Prior to joining Freshway Foods, Eastman held marketing positions with Standard Register and Lau Industries.



Eastman held marketing positions with Standard Register and Lau Industries.

KINGSTON & ASSOCIATES MARKETING IDAHO FALLS, ID

Kingston & Associates Marketing LLC., welcomes **Nick Proia** to the company. Proia fills the newly created position of vice president of business development. Proia is responsible for developing new business, strengthening strategic relationships and expanding product lines and current distribution channels.



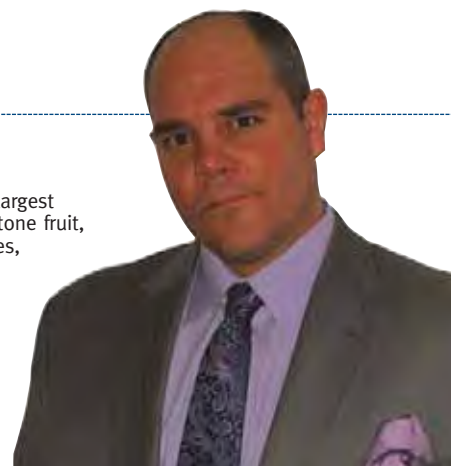
NEW YORK APPLE ASSOCIATION FISHERS, NY

New York Apple Association (NYAA) names apple and produce industry public relations veteran, **Julia Stewart**, as the association's spokesperson. Stewart's responsibilities include planning and executing media outreach activities to promote New York apples, representing the association to consumer and trade media, and providing strategic communications counsel to NYAA senior management.



FOWLER PACKING FOWLER, CA

Fowler Packing, one of the largest grower/packer/shippers of stone fruit, table grapes and clementines, hires **Derrick Bender** as vice president of New Business Development. In his new role, Bender helps expand Fowler Packing's domestic and international programs on its entire product portfolio.



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ANNOUNCEMENTS



UNITED SCORES RECORD DONATIONS

United Fresh Produce Association, San Diego, CA, announces the landmark donation of salad bars to 436 California schools. The donation will benefit 300,000 California students who now have access to a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables every day at lunch. The donation is part of United's "Let's Move Salad Bars to California Schools" campaign to increase children's fruit and vegetable consumption and improve their health.

CMI KIKU APPLES GROWS STRONG

CMI, Wenatchee, WA, prepares for the beginning of its import season with the exotic KIKU apple variety. New packaging with the flavor profile for the KIKU apple supports the growing and distribution for this apple. The updated packaging is a follow up to last season's two-pound grab-and-go pouch bag that included smaller snack-size apples.



GOURMET TRADING'S RETAIL-FRIENDLY PACK SIZES

Gourmet Trading Company, Los Angeles, CA, introduces retail-friendly pack sizes of its Superblues for California's blueberry season. Superblues are now available until the end of June from the company's own farms in California. The super-sized and super crunchy blueberries are available in the traditional 4.4-ounce and 6-ounce clamshells but also in the modified pack sizes: 5 ounces, 10 ounces and 16 ounces.



OCEAN MIST OFFERS PERK TO ARTICHOKE LOVERS

Ocean Mist Farms, Castroville, CA, is celebrating the start of the artichoke season by extending an exclusive offer to members of the Artichoke Aficionados Club. The offer allows members to purchase a case of artichokes directly from the company. Last year was the first year Ocean Mist Farms made artichokes available to purchase for the club members.



CAC AND NATURIFE FARMS PARTNER ON PROMOTION

The California Avocado Commission, Irvine, CA, and Naturife Farms, Estero, FL, have developed a multi-faceted co-marketing promotion that supports the California avocado season now through October. To promote the concept of pairing berries with avocados, Naturife will print recipes featuring California avocados on select berry packages.



CALIFORNIA GIANT BERRY SPONSORS URBAN GIRLS SQUAD EVENT

California Giant Berry Farms, Watsonville, CA, partnered with blogger Coryanne Ettiene and the New York City's social networking group, Urban Girls Squad, to host an exclusive berry party on April 23 at the GE Monogram Center. The event served as an opportunity for California Giant staffers to share recipes, bake and interact with young moms and professionals who strive to balance work, home life and entertaining.



CRUNCH PAK'S BROADWAY REAL ESTATE

Crunch Pak, Cashmere, WA, is headed for a year-long run on Broadway. The company is participating in a marketing campaign that showcases its fresh apple product portfolio on a gigantic electronic billboard in the heart of New York City's world-famous Times Square. The billboard, located at 1541 Broadway, is the only bi-directional screen in Times Square with screens that measure 10-feet by 90-feet.

DOLE'S TASTE OF SPAIN EXCITES CONSUMERS

Dole Salads' Taste of Spain initiative combines a national, collect-and-wins-meets-instant-win online game. The campaign uses new, delicious Spanish-influenced recipes, serving suggestions, and House Parties to spark consumers' creativity, imagination and culinary "ole." Participating consumers have the chance to win more than 10,000 instant prizes and a grand prize culinary trip to Spain for two valued at \$40,000.



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

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TRAINING AT WAL-MART AND BEYOND

By James Prevor
President & Editor-in-Chief



One can view Wal-Mart's announcement that it will provide enhanced training in produce to 70,000 associates as a kind of surrender to the primacy of people in the produce industry. Even Wal-Mart, a company built upon excellence in logistics, is acknowledging that in the produce industry, where product quality is so variable and so dependent on care and handling, it is impossible to optimize a produce operation without knowledgeable people.

Knowledgeable players are necessary for corporate success, and Wal-Mart will find that more than education and training is essential. Knowledge, however, is not the only criteria for success. Associates also need to be dedicated and committed to excellence. For the same reason product knowledge is important and requires specialized training, it is also difficult to supervise. After all, if the produce clerk is trained but his manager is not, how will the manager know if opportunities are being maximized or problems neglected?

Of course, this is not just Wal-Mart's problem, nor the problem of retailers. Dealing with a product that is variable in supply, quality, price, and with market conditions changing by the minute is a dilemma for the entire trade. Unlike many other industries, the produce business absolutely depends on the quality of the people involved. Think about how few industries have anything similar to the moral responsibility ratings that the Blue Book offers. Think about how difficult it is to create a system that consistently generates morally responsible conduct. One realizes how utterly dependent every produce company is on deploying quality people.

The very essence of the professional quality crucial for the industry to advance is depicted in this month's cover story, the iconic *PRODUCE BUSINESS 40 Under Forty* list of young industry leaders. For eight years, we have chronicled the stories of the up-and-comers in the trade — both boosting their prospects and inspiring new entrants to strive for excellence. It is rewarding to see the degree to which these young leaders contribute to society and obtain greater authority and responsibility in the field.

Just prior to writing this column, this columnist wrote a piece for the *Perishable Pundit* about Wal-Mart's new training policy and the Produce Traceability Initiative. As part of the piece, we published a key letter from Wal-Mart to suppliers. One of the signatories, Wal-Mart's vice president of produce/floral, Dorn Wenninger, was a member of the 2008 *40 Under Forty* class when he was working for S. Katzman Produce in the Bronx.

The enormous importance of people is a double-edged sword for entrepreneurs looking to grow their businesses. Most of these businesses initially thrive because the entrepreneurs are so good. However, if the

businesses continue to grow, they reach a point at which the question arises whether that entrepreneur can transition to a role of leading others.

The process of inspiring and managing others is a difficult one. The various lists of "best places to work" are often simply lists of business models that are rich enough to allow for generous policies. In other cases, they are closely held companies that may be satisfied with a less-than-optimal financial return, so the owners feel good about how they treat people and are admired as pillars of the community.

If one needs to make a competitive return on investment, however, and isn't Google, with a giant moat of intellectual property, or GE, with the ability to buy billion dollar businesses (in other words, if you are a produce industry company), then how does one optimize the contributions of one's team?

Perhaps the greatest gift one can give a team is to not put them in a situation in which they feel the choice is between taking care of business or enhancing their own abilities to contribute. We have seen many produce companies with strong growth potential implode because the people in line for the next generation of leadership were so tied to the sales desk or their current function that they never invested the time in executive development.

For a company, this situation is toxic. First, it is dangerous. If you can't spare someone to attend the Cornell/United Executive Development program or one of PMA's leadership programs, how are you positioned if the same person gets sick or quits? Being able to handle absences without failing to serve one's customers is an essential attribute of a strong company. Second, investment in training is the only way. If you have a great onion salesperson but you think he has CEO potential, he will never develop that potential if he keeps doing the same thing.

A lot of companies talk the game and say they back up professional development, but when a motivated employee says he or she found a great program in China and wants to go for a month to gain expertise in global trade, watch the boss panic.

Of course, individuals are often their own worst enemies. Some think they are indispensable — or fear that they are not — and won't go, no matter what options are presented. Perhaps they are lazy and hesitant to do the serious work required to learn things outside of their comfort zone. If they are superstars in their field, they suddenly find themselves not being a star at all as they confront new material in a context where nobody cares about their past achievements.

Companies and individuals must remember that the velocity of change is so enormous today that standing still is the same as falling behind. So a word of advice to this year's *40 Under Forty* honorees: This recognition is the beginning — not the end. Take it, leverage it, run with it, and make sure you view your career as a process of continuous improvement. It is the only way to get where you want to go and the only way to contribute all you can do.

pb

If you can't spare someone to attend the Cornell/United Executive Development program or one of PMA's leadership programs, how are you positioned if the same person gets sick or quits?

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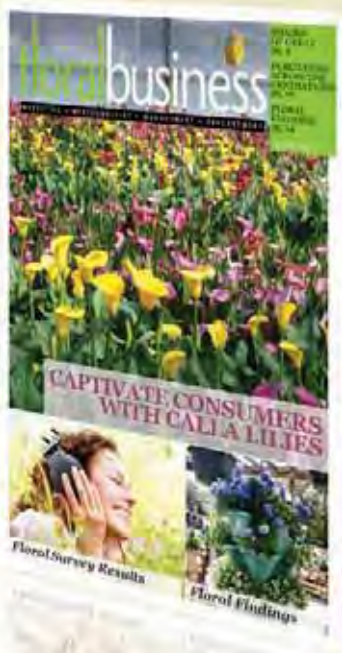
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POMPANO BEACH/FT. LAUDERDALE MANGO OUTREACH MEETING

Conference Venue: Fort Lauderdale Marriott North
Conference Management: National Mango Board
Phone: 407-629-7318 ext 106
Email: mpeele@mango.org
Website: www.mango.org

June 13, 2013

MIAMI, FLORIDA MANGO OUTREACH MEETING

Conference Venue: Miami Marriott Dadeland
Conference Management: National Mango Board
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June 14, 2013

ANNUAL TIPA CHARITY GOLF TOURNAMENT

Texas International Produce Industry
Charity Golf Tournament to help Food Bank RGV fight
hunger and find hope in the Valley.
Conference Venue: McAllen Country Club
Conference Management: Texas International Produce
Association
Phone: 956-581-8632
Email: bret.erickson@texipa.org
Website: www.texasproduceassociation.com

June 18, 2013

MCALLEN, TEXAS MANGO OUTREACH MEETING

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Conference Management: Fresh Produce & Floral
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Conference Management: Produce Marketing Associ-
ation, Newark, DE
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Website: www.pma.com

AUGUST 19 - 21, 2013

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Conference Management: Vance Publishing,
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Conference Management: Florida Fruit & Vegetable
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Website: www.ffva.com

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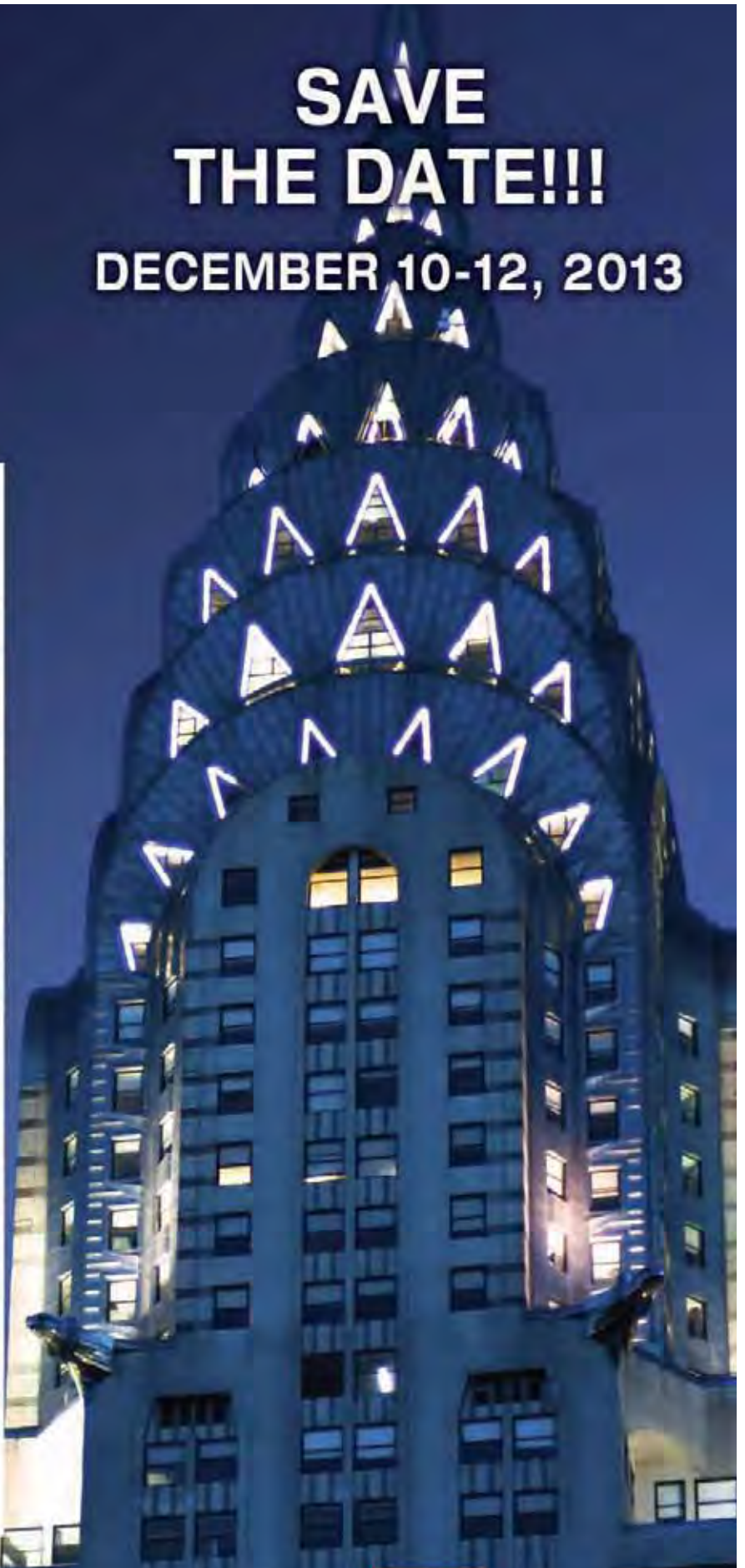
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CELEBRATING
FRESH

Fresh Enthusiasts Versus Elusives

BY KELLI BECKEL, SENIOR MARKETING MANAGER, NIELSEN PERISHABLES GROUP

Women with children are undoubtedly a large and high-spending consumer group. They are often the shoppers the produce industry targets when creating marketing strategies and new products. But are these consumers truly the ones who spend their time and dollars in the produce department, or are we missing an opportunity to reach a more lucrative shopper?

Nielsen Perishables Group analyzed transaction data from FreshFacts Shopper Insights powered by Spire to identify the core and opportunity shopper groups of fresh produce as well as the products that are most important to them. We examined consumers in the context of Spire's 40 unique "Essence" segments, which were based on demographics and purchase history throughout the store. Within these 40 consumer segments, the top five and bottom five groups for fresh produce were determined based on their shares of fresh sales compared to total store sales.

If the consumer groups account for a greater share of fresh food sales versus their total store sales, and they are a significant sized group (high group spending power), they were designated in the *Fresh Enthusiast* consumer group. The same methodology was applied to determine a *Fresh Elusive* group, where their share of fresh sales was lower than their share of total store sales.

Fresh Enthusiasts

The *Fresh Enthusiast* group tends to be affluent, health-minded, food-focused, and are more likely to be couples than families. They account for 23 percent of total store sales, but 27 percent of fresh sales, or over \$25 billion in fresh food sales, annually.

Four of the five consumer segments included in the *Fresh Enthusiast* group are couples. Premium Healthy Living Families are also in this group, but this segment is limited to households with incomes greater than \$100,000.

Among the Top 10 highest indexing fresh categories for the *Fresh Enthusiast* group, six are produce categories.

Highest Indexing Fresh Categories for the *Fresh Enthusiast* Group

- Specialty cheese
- Berries
- Packaged salad
- Cooking vegetables
- Tomatoes
- Fin fish
- Citrus
- Apples
- Shrimp
- Breads

This group translates to huge spending power in produce. The *Fresh Enthusiast* group accounts for approximately 37 percent of berry category sales, which equates to over \$1.2 billion at retail each year.

Fresh Elusives

The opportunity in fresh lies with consumers who are more convenience-minded, time-strapped, less willing to cook, and are more likely to be families than couples or singles. This is the primary consumer for many retailers and suppliers, but this group accounts for a somewhat smaller share of sales not only in the fresh departments, but also across the entire grocery store (21 percent for *Fresh Elusives* versus 23 percent for *Fresh Enthusiasts*).

The *Fresh Elusive* group benefits the store most by over-spending on convenience meat, but produce does not fall anywhere in their Top 10 indexing categories. In fact, five of their Top 10 lowest indexing categories are from the produce department: berries, cooking vegetables, packaged salad, tomatoes and citrus:

- Packaged meals
- Fully cooked chicken
- Meat franks
- Processed lunch meat
- Cakes
- Deli pizza
- Fully cooked beef
- Breakfast sausage
- Fully cooked other meat
- Other miscellaneous meat items

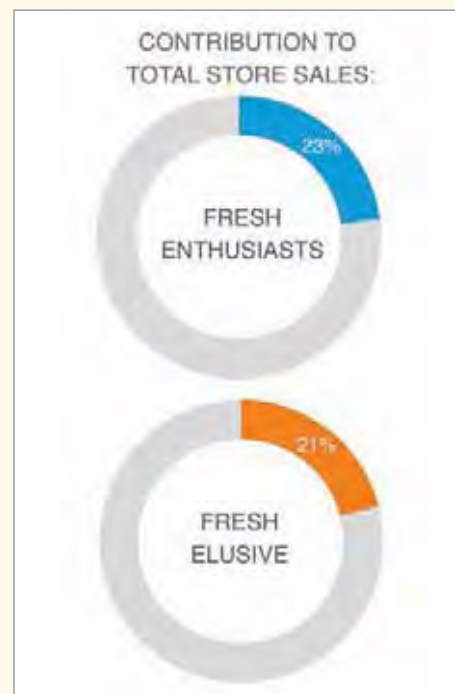


CHART COURTESY OF: NIELSEN PERISHABLES GROUP

Packaged salad is among *Fresh Elusives'* lowest indexing fresh categories. The group accounts for 17 percent of packaged salad sales, compared to *Fresh Enthusiasts'* 33 percent contribution. Intuitively, packaged salads should be a category that appeals to on-the-go families due to its convenience factor. If the industry can draw these busy families to packaged salads enough to raise their sales contribution from 17 percent to 21 percent (their share of total store sales), that would mean nearly \$500 million in additional retail sales.

As the make-up of American households continues to evolve, so must the produce industry's understanding of whom should be considered when strategizing innovation, assortment, packaging and marketing.



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

Can Consumer Preferences Be Changed?

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

In the season of F. Scott Fitzgerald and *The Great Gatsby*, one remembers the apocryphal conversation Ernest Hemingway claimed to have had with his friend: *Fitzgerald: The rich are different than you and me.*

Hemingway: Yes, they have more money.

Now, the Nielsen Perishables Group tells us that there are other differences as well, such as affluent people purchasing more, and different types, of fresh products.

One of the most significant changes in retailing has come from the use of UPC data to better understand the customer. Retailers once assumed that their “best” customers were the biggest customers. It was, after all, hard to get data much beyond the total ring. With more data came the opportunity to see that the highest volume customers were often from large families and were economically strained.

Those large baskets were driven by items on sale, the use of coupons, and a focus on lower margin merchandise. The shoppers of these larger baskets often were both aware of prices and driven by economy. The big buyers had a lot of dollars and a relatively high percentage of income at stake, so they studied ads, cherry-picked and shopped competitive outlets. It turned out these shoppers often bought a lot of stuff but the contribution to profitability was minimal.

It gradually became obvious that the “best customer” might need another definition entirely. A high-income urban bachelor wasn’t going to buy the copious amounts of paper goods and cheap hot dogs on sale that the largest volume customers were buying. Instead he ran in on the way home from work to pick up expensive prepared foods and bought premium beer and wine. He stocked his house with pricey olive oil and balsamic vinegar, and he didn’t hesitate to buy raspberries — regardless of cost. In fact, he wasn’t very aware of prices, didn’t check ads, use coupons or shop anywhere other than the convenient place near his home or office.

This study by the Nielsen Perishables Group provides an important additional

perspective for both retailers and marketers to assess business opportunities. Why do certain people buy differently, and is there anything that can be done to change these habits? If so, what can be done?

For retailers, this is interesting, and retailers certainly would like to switch consumers to higher margin products. It is also in retailers’ interests to encourage consumption of fresh. After all, fresh produce requires frequent replenishment, which translates into more frequent consumer visits, which gives retailers more opportunities to sell more products.

Yet, in the end, the big win from this kind of focus is with marketers. After all, the study doesn’t show that *Enthusiasts* eat more than *Elusives* — it just points to differences in purchasing preferences. Changing those preferences switches a retailer’s sales around, but switching consumer purchases around — from products a given marketer doesn’t sell to one the marketer does sell — is the point of most marketers’ efforts.

So why are *Enthusiasts* and *Elusives* different? Well the obvious call is affluence. Products such as specialty cheese, seafood, fresh-cut salad mixes and berries all are on the pricey end of the spectrum. Beyond the actual price of the product, fresh produce always carries a financial risk. If a family buys frozen or canned spinach, and then things come up, and these items aren’t consumed, the consumption is deferred. Fresh meat can also be brought home and frozen. But that bag of fresh spinach, if not consumed, is money lost.

If the family is affluent, it is a small risk for a small expense, but if a family is living paycheck to paycheck, with every dollar budgeted out, it is a risk they may not want to take. It is also true that convenience produce items suffer because economical replacements are so accessible and obvious. So consumers can easily compare the price differential between bagged salad and head lettuce, and one doesn’t have to be a great chef to cut vegetables. In contrast, it is a big job to make one’s own sausage, and

Why do certain people buy differently, and is there anything that can be done to change these habits?

it is beyond the time and experience of many consumers.

There is, however, more than money involved in these statistics. There is a cultural gap. One wonders if a study has ever been done on how eating habits change in America when affluent families see their incomes go down. In desperation, people may eat anything to stay alive, but in less extreme situations, we would be surprised if the contours found in this study don’t stay the same. One culture finds it acceptable to serve bologna sandwiches and one does not. One culture is predisposed to eat meat and another to seafood and to produce.

The opportunities presented are many, and Kelli Beckel is right to point to things such as bagged salads as possible leverage points to increase consumption. However, the health and convenience messaging most common among produce marketers probably won’t do the trick for the same reasons it has never done the trick. The *Elusives* are likely to see appeals to convenience as self-indulgent, and the appeals to health won’t be sufficient to overcome cultural practices and budgetary concerns. So the challenge is to reposition produce with greater relevance to blue collar concerns. How to do that is, well, to steal a line from Churchill: “A riddle, wrapped in a mystery, inside an enigma....” **pb**



As Multiple Formats Devalue The Community Grocer, The Big Challenge Is Giving Up On The Notion To Be Everything For Everybody

FROM JIM PREVOR'S PERISHABLE PUNDIT 05.13.2013

We have always liked the *Star Tribune*, especially since the editors solicited an op-ed from the Pundit that was published under the title, "Who's Guarding our Commerce?"

Now John Ewoldt has written a piece for the *Star Tribune* about shopping behavior, and we are reminded of a piece we wrote in Pundit sister publication, *PRODUCE BUSINESS*, a decade ago, titled "Death By A Thousand Cuts":

The nature of the competitive challenge posed to the contemporary supermarket produce department has changed. Not all that long ago, the main concern was that another supermarket chain was opening in town and that the new stores would drive the existing chain out of business or at least take substantial market share. This was a dangerous situation, but at least the threat was clear. A new direct competitor is on its way and stores need to fight back. New stores must be built, remodels performed, pricing must be aggressive.

Not only have retailers fragmented, but consumers are themselves no longer demonstrating much loyalty.

But today the situation is different. It is the exception that the major competitive threat is a new supermarket chain coming into town, anxious to take major market share. More typical is that supermarkets and their produce departments face death by a thousand cuts — death not from one new chain seizing 40% of the market, but instead from a plethora of new formats, each one seizing a few percentages of the business.

So the wholesale clubs come into town and grab four percent of produce sales. A Whole Foods chain, emphasizing a "back to the earth" atmosphere, opens and takes six

percent. Fast food restaurants open their drive-through windows at 7:00 a.m. so workers can pick up a salad for lunch on the way to work — another one percent of business is lost. A supermarket chain opens specializing in small stores with limited variety and low prices, taking six percent of the market with them. Then we have gourmet stores, farmer's markets, flea markets, U-Pick operations, supercenters, hypermarkets, home delivery services and more.

What it all boils down to is that it is increasingly hard to compete if your goal remains to be the broad-based supermarket attractive to 95 percent of the people in the community. Instead, the trend is to the development of niche operations, each one dedicated not toward capturing the entire market, but instead dedicated to doing a great job serving a specific consumer segment.

The *Star Tribune* piece is titled, "Changing Shopping Habits Challenge Traditional Grocers":

Like increasing numbers of grocery shoppers, Ty Rushmeyer doesn't have a regular store.

The 28-year-old and his wife go to Rainbow once a week, but they also stock up their pantry at Target. Then there are "fun runs" for unique products at Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, an Asian market, the Wedge Co-op and, in season, the farmers market.

"We're looking for healthier options," Rushmeyer said. "But we're also deal seekers. We know which store has the best price for each item."

Welcome to the new grocery landscape, in which traditional grocers like Cub Foods and Rainbow are less able to count on loyal customers who buy everything they need in one visit. Instead, shoppers are spreading their money around and constantly looking for deals.

It's a dynamic that complicates a competitive landscape for Cub Foods, the grocery market leader in the Twin Cities. Supervalu, Cub's parent company, is leaning on the Cub brand to help revive its fortunes after it recently sold several major chains but kept Cub. Just last week, Eden Prairie-based Supervalu said it was cutting 1,100 corporate jobs to get its head count more in line with the company's reduced size.



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4th Annual Produce Research Symposium



June 25 – 26, 2013

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Danny Wegman, CEO
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The Center for Produce Safety is focused exclusively on providing the produce industry and government with open access to the actionable information needed to continually enhance the safety of produce. Established by public and private partnership at the University of California, Davis, initial funding for CPS was provided by the California Department of Food and Agriculture, the University of California, Produce Marketing Association and Taylor Farms. Ongoing administrative costs are covered by the Produce Marketing Association, enabling industry and public funds to go exclusively to research.

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The multi-format retail world inevitably devalues the community grocery store. This poses challenges for many not yet ready to accept the necessity of Focus.

But Cub and primary rival Rainbow are getting squeezed, not only by Target and Wal-Mart, but also by co-ops, farmers markets, specialty gourmet stores, Aldi, dollar and drugstores. Rainbow recently closed its Forest Lake store and soon will shutter locations in Robbinsdale and Plymouth.

...The increased range of shopping options is changing the grocery business in many ways. Square footage allocated to groceries grew 5.7 percent from 2005 to 2011, according to the Food Marketing Institute, but the increase was at supercenters, convenience and dollar stores, warehouse clubs and discounters/liquidators. Traditional supermarkets decreased their space allotment.

Menards, for example, now devotes about six aisles to groceries as well as a refrigerated section with pizza, milk, cheese and eggs. At Walgreens, food and beverage items now make up 20 percent of the merchandise with plans to allot more space, said Jim Jensen, divisional vice president. "Food, along with beauty and health items, gets customers to visit the store more often and buy more," he said.

The quote by the Walgreen's executive, Mr. Jensen, is telling: "Food, along with beauty and health items, gets customers to visit the store more often and buy more." This is the key to understanding what is going on.

Consumers visit grocery stores about ten times a month. They visit general merchandise and drug stores about once a month, so if these stores can get some food business, especially perishable food, they are likely to increase shopper frequency substantially.

This, of course, makes them very tough competitors as they have an alternative motivation for selling food. A Target that adds a PFresh concept, a dollar store that adds a fresh foods offer, a drug store that puts in a nice fresh assortment... these

stores often see substantial same-store sales growth, much of it from increased sales of non-fresh items to customers who were drawn in by the fresh offering.

None of this is new; supermarkets were petrified at Wal-Mart's entry into the food business precisely because it was theorized that Wal-Mart could happily sell food for no profit and then make a profit when the customers drawn in by the food offering bought high margin general merchandise at the same time.

One of the things that is crystalizing and that the *Star Tribune* piece emphasizes is that not only have retailers fragmented but consumers are themselves no longer demonstrating much loyalty.

In other words, it is not that there is a Costco customer, a Whole Foods customer, a Trader Joe's customer and an Aldi customer, etc. Instead, many of the customers shop at many venues at various moments in their lives.

In fact, the market is becoming so fragmented that it may not make sense to go after a specific type of consumer. Instead retailers may need to pursue certain types of consumers at certain moments of their lives. In other words, retailers need to think of their stores as "buying dinner for a big date" outlets or "running in to pick up a quick dinner for the kids" outlets or "stock up for a big traditional holiday dinner" outlets, etc.

This likely means editing one's assortment as one edits the customer experiences for which a given retailer chooses to compete. It means giving up on being everything to everybody — still a big challenge for many grocers who have always thought of themselves as a neighborhood's grocery store.

With the growth of the internet, communities of like interest form more easily, and this tends to devalue the communities of propinquity that were the traditional core.

Equally, the multi-format retail world inevitably devalues the community grocery store. This poses challenges for many not yet ready to accept the necessity of Focus.

Fill Half the Plate with Fruits & Vegetables

Produce for Better Health Foundation can help you extend this message to consumers—

Let us feature *your* product in one of our popular healthy “plates!”

Curried Chicken with Raisins and Mushrooms
 Serves 4
 This chicken and mushroom dish with the addition of raisins and red bell peppers will make the entire meal taste a little sweeter.

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 lbs skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
- 2 medium onions, sliced
- 1 cup raisins
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1/2 cup sliced red bell peppers
- 1/2 cup sliced green onions
- 1/2 cup sliced carrots
- 1/2 cup sliced celery
- 1/2 cup sliced zucchini
- 1/2 cup sliced eggplant
- 1/2 cup sliced cauliflower
- 1/2 cup sliced broccoli
- 1/2 cup sliced asparagus
- 1/2 cup sliced artichokes
- 1/2 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1/2 cup sliced green beans
- 1/2 cup sliced peas
- 1/2 cup sliced corn
- 1/2 cup sliced lima beans
- 1/2 cup sliced kidney beans
- 1/2 cup sliced chickpeas
- 1/2 cup sliced lentils
- 1/2 cup sliced black beans
- 1/2 cup sliced pinto beans
- 1/2 cup sliced navy beans
- 1/2 cup sliced cannellini beans
- 1/2 cup sliced garbanzo beans
- 1/2 cup sliced chickpeas
- 1/2 cup sliced lentils
- 1/2 cup sliced black beans
- 1/2 cup sliced pinto beans
- 1/2 cup sliced navy beans
- 1/2 cup sliced cannellini beans
- 1/2 cup sliced garbanzo beans

Blistered Cornfetti Salad Sandwich with Grapes
 Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup sliced cornfetti
- 1/2 cup sliced tomatoes
- 1/2 cup sliced lettuce
- 1/2 cup sliced onions
- 1/2 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1/2 cup sliced carrots
- 1/2 cup sliced celery
- 1/2 cup sliced zucchini
- 1/2 cup sliced eggplant
- 1/2 cup sliced cauliflower
- 1/2 cup sliced broccoli
- 1/2 cup sliced asparagus
- 1/2 cup sliced artichokes
- 1/2 cup sliced mushrooms
- 1/2 cup sliced green beans
- 1/2 cup sliced peas
- 1/2 cup sliced corn
- 1/2 cup sliced lima beans
- 1/2 cup sliced kidney beans
- 1/2 cup sliced chickpeas
- 1/2 cup sliced lentils
- 1/2 cup sliced black beans
- 1/2 cup sliced pinto beans
- 1/2 cup sliced navy beans
- 1/2 cup sliced cannellini beans
- 1/2 cup sliced garbanzo beans

Avocado Melon Breakfast Smoothie
 Serves 2

Ingredients:

- 1 cup frozen avocado
- 1 cup frozen melon
- 1/2 cup frozen mango
- 1/2 cup frozen pineapple
- 1/2 cup frozen strawberries
- 1/2 cup frozen blueberries
- 1/2 cup frozen raspberries
- 1/2 cup frozen blackberries
- 1/2 cup frozen cherries
- 1/2 cup frozen peaches
- 1/2 cup frozen nectarines
- 1/2 cup frozen plums
- 1/2 cup frozen apricots
- 1/2 cup frozen kiwis
- 1/2 cup frozen guavas
- 1/2 cup frozen passion fruits
- 1/2 cup frozen dragon fruits
- 1/2 cup frozen jackfruits
- 1/2 cup frozen breadfruits
- 1/2 cup frozen cashews
- 1/2 cup sliced almonds
- 1/2 cup sliced walnuts
- 1/2 cup sliced pecans
- 1/2 cup sliced hazelnuts
- 1/2 cup sliced pistachios
- 1/2 cup sliced macadamia nuts
- 1/2 cup sliced pine nuts
- 1/2 cup sliced sunflower seeds
- 1/2 cup sliced flax seeds
- 1/2 cup sliced chia seeds
- 1/2 cup sliced hemp seeds
- 1/2 cup sliced pumpkin seeds
- 1/2 cup sliced sunflower seeds
- 1/2 cup sliced flax seeds
- 1/2 cup sliced chia seeds
- 1/2 cup sliced hemp seeds
- 1/2 cup sliced pumpkin seeds

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Contact Renee Bullion, rbullion@PBHFoundation.org, or Cyndy Dennis, cdennis@PBHFoundation.org to learn more!

United Takes Flight

The United Fresh Produce Association celebrated its opening ceremony aboard the USS Midway Museum in San Diego, CA on May 14. PRODUCE BUSINESS and Avocados from Mexico sponsored the festivities. While the live band played 1940's hits, guests mingled and enjoyed refreshments as day turned into night.



United Fresh 2013

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Opening
Party Aboard
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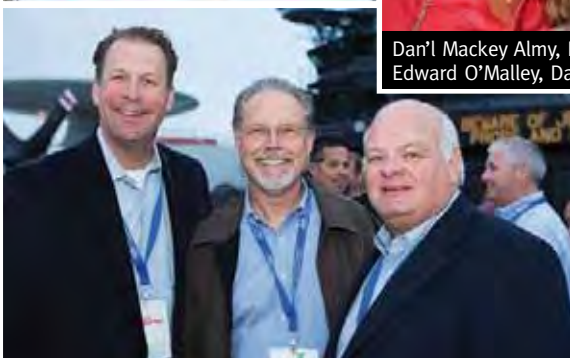




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UNITED FRESH OPENING PARTY



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Nate and Heather Mineart, Michael Orf, Hy-Vee;
Roger and Joni Pepperl, Stemilt



Andrea Chavez and Brian Talley,
Talley Farms



Gretchen and Ernst Van Eeghen, Church Brothers;
Bob Cummings from Crunch Pak



Sue Ottum, Potandon, Mark Klompfen and
Travis Blacker, Idaho Potato Commission.
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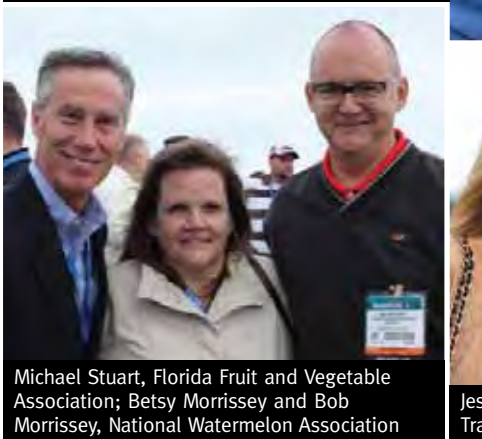
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Michael Stuart, Florida Fruit and Vegetable
Association; Betsy Morrissey and Bob
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Marty Ordman, Cynthia Nunes, Mike Cavallero,
Robin Dobeasky, Bil Goldfield, and Todd Camel, Dole



Jessica and Patty Thomas, Thomas Produce;
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Marie Eastman, Sanitation Specialists; Arturo Paniagua, Mary
Cork, and Alvin Wong, Safeway

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

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

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

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

ABOUT THE NOMINEE:

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

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

Nominee's Professional Achievements:

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Mason Arnold, 34 Co-founder and CEO Greenling Austin, TX



Arnold has been a sustainability pioneer and serial entrepreneur since graduating from The University of Texas at Austin in 2001. In 2005 he co-founded Greenling, an award-winning local and organic grocery delivery service which has reached over 55,000 customers and supports hundreds of local farms in Texas. As co-founder and CEO of the company, he spends most of his time moving the company forward and helping his teams excel. Since its inception, Greenling has grown significantly in Austin, and now has branches in San Antonio since 2008 and Dallas since February 2012, and has just launched Houston.

An advocate for organic and sustainable growing practices, Arnold drafted the legislation that created an Organic Advisory Board to the Texas Department of Agriculture. He also helped create Slow Money Texas — the statewide chapter of Slow Money, an undertaking to connect farmers, entrepreneurs, investors, philan-

thropists and activists to build local and national networks to catalyze the flow of capital to small food enterprises and local food systems. He also helped create the Sustainable Texas Investment Club, which focuses on local farms and local food. He served on multiple community organization boards, including the non-profit organization, Sustainable Food Center.

Greenling's customers aren't the only ones who noticed Arnold's passion for Sustainability. He and the company have been recognized with more than 20 awards. He was recognized in Slow Money's 2010 National Gathering Showcase as an entrepreneur who is "rebuilding local food systems, one small food enterprise at a time."

Working directly with local, sustainable farmers is truly inspirational for him. He explains, "Growing food the right way, without chemicals and additives, is also the hard way, and our local vendors are some of the most hard-working individuals you'll ever meet. My mission is to help those local farmers spend more time actually farming, rather than worrying about distribution and whether they'll get a fair price for their hard work. This in turn helps consumers too, because local, sustainable food is more accessible,

and eating local becomes more attainable than ever."

Arnold has seen his fair share of challenges. "Had I known anything about produce when I got started in this business, I probably would have gone another way," he quips. "Creating inventory management, storage and distribution processes that maintain produce quality from the farm to the doorstep was quite a challenge, but we like to think we've perfected it. While most grocery retailers experience spoilage of up to 30 percent, we maintain less than 2 percent spoilage with our just-in-time inventory system. We partner with local charitable organizations in each market to use the produce that isn't perfect enough to send to our customers, but is still edible. And the rest becomes compost to feed our local soil systems."

His mission now, and for the future, is to change the way people source their food. "We aim to continue to grow and make it easier for local producers to grow in a sustainable way, and also for consumers to get local and organic food on their tables," he says. "And, to do this in a way that fits their busy lifestyle and doesn't break the bank. We believe our model can work anywhere people eat food!"

His love for what he does is not

hard to spot around Greenling's operational areas, not only because of his passion but also because he drives a Prius with a six-foot banana on top.

Josh Auerbach, 30 Sales and Marketing Maurice A. Auerbach, Inc. Secaucus, NJ



Auerbach executes a multitude of responsibilities including managing a number of customer accounts as the primary representative, managing the lime category as commodity manager/buyer, assisting in purchasing and procurement of several other commodities, and participating in maintaining accurate product inventory on his own commodities as well as others. He helps set product pricing on a daily and weekly basis and is one of the people who coordinate outbound transportation for orders.

He began his career humbly as a sales assistant and spent a great deal of time interacting with warehouse and packing room staff. Gradually, he proved himself and became the primary sales contact on several customer accounts.

Because of his drive, he plays an active role in the procurement of product, culminating in his managing the lime category, and assisting in other special projects.

Auerbach spearheaded the business development with a national foodservice distributor from selling one division to now selling seven divisions in two regions as a corporate vendor. During his management of the lime program, he and the sales team reached many new customers. "I am particularly proud of the growth in our lime program and proud of our sales team," he says. "I applaud their efforts. The category has expanded and increased in volume, and our customers include some of the finest retailers, foodservice distributors and wholesalers in the marketplace."

He worked closely on accounting for costs and charges on products and transactions to analyze profitability of products and business. He revived "dead" customer accounts that had not worked with Auerbach in several years and have returned as regular business. He championed successful new items and lines for the company such as peeled pearl and cipolline onions and baby bok choy.

His responsibilities spill over to future investment. He initiated and managed Auerbach's first-ever recruitment of new talent from a major business school's food marketing program, including creating job descriptions and interviewing candidates for the positions. He also contributed ideas and feedback in the planning and construction of Auerbach's state-of-the-art facility, which opened in December of 2011.

As much as he loves his job, he credits his love for his family as strongest inspiration. "I am truly fortunate for the love and friendship of my wonderful wife, Michelle Auerbach, and our new beautiful baby daughter, Lily Harper," he shares. "And, I would not be here were it not for the constant love and support of my parents, Paul and Randy Auerbach. I work with them and we STILL like seeing each other outside of work!"

In the future, he hopes to see the company and the industry develop further. "The public's increasing recognition of the value of fresh, safe, healthy and delicious fruits and vegetables is and will continue to be a driver for more innovation," he states. "Who knows what great idea, what underappreciated or undersupplied product lies around the corner?"

Chief among his mentors is his

father, Paul. "He has been in the produce industry since before I was born," he explains. "His knowledge, compassion, and work ethic have been crucial in my personal and professional development. We have always been close, but since we have been working together, I feel the relationship has taken on additional depth, and I cherish the time we spend together in all capacities."

Though everyone at the company has been uniquely influential, Auerbach also recognizes Jeff Schwartz, Ian Zimmerman, Bruce Klein, and Jim Maguire as indispensable mentors.

Ben Batten, 32
Account Executive
Des Moines Truck Brokers, Inc.
Norwalk, IA



Batten has been instrumental in the growth and success of Des Moines Truck Brokers (DMTB) during his nine year tenure with the

company. Throughout that time, the company experienced record growth in the fresh produce division and, last year alone, handled logistics for nearly 3,000 loads of produce.

Starting in dispatch, Batten worked his way up the ranks. Currently he plays a critical role in both sales and marketing, directly resulting in the company's growth and visibility as a respected player for Midwest-bound produce loads. His leadership and expertise in the produce supply chain helped the company win numerous local and national awards. He was responsible for a 13 percent increase in company revenue during his first year as account executive and provided invaluable oversight on the company's new operations training program.

Batten earned the professional designation of CTB (Certified Transportation Broker) from the top industry association, TIA (Transportation Intermediaries Association), in March 2010. Although he holds a Bachelor of Science in Transportation Logistics, he augmented his knowledge with TIA-sponsored workshops on Temperature Controlled Transport, Marketing and Partnership in the Supply Chain. In September, he will graduate from Iowa Motor Truck Association's (IMTA) Leadership Class. He was responsible for nominating

DMTB for two recent awards: The *Des Moines Business Record's* 2010 Best Kept Secret and 2012 Iowa Business of Integrity Award for small businesses.

Batten is active in the industry and his community. He traveled to many growing regions and shipping locations across the country, met with shippers, and worked closely with buyers. Within his community, he's active in volunteer programs that help local families in need as well as arranging donations of fresh produce to various walks and triathlons. He recently directed his company's donation of freight charges associated with moving a piece of steel beam from the World Trade Center to a local fire department.

His inspiration comes from those around him involved in day-to-day produce buying and selling. "I learn a lot by listening to buyers put together loads and deal with growers," he states. "I'm truly inspired when our customers succeed and continue to grow. It shows me that what we're doing here at DMTB has a positive effect on their business."

He notes the challenging nature of the industry. "I'm sure most would agree that it takes a different breed of person to be successful in the produce industry," he says. "Being able to juggle customer price pressures with changing markets and unpredictable weather requires skill. On our end of the business, we must adapt to rapidly changing situations. Product availability can shift without much notice, and if our customers are on ad, the difference in freight can mean being profitable or taking a loss. Truck availability also plays a large role in buyer decisions. My job is to ensure we have the capacity to move fresh loads quickly and efficiently."

Another recent challenge is the CA CARB requirements. "These new laws have potential to hurt the produce industry in California by decreasing the supply of trucks that can haul the loads," he says. "We have to stay on top of these regulations and fight them whenever possible."

His goal is to increase stability in freight pricing. "I plan on working closely with our produce customers to more accurately match supply of product with spikes in demand," he reports. "Additionally, we intend to add expedited freight service for

those times when quick on-time delivery is needed."

He attributes his growing knowledge to the Comito family of Capital City Fruit in Norwalk, IA, as well as James DeMatteis, owner of DMTB. "At 70 years old, Joe Comito has been a wealth of information and insight into the produce business," he says. "His son and current CEO, Christian Comito, has been another mentor to me, helping me develop a broader understanding of how growers, shippers, re-packers, and distributors work together. Jimmy DeMatteis has always been central to our business and played a huge role in developing my decision-making and leadership skills."

Laura Berlanga, 34
Product Innovation
and Research Manager
Ocean Mist Farms
Castroville, CA



Berlanga is known as an intelligent, energetic emerging leader who rose through the ranks from sales coordinator to marketing

assistant to now leading its organization in her current position. She is credited as being innovative in her thinking and approach to operational challenges and excels in creating something new.

She was promoted to her current position in January 2013. Prior to this, she worked in the sales office, where she assisted the artichoke commodity manager on key accounts. She later transitioned over to the marketing department. As a marketing associate, she managed print, digital, and pay-per-click ad campaigns for the trade and consumer, consumer affairs, and trade show events. Part of her responsibility was management of the "Where to Find Artichokes on Sale" program, which allows consumers to find retail artichoke ads on the company web site or mobile site as well as providing e-mail blasts to Artichoke Club members during the spring months.

Berlanga is active in the community and has been a board member of Ag Against Hunger for three years. She is currently the second vice president and also on the PR committee and Special

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Events committee. "I truly enjoy being part of an organization that helps alleviate one of our country's biggest problems, hunger, and provides fresh produce to those in need," she states.

She is a past president of the Hispanic Business Association and is a member of California Women in Agriculture. She is actively involved with children's education and is part of the Lagunita Parent Teacher Committee and the Pacific Coast Christian Academy Parent Teacher Committee.

She is motivated by the challenges of the industry. "Every day is a new challenge, that is how the produce industry is, and that is what I love about it," she says. "I like working in the fresh produce business, knowing that I play a small part in providing healthy, nutritious vegetables to the consumer. That is a good feeling."

In the future, Berlanga aims to continue to grow and innovate. "I want to keep learning more and creating innovative products to meet consumer demands," she says. "Eventually, I look to move up even more in the company."

She credits many great people at Ocean Mist who influenced her career and singles out Rosa and Ed Boutonnet. "Rosa has always been a steady rock," she says. "She is fair, giving and has core work ethics and values that I admire. I respect Ed for his strong balance, calm control, and perspective on the produce industry. He has taught me to see things in different ways and recognize the opportunities."

Ed Bertaud, 40
Director of Business Development
IFCO (Pallet Management
Services Division)
Houston, TX



Bertaud has served the industry for nearly 20 years, beginning in 1994 when he worked for Pallet Recycling Associates of North America. He became vice president and managing partner of Pallet Exchange Inc., in 1997, general manager with IFCO in 2000 and regional business development manager in 2008 before being named to his current position in 2011. That year, IFCO recognized Ed's exemplary perform-

ance with the IFCO "Hero of the Year Award" for top incremental revenue. Though he served many industries in his career, Bertaud has always been particularly focused on the needs of the produce industry.

He is known as an industry activist and for getting involved to help whenever possible. He has worked on numerous issues on the industry's behalf at the local, state and federal levels. Bertaud helped lead the Texas International Produce Association's (TIPA) evolution from the Texas Produce Association to its current focus on international trade and was also instrumental in driving the association's Border Issues Management Program.

He is currently chairman of the board of the Texas International Produce Association and previously served as vice chairman, secretary treasurer, and director-at-large for the same organization. He also serves as a member of the United Fresh Logistics & Supply Chain Council and the United Fresh North American Transportation Working Group. He was presented with the America Trades Produce Conference 2013 Rising Star Award.

In his community, Bertaud is active with America's Second Harvest, Feeding America, Wounded Warrior Project, North Texas Food Bank, South Texas Food Bank, Houston Food Bank, Ryan Palmer Foundation, and the Christian Fellowship Church. In 2011/2012, he worked with events to raise money for salad bars in Houston Schools.

The people in the produce industry are his greatest inspiration. "Many work in family-owned businesses, some with generations of history behind them, and none are averse to plenty of hard work," he says. "I grew up in a family-owned business and know that the lessons I learned during that time have been invaluable to me in my career."

In the future, Bertaud will strive to stay involved in key organizations. "I want to maintain the organizational relationships I have developed and further drive value to their memberships," he says.

He names John McClung of TIPA, Trent Bishop of Lone Star Citrus Growers in Mission, TX, Mike Martin of Rio Queen Citrus in Mission, TX, and Will Steele of Frontera Produce in Edinburg, TX, as the many mentors he has in the industry.

Joseph Bunting, 36
Produce Business Manager
United Supermarkets
Lubbock, TX



Bunting practically grew up at United Supermarkets, celebrating his 20th year this past year and having worked as produce assistant manager, sacker, checker and stocker. After working the retail side of the business during school, Bunting was snatched to full-time employment by United on completion of his college education at Abilene Christian College. The company was in the infancy of building its self distribution, having left Fleming in 2000, and Bunting, along with Darvel Kirby and Tommy Wilkins, developed the procurement partnership lineup into one the company is proud of today.

In 2011, he moved into the Business Manager role, where he took the lead in data analysis, ad preparation, SKU analysis, and performance reporting. He is responsible for creatively driving sales and analyzing data to set retail pricing for all categories in produce.

In 2012, Bunting was named to the Southeast Produce Council Step Up Program and traveled the Southeast learning and building his company's partnerships. He serves on the Retail and Food Service Board of the United Fresh Produce Association, the Board of Directors of the Southeast Produce Council, and is active in the Produce Marketing Association. He has received numerous Positive Impact Awards from United Supermarkets for various activities, including creating guest solutions and achieving record sales.

He and his wife, Amiee, are very involved in raising their three children in a Christian environment as well as supporting them in many youth events. He helped in providing a BBQ dinner in appreciation for United's partners the night before its annual Charity Golf Event, hosting over 100 partners each year. He served the community through Meals On Wheels for the past seven years.

Bunting is motivated by the fast-paced environment of the industry. "Each day may seem basically the same but always presents a new

challenge of its own, which makes it fun," he says. "I have learned to be ready for change and depend on the partnerships we have to help us through tough situations. The people in the produce industry also motivate me. So many good people in the industry make the work enjoyable and fulfilling. I love visiting growers and seeing first-hand their passion for what they do."

In the next decade, Bunting's goal is to become the Produce Director for United. "Since I started at the bottom, I have gained valuable experience through the years that will help me lead in the future," he says. "The retail market has become increasingly competitive and for a small retail chain to survive, it will require leadership. My goal is to lead our produce department in this changing environment, as well as develop the next generation of leaders who will succeed me both at United and in the produce industry."

His mentors include United's Jacky Pierce, Darvel Kirby and Tommy Wilkins. "Jacky was a legend in our company," he explains. "He was instrumental in the development of our company and produce department with great passion and vision. He gave me a shot at a career in produce even though I lacked the experience at the time. Darvel is a great leader who leads by example. He has taught me do what is right and always keep our guests in mind with every decision we make. Tommy has taught me about the value of relationships in the produce business. He has helped me in my development as a buyer and a leader. His ability to cultivate and build relationships within the industry is admirable, and I strive to achieve this in my career as well."

Michela Calabrese, 32
Stakeholder Director
Interrupcion Fair Trade
Buenos Aires, Argentina



Calabrese has been a pioneer in the organic/fair trade arena and a partner with Interrupcion in its Brooklyn, NY, office for eight years. As stakeholder



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director at Interrupcion, she has taken a leadership position within the produce industry, helping to launch Taste Me Do Good fair trade and organic items with some of the largest retail and distribution organizations in the U.S. and Canada. These are key drivers of Interrupcion's growth over the past five years.

Calabrese came into the produce industry from the development world. She has a background in socio-economic empowerment strategies and experience working with The World Bank and UNICEF on numerous poverty alleviation plans. She educated hundreds of high-level management, produce personnel, and retail managers on the concept of fair trade and its necessity to any Corporate Social Responsibility plan. She assisted companies with strategies on how to convey this concept to shareholders, community stakeholders, and consumers in order to aid sell-through, build sales, and better align with positive brand image.

She was one of two sales people from 2005 to 2010 who assisted in growing company revenue tenfold and is now one of three sales people witnessing 100 percent growth year after year. She created and executed the company's Responsible Consumption Campaign, an in-store educational marketing program encouraging consumers to learn how their purchase has power. The campaign used food products as tools to educate and empower customers to make positive change in producing communities through the food they buy. This included training hundreds of "Agents of Social Change," who have "interrupted" hundreds of thousands of consumers at the point of sale in supermarkets across America.

Calabrese is inspired daily by the Interrupcion community. "We are joined by the common desire to build a better world through more productive and positive systems," she says. "We achieve results everyday through responsible consumption, sustainable community development, organic farming and fair trade processes. Our industry is becoming more and more relevant as we see growing obesity epidemics, hungry populations, food deserts and fewer opportunities to access capital and economic opportunity

for those most marginalized in society. Through innovation, strategic incentives and will-power, we can work together to solve collective problems."

Her future goals focus on expanding the reach of fair trade. "I want to increase the percentage of fair trade organic food in the marketplace, build consumer awareness and empower consumers," she explains. "I also want to increase access to healthy food for all (despite geography or social class) and raise the bar for the way food should be made by creating higher environmental and social standards necessary to compete in the produce industry. We are a stakeholder community because all those involved, from field laborers to consumers, have a stake in the success of the supply chain, and most importantly, benefit from its existence. I strive to help grow this community."

She names mentors Victor Savanello and Dean Holmquest of Allegiance/Foodtown in Iselin, NJ, Jim Whitler of Vernon Produce in Winston-Salem, NC, Terry Romp of Heinens in Cleveland, OH, and Dave Graf of Buehlers in Wooster, OH. "I will be forever grateful to these gentlemen," she says. "I entered the produce industry with no produce background. I learned lessons, often times the hard way, but frequently from friends such as these. I have had so many mentors in this industry, from close clients to colleagues to friends. They have given Interrupcion a chance and have guided me over the years."

Lucinda B. Clark, 28
Founder and CEO
Space Girl Organics, Brewers
Organics, and Georgia Girl
Organics
La Belle, MO



Clark epitomizes the rags-to-riches story, going from living in a town of 600 on a struggling family farm to running multi-million dollar companies in three different states. She is a pioneer in the organic industry, traversing the nation and raising organic awareness, promoting and aiding small local farmers, and making high-quality organic fruits and vegetables

accessible to people across the U.S.

She is founder and CEO of Brewers Organics, Georgia Girl Organics and Space Girl Organics, home delivery services offering organic fruits and vegetables. The companies operate in Florida, Georgia, and Wisconsin. She is also the founder and former owner of Clark's Organic Market, Kansas City's original organic produce home delivery service, and Arch City Organics, St. Louis' original organic produce home delivery service.

Clark has leveraged technology to set up an online market place, removing the need for a traditional storefront, achieving less produce shrink, providing a market for local farmers and artisans, and ultimately offering organic produce at a reasonable price for consumers with the added convenience of delivery to their doorstep. She harnessed the power of communication and social media to connect with customers, building a sense of community by sharing stories from the fields, coordinating local events, and encouraging customers to blog on the company web site.

She created a logistics process to move product in and out of her warehouses within 24 to 48 hours, yielding less risk, since the produce has a home before it is out of the field. Clark's efforts resulted in farmers, wholesalers and brokers contacting her when they have produce that doesn't fit their traditional customers.

Clark took her business success beyond commercial borders. She implemented a successful item-of-the-week campaign to benefit the homeless. Customers may donate an item each week, such as toothbrushes or toothpaste, which the company picks up when the customer's delivery is dropped off. The items are then distributed to the homeless via local shelters in the market area. She also created a cooperative program allowing customers to pool their buying power to raise money for schools and charities.

She is motivated by the desire to help small farms find a marketplace for their produce and to help families gain access to high quality organic fruits and vegetables. "I grew up on a struggling family farm, so I know firsthand the challenges our farmer's face," she says. "The way I see it, more farmers in the U.S. do not choose to grow produce over

row crops because of economics and logistics. Farmers can't afford to take the risk of not being able to sell 100 percent of their yields. I want to change that. I am creating market food hubs for farmers to sell their products. I am trying to fix logistics so farmers can farm and people can eat."

Looking toward the future, she aspires to set up additional markets and to participate in more community involvement. "I want to find creative ways to help educate consumers and lend a helping hand to those in need," she says. "At this point, all of my businesses are in major metropolitan areas. In the future, I want to expand to more rural areas like my hometown in Missouri. I think everyone should have a choice, an option and availability of fresh foods."

Clark counts herself blessed to have been mentored along her journey by some of the best people in the industry. She specifically names Pat and Frank Gallo of Central Produce in Kansas City, MO, Rodney Scaman of Goodness Greenness in Chicago, IL, and Tom Stromolo of New York City Green Market. "Pat and Frank rented me my first warehouse space. They have been very generous with their knowledge of produce and how the industry works over the years," she explains. "Rodney has become not just a mentor but a friend. He generously made a special trip to Florida just to introduce me to farmers when I got started there. Although I only speak to Tom a few times a year, he is quite an inspiration and is always available to swap stories of how the industry really works."

Marcus Isaac Cutler, 29
Director of Field Operations
Race-West Company
Clarks Summit, PA



Cutler is part of a fourth generation company established in 1973. He has been working in the produce business since 2005, but started learning about produce from trips he took with his father when he was a child. He would go through supermarkets and learn proper ways to stack and display produce.

He held many roles at the Race-West Company. He brings his knowledge in field practices of potatoes to the office, taking on the title of director of field operations. He used his degree from Syracuse University in engineering and computer science to revamp the company's computer systems. He also improved the company's efficiency in order-entering, invoicing, and inter-office networking. He sees himself as a steward of the 35-year-old business that his father built. He is committed to advancing the opportunities afforded by previous generations and building the business for future generations.

One of his most meaningful experiences in the industry occurred in January of 2007 with his father, Harris Cutler, and brothers, Geoffrey and Joseph. "We took a cross-country road trip from Clarks Summit to Seattle, WA, stopping to see customers and farms all along the way," he explains. "Once we arrived in Seattle, my father told me that he

was starting a new Produce University and that I was going to be the first graduate of the Harris Cutler Potato Grad School. I was then given instructions to visit as many potato and sweet potato sheds as possible between Washington and Pennsylvania. I ended up visiting over 45 sheds and packinghouses in Washington, Idaho, Colorado, Wisconsin, New York, North Carolina, Maine, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island."

From a very young age, Cutler has been involved with community service. For 13 years he helped lead services for all Jewish holidays at Elan Gardens, an assisted living facility in Clarks Summit, PA, and at the Jewish Home of Northeastern Pennsylvania. "During this time, I learned the true meaning of respecting one's elders through serving the elderly," he says.

One of his greatest inspirations in the industry is meeting and working with people who are excited about what they do. Cutler

considers himself privileged to work alongside his younger brother, Geoffrey. "We work together every day constantly feeding off of each other's energy," he says. "Geoff's level-headedness and business savvy helped me grasp higher concepts in the business."

His main future goal is to build upon the vision of his great grandfather, Philip Ball, his grandfather, Philip Cutler, and his father, Harris, to help distribute produce efficiently from the farm level to dining room table. "I want to focus on discovering new avenues for fresh produce for the company," he says. He plans on expanding his growing partners and continuing to develop the family business so that his children's children can serve the industry for generations to come.

His father is his greatest mentor in the industry. "His 35-plus years of experience helped me through many trying times in the business," he says. "He is responsible for teaching me

everything I know in business, and has groomed me for success. I'm grateful to be a part of one of the greatest success stories of a father and a son working together in business."

Charlie J. DiMaggio, 37
President/ Owner
FresCo LLC
Bronx, NY



DiMaggio has been in the industry his entire life. As a child, he ventured to Hunts Point Market accompanying his father, Vincent, who had retail stores in Manhattan and was a purveyor to fine restaurants. Upon adulthood, he worked with his father's retail business and in food-service for a while. However, feeling drawn to Hunts Point, he eventually took a position at another company as a floor salesman for M&R Tomato.

Two years ago, DiMaggio opened FresCo on the Hunts Point Market. It is



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the youngest company on the market, yet in an era where many terminal market businesses are closing doors, FresCo has experienced significant growth. Within two years, FresCo has grown to over 100 vendors and over 500 customers. Its import division started in Fall 2012 and already has a product range of over 25 different items from three different countries. In January 2013, DiMaggio led FresCo to create a foodservice division, which is reaching its stated goal of taking in no more than 15 and no less than 10 customers per month.

DiMaggio is involved in every aspect of FresCo on a daily basis. Within the first two years of creating the business, he taught himself how to be a buyer, create long lasting relationships, and be a principal of a vast company that branched out in many different areas of the industry. Fresco is well on its way to not just being a terminal market distributor, produce purveyor and importer but to one day expand into retail, develop exclusive product lines and broker.

DiMaggio works with many non-profit associations, such as City Harvest and Food Bank, and he serves on the board of the New York Produce Trade Association. He emphasizes the need for community involvement. "When I created FresCo, community was a key value for me," he explains. "From lowering the carbon footprint as much as possible to being directly involved in community programs, I wanted to ensure the company and I contributed back."

He has always been motivated by his strong passion for the industry and especially terminal market business. "It always intrigued me to go into Hunts Point Market with my father because of the hands-on action, the vast volumes of produce being distributed, and the endless amounts of knowledge there," he says. "This led to my dream of creating a company to serve the current needs of the industry but also to pioneer in the changing times coming ahead."

His father was his first mentor and he also credits his close friend and now partner, Sal Restivo, as an influence. "My father taught me the original basics about produce," he shares. "He always expected me to know more than what he would

teach. This kept me striving for more and cultivated the hope that one day I could succeed at building a business on my own. Sal Restivo may not have known much about the produce industry before joining us, but he taught me some fundamental values of business and I continue to value his input."

Rebecca Eckblad, 35
Director of Floral
Roundy's Supermarkets
Milwaukee, WI



Rebecca Eckblad is known for her dedication, work ethic, and contagious passion and enthusiasm for the floral industry.

Her love of flowers was realized early on in her career, when first employed as a floral clerk during high school and a floral department manager through college. "It was in those positions that I decided working in retail and with flowers was more than a job to me; it was going to be a career."

In her seven years with Roundy's Supermarkets, a \$4 billion publically held company, Eckblad progressed from floral merchandiser to category manager to her current role as director of floral. She is currently responsible for the procurement, retail sales and merchandising of Roundy's high quality floral programs at 160 stores.

As director of floral, Eckblad developed and implemented several successful programs focused around driving floral sales with incremental units and creating excitement for the customers. Recently, she helped the company expand into the Chicago market with 10 new Mariano's stores, which have sparked a buzz in the industry. The floral program she directed in Mariano's can be considered a best-in-class in the country. Roundy's floral department and team at Mariano's Lakeshore location earned honors as Chicago's Top Ten Florists in 2012.

Eckblad completed the Master Gardener certification program and speaks at local garden clubs, educating flower enthusiasts on floral design, care and handling. Her competitive spirit shines in

"...it takes just as much planning to build a million-dollar program as it does a thousand-dollar program."

— Rebecca Eckblad,
Roundy's Supermarkets

her after-work activities, coaching and playing on five softball teams, as well as playing in a volleyball and kickball league. She proudly reports having been a former University of Wisconsin Madison mascot Bucky Badger, only the second girl in school history to wear this coveted costume.

Eckblad's motivation to sell flowers is overwhelming. "Working with beautiful and amazing product is my inspiration," she says. "Creating programs that excite employees and customers is also inspiring, as is watching flowers travel from the farms through the supply chain in to the consumers' hands. Receiving complements at annual sales meetings from store directors who say they were most inspired by my floral presentation, or hearing floral managers repeat something I taught them provides the best daily motivation!"

Her ongoing goal is to maintain differentiated and unsurpassed floral programs in Roundy's markets, offering the freshest product at the best value. "Getting more flowers in more carts will forever be my goal. I hope to help the technologically-challenged floral industry more by fully integrating social media and digital communication into our floral marketing and to develop floral consumer insight," she says.

Kathy Hession, vice president of bakery and floral at Roundy's Supermarkets and Eckblad current supervisor, is a tremendous mentor in her career. "I admire how highly regarded she is in the industry and the respect she commands for floral in the grocery business," she explains. "Although floral may be a small percentage of total store sales, Kathy didn't allow me to feel small and reminds me that it takes just as much planning to build a million-dollar program as it does a thousand-dollar program. Build a great plan, and after that, it's just a matter of scale. Kathy taught me

the relentless pursuit of the best quality, the great value of loyal vendor partnerships, and how to build successful programs."

Dan Ehrenstein, 31
Vice President, Sales & Marketing
Sunshine Bouquet Company
Miami, FL



Since taking over the responsibilities of sales and marketing almost four years ago, Ehrenstein helped double the size of

the company with respect to sales, employees and farms. Today it does over \$125 million in sales, has over 4,000 employees between the United States and Colombia, and over 700 acres of farms. This year's projections are for the company to grow and sell over 300 million stems of fresh-cut flowers.

Ehrenstein manages all of the sales efforts for the company. His responsibilities oversee sales to major national and regional supermarket chains across the country, including Kroger, Wal-Mart, Sam's Club, Safeway, Ahold, Food Lion and many other large retailers. His specific duties include pricing, marketing, product design and constantly traveling the country to visit customers and see how products perform at store level. He oversees and works with a great sales team of over 30 people.

He is inspired by the challenge of growing the floral category for each of the company's supermarket customers. "When compared to other mature manufacturing or farming industries, the floral industry in the U.S. is still relatively young and fragmented," he explains. "Just as the supermarket industry continues to mature and consolidate through mergers and acquisitions, so too will the floral industry, especially as it pertains to mass market retail sales. We have some fantastic growth opportunities in the future, and this keeps me excited and motivated every day."

His future goal is to increase floral consumption. "Through a combination of having the best quality, value and design, I want to help each of our customers double their fresh-cut flower sales over the next five to 10 years," he says.

His primary mentor throughout



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his career has been John Simko, Sunshine Bouquet president. "He taught me a tremendous amount about sales, production, farming, strategy and human nature," Ehrenstein says. "Without his guidance and leadership, I most certainly would not have progressed both professionally and personally in life as quickly as I have. I have also learned a tremendous amount about retail from our customers, and how important a small number of details can be in making the difference between success and failure."

Stiaan Engelbrecht, 36
Managing Director
Everseason
Citrusdal, South Africa



Engelbrecht holds several key positions for the South African citrus industry — any one of which might be enough for any one

person. He is managing director of Everseason, an export company he founded. He is responsible for the day-to-day running of the business and growing shareholders' equity. Under his leadership, Everseason has grown from 9,000 tons of export to 34,000 tons in 2012. The company serves markets around the world, including Europe, U.K., U.S.A., and Canada, nine countries in the Middle East, Asia and Russia.

He is also chairman and director of Icon Produce, a company he helped co-found. It was established to be one of South Africa's leading export companies to the Middle East. It trades in all fresh produce and has grown from 3,000 tons to 11,000 tons. Engelbrecht's responsibility currently with Icon Produce is to manage current clients, identify market trends and keep the clients on the cutting edge of those trends. Also, he is responsible for the fruit supply and assures that all suppliers can respond quickly to markets' demands. As chairman, he is responsible for financial operations.

Engelbrecht is a director of logistics company Freight Logistics4u, another company he co-founded. At the time the company was established, he managed the business side to develop shareholder agreements. As the company grew, he has managed expansion and profitability by selling shares and

expanding the supplier base. Currently, his focus is on negotiations with shipping lines and overseeing financial operations of the company. It has grown from 25,000 tons to 80,000 tons.

Recently, Engelbrecht was named director of Ocean South Fresh, one of the largest exporters to Russia. His role there is to structure the company so that it is able to handle larger volumes at better profit margins. Closer to home, he was recently elected to the board of Citrus Juices, the largest orange juice plant located in the Western Cape region of South Africa.

As a director for the Western Cape Citrus Producers Forum (WCCPF), Engelbrecht helps determine the direction of the successful and growing South African industry. His principal role is managing the finances of the WCCPF as well as serving on the operational committee of the WCCPF to manage the day-to-day operations of the export program to the United States.

His boyhood, as one of 10 children, was spent working on the family's sub-Saharan desert farm. Some 130 miles from the nearest town and 30 miles from the nearest neighbor, his family relied on a generator for electricity and bore holes to collect rain for water. He credits athletics, strong family ties, and long hours working on the farm and in a citrus packinghouse as key contributors to his leadership style and vision for South Africa's place in the world market.

He knew that he would one day become a business owner in South Africa. "I believe in the 10,000 hour rule — if you really want to make something work, you need to put a lot of time in," Engelbrecht says. "Through youth athletics, I learned how to win, lose and deal with injury — all factors in my management style. Then my early days in the packing industry taught me negotiating skills and a deeper understanding of people, collaboration and entrepreneurship."

In his current roles, Engelbrecht empowers his employees to see their roles and responsibilities in South Africa's economic future. "I know I can make a difference in the lives of 25 growers in Citrusdal who will again influence the lives of more than 1,000 workers and their families in Citrusdal," he said. "From here, it just spreads wider. The biggest difference you can

"I believe in the 10,000 hour rule — if you really want to make something work, you need to put a lot of time in. Through youth athletics, I learned how to win, lose and deal with injury — all factors in my management style."

— Stiaan Engelbrecht,
Everseason

make is at home. Over the past 10 years, the real opportunities started for entrepreneurs and now, looking ahead, our children will make or break the future. We must grasp those opportunities, make them available to all, and make them secure."

He is inspired by and committed to his family and to building a better future for South Africa. "The minute you see making time for your family as a compromise you have missed the boat," he says. "That is why the Everseason offices close for lunch every day and all employees go home for lunch. Ten days of a holiday does not make up for one hour missed at the school play. I feel a great deal of responsibility working in the citrus industry. Citrus is by far the biggest fruit export commodity for South Africa. Our industry gives work to thousands of people in South Africa. We must remain informed individually and collectively, stay up to date with new trends and to drive and improve."

Pamela A. Fierman, 31
Vice President of Marketing & Business Development
Fierman Produce Exchange, Inc.
Hunts Point Terminal Market
Bronx, NY



Fierman entered the business as a fourth generation member of a 75-year-old company with high expectations. Though "born" into the business, her career didn't begin there. She first worked at the New York Mercantile

Exchange (NYMEX) for over four years before coming back to the family business. Drawing on her experience and drive, she helped the company achieve efficiencies on an expense side and push creativity in new business development ventures to add incremental revenue streams.

Her position in the company has evolved from the day-to-day operations to a far more strategic and comprehensive one. Realizing that inventory control and management had room for improvement, she pushed to create a new inventory system and implemented it into the everyday routine. She was effective in decreasing the loss of product and revenue due to lost, broken, and mis-picked items. Fierman's inventory includes over 500 SKU's. The new system allows for determining when produce is about to turn and it also integrates into product traceability.

On the business side, she started a new inside sales, business development venture that grew exponentially in the past six months. She put together a sales team to focus on untapped resources and increase the customer base. She successfully initiated the usage of social media, in all its forms, to further market products and services. On a daily basis, she updates customers with prices based on market, takes orders, and makes sure orders are placed properly and in a timely fashion. She is responsible for ensuring customers are satisfied with product, quality and pricing.

Fierman has also been instrumental in recommending new product lines both domestically and internationally to target a wider array of customers. She introduced a product line of produce snack items to the marketplace, looking to embrace a customer base in a society where healthy snacks are becoming more prevalent. Her newest venture is on the buying side of the business. She traveled to various growing regions to build relationships with shippers. She intends to utilize the knowledge and insight gained to improve handling and distribution of the various types of produce the company supplies.

She gained significant inspiration at the start from melding her experience at NYMEX with her Hunts Point work. "The parallels

between the two industries gave me the insight and knowledge I needed to thrive in a volatile market such as Hunts Point," she explains. "Upon my arrival here, I made it a point to learn every aspect of the business, from office work to selling on the street to buying product."

She continues to be motivated by new experiences. "Whether it's traveling to see shippers or attending different conferences, the experience I gain is monumental in achieving goals both professionally and personally," she states. "This year, I played an active part in setting up and working our company booth at the New York Produce Show. Following the show, I hosted a dinner for over 20 shippers, family and employees to attend. Through organizations such as City Harvest and hurricane relief funds for Sandy, I have seen the importance and benefits of being able to help and assist the community in need."

Her greatest mentor is her father, Joel Fierman. "None of what I've done would be possible without his guidance and support," she shares. "Being able to travel with him and

"I made it a point to learn every aspect of the business, from office work to selling on the street to buying product."

— Pamela A. Fierman,
Fierman Produce Exchange, Inc.

learn from his experience has provided me with the foundation I needed to move forward and continue in a successful manner. He encourages me to attend the weekly PR meetings for the Hunts Point Market, which he chairs. It is not only important to be involved in my own organization but also the market as a whole. I hope to one day follow in his footsteps and become a member of the Co-Op Board. It is important to be instrumental in the decision-making process that not only affects my business but the market as a whole. My father's knowledge and passion for the business taught me how to be a respected leader in this industry and within our company."

Chelsea Ariana Fiss, 29
Retail Program Manager, San Diego and Imperial Counties
Network for a Healthy California,
UC San Diego Center for Community Health, Division of Academic General Pediatrics, Child Development and Community Health
San Diego, CA



In her current position, Fiss facilitates partnerships between neighborhood stores and community health agencies to help increase the consumption and purchase of fruits and vegetables among food-stamp-eligible Californians. Through Retail Program activities and promotions, retailers show their commitment to customers' health, which increases loyalty and even helps drive sales.

In 2011, Fiss took the lead on a local demonstration project funded by the Centers for Disease Control. The aim of the project was to bring fruits and vegetables to an urban

food desert, by placing fresh produce grown by local farmers in four corner stores within a redevelopment district of Western Chula Vista. The project required her to market and educate four local liquor store owners to parcel out a portion of their store's merchandising area for the sale of fruits and vegetables. The project was incredibly successful, as it demonstrated a significant portion of sales for the store owners and increased access to fresh produce for the local community. This project received the 2012 PRODUCE BUSINESS Marketing Excellence Award for the adaptation and implementation of the project.

With Fiss at the lead, this model is currently being used locally to guide more conversion projects to distribute local produce to diverse communities, including rural and Native American populations in coordination with San Diego County's "Building Better Health" long-term strategy.

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Active Living (HEAL Zone) grant with Childhood Obesity Initiative, Fiss offers technical assistance and guides the group's efforts to increase healthy food access.

Last fall, she participated in two popular Food Day events. The first included over \$1,000 in donations for farmer-led market tours with professional chefs facilitating healthy recipe demonstrations to over 150 low-income elementary school students and their families plus free cookbooks and fresh produce give-a-ways. The second was the "San Diego Food Day School Passport Challenge". A co-led group effort that was recently selected by the Center for Science in the Public Interest as one of its top five most replicable Food Day models in the nation.

Fiss is inspired and challenged by the need for greater education on, and access to, healthy produce. "From a young age, I was taught the importance of caring for your body with healthy foods and exercise," she explains. "When I began working in the school system, and joined the kids for lunch, I took note of their eating habits, general low knowledge of produce, and lack of nutrition education. I realized that our food system is being driven by pop-culture. Things as simple as broccoli and blueberries were foreign to most of the kids. From that experience, I knew I wanted to be part of a group making systematic changes to support nutrition education through the consumption of fruits and vegetables."

Funding for projects is a difficult challenge. Fiss combated this issue by creatively introducing partners to leverage the capacity of projects and developing plans sensitive to a minimal budget. In 2012, she received one of 100 nationally awarded mini-grants from Share Our Strength Shopping Matters to conduct store tours to low-income and Women Infant and Children (WIC) eligible families. In March of 2013, she obtained over \$4,000 in produce and material donations enabling network programs and projects to function at their highest potential while making a difference in the lives of low-income San Diegans. "My approach to business partnerships has significantly enhanced the services offered to our low-income audience," she relates.

One of Fiss's current project

"Our food system is being driven by pop-culture. Things as simple as broccoli and blueberries were foreign to most of the kids. From that experience, I knew I wanted to be part of a group making systematic changes to support nutrition education through the consumption of fruits and vegetables."

— Chelsea Ariana Fiss,

San Diego and Imperial Counties Network for a healthy California

goals is a design to improve the local economy through the sale of local produce by joining farmers, community, retailers and nutrition education. "As the creative designer of the concept, I am collaborating with colleagues to create the San Diego Harvest of the Month Calendar Initiative. This is a comprehensive toolkit of resources and curriculum for multiple venues and community organizations based on San Diego's local harvest."

Her mentors include San Diego's local growers, farmers' market managers and retail owners and managers who are on the forefront of changing communities through produce sales and nutrition education. She also credits Larry Brucia of Sutti & Associates and co-workers Blanca Melendrez and Michelle Zive. "Larry has contributed technical assistance and consulting on projects. I value his insight, stories and guidelines for success. My supervisors Blanca and Michelle saw that my diverse experience was a great foundation to improve our community and help create a food system for San Diegans — particularly low-income families."

Dean G. Gibson, 40
Controller
Magic Valley Produce
Paul, ID



Gibson owns and operates a successful grower/shipper operation along with his brother, Jeff. Since joining Magic Valley Produce in 1999, the size of the family farming operation has more than doubled. Magic Valley grows and packs Idaho Potatoes as well as grows grains and hay. Gibson has experience in other related businesses directly involving the potato and produce industry, including a custom application busi-

ness and a logistics company.

Graduating with an MBA from Idaho State University, he worked in public accounting before starting his career in the produce business at Magic Valley Produce as the Controller.

Gibson has been a board member with the Idaho Grower Shippers Association (IGSA) for six years, the National Potato Council (NPC) for five years, the Idaho Eastern Oregon Potato Committee (IEOPC) for six years, and the Magic Valley Ground Water District for several years. He served as Chairman of the IGSA during the 2011/2012 packing year and on the executive committee of the IEOPC for the past two years. He often takes on additional tasks such as being chairman of the annual IGSA convention. He participated in the Potato Industry Leadership Institute in 2007 and the Business of Potatoes Leadership Program sponsored by Syngenta in 2005.

Gibson's involvement in community activities led Magic Valley Produce to become a leader in supplying potatoes to the Idaho Food Bank and other Food Kitchens around the State of Idaho. He, his wife Renee, and his two boys are volunteers at the Mini-Cassia Christmas Council, providing gift baskets of food and Christmas gifts for needy families in the area during the holiday season. He is also a member of the Rotary Club, an international charitable organization.

Gibson is a third generation family member of the business and is inspired by his family's commitment to the Idaho Potato industry and their business. "The produce industry is a challenge, even in the good times, but working with family toward the common goal of producing a quality product and running a sustainable business is rewarding," he says. "I am motivated to ensure that my children

are given the opportunity to join the family business."

In the future, Gibson is interested in serving as a commissioner on the Idaho Potato Commission and on the U.S. Potato Board. "Both organizations' missions are to promote potato consumption in the United States and internationally," he says. "Each organization is instrumental in the continued success of the potato industry. I'd also like to become more involved in the National Potato Council. What they do is important, especially their ability to shape the regulatory and political environment in which we operate."

Gibson was mentored by his family, especially his grandparents, Costa and Ruth Delis, who founded Magic Valley in 1965. "Their dedication to the produce industry and their family business has always been evident," he says. "I always admired the hard work and determination they had in building the business and the values they instilled in their children. The entire family worked to make the business a success."

Dave Beesley of Snake River Plains Potatoes in Idaho Falls, ID, is another mentor. "While working with Dave on the IGSA board of directors, I always admired his intellect, wit and overall understanding of the potato industry," he says. "He has become a very good friend as well as a colleague in the produce business."

David M. Hahn, 34
Director of Procurement
Four Seasons Produce, Inc
Ephrata, PA



Hahn began his buying career with Four Seasons in 1998. He was an intern while attending Millersville University.

His responsibilities included watermelon buying as well as focusing on the company's locally grown program, which at the time was in its infancy. In 2002, after four successful summer seasons, he took a full time position in buying value-added products. Over the years, he worked with a multitude of commodities including watermelons, cantaloupes, eastern and western vegetables, tomatoes and fall ornamentals.



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Hahn has been instrumental in the success of Four Seasons' locally grown program. Its grower network saw extraordinary growth over the past couple years. Hahn personally takes time each year to meet with the growers to review the current year as well as plan for the upcoming season. In 2008, he initiated a major change in the company's tomato program. Leading an internal team, he designed and developed a new label, "Chubby Cheeks," now the tomato program label. He began working with growers in Florida and Pennsylvania to have the label packed at source. This change alone eliminated a significant amount of shrink, and ultimately improved the overall profitability of the program.

In 2009, he was elected to be on the Board of Directors with the Ephrata Public Library, including a stint as treasurer in 2011 and 2012.

Working directly with small growers within the community inspires him. "I believe it is critical to support our local economy, and knowing that you play such a vital role in their overall success is humbling," he says. "Food Safety has become crucial in the produce business, and it's much harder for smaller growers to stay in tune with new laws, or the demands, by large retailers or wholesalers. I've addressed this challenge head on. This year we provided all our local growers with the opportunity to join us at a Food Safety Seminar led by the Penn State Extension. Our goal is to support all of our growers in developing their Food Safety Plan and work at becoming GAP-certified for the upcoming 2013 season."

In the future, he hopes to focus on organics. "I hope to have the opportunity to expand our grower base by adding new organic growers to our locally grown program," he says. "This is definitely a top priority."

Hahn names Rick Stauffer of Seminole Produce Distributing in Sanford, FL, and Jason Hollinger at Four Seasons as mentors. "Rick was my direct supervisor throughout my summer internships and through 2005," he explains. "Rick always stressed the importance of having good information, but more importantly, how to act on it. I worked for Jason for the past three years, and he has been an excellent coach. He knew the right questions to ask,

which allowed me to make my own decisions, whether they were right or wrong. He had the confidence in me that while my decision might have been wrong, I'd ultimately learn from the results. His passion for success was evident as he initiated quarterly one-on-one meetings, set goals, and challenged us to achieve them."

Alberto Harfush, 37
Produce Director
Wal-Mart Stores Inc.
Bentonville, AR



Harfusch is known for his passion for selling produce and growing categories as well as his ability to leverage the expertise of growers to the benefit and advantage of his work. He is strategic in his thinking and makes time for joint business planning with suppliers. He is innovative and challenges his vendors to strive for the same goal. He is always looking for ways to improve his operation and drive sales.

He is responsible for major orchard categories such as apples, citrus and stone fruit, and manages billions in produce sales for his organization. As director and CTL (Category Team Leader) responsible for citrus, apples and pears for Wal-Mart U.S., he coordinates sourcing, planning, replenishment and merchandising teams to ensure the operation provides fresh produce at low prices to customers.

Harfusch has brought together every piece of the company's cross-functional team with one common goal in mind: to save consumers' money so they can live better. When last year's regional apple crop was decimated by weather events, he provided direction for specific partnerships that needed to be in place to keep local growers relevant for as long as possible while having transition plans to service all customers without interruption. By mitigating the expected heavy inflation on last year's apple category, the company increased the velocity of its apples and volume growth close to double digits on a very mature category.

In citrus, he shared the strategy of capturing a disproportionate amount of volume while main-

taining low prices for customers allowing his team to capitalize on growing categories like clementines. He partnered with one of the biggest domestic growers in California, which provided invaluable input about the crop. He then connected with leadership on the operations side of the business to promote citrus at store level with no historical precedent, showing consistent double-digit growth for the duration of the season in both dollars and volume. In the month of December 2012 alone, the company doubled volume compared to the previous year.

While many in his position would develop an ego, Harfusch is known for his humility and is said to exemplify Sam Walton's credo for respect for the individual. He is interested in giving back to the produce community. As of November 2012, Harfusch became a member of the PMA's PLU Assignment Committee. He also supports the company's community and charity initiatives on a regular basis.

He has been inspired by passionate people with strong beliefs and vision. "I have been blessed to come across a lot of industry leaders matching this description," he says. "One challenging aspect of our industry is the duality of the here-and-now versus building-future-business. We have found that a healthy combination of both is required while always staying open to learn. Learning is something our industry provides on a daily basis."

In the future, Harfusch aspires to even better tune the relationship between demand and supply. "I feel passionate about the dynamic nature of our industry," he explains. "I strive for a better understanding of our crops and demographics so we can provide the right combination of produce attributes to our broad customer base and provide all growers equal growth opportunities. Clear and open communication is crucial."

He credits Ignacio Cifuentes in Wal-Mart's Global Food Sourcing in Santiago, Chile, as a significant mentor, as well as other suppliers he's worked with during his career. "All of our apple, pear and citrus growers have been important to my development," he says. "Their guidance and patience have been invaluable."

Joshua Knox, 37
Strategic Category
Manager - Melons
C.H. Robinson
Eden Prairie, MN



Working out of Davis, CA, Knox is in his 13th year at C.H. Robinson. He is known for his passion around developing relationships and processes that result in improved flow from the grower to the customer.

Knox played an integral part in the development of C.H. Robinson's Pink Ribbon Watermelon Program in 2007. Launched then with one customer and a minimal donation to breast cancer research, the program today involves retailers across the United States and Canada to bring Pink Ribbon to their stores. This resulted in over \$680,000 donated to local breast cancer research. Not only has this program had a positive financial impact to breast cancer research, but it has helped educate consumers on the healthy benefit of watermelons.

In addition to his development of the Pink Ribbon Watermelon program, Knox is very involved with mentoring employees. Supervisors and co-workers credit him for looking at the business through a different lens and seeing the bigger picture via his mentoring activities. Knox is constantly challenging fellow employees on a daily basis, and also guides them through difficult times.

His main inspiration comes from his family. "I want to teach my children the fundamentals that hard work pays off and nothing comes for free," he explains. "I want to make sure my daughters grow up with a great work ethic, ability to build relationships, to take pride and responsibility in what they do, and understand where our food comes from. Besides my family, I'm deeply motivated by innovation. Although the products we bring to market are centuries old, I enjoy working to find the next generation of seed, packaging and ultimately improving our supply chain."

His future goal is to be a part of the development of the next set of leaders within the produce industry. "This is a very challenging

business, and in order to have a sustainable career, you need to surround yourself with good people who push you but also guide you," he says. "I'm always striving to improve supply chains and grow business, but ultimately, the legacy I want to leave behind is the development of others."

His mentors have been the different teams he's been a part of in his CHR career. "I've been surrounded by new and tenured employees who view our business through different lenses, which always challenges status quo," he states. "This diverse group of people makes sure you are constantly improving yourself to ensure you are challenging them on a daily basis, but also be there to guide them through difficult times."

Victor A. Lopez, 39
General Manager
West Coast Tomato Growers, LLC
Oceanside, CA



Lopez is known as a young enthusiastic entrepreneurial spirit with a successful career track in the produce and seed industries in both the U.S. and Mexico. After graduating from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo in 1997, where he also completed an internship with Pybas Vegetable Seeds of Santa Maria, CA, he was recruited by Keithly Williams Seeds of Holtville, CA. In 2000, he finished his Masters in International Business from National University in La Jolla, CA. During his 10-plus years in the vegetable seed industry, Lopez excelled in seed variety evaluations, basing them on key factors like shelf life, uniformity and marketability.

His experience and education formed his vision of the future for the industry. He realized the need for a seed distributor to invoice and deliver directly in Mexico. His vision led to the creation of Keithly Williams de Mexico. As co-manager, he helped with intense product development and sales resulting in tremendous growth in less than a year.

In 2002 Lopez left KW to start Integro Seeds S de RL, where as a partner he succeeded in making several seed varieties standard in the industry. This success attracted

other investments, and in 2004 Gowan Semillas SA de CV, part of Gowan Group LLC, was founded. He became the general manager for the new partnership and drove the company to a full line of distribution in Mexico.

In 2008, he transitioned directly into the produce industry, supplying peppers for fresh and processing markets. He concentrated on developing relationships and evolving to supply an array of produce (including peppers, tomatoes, onions, papayas, watermelon, and oriental vegetables) and working in the different markets of Nogales, San Diego, Phoenix and Los Angeles. Now as GM at West Coast Tomato Growers, one of the industry's largest vine-ripe tomato growing operations, he is meeting new challenges head-on. He assists in cost analysis and reviewing projects for special packing and value added from a production, financial, marketing and logistical point.

Lopez lists many angles the industry has to face as a particular challenge. Lopez explains, "From governmental compliance, to industry compliance, food safety, workers' comp, transportation, and more, we face multiple hurdles. I see the business as a whole system. All parts must work to succeed. From the many hats that I have worn in my career, I have always tried to help close the gap between field, grower, distributor and final consumer."

In the future, Lopez plans to become more involved in the different agencies so that he can be an active force and voice in the industry. "The produce industry is challenged directly with issues concerning agriculture," he states. "Having hands-on experience will be beneficial, and as a member of the various organizations representing our industry, I would be able to present firsthand experience on relevant issues and help to make a difference."

His mentors include Harry Singh Jr. and Dick Keim of West Coast Tomato Growers, Greg Emi Muranaka of Muranaka Farm in Moorpark, CA, and Kelly Keithly of Keithly Williams Seeds in Holtville, CA. "Mr. Singh inspires me with his persistence in the industry, facing challenges, and an unyielding focus to his goal and vision," he shares. "I admire Dick's strong mind and

purpose. I learned from Greg the power of patience and good planning. Mr. Keithly is always an inspiration for his gentle firmness, common sense, and long term perspective. I learned from him to 'walk the talk'."

Omar Losolla, 37
Sales Manager
SunFed
Rio Rico, AZ



Losolla is credited by associates as being an extremely bright and charismatic individual who is able to make tough calls and balance the needs of all with a smile on his face. In his short time with SunFed, he rose through the ranks to occupy a heavy load of responsibility for the company.

In his current position, Losolla advances prices to all retail/chain store customers on all commodities. He is responsible for product allocation, handling all the eastern wholesale terminal markets, and handling Canadian retail customers. He advises all commodity managers to set daily pricing on commodities, manages and schedules product ad commitments, and gives direction to the packing shed as far as what needs to be packed on a daily basis. He manages sales department personnel and the timely and proper sale of all commodities.

He started his career as an inspector for the Department of Agriculture in Arizona in 1997/1998. Then he was hired by Wilson Batiz to do Quality Control in the warehouse in 1998 and worked there until 2005, also handling its Food Safety program and Food Security program. He played a key role in getting the company CTPAT-certified. In 2005, he left Wilson Batiz to work for Coastal Marketing Service out of Fort Myers, FL. In 2010, he left Coastal and was hired by SunFed as an FOB salesman. Just one short year after his debut with SunFed, he was promoted to the sales manager position.

He has been coaching coed soccer in the AYSO soccer league for the past two years and was involved in coaching little league baseball in Rio Rico, AZ. He is extremely active in his church, First

Baptist Church of Nogales, where he serves as a Deacon and has been a Sunday School teacher for the past five years. He works closely with middle school boys and girls, mentoring them and providing a positive role model. He is involved in a ministry that takes food and other much-needed supplies, such as clothes, hygiene products, school supplies, etc., to the mostly indigenous workers of the greenhouse industry in Imuris, Sonora, Mexico.

Losolla is inspired by the people in the industry. "I have had the honor to meet, work and trade with wonderful people," he says. "I'm challenged to be the best at what I do and to perform at the highest level every day. It's about never settling for doing just enough to get by but going far and above the call of duty to help maintain the company I represent as a major leader in the industry."

In the future, Losolla intends to continue in the sales/management side of the business. "I enjoy getting into the trenches and getting things done," he explains. "I definitely want to be part of something that is unique, regardless if it belongs to me or not. I always want to be associated with something that is known for being top of its class. I also believe that longevity and consistency are the mark of individuals who do things right. I would be honored to perform at a high level for the next 30 years just to walk in the path of other great produce people, nurturing friendships and building relationships with other great individuals."

He names Rudy Batiz of Frank Donio, Charles Fox of Coastal Marketing Service and SunFed's Danny Mandel as mentors. "Rudy gave me my first job in the produce business and was always there to give me great advice in critical time of my career," he shares. "Charles has been one of the most important men in my life. He was a father figure and modeled the most important aspects of the business for me. He was extremely encouraging and loving. He cared about my family and me in a sincere and special way. He recently passed away in 2012, and I greatly miss him. Danny has been key in shaping and instilling in me a mindset of excellence and a clear vision. Having built a very successful company, he embodies the characteristics of a person who never

settles for mediocrity but is always striving to be the best at what he does. He has a relentless work ethic, always thinking a step ahead of the competition.”

Scott Mabs, 39
Chief Executive Officer
Homegrown Organic Farms
Porterville, CA



Mabs was hired by Homegrown Organic Farms six years ago as director of sales and marketing. Since that time, he

orchestrated and led numerous changes to redefine what the company is and how it operates. During his tenure, he changed the name of the company and the branding of all items from Sierra Heights Marketing to Homegrown Organic Farms.

He changed the company culture from individualistic to team-oriented through the example of service-based leadership. He replaced over half of the staff with team members who support the new culture and vision for the future. He doubled the sales of the company during his time there and transitioned the customer base from 30 percent retail business and 70 percent wholesale business to 75 percent retail business and 25 percent wholesale business.

Mabs implemented a quality control program with the utilization of iPad applications and technology to create real time quality control data throughout the organization. He consulted with Suntreat Packing on the development of Sumo Citrus in the U.S. market and helped make Homegrown the exclusive supplier of Organic Sumo Citrus. He launched a new marketing campaign focused on making the company's growers into superstars with the people who buy their product. This included the release of a new web site, grower videos and biographies, and the development of Facebook and Twitter pages.

He is an active part of the industry and has participated in organic citrus round table discussions at the Citrus Research Board Annual Conference. He is a former alternate board member on the California Blueberry Commission and a member of the ACP Organic Industry Task Force, seeking to find

“Simply, I want the organic produce industry to double in size over the next five years. Sustained, consistent growth is what is needed for more people to have access to organic produce. The produce industry must stay relevant to the consumer base it serves.”

— Scott Mabs,
Homegrown Organic Farms

solutions for organic citrus growers dealing with the Asian Citrus Psyllid in California. He worked two years for the California Citrus Mutual, a grower-based advocacy association dealing with the industry issues that affect growers in California.

In his community, Mabs is an active in his church's youth ministry, small group and worship ministries. He led a seminar for the Ag Pathways Program, which helps local high school students understand opportunities that exist through choosing a career in agriculture.

He is inspired by the dynamic nature and the people of the produce industry. “The produce industry is best summed up with one word – perishable,” he says. “It shapes and influences our business in so many ways. The culture and fabric of why our industry does what it does is based in this reality. Once you understand this, the pieces that don't seem to make sense in our industry begin to come together. Anyone who has spent many years in the produce industry can't help but be inspired by the people who make up who we are. So much of our industry is founded on the values of families and relationships based on a hand shake — TRUST!”

His future goals are both simple and complex. “Simply, I want the organic produce industry to double in size over the next five years,” he explains. “Sustained, consistent growth is what is needed for more people to have access to organic produce. The produce industry must

stay relevant to the consumer base it serves. Homegrown will continue to tell the farmer's story despite the challenges. It is about the growers and we must not forget that.”

Mabs credits his grandfather, the late Gordon Keith Patterson, who served as CEO of Early California Foods in Lindsay, CA, and his father, Don Mabs of Agricare in Strathmore, CA, as providing exemplary mentorship. “My dad has been an incredible example of excellence in growing crops and caring deeply for the people who work for him,” he shares. “I have never questioned his integrity in business and relationships. My grandfather was an amazing man who touched the lives of many. His legacy lives on through our farming generation.”

He also names Tom Avinelis of AgriCare in Strathmore, CA, John France of Homegrown Organic Farms in Porterville, CA, and Vern Peterson of Peterson Family Farms in Kingsburg, CA, as mentors.

Anton J. Marano, 38
Vice President Sales
Anthony Marano Company
Chicago, IL



Marano grew up in his family's fresh fruit and vegetable distribution company founded by his grandfather 60 years ago. He joined the company full time in 1997 after graduating Loyola University Chicago with a Bachelors Degree in Business Finance. Prior to taking on leadership responsibilities, he learned every job in the company, including packing tomatoes, pulling orders, driving customer deliveries and selling.

The hallmark of Marano's work is his mastery of information technology and promoting its use throughout the organization. A decade ago, every sales order was handwritten and inventory was kept on a paper ledger. Since then, he has promoted sales and fulfillment automation and directed the design, definition and implementation of robust custom software solutions. The entire process has been refined with the introduction of real-time inventory and immediate customer feedback.

He led a core team to address software requirements and modi-

fied the priorities of sales staff, maximizing benefits to the company. He expanded and led various business process improvements over the past few years. Using best practice management techniques, in conjunction with information technology, he redesigned operational processes throughout the company. This has included staffing and succession planning. As the company has grown, Marano resisted growing the organization in a linear way. Instead, he imbedded himself for months at a time in targeted departments to plan the right hires through a review of work flow.

Marano notes the complexity of working with family when leading business process improvements as well as the challenge of responding to a fast-paced industry. “Not only do I encounter the common, ‘We've always done it this way’ response to change, but I also have to negotiate and compromise with family members who've known me my entire life,” he explains. “The world of fresh produce moves at light speed compared to any other enterprise. Balancing customer needs and vendor relations, in a competitive market like Chicago, requires 100 percent focus on the pace of business.”

He actively supports the Chicago Food Depository with donated fruits and vegetables. “This charity distributes 64 million pounds of food, including more than 21 million pounds of produce, to 650 pantries, soup kitchens and shelters in Cook County,” he says.

His future goal for the produce industry is developing better packaging solutions for customers. “Emerging food traceability requirements as well as convenience attributes are challenges answered by well designed solutions,” he suggests. “The ideal container protects the product as well as enables effective labeling. The challenge is ensuring consistent product quality.”

Marano is inspired and mentored by the work ethic of his family. “My father has been my mentor in life and business,” he relates. “Sometimes his advice is unsolicited, but I never felt ignored. Fresh produce distribution is not an industry you can learn in a book. The relationships and business knowledge is passed on from one generation to the next.”

Antonia Mascari, 31
Marketing Manager
Indianapolis Fruit Company
Indianapolis, IN



Mascari is known as a self-directed, articulate, and enthusiastic young woman who brings a freshness and passion to the

industry. She was raised in the industry. Throughout her teen years and college, she often worked in various roles at Piazza Produce and its parent company, Indianapolis Fruit. Mascari joined the company on a full-time basis over three years ago in the foodservice division of Piazza Produce as a sales and marketing consultant. After a few years on the foodservice side, she was promoted to her current position as marketing manager for Indianapolis Fruit Company.

As marketing manager, Mascari is responsible for establishing marketing goals to ensure profitability of products and services. Since starting with Indianapolis Fruit, she has successfully revamped its advertising efforts through the development and execution of a new marketing plan. By doing so, she has played an instrumental role in improving customer relationships. She has also worked on various committees and projects to shape the future direction at Indianapolis Fruit Company.

Mascari currently resides on the United Fresh Nutrition and Health Council, where she channels her personal interest in combating childhood obesity and increasing nutritional awareness. In her community, she has served as a mentor to young girls as a basketball coach. She has actively raised money and volunteered at Handi-Capable Hands, Inc., and the local Italian Street Festival Fundraiser.

She is inspired by her peers and the by industry's dedication to increase produce consumption while promoting health and nutrition to adults and children. "I couldn't see myself working in any other industry," she says. "I am challenged by the complexity of marketing the vast array of our produce offerings, including perishability, unpredictability, consumer demands and progressive marketing tools. I enjoy the chal-

lenge and opportunity of educating customers on how to incorporate our offerings and make their department a produce destination."

"It's important to nurture young, intelligent and determined people for future growth. Our industry is ever-changing, and if you don't evolve to meet these changes, you will ultimately fail."

— Antonia Mascari,
 Indianapolis Fruit Company

Her future goal is to continue cultivating the family business with other young family members. "It's important to nurture young, intelligent and determined people for future growth," she says. "Our industry is ever-changing, and if you don't evolve to meet these changes, you will ultimately fail. It is my goal, along with future generations, to carry on a successful legacy — not only to grow our company but to shape the future of our industry."

Mascari notes having had many influential mentors preparing her throughout the years, but particularly mentions her father, Michael Mascari, president of Indianapolis Fruit, and Lisa McNeece of Grimmway Farms in Bakersfield, CA. "Since I was a young girl, I always knew I wanted to be a part of the family business," she explains. "I saw the dedication from my father at an early age and the importance of hard work, dedication, honesty and integrity. When I think of key leadership skills, I put his name next to each. Lisa McNeece is an impeccable example and role model for younger members of the industry, especially women. She truly cares about others and shows this by the time she spends mentoring young people. Her high level of involvement in a multitude of industry boards and committees demonstrates her dedication to spreading the word of fresh produce."

Raquel Mello, 32
Sales Manager
Hapco Farms
Riverhead, NY



Mello started her produce career with Ahold in 2003. As a produce buyer for Stop & Shop, she oversaw the citrus, apple/pear,

tropicals and watermelon categories. She quickly excelled at learning the importance of working closely with growers and anticipating consumer demand. In 2010, she left the procurement side to switch to strawberry and watermelon sales, joining Hapco Farms. Over the past two years, she and her team have grown Hapco's business significantly.

Mello is inspired by the exciting and challenging nature of the produce industry. "We are challenged daily with availability affected by weather, increasing fuel costs and seasonal demands, but it's these challenges that make my job and our industry so fulfilling," she explains. "I'm inspired when faced with these challenges and being able to still provide my customers with exceptional service. There's no better feeling than overcoming these daily obstacles and having quality fruit delivered to our retailers."

In the future, Mello looks forward to partnering with new growers. "I want to build commodity sales under the Fresh From the Start label," she reports. "Having the ability to build a program from the ground up is a great feeling, and I look forward to adding acreage thus increasing sales for new commodities over the next few years."

She notes particular mentors she worked with early in her career including Dominic D'Antuono and Gary Kosofsky from Stop&Shop in Freetown, MA. "Under their tutelage, I was able to build on my procurement and industry knowledge," she relates. "Since working with Hapco Farms, I have had the benefit of learning the other side of the business from Eric Scannelli, who has 20-plus years on the sales desk. I have been able to gain an immense amount of guidance in sales. Each of these gentlemen has instilled in me the importance of

communication and customer service. They have constantly reminded me how building relationships is key. Whether we are working with growers, truckers, buyers or consumers, we need to be diligent in our communication and service."

Luke Miller, 28
Regional Sales Manager
Value Added/Business Development Manager Value Added
Lighthouse Foods
Sandpoint, ID



Miller's understanding of multiple aspects of the value-added channel and his ability to participate across various disci-

plines has been instrumental in the healthy growth of Lighthouse's business within the produce industry. At Lighthouse, he assists in numerous responsibilities, ranging from internal margin management to marketing to project management to business development. His role has been cross functional within the company's internal team and touches all aspect of the business.

During his career at Lighthouse, one of Miller's greatest accomplishments was launching the company's Varietal Apple Cider into the produce department. This product line added excitement to the produce department and displayed how important innovation is at Lighthouse. The seasonal line peaked at over \$12 million in just two years' time and has been in high demand ever since.

In his role as a regional sales manager in value-added channels, he has been able to integrate marketing flavor trends in Lighthouse items offered to value-added partners. He has also made strong flavor recommendations that have proven successful and have helped grow the total produce category.

Soccer has been a passion of Miller's since he was five years old, and he was part of the varsity soccer program at Gonzaga University during his studies. "Through the years, I developed a lot of knowledge and skill around the sport," he relates. "This has allowed me to give back and coach in the small community of Sandpoint, Idaho. I've coached ages 10 through high

school and really enjoy being a part of something that meant so much to me growing up.”

The people at Litehouse are an inspiration to Miller. “Being an employee-owned company, everyone takes so much pride in their day-to-day work,” he says. “Hearing from Edward and Doug Hawkins is so inspiring. They are full of passion for the company and are really a true ‘rags to riches’ type story. The quality of our products and the pride we take in our customer service is inspirational to me. Not only does it make it fun to work for a company that values these things, but it makes it a place I hope to stay at for a long time.”

A future goal for Miller is to grow his knowledge and experience at Litehouse and in the produce industry. “I want to continue to be an asset to the company and contribute everything I can to make the company an even bigger success,” he says. “I want to be a leader in the company and make sure it is successful to give back to the employees as it is an ESOP (employee stock ownership program) company. Their families rely on Litehouse, and I want to make sure I can be a positive piece in growing the business to further success.”

Miller names Allen Wright, a Board Member and long-time employee at Litehouse, as an influential mentor. “He is the one who inspired me to get into the sales side of the business,” Miller states. “He has always had great advice and has generously shared his experiences with me, something I value and appreciate.”

Lynn Perry, 34
Procurement Manager
Ahold USA
Carlisle, PA



Perry manages and oversees the procurement of several produce categories, including apples, pears, watermelons, dried fruit, peanuts/pistachios/nuts and organic packaged salads. She manages ordering, code-date tracking, and logistical information to ensure shipments for all Ahold USA retail divisions. She is responsible for

cost negotiation, price and overall inventory management in these categories. She is directly accountable for cost of goods to ensure overall financial goals, manage service levels, and maximize inventory turns to optimize working capital.

Perry develops strong vendor partnerships to ensure fresh, quality product is being sourced at all times. She works closely with the sales and merchandising team on pricing, promotions, merchandising and seasonal changes. She ensures that the stores receive product on time to satisfy customers and is considered an asset to the produce team by co-workers.

After graduating from Bentley College, she worked at Stop & Shop in 2003 as a coordinator in the logistics department. In 2004, she transitioned to the meat procurement department as an administrative assistant. Shortly after that had the opportunity to become an assistant produce buyer. In 2010, Perry was promoted to procurement manager during the transition of the buying offices to Carlisle, PA.

While working in Freetown, MA, at the Stop & Shop Distribution Center, she was part of a small group that organized charity events in the community, helping children, seniors and those in need of winter coats, Thanksgiving dinners, food and Toys for Tots. She played an active role in organizing office sample sales to raise money to support the community. In the five years that she was part of the group, they were able to donate over \$70,000 to the community.

The produce industry and the associates she works with inspire her on a regular basis. “Our focus is making sure customers have what they need, when they need it. When it comes to produce, I find the pace and ever-changing variables to be two of the most fascinating and challenging things about the business. I enjoy the daily challenges that have a direct effect on the end user. I continuously look for new and innovative items that ensure a lasting relationship between our produce items and our customers.”

Her future goals include growing her knowledge of the industry. “I want to expand the variety of commodities I am responsible for procuring and broaden my knowledge of the merchandising side of

the business,” she says. “I hope to eventually have a well-rounded understanding of both procurement and merchandising that allows me to make a difference in the customer shopping experience.”

She notes having had the privilege to learn from some of the best people in the industry. She specifically names Domenic D’Antuono, Gary Kosofsky and Doug Williams of Stop & Shop, as well as several Ahold associates. “Domenic’s, Gary’s and Doug’s years of experience, commitment and high level of integrity still motivate me on a daily basis,” she shares. “In my recent years at Ahold, I have looked to Brian Fleming and David Lessard as mentors in my current position as a procurement manager. Brian guides and supports my decision-making by allowing me the freedom to come to solutions to the daily challenges. He encourages all of us to work together as a team and support our corporate initiatives collectively. David demonstrates dedication to consumer trends by creating and executing strategic, result-driven merchandising plans. Dave’s high energy management style keeps the entire office on task. One of his best motivational quotes is ‘You can’t steal second with your foot on first.’”

Jesse Prater, 29
Purchasing Associate
Global Organic Specialty
Source, Inc.
Sarasota, FL



Prater has been in the industry for over 13 years, starting as a produce clerk at E.W. James & Sons Supermarket in Camden, TN. From there he moved to Chicago where he worked at Wild Oats (before Whole Foods Market acquired them) and eventually became a sales representative at Goodness Greeness, one of the Midwest’s largest suppliers of organic produce.

He has been with the Global Organics for almost six years and is an integral part in the growth of the company. He started in sales and was consistently one of the top sales representatives, even serving as interim sales manager at one point. Four years ago, Prater jumped

at the opportunity to expand his talents and was given the position as head fruit buyer at Global Organics, where he has excelled.

The biggest challenge he sees in the organic produce industry is meeting the ever-increasing demands. “Growers are recognizing this shift, so there’s a lot of opportunity for new growers and vendors out there,” he says. “It’s inspiring when you’re able to make a connection.”

In the future, Prater dreams of having his own working organic farm. “Whether it is just for fun or for revenue, I love the idea of that kind of lifestyle,” he shares.

His principal mentor is his father, Allen Prater, a produce manager for Dominick’s in Chicago for almost 20 years and now with E.W. James & Sons. “He taught me almost everything I know, especially merchandising and the art of really just caring for the produce,” he says. “Besides my father, our purchasing director here at Global Organics, George Caldwell, has definitely been influential for me and the way I approach the industry. George has such a passion for organic produce that it is infectious. He is like family to me.”

Gary M. Redner, 35
Executive Vice President
Procurement
Redner’s Markets
Reading, PA



Redner represents the third generation of Redner’s Markets, a family retail business started in 1970 by his grandparents and now operating with 43 stores. He has been involved in the operation at some level since he was a kid. His first job was cleaning toilets at the company’s warehouse facility. He worked part-time through high school and then college. He became full time in 2002, one week after graduating from college.

Five years ago, a tragedy threw Redner into a greater role. In March 2008, his father, who oversaw procurement for all the company’s departments and its two distribution centers, was the victim of a homicide. His family approached him to undertake fulfilling his father’s role. “I wanted to honor my

father and carry on his legacy," Redner remembers.

His first priority with the transition was visiting the large growers and packers with whom Redners had directly worked with for years to assure them that the partnership would remain intact. Redner maintained and built these relationships. His efforts paid dividends in the level of quality Redners offers and that its customers have come to expect.

Redners' second priority was to develop new relationships and opportunities for various commodities or seasons the company had been missing out on — for example, a direct California cherry program. Over the past three seasons, the company significantly increased sales through this partnership. In addition, the company did not have a strong winter berry program. It has been able to see significant increases as a result of Redners' efforts and truly lifted overall produce distributions as a result during the off-peak winter months. The same can be said for the Chilean import program on several commodities as the company under Redners' direction has formed stronger relationships in this area.

“People want to know where their produce came from and that growers and packers stand behind what they are producing.”

— Gary M. Redner, Redner's Markets

Redner is motivated by serving as a link between growers and customers. “This past season I invited each of our partner growers for a picture event,” he explains. “The goal was to get family pictures and be able to utilize them in our stores and our ads. We wanted customers to identify with the products they were buying and be assured not only of local sourcing, but that each farmer was committing to quality and stood behind their products. This year we plan to open it up more to other departments in our stores.”

In the near future, Redner is building greater links with customers. “People want to know where their produce came from and that growers and packers stand behind what they are producing,” he says. “We are just about to launch a Facebook page and are planning to utilize some of our partnerships to tell a story about the products we offer to our consumers. We plan to use the long standing partnerships within our perimeter departments to draw on with their products to help create a niche for us as we are trying to attract the next generation of shoppers.”

While Redner has many family influences in the business, his prime mentor was his father. “My father built solid relationships within the produce, meat, deli, and seafood community,” he says. “He was well respected and known for his blunt honesty as well as humor. He is my mentor and anything I do, I always question if I am representing the family and the company the right

way. I not only want to make him proud, but want the same for the next generation.”

Serafin F. Ruiz, 38
Harvesting Manager
Ocean Mist Farms
Castroville, CA



Ruiz grew up in the agriculture environment of the Coachella Valley. During his adolescent and teenage years, he worked alongside his family harvesting a variety of crops like citrus, grapes, raisins, pears and other stone fruit commodities. During these years he migrated with his family throughout California and Arizona following the harvest of the crops.

He graduated from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo in 1998 with a degree in Agricultural Engineering Technology and began his career as production supervisor for Paramount Citrus in Delano, CA. In 2000, Ruiz started working for Ocean Mist Farms as the harvesting manager for its signature commodity, artichokes. He developed a keen ability to forecast over 5,000 acres of artichokes in different regions of California and Mexico.

In his present position, he spearheaded the development of a piece rate program to compensate and motivate the harvesting crews. This contribution allowed Ocean Mist Farms to retain skilled employees in California, even in an extremely tight labor market. On a daily basis, Ruiz effectively leads and manages over 250 people. Additionally, Ruiz is recognized for his energetic work ethic and capability of communicating with employees. These positive traits have contributed to the success of Ocean Mist Farms and its strategic goals.

Ruiz is currently an active member of the Toast Masters club. He also enjoys volunteering on his daughter's softball and running teams. One of his enjoyments is mentoring young individuals who want to learn and be part of this industry. He successfully completed the Leadership Development Program (LDP) through the Center for Creative Leadership.

The people in the agriculture industry inspire him. “I have a tremendous respect for those people who work from early in the morning to late at night,” he says. “They are passionate about agriculture despite the many challenges they face every day. In an environment where farming practices are complicated due to government regulations and labor shortages, constant communication is key to being successful.”

One of his future goals is to develop and work on projects to help maximize the best return for the Ocean Mist Farmers' growers and produce the safest and best quality for the customers.

At Ocean Mist Farms, some of his mentors include Ed and Rosa Boutonnet, Dale Huss, Philip Taluban and Art Barrientos. “They taught me to be confident and be patient in our challenging industry,” he relays. “Additionally, in working with Joe Michelli Jr. and others, I have learned how to

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work as a team in making decisions that are in the best interest of the company. Chris, Drew and Adrian Zendejas are great peers and have been a great inspiration as young leaders.”

Brianna Shales, 28
Communications Manager
Stemilt Growers
Wenatchee, WA



Known as highly organized, hard-working and adaptable, Shales developed Stemilt’s consumer marketing program that includes press, advertising, social media, bloggers and outbound marketing. These efforts helped Stemilt develop a stronger brand as well as a new product development community.

Under her responsibility for Stemilt’s corporate communications and social media, Shales grew the company’s social community on Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and, most recently, a new corporate blog (The Stem). She partnered with Stemilt’s owners in meetings with the State governor to bring agriculture to the forefront with the State business community.

Shales is a lead member of the Stemilt Responsible Choice Council, which strives to catalog and devise new sustainability initiatives to implement throughout operations as part of the company’s long-standing Responsible Choice program. She created a catalog and corporate social responsibility report showing the depth of the program, and she helps to calculate the company’s economic savings and sustainability impact. Shales also serves on Stemilt’s Corporate Social Responsibility Committee, which decides how the company gives back to the community through sponsorships, donations, and participation in community events.

Her participation in national campaigns that advise on consumer initiatives is very impressive. She is Stemilt’s representative on the USDA’s Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion National Strategic Partners committee, which works to promote the MyPlate guidelines and messaging to consumers. She also serves on the

Produce for Better Health Marketing and Communications committee. Recognized for her outstanding ambitions, she was selected as an Employee of the Quarter in 2011, as well as Sales/Marketing Employee of the Month twice in her five years with Stemilt.

Shales is motivated by the interchange and people involved in her work. “It’s so fun to see the dialogue between fans about our fruits,” she says. “It really highlights the fact that people want to know where their food comes from and how it is grown. The stories from our growers, the people who work so hard to get healthy foods into people’s mouths around the world, inspire me each day. It’s an honor to be able to share their story to our various audiences.”

“I want to raise consumption levels of fresh fruit and fresh produce as a whole.”

— Brianna Shales,
Stemilt Growers

In the future, Shales hopes to continue working to build the Stemilt brand at both trade and consumer level. “I want to raise consumption levels of fresh fruit and fresh produce as a whole,” she states. “In my current role, there are so many opportunities to help do that! Down the road, I’d love to take on a deeper leadership role both here and within the industry groups. I feel like I’ve barely scratched the surface and look forward to getting more involved as my career evolves.”

She names Stemilt marketing director, Roger Pepperl, and president, West Mathison, as mentors. “Roger is a great boss, and I’m fortunate to work alongside him each day,” she says. “He challenges our team to look for innovative ways to take our product to market and has deep knowledge of the vast produce industry. The knowledge he is able to pass to me will certainly guide me as I continue my career. West holds the weight of the entire company and the tree fruit industry on his shoulders, but he is always a calm and collected leader making intelligent and thoughtful decisions. The fact that he is leading a large organization

like ours at such a young age is very inspiring to me!”

Amit Kumar Shee, 39
Sam’s Produce Buyer
Sam’s Club
Bentonville, AR



Shee made the most of his five years in the produce industry holding a significant position with one of the world’s leading players in produce retailing. In his current position at Sam’s Club, he works with purchasing of the greenhouse category for all U.S. Sam’s Clubs. Prior to joining Sam’s, he worked with Wal-Mart Global at the beginning stages of Wal-Mart’s global produce initiative.

He successfully developed and increased several categories of produce by concentrating on educating customers on mangos, helping promote produce, and achieve double-digit growth for several consecutive years. Having found grape tomatoes to be the fastest growing tomato category, he conducted a statistical analysis to define what customers are looking for and worked with growers on grape tomato varieties.

Under his initiative, the company introduced newer varieties to its customers, capitalizing on the current trend and providing the customer with an excellent eating experience. These examples are just a few of the many illustrating his ability to find the essential attributes of a produce item and utilize numbers to tell the story and build sales.

As a Sam’s Club produce buyer, he is responsible for the tomato, potato, pepper, onion, cucumber and pumpkin categories. Shee possesses a keen ability to source and identify new items and trends then devise marketing strategies to capitalize on opportunities. He plays an important role establishing and maintaining supplier relationships and driving the execution of multiple business plans and projects for merchandising. Shee remains focused as an active leader supporting the company’s strategy, vision and growth of the categories.

In his community, Shee contributes to the Fayetteville Boys and Girls Club. As a buyer, he is able

to aid local churches, the Salvation Army and various food banks. Last year, around Thanksgiving, he participated in a cookout at Youth Bridge in Centerton, AR, by donating all the pumpkins for the pumpkin carving activity.

His motivation stems from his propensity for science and numbers and how they relate it to the industry. “The produce industry has evolved and is continuing to evolve,” he explains. “As an engineer by trade, numbers and science are my forté. Seed and soil selection, production and planning, harvesting techniques, packaging and shipping options, merchandising, and customer education and perception are some of the elements that inspire me to look beyond the basics. My educational background helps me to take all the aspects together and look for better solutions rather than just fix one piece of the puzzle.”

In the future Shee hopes to share his knowledge with other countries to secure future growth and help promote greater sustainability and quality. “There are countries like India where farming practices need improvement and the whole produce industry needs a revamp,” he says. “I also want to look at sourcing and selecting future produce items that are ecologically balanced, economically sound and excellent. Lastly, it must be an outstanding eating experience; quality is the key to success.”

“Tammy Roberts, formerly with Sam’s and now consulting in La Plata, MD, and Loren Green at Sam’s Club in Bentonville both helped me in understanding the basics and intricate details involved in the produce business,” he says. “The late Jerry Hull of Sam’s Club, as well as Michael Cochran of Wal-Mart and Russell Mounce of Sam’s Club, have all constantly guided me throughout my career as a Sam’s produce buyer.”

Chad Street, 31
Purchasing Coordinator
Indianapolis Fruit Company
Indianapolis, IN



Street is known for his exceptional passion and dedication to the produce industry. In his current position

with Indianapolis Fruit, he is embraced for his forward-thinking and expanding ideas for the company. His creativity extended category growth and profits over 38 percent.

A third generation produce person, he witnessed his mother work her way up through the ranks of the business. He started in produce as a buyer with Foster-Caviness in Greensboro, NC. In his three years there, Street learned all he could about the produce business. Soon he became product manager and helped the company see their best years of sales to date.

After his time with Foster-Caviness, he moved to FreshPoint in Raleigh, NC, as buyer. This experience chronicled one of the biggest accomplishments in his career. Street helped the company achieve record sales by creating metrics to achieve a cultural shift within the company to a more "progressive mentality". Then he moved to the company's top sales office in Hartford, CT.

In the community, he works with The Children's Museum of Indianapolis and Reilly's Children's Hospital, Little Sisters of the Poor to feed the homeless, and he coaches elementary-age basketball.

Street is motivated by the relationship and family aspects of the business. "My grandfather had deep roots in the Central California citrus agriculture, and my mother paved her own way to success," he shares. "However, I also want to ensure success based on my own effort. That pushes me to always strive to do better. In this business, personal relationships are what matter most, and it drives me to be the best I can every day."

Street sees a bright future within our industry. "We have great opportunity, from creating new excitement for the next generation to become a part of agriculture, to providing quality, flavorful, safe fruits and vegetables to our consumer," he says. "I want to focus on these objectives that will one day give me the chance to be in charge of day-to-day operations and even run my own company."

Street notes his fortune in being surrounded by phenomenal individuals who helped mold him both personally and professionally. "These men and women lead daily by example, expressing their passion for the industry," he says. "I

especially recognize my first mentor, Bruce Baker with Foster Caviness. He taught me everything I needed to know about the produce business and always had time to listen to the opinions of others. Another mentor is Lee Woodham at FreshPoint, who took me under his wing and showed me the ropes. Lastly, Joe Corsaro of Indianapolis Fruit, whom I have known for 15 years, has treated me like a son and taught me the power of integrity while working well with others."

Mike Swiatkowski, 32
Vice President of
Sales & Marketing
Hickory Harvest Foods
Akron, OH



Swiatkowski is in charge of Hickory Harvest's in-house salesmen and brokers in the Eastern half of the United States.

Under his direction, the team works to achieve a goal for stores to have four percent of total produce sales in the snack-food category via large everyday sets and seasonal promotions. In the past three years, the company has added more than 15 new regional chains.

Since he took over sales in 2004, the company has tripled in total sales, adding over 30 employees. He guided sales efforts and successes (made by his brother, Joe Swiatkowski), developed an internal sales force and a small broker network.

He is inspired to create the best snack food program in the industry. "Convincing a produce buyer to switch to my program is only the beginning," he says. "Showing them an over 100 percent sales increase in the snack category during the first year is what drives me. Maximizing the sales of my customers is beneficial for both parties. The challenge is to consistently come out with new items, packaging, new specials, and display vehicles."

In the future, Hickory desires to have every produce department in Eastern U.S. do business with Hickory Harvest Foods. "I want them to consider us a long-term supplier because of our business practices and the quality product

we produce," Swiatkowski says. "I also want to see us become a manufacturer and innovator of more items. For the chains we don't sell everyday programs to, I want to supply the re-packer with our quality bulk products. We plan on candy flavoring and panning chocolates in the near future."

Swiatkowski names his father, George Swiatkowski, as well as buyer interaction as having served as mentors. "My dad remains my mentor even though he passed about 10 years ago," he explains. "He started selling snacks in produce in Northeast Ohio back in the 1990's before anyone else focused on this opportunity. I look at him as a pioneer in the industry selling bulk and pre-packed. Many of the buyers I met have been mentors throughout the years reading what it takes to sell and become a good partner supplier."

George Szczepanski, 28
Sponsorship/Exhibit Sales
Manager
Produce Marketing Association
Newark, DE



A graduate of the Food Marketing Program at St. Joseph's University, Szczepanski was one of the first participants in the PMA Foundation's Pack Family Career Path Program in 2004. Recognizing the great potential of this industry, he went to work for Jac Vandenberg, Inc., where he was in sales for two years managing the kiwi category. In his second year, he was handed a large client and was able to double its box and dollar sales from the previous year, bringing the client into the company's top customer list. He was known to be an integral part of the sales force and a fun person to work with.

After completing a Masters in Agricultural Economics from the University of Delaware and interning in agricultural lending with Met Life, he came to work with PMA in 2010. He used his experience in the industry to develop a close rapport with the exhibitors of the PMA Fresh Summit and Food-service Conference. He currently manages the sale of the Fresh Summit Expo floor, the single

largest revenue-generating activity at PMA. As part of the team, he helped the expo grow year after year, even in a time when budgets were tight and tradeshow saw a decrease in sales in general.

Szczepanski has been a key part in developing innovative ways to increase recognition for exhibitors. He helped design and then implemented a new booth assignment system, involving personal communications with more than 900 exhibitors. He was instrumental in creating a new area to give first-time exhibitors distinct visibility as well as developing a new Floral Pavilion to be featured at the 2013 PMA Fresh Summit.

He was inspired to work in the produce industry because of the energy of the people he met at industry events early in his career. "The people and the unique qualities of the products we bring to market really motivate me," he says. "The challenges of the produce industry are what keep me interested and excited. Seasonality, perishability, early- and late-season varieties, sourcing from different regions, logistics, competition and all the other unforeseen issues make creative problem solving a necessary part of the job."

His short term goal is to continue to refine the process of reserving booths at Fresh Summit and to bring the show to a broader audience of exhibitors and attendees. "In the longer term, I see myself moving to a more strategic role," he says. "I hope my background in the produce industry and contact with so many people in different parts of the industry can be leveraged to drive PMA to find better ways to serve the industry."

Szczepanski credits Al Murray, assistant secretary of agriculture for the state of New Jersey, Professor Jerry Bradley from St. Joseph's University, and Jamie Hillegas, PMA director of tradeshow, as mentors. "Al Murray was my boss at my first industry job working with the Jersey Fresh campaign and is still someone I go to for advice," says Szczepanski. "Jerry brought me to my first Fresh Summit, as part of the first Career Pathways Program. We still get together every year at Fresh Summit and any other industry event we can both find our way to. Jamie encouraged me to work hard, gave me advice on how to succeed in our organization, and

worked with me on many of my biggest projects. She's been a mentor and friend, and my successes have come with the help of her guidance."

Krystal Thomsen, 34
Retail Sales &
Customer Service Manager
Driscoll's
Watsonville, CA



Thomsen has been with Driscoll's for 11 years, starting as a sales coordinator and working her way up. As a collaborative leader

of the retail sales team, she guides and oversees the team's long range goals, fulfilling annual business plans, and works with her team colleagues in achieving them. Her commitment to customer service has led to unsurpassed growth in national and regional accounts in both domestic and Canadian markets. She led Strategic Initiative Projects, achieving more efficient processes while maintaining and exceeding customer expectations.

Thomsen manages a select group of Driscoll's top customer accounts. The company relies on her for insight and trusts her with the most complex situations. She is passionate about career development, as demonstrated in her management of the eight retail sales coordinators. She completed the very rigorous Driscoll's Leadership program as well as Leadership Salinas Valley and Core Selling Skills for Sales Professionals. She has been awarded the Central Coast Young Farmers & Ranchers Member of the Year and the Star Award from the California Young Farmers & Ranchers.

Thomsen regularly participates in the fundraising and community events as well as events that are created by her customers for their communities. In the past, she has been very involved with the Monterey County Young Farmers and Ranchers Association. She is known for her tireless and passionate fundraising for cancer research — a cause near to her heart. She also spearheads an annual campaign to provide backpacks and a multitude of other school supplies for underprivileged

children in the Salinas Valley.

She is inspired by her colleagues in the agricultural industry. "I draw insight and motivation from the committed and creative industry professionals with whom I interact with on a daily basis," she says. "I understand the importance of agriculture's far-reaching effects, knowing that my daily work has an influence on the choices people make when feeding their families. Though consumer education can be an overwhelming undertaking, it is an area I strive to constantly improve. A great number of consumers do not know or understand where their food comes from. I recognize the need for thoughtful, honest, and easy-to-understand consumer information, and I welcome the challenges this area may pose."

"A great number of consumers do not know or understand where their food comes from. I recognize the need for thoughtful, honest, and easy-to-understand consumer information, and I welcome the challenges this area may pose."

— Krystal Thomsen,
Driscoll's

In the future, Thomsen looks to expand her leadership role not only within Driscoll's but also within the industry. "With berries being the Number One category in produce, I want to lead the continued expansion of the Berry Patch in the marketplace," she explains. "Driscoll's global initiatives and strategies are the foundation of my future growth within the industry. I see the importance of the development, guidance, and mentorship of young people in our industry as vital to its continued success. I intend to continue being one of the industry's most stalwart advocates, most visibly as a consumer educator and liaison."

Thomsen credits two Driscoll's people, Tim Youmans and Randy Benko, with her success and continued development. "Since my

first day on the job, Tim has been a driving force in my career," she states. "I respect and emulate his ability to lead by example, to provide clear and concise direction, and his ability to share a vision. His value of customer service, dedicated work ethic and exceptional sales skills are traits that I strive to achieve. Randy was instrumental in my first years in the agricultural industry, sharing valuable career wisdom and coaching me. His industry knowledge and understanding of the grower proved to be key skills for me."

Claudia Pizarro-Villalobos, 37
Sales Specialist
D'Arrigo Bros. Co., of California
Salinas, CA



Pizarro-Villalobos' wide range of experience from politics, education, and health to agricultural sales has led to creative success at D'Arrigo. She began her career after graduation from Cal Berkeley, working as director of programs at Hartnell College. She was selected as a Ford Fellow Scholar for the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington, DC, and then returned to Salinas and formed the new Monterey County Health Consortium.

She also was co-owner of Chapala Family Mexican restaurant with her mother. She participated in marketing as a consultant for Hartnell College and also served as the executive director for Partners for Peace. She was hired by D'Arrigo five year ago due to her tenacity, energy, focus, enthusiasm and love for the community.

Pizarro-Villalobos works as a sales specialist focusing on the Andy Boy specialty commodities like Fennel, Rabe, Cactus Pears and Nopalitos. She is a commodity manager for Cactus Pears and Nopalitos. She also assists with an array of marketing projects and organizes company events.

Four years ago, she took the lead at D'Arrigo to establish a culinary program for kids and adults to showcase all the commodities — something never before done at the company. She created two class formats for each age category that

would keep audiences engaged and learning while having fun. This "Kids Cooking in the D'Arrigo Kitchen" has been a big hit among families with every class sold out and a waiting list. The class entails a lead chef and five sous chefs to teach a class of 20 kids. The program worked with an array of local chefs such as: Chef Dory Ford with Aqua Terra, Chef Kevin Hincks and Celebrity Chef, Todd Fisher.

As an active community volunteer and member of California Women in AG (CWA), Pizarro-Villalobos served as the 2012 Chair of the Progressive Dinner to raise scholarship funds for young women in the tri-county area pursuing studies in agriculture and viticulture in high school and in college. She also sits on the CWA scholarship committee that distributes the funds. For the past two years, she has been an active board member of HELP (Healthy Eating Lifestyles Principles), whose mission is to promote healthy eating, physical activity, and the increased consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables among youth and adults. Through her connections in the non-profit sector, she was able to secure \$75,000 from the California Endowment for two consecutive years, assisted with a fundraiser at D'Arrigo that raised \$50,000 and approached Taylor Farms to sponsor the event for three years at \$35,000.

She is motivated by her love for what she does and the challenge of overcoming obstacles. "When I started with D'Arrigo, I was the only female sales person and one of three women in the sales office," she shares. "At the onset, I endured derogatory comments and worked through games played by some industry buyers. The daily obstacles that confronted me at times were draining and made me wonder why I continued in the job. The simple answer always was that I love what I do!"

Her mentors include Margaret D'Arrigo Martin of Taylor Farms and Tonya Antle, formerly with Earthbound Farms in San Juan Bautista, CA, and now teaching at CalPoly San Luis Obispo. "Margaret has been a mentor since we became friends over 10 years ago," she says. She continuously motivates me through her spirit of service as a philanthropist, business leader and produce activist. Tonya's knowledge

of, and passion for, produce is invigorating. She is such a genuine, intelligent and fearless person. Her innate characteristics make her a savvy seller and leader in the ag industry. Both Margaret and Tonya have taught me that passion, persistence, relationships and balance are key factors to success in the industry."

April Ward, 35
Communications Director
California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement (LGMA)
Sacramento, CA



Ward leads the communications team responsible for presenting the LGMA food safety program to the leafy greens

industry's vast audience of regulators and buyers. She collaborates with fellow LGMA staffers, outside agencies and industry volunteer leaders on initiatives and is responsible for crafting all of the LGMA's communications efforts. Her skills and leadership have helped establish the LGMA's reputation as an innovative food-safety program that institutes healthy practices for farms in the leafy greens industry.

Ward manages the LGMA's emerging social marketing program and is an online advocate. She oversees the annual update of the LGMA's rapid response plan, manages the LGMA's strategic planning process, and coordinates LGMA's "Golden Checkmark" award program. Ward orchestrates media training for industry spokespeople and marketing efforts to buyers and customers. She also partners with LGMA's advertising and PR consultants to develop targeted and incisive advertising, direct mail, and Internet marketing campaigns. In 2012, she managed LGMA's first consumer-outreach program test in Canada.

To stay active with women who have similar interests, Ward is a member of California Women for Agriculture and an annual participant in industry charitable efforts like 5K runs.

Ward reveals how working with the California Leafy Greens industry is a real inspiration. "The LGMA was created in response to a crisis, but the individuals who built this organ-

ization handle themselves in the most respectable and inspiring manner," she says. "Every chance I get, I share with others the opportunities that lie ahead for hard workers within this important and inspirational industry."

Working as part of a small staff is both challenging and empowering. "We work together to make sure that everything gets done, however we often have to complete tasks that normally wouldn't fall under the responsibilities of our position," she explains. "There is a real sense of community within our organization and the whole California Leafy Greens industry."

In the coming year, Ward will be working to expand the LGMA's blossoming social networking program. "Online outreach presents unlimited opportunities and is an affordable way to share your message," she states. "I would also like to attain my master's degree in communications. Continuing education is a high priority for me and will enhance my career choices moving forward."

Working with LGMA board and committees—especially industry leadership—provided numerous mentors for her. "To see how they think and make decisions led me to grow as a professional," she says. "From day-one, Scott Horsfall, the organization's CEO, gave me the utmost respect and opportunity. Having a supervisor who is supportive and allows for career growth is really all that one can ask for, and I've found it in the produce industry working for the LGMA."

David White, 31
President & CEO
Providence Produce Markets, Inc.
Matthews, NC



Over the past 10 years, White has steadily and aggressively built Charlotte, NC's foremost retail produce experience. With

signature road-side open-air markets, he created a distinctive brand for his customers and an exceptional work place for his employees. He started his company as a road-side produce stand in 2002. Though he had little startup money, he had a clear idea of the concept and a brand he wanted to

create. He took his only asset at the time (his car) and traded it in for an old refrigerated truck. His first location was built by his father, a friend and himself. During that first year, he started the company of Providence Produce Markets, Inc., and he worked hard to keep the concept simple: providing produce to the community and sourcing local when in season.

Since then, the company has grown into a much larger line of products and services. It currently has four retail locations and a warehouse to serve its retail outlets and wholesale customers. Its unique and simple farm-fresh style has created a strong following. White promoted change and helped amend the zoning laws in Charlotte, NC. These laws had previously restricted open-air produce markets, but now embraces and encourages these types of businesses in the city. He has also helped people and young entrepreneurs create businesses and successfully launch into the industry.

White believes strongly in giving back. "My community has always been so supportive of my business. I feel an obligation and passion when it comes to returning the favor," he says. "Providence Produce donates thousands of pounds of fruits and vegetables every year to those in need. We partner with philanthropic organizations and charitable causes to distribute to those who are less fortunate. We also sponsor community events, fundraisers, and make in-kind contributions to schools and camps."

He is motivated by the challenges created by the incredibly dynamic industry. "My dedicated team continuously works on new ways to do things, meeting new growers and working with new vendors," he states. "No day, week, or season is the same. I am most challenged by finding the products that no one else can, whether it is from a local farmer or a far-off region. The reward is bringing premium produce to the customer and creating the 'wow factor!'"

In the future, White aspires to expand his company's brand, quality standards and logistics. "We are not trying to be the next franchise hit or finding someone to help us open 100 new stores," he explains. "We are focused on the quality of what we are doing to

our customers' needs, listen to them and grow in the direction they steer us. I believe there are tremendous growth possibilities for small retailers and produce distributors like us. We don't worry about the big box retailers and mega food distributors of the world. Our local market share is small but, as I tell people, I would rather have a small market share and amazing growth potential than large market share and only trying to hold ground."

He names Mike Severt of Severt & Sons Produce in Columbia, SC, Todd Gates of VB Hook & Co. in Columbia, SC, and John Mackey of Whole Foods as particular influencers for his career. "Mr. Severt taught me hard work is not an option in the produce industry; it's a way of life," he shares. "Todd Gates displays strong professionalism and industry knowledge. John has taken a concept from small to huge. I admire how he has really put some strong values into the industry, subsequently passing them down to the employee, vendors and growers of that company."

Adrian Zendejas, 38
General Manager
Desert Mist Farms
Coachella, CA



As GM at Desert Mist, a farming operation for Castroville-based Ocean Mist Farms, Zendejas manages over 3,400 crop

acres on 2,600 land acres for an operation of 22 field employees, two field supervisors and two office staff. He reviews budgets, farming agreements, planting schedules and monitors farm labor contractor, Valley Pride, with 35 field employees. Since he began working for Desert Mist, assets have doubled in size.

The son of migrant farm workers, Zendejas was the first in his family to earn a college education and eventually begin his farming education with Sea Mist Farms, another farming operation of Ocean Mist, in Castroville, CA. It all started with a college field trip to the Salinas Valley, where he met Ocean Mist's Ed Boutonnet and was eventually hired for summer work. From 1995 to 1997, he worked in various roles for Ocean Mist during

winter and spring breaks. In June 1997, he was hired full time by Sea Mist Farms, as an IPM specialist and was eventually promoted to assistant production manager for Sea Mist. In April 2006, he became general manager of Desert Mist Farms in Coachella, CA.

In 2011, Zendejas was awarded Agriculturist of the Year 2011 by the California Women for Agriculture-Coachella Valley Chapter. He enjoys giving tours of the farming operation to elementary children and senior citizens with the mission of helping them better understand where their food comes from. He is vice-president of the Farm Bureau in Riverside County and is on the Coachella Valley High School FFA Advisory Board. He is actively involved with the 4-H Desert Sand Blasters and in coaching girls AYSO soccer. He loves spending time and traveling with his wife, daughter and son.

Zendejas grew up in the east end of the Coachella Valley, and like many during that time, his family was directly involved in

agriculture. He explains, "Most of my holidays and weekends were spent in the grape orchards picking up rocks, pruning grapes, replacing broken stakes, thinning bunches, tying vines or harvesting grapes in over 100-degree temperatures. It is difficult work but rewarding as well. My parents always preached to me the importance of an education."

During this time, he would occasionally see a white pickup truck pull up, talk to the foreman and leave. "I thought to myself, that's what I want to do," he says. "Not because I wanted to get out of the heavy work, but because that guy seemed to have a lot of responsibility and knowledge to grow beautiful grapes and make a difference in the farming community. From that moment on, I knew I needed to study hard to fulfill my dream of being a farmer."

One of Zendejas' goals is to help educate and encourage people to continue the great farming traditions. "We need to keep farming in the U.S. for everyone's benefit and not

depend on others to feed us," he says. "We need to be leaders in food production, quality and safety."

His mentors include Ed Boutonnet and Dale Huss of Ocean Mist in Castroville, CA, and Jeff Percy of Desert Mist in Coachella, CA. "Mr. Boutonnet gave me my first opportunity and encouraged me to seek him out for work even though he didn't personally know me," he says. "Dale gave me my

first chance to become a grower. He guided me through my career path and goals that eventually led to my promotion and transfer to the Coachella Valley. Jeff mentored me in developing crop planting schedules for all three desert areas of production. He has also helped me create annual budgets, contracts and land leases. These skills have helped me develop my leadership responsibilities and become a better manager." **pb**

Take Part In Selecting Next Year's Nominees!

40 Under Forty is an annual feature of PRODUCE BUSINESS magazine. If you would like to nominate a young leader for next year's edition, please visit www.producebusiness.com or fax your nomination to 561-994-1610.

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From Roadside Stand To Urban Supermarket

A dream realized, Harmons is the first supermarket in downtown Salt Lake City. **BY OSCAR KATOV**

“I never expected that a supermarket would be built downtown, and such a big one,” the shopper says, clearly pleased with her family’s store visit. “We parked for free in the store’s garage, we had a great lunch in the deli — picking and choosing from all sorts of items — and now we’re starting to do some shopping.” She pauses, and says with a smile, “My neighbor says there are more than 200 different cheeses to choose from and an absolutely beautiful spread of fresh produce. And, she asked me to bring her a loaf of special artisan bread.”

Similar shopper praises have been the norm since last year, when Harmons opened the first supermarket in Salt Lake City’s downtown business district. For Bob and Randy Harmon, the store is more than a special “first”. It is a realization of their grandparents’ dream, Jake and Irene Harmon, whom opened a roadside fruit stand 82 years ago while facing the challenges of the Great Depression.

In the late 50’s, Jake and Irene moved 20 miles west of Salt Lake City to build their first full-sized grocery store, called “Harmon’s City.” Today, 16 Harmons supermarkets flourish in Uta — capped by a 68,000 square foot, two-floor supermarket, delicatessen and parking garage. Located in the historic City Creek area, it’s a short walk from Temple Square — site of the world-recognized Mormon Temple.

A key player in the planning and development of the complex is Lori McFarland, vice president of sales. When asked to define goals of the latest enterprise, she refers to the company’s mission statement: “Be remarkable. People will be disappointed shopping anywhere else.”

“We knew from our visionary leaders, CEO Dean Peterson and COO

Mark Jensen, that some day we would have a store located in downtown Salt Lake,” says McFarland. “We partnered with the City Creek Project and offered to build a grocery store as part of the city’s larger



“Our model for the store’s produce department is ‘truck-to-shelf,’ so the quality will last longer in our customers’ homes.”

— Lori McFarland

development project. There were many years of working through the architectural challenges, including putting the garage on top of the store, and creating an amazing store within a smaller space to give all customers the ‘Harmons Shopping Experience.’ We wanted to offer a great dining experience through our deli for local business people, and yet offer a complete grocery shopping experience for nearby residents.”

“We had to provide the right quality and variety of produce, offer great fresh-cut fruit and vegetable products (made by our sous chefs), along with an amazing selection of organic produce,” adds McFarland. “Our model for the store’s produce department is ‘truck-to-shelf,’ so the quality will last longer in our customers’ homes. We also launched our fresh juices, made in the store. We created a deli that would be a convenient option for local business, by offering a wide selection of hot food from our wok, fresh-made soups, pizza, sushi, a salad bar and a selection of sandwiches. We spent many years in the U.S., and

A MESSAGE FROM “The VP for the Customer”

“Over the past couple of decades, Harmons experienced significant change, always searching for highly committed, passionate people who share common values, creativity and leadership. With incredible leadership, we’ve grown from nine locations in 2000 to 16 today. We now have a family of 2,400 and growing.

Randy and I have both worked in our early years, doing all kinds of tasks — like sorting milk and pop bottles, sweeping floors, bagging and clearing carts from the parking lot. We enjoyed being there with Grandpa Jake and our dad, Terry Harmon, at the family store.

We have traveled throughout the country and abroad to understand and learn about this amazing industry. We have visited family farms and the finest retailers to improve everything we do for our associates and our customers. These experiences allowed us to keep a pulse on best methods, highest quality products and innovation.”

—Bob Harmon



a few trips to Europe, to get ideas, learn about trends, and then put our own touches on them. We want grocery shopping to be

fun, and a great experience. With our wonderful associates delivering the best food, we just like to have fun at what we do.”

Robert Seegmiller, produce sales director, who has served the company for 33 years, emphasizes, “Produce remains the cornerstone of our business. We take great pride in giving customers a broad selection of food not available elsewhere. A good deal of our produce is locally grown, ranging in variety from cherries and watermelons to apples and squash. We like to think that just about anything can grow in Utah. We promote offerings of local farmers with signs in the produce departments telling their stories. Our customers demand quality. We continue to find that product quality overcomes debates about price. Another important factor in our program is loyalty with vendors. We have vendors who go back to the earliest years — such as an orange grower who now calls our navels, Harmons Oranges.”

There’s a legacy, too,” says McFarland. “Our success today is directly related to the roadside fruit stand 82 years ago.” **pb**



TEACHING ABOUT TASTE

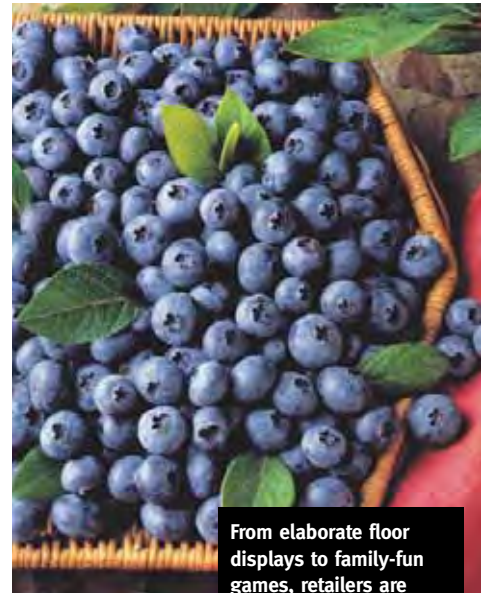
How do children learn to enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables?

One way is starting early to introduce children to products they may not see at home. It’s fun for an entire classroom to taste products together. A program of this kind, called “Teach To Taste,” was developed by Harmons to teach Salt Lake City first graders about healthy food choices.

A variety of visual aids also help, such as U.S. and world maps showing where different products grow. At the beginning of the year, all the children pledge to try everything, but they don’t have to finish what’s on their plates. The objective is to encourage the children to eat with their families at the table—without the distraction of watching TV.



PHOTO ON RIGHT COURTESY OF US HIGH BUSH BLUEBERRY COUNCIL



From elaborate floor displays to family-fun games, retailers are exploring creative ways to heat up holiday sales.

Heat Up Produce Sales With Summer Holiday Merchandising

Summer marks a celebration of U.S.-grown fruits and vegetables. As such, it's a ripe opportunity to reap season-sational profits on produce. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER RD**

In most northern climates, summertime drives the largest volume of produce sales. At least that is the case for Grand Rapids, MI-based Meijer, which operates 199 supercenters and grocery stores throughout Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky.

"In our area, people are cooped up all winter. They look forward to going outside, and that means picnics, cookouts, graduation parties and family reunions," says Brian Coates, senior buyer and produce merchandiser for Meijer. "This all adds up to greater sales of fresh produce. The impact was greater before imports and year-round availability of many fruits and vegetables, but we still see a definite increase in sales in the summer."

The key warm-weather merchandising themes of barbecuing and grilling tend to stay the same from Memorial Day through Labor Day. It is the ever-changing parade of fresh produce available throughout the summer and the prospects this represents for promotion that creates more selling opportunities.

MEMORIAL DAY May 27

"Memorial Day marks the kick-off to barbeque season," says Karen Caplan, president of Frieda's Inc., in Los Alamitos, CA. "This means the first zucchini, eggplant and peppers in many regions, and these all lend themselves to a summertime grilling display. Specialty items such as baby pineapples, pearl and boiler onions are available now too and tie nicely into holiday promotions."

Jeff Williams, president of Wm P. Hearne Produce, in Wimauma, FL, says, "We're shipping peppers, squash and cucumbers out of Georgia to the East Coast and Midwest from the second week in May to the second week in June. Cucumbers are especially a big item with people starting to eat more salads. It's at this time of year that retailers need to be mindful of retail prices each week to reflect changing FOBs. For example, going from 59 to 69 cents each on cucumbers when FOBs are \$30, to 3 for \$1 when FOBs drop to \$10. It's risky to plan this four to six weeks in advance for ad promo-

tions. In the old days, retailers reacted more quickly by posting in-store promotions, and this really helped us move product."

"Sweet corn is a natural for grilling holidays," says Jason Stemm, spokesperson for the Maitland, FL-based Fresh Sunshine Sweet Corn Council. "The last shipments are wrapping up out of Florida at this time, and the crop is transitioning to Georgia and Texas, so there is good availability. Bi-color is most popular, representing over 60 percent of the crop out of Florida."

Most retailers build big displays for Memorial Day with husking bins adjacent to minimize the amount of husk and silk that falls to the floor. Some retailers even offer heavier plastic bags. The standard produce bags are fine for greens, but may break or rip under the weight of several ears of corn.

"Small chains and independents still favor point-of-sale (POS) materials," Stemm adds. "I recently had a call from a 24-store chain for leaflets, tear pads and posters to help them build eye-catching displays."

MEIJER CELEBRATES SUMMER HOLIDAYS WITH FRESH PRODUCE

Summer produce is the headliner in ads and in-store promotions from Memorial Day through Labor Day at Meijer, a Grand Rapids, MI-based retailer that operates 199 supercenters and grocery stores throughout Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Kentucky.

Brian Coates, senior buyer and produce merchandiser, says, “Sweet corn is big for Memorial Day. Sales of corn don’t seem to fluctuate with the weather, but watermelon can. If it’s cold out, it doesn’t matter what price is on the watermelon. Cherries from California are usually promotable. Michigan is growing more sweet cherries, but the volume isn’t large enough during the season to supply more than a few stores. For vegetables, we promote local Michigan asparagus.”

“Father’s Day produce ads will tie in with a store-wide grilling theme,” Coates says. Sweet corn is a focus item, along with portabella mushrooms. For Fourth of July, watermelon is the lead item. Corn is in the ad again, as are blueberries and cherries. Tree fruit is another big driver in ads from June through Labor Day. Grapes, tree fruit, sweet corn, local

watermelon and early apples are promoted for Labor Day. Throughout the summer, Meijer stores will feature locally grown produce each week such as blueberries, corn, watermelon and cantaloupe as well as all the traditional garden vegetables.

Promoted fruits and vegetables are showcased in massive waterfall displays built within the produce department.

What’s it take to execute successful summer holiday produce promotions?

“Constant planning as the weather changes,” says Coates. “I listen to the buyers and what they’re hearing about timing, availability and quality. Sometimes things don’t come out as we planned, and we have to add or cut loads according to weather-related events. There’s a certain agility needed to make it all work.”

“Success is evident in the sales,” Coates says. “Plus, we know something is successful if it’s picked up in the social media chatter. For example, when we promoted strawberries 10 pounds for \$10 in the spring, everyone was really talking about it.” **pb**

Many retailers will also feature corn on the front page of ad circulars for this holiday. Multiples such as eight ears for \$5 or five ears for \$2 are the norm.

“On the supply side, the corn industry is transforming with the introduction of the Eco-Crate,” says Chris Harris, director of sourcing category development at C. H. Robinson Worldwide, Inc., in Eden Prairie, MN. “This environmentally friendly container is made from recyclable plastic and weighs less than current container solutions. Due to its overall design and material performance, up to 30 percent more crates can be loaded per truckload compared to conventional crates.”

Other vegetables, such as sweet carrots and onions, are highly promotable in late May.

Matt Curry, president and owner of Curry & Company, in Brooks, OR, says, “Our Vidalia sweet carrot program continues through June, while peak promotional times for Vidalia sweet onions are late April through the summer. Sweet onions especially need to be differentiated from regular storage onions. In addition, sweet onions can be merchandised with all

sorts of different items from a grilling display to a fresh and local summer salad set.”

“May is the first opportunity to showcase the abundance of summer fruits,” says Dovey Plain, marketing coordinator at Family Tree Farms, in Reedley, CA. “We have the widest array of items so we get excited about Memorial Day promotions. There’s blueberries, apricots, cherries, white peaches, white nectarines, yellow nectarines — a little bit of everything.”

“Produce has an opportunity to seize some of the sizzle that traditionally goes to the meat department,” Plain adds. “Grilled veggies are more common, but grilled fruits are a newcomer. Introduce your customers to grilled fruits through pictures, recipes, and social media.”

FATHER’S DAY June 16

Apron-clad men tending steaks on the grill is the iconic image of Father’s Day. Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa’s World Variety Produce, in Los Angeles, CA, says, “Potatoes, onions and

Research conducted by the San Jose, CA-headquartered Mushroom Council “shows that swapping out a portion of ground beef for finely chopped mushrooms in hamburgers...can lower the calories, fat and sodium, but retain the flavor due to mushroom’s umami effect.”

— Kevin Donovan,
Phillips Mushroom Farms

peppers are favorite accompaniments for grilled steaks and hamburgers as well as cut-up and placed on skewers to make kabobs.”

“Retailers can encourage Dad and the entire family to eat healthier by introducing the ‘swapability’ concept,” recommends Kevin Donovan, national sales manager for Phillips Mushroom Farms, in Kennett Square, PA. Research conducted by the San Jose, CA-headquartered Mushroom Council “shows that swapping out a portion of ground beef for finely chopped mushrooms in hamburgers and other ground meat dishes can lower the calories, fat and sodium, but retain the flavor due to mushroom’s umami effect,” explains Donovan.

To make it easier for retailers to convey this concept, the Mushroom Council announced a new summer online recipe contest called “Swap It or Top It”. Consumers are encouraged



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to transform their traditional summer grilling recipes using mushrooms, with the grand prize of \$5,000 in cash and gift cards. The contest started on June 1 and the winner is announced during September's National Mushroom Month. POS materials to help retailers drive contest awareness and mushroom sales include shelf-danglers, channel strips and posters.

Demand for portabella mushrooms skyrockets in the summer, tells Joe Caldwell, vice president of Monterey Mushrooms, Inc., in Watsonville, CA. "We start converting over more square footage to portabella production in late April. Portabellas are popular to grill and place on top of steaks and burgers. Some limited-assortment club stores will switch from a 24-ounce pack of baby portabellas in the

winter to an 18 to 20-ounce pack of portabellas in the summer."

Monterey Mushrooms also offers four portabella mushrooms in a corrugated tote with handles from May to October. The totes create an attention-grabbing display and are often used for in-and-out promotions.

FOURTH OF JULY July 4

Salad fixings such as cabbage, onions and potatoes, in addition to traditional summer fruits such as watermelon, blueberries and peaches, star in promotions leading up to this patriotic holiday.

Jeff Greene, director of marketing for the Hollar & Greene Produce Company, in Boone,

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NC, says, "We will have cabbage starting in mid-June this year. Greens are the staple, especially for summer dishes like coleslaw. We also grow and sell red and savoy cabbage."

"July is the peak season for Walla Walla sweet onions," says Curry & Company's Curry. "They are the sweet onion of choice in the Pacific Northwest and also have a loyal following in many areas of the U.S. The Fourth of July is a great time for potato salads and other picnic style items, so provide recipes featuring sweet onions."

"Display Star-Spangled Spuds on an end cap and decorate with American flags," suggests Frieda's Caplan. The 1-pound bag features gourmet Yukon Gold, purple and red potatoes. The company provides a recipe for

potato salad that includes green onions as well as crumbled blue cheese.

Watermelon peaks in availability from May to September, with July officially designated as National Watermelon Month.

Gordon Hunt, director of marketing for the Orlando, FL-based National Watermelon Association (NWA), explains, "Years ago, I would have said large whole watermelon are best to merchandize in the summer. However, with smaller households, retailers can best boost sales by offering something for everyone — large picnic-size, mini's, fresh-cut halves, quarters and chunks and even seeded for those who want to have summertime seed-spitting contests. Similarly, it's most profitable to merchandize watermelon in three areas during

the peak season: in a bin, as mini's with other melon like cantaloupe and honeydew, and chunks in the fresh-cut fruit section."

"Big displays drive impulse sales even more than loss-leader pricing," says Hunt. "We've worked with retailers on the last three 'World's Largest Watermelon Displays'. They were built with 160, then 180 and finally 200 cartons, and in each case, retailers had to order more before the week-long promotion was finished."

"Oregon blueberries are in heaviest volume the entire month of July," says Bruce Turner, Curry & Company's director of sales. "We encourage our retail partners to have blueberries on ad every week and to push multiple displays with multiple pack sizes to maximize third-quarter sales. During the month of July,

MUSHROOM SHOWCASE

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we'll be pushing our largest retail packs including the 5-pound box and 18-ounce clamshell. For Fourth of July, feature a red, white and blue theme with blueberries along with either cherries or strawberries."

The Folsom, CA-headquartered U.S. High-bush Blueberry Council offers a variety of holiday-themed recipes to help retailers sell more blueberries. For Fourth of July, recipe ideas include Chicken Blueberry Salad Platter or Wraps, Blueberries BBQ Sauce, Wave the Flag Cupcakes and Star Spangled Blueberry Parfaits.

"One relatively new tree fruit variety that is a direct descendent of two older canning peach varieties—and will be available from late June through mid-July—is Family Tree Farms' peach pie," says Plain. "We call it an heirloom peach but it's more technically an 'heirloom-style' peach. It's a yellow flesh, Saturn peach. It's completely orange, no red blush at all, giving it a unique appearance. The flavor is simply melt-in-your mouth delicious. Consumers are used to their peaches being red on the outside, so we know this will take some marketing effort to get that initial purchase. Our 14-ounce clamshell, along with an attractive old-style label design, makes for the perfect package. POS signage is also available with QR codes for those who want to get even more information."



PHOTO COURTESY OF TANIMURA & ANTLE

SUMMER: TIME FOR LOCALLY GROWN August

August is the peak of the domestic produce season. Family Tree Farm's Plain suggests a "back to basics" approach for the produce department at this time of year. "Produce team members should all be sales people. They should taste the products, know a little something about every product and engage with the customers," Plain advises.

Plain advocates sharing a taste experience to the customer. "For example, saying, 'I tried that plumcot this morning and it's fantastic!' Something this simple will move a customer to buy. Think about why consumers enjoy the

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HARPS FOOD STORES FEATURE BERRY BOWLS

There's not a summertime fruit or vegetable that isn't creatively promoted by everything from price reductions and sampling demos to display contests and more at Harps Food Stores, a Springdale, AR-based chain with 72-stores located in Arkansas, Oklahoma and Missouri. One of the biggest promotions centers on berries.

Dennis Baker, director of produce, explains, "A few years ago we noticed that we weren't selling as many variety berries – blueberries, blackberries and raspberries. We racked our brains for what to do and figured that the best way to get customers to buy is to let them try the berries. That's when we came up with the Berry Bowl idea."



Harps' Berry Bowls consist of 85 to 90 percent strawberries with a topping of all three variety berries packaged in a clear plastic bowl-shaped clamshell. The bowls are packed fresh daily in-store according to each store's projected sell-through rate. "Some stores sell up to 30 bowls a day," says Baker. In addition to the standard 1.5 pound size bowl (which retails for under \$7) stores also make a 14 to 15 ounce bowl and a 10 ounce snack-sized bowl with the same combination of berries. These bowls are displayed in coolers with other fresh-cut fruit products as well as on refrigerated shelving with berries and grapes.

"The thought is that everybody buys strawberries, but not everybody buys variety berries," says Baker. "Maybe it's price. Maybe they don't know if they'll like them. But after they try them in a Berry Bowl, they may be more apt to buy a pack of variety berries on their own."

The strategy worked. In the first year that Harps introduced its Berry Bowls, sales of variety berries increased by over 800 percent. Moreover, Baker discovered that the Berry Bowls became a signature item that customers look for, and they distinguished Harps from the competition.

pb

farmers' market experience, and do what you can to bring that product knowledge aspect into your produce department."

"Kale is a farmer's market favorite that has increased over 500 percent in sales throughout the past few years," explains Melissa's Schueller. "We're introducing kale sprouts this summer. They are a Brussels sprout and Russian Red kale hybrid with a Brussels sprout's flavor that is less bitter than kale. Plus, they don't lose their bright color when steamed."

"Retail buyers who worry about a supply



gap in local greens due to weather, or other reasons, can satisfy consumer demand for premium lettuce products with Tanimura & Antle's two new products: Artisan Lettuce Varieties and Little Gems Sweet Lettuce," explains chief executive officer and principal, Rick Antle. "Our field-packed whole-head lettuces are available year-round and nationwide. It also has extended shelf life packaging that protects the product. It's a win-win for retailers who like the halo of locally grown and also want to have a ready supply of a high-quality


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GROCERY OUTLET'S SUMMER FRESHFIVAL



PHOTO COURTESY OF GROCERY OUTLET

At least 12 bins of fresh summer produce are displayed outside under a large tent at the entrance or in the parking lot of Grocery Outlet stores for the chain's branded Summer Freshfival. This annual 72-hour produce promotion is in its fourth year at the Berkeley, CA-headquartered discount grocer, which has 185-plus independently operated-stores in seven states.

Scot Olson, director of produce and floral, explains, "We feature what our owners and operators like. It could be a six-bin display of watermelon, plus six to eight additional bins of grapes, berries or tree fruit. Some stores have bins of mangos and maradol papayas. We suggest products and planograms, but we work hand-in-hand with each store's owner and operator because they ultimately know what their store's customers like best."

"The planning for Summer Freshfival starts a month or more in advance," Olson says. "We partner with growers to get the best price and quality produce."

Prices are super-hot! For example, past specials have included two-pound bags of nectarines for 99 cents, large cantaloupes for 99 cents each and watermelons for \$1.99 each.

Produce and store staff set up the bins early in the mornings, adding signage and balloons to call attention to the promotion. Most stores create extra excitement with food samplings, melon carving demos, and kid-friendly stations where young shoppers can enter coloring contests and other produce-centric activities. Some stores host a barbecue, a taco truck, a hot rod car show or a live radio broadcast.

"My favorite [activity] is a corn roaster," says Olson. "Freshly roasted corn is served on a stick with all the fixings like parmesan cheese, garlic salt and Tajin seasoning."

The hard work to plan these Freshfivals always pays off. Olson says that the lift on produce sales ranges from single to high double-digits with an average of 15 to 20 percent per store. **pb**

lettuce with brand loyalty."

Antle adds, "It's easy to put our lettuces in a mobile refrigerated merchandizer and cross-merchandize with ingredients for summertime favorites like burgers, tacos and upscale BLTs."

"There's a missed opportunity in early August for watermelon sales when the late-season regional supply kicks in," says C.H. Robinson's Harris. "Overall sales of watermelon will increase seven percent for weeks that are five degrees above average in temperature. Typically, August is a consistently hot

month across the country, which makes watermelon a great way to refresh and cool off."

C.H. Robinson's Pink Ribbon Watermelon Program, a comprehensive initiative that includes consistent supply, in-store support, and a cause-marketing component, adds a new mobile app this season. The app features a variety of different activities for users to interact with. From step-by-step instructions for carving ornate watermelon centerpieces, to watermelon recipes, to a family-friendly "Save the Watermelon" seed-spitting game,

“We’re introducing kale sprouts this summer. They are a Brussels sprout and Russian Red kale hybrid with a Brussels sprout’s flavor that is less bitter than kale.”

— Robert Schueller, *Melissa’s World Variety Produce*



PHOTO COURTESY OF FAMILY TREE FARMS

the app has something for every generation. In addition, all profits from the app’s sales are donated to breast cancer research.

LABOR DAY
September 2

“Grapes have many competitors for shelf space within the produce department in the summer,” says Nick Dulcich, owner of Delano, CA-based Sunlight International Sales, Inc. “But in the fall, grapes reign supreme for that

refreshing healthy fruit that consumers crave. We offer materials that retailers can use to enhance their grape displays.”

Cindy Plummer, vice president of domestic marketing for the California Table Grape Commission, in Fresno, CA, agrees and adds, “Fall is also a great time to have plentiful displays of grapes when volume is highest for the California season. For both summer and fall, displays should be refreshed often. The final decision to purchase grapes most often happens

when customers get in the store, so the display and grapes need to look good to encourage purchase. If the display looks empty or the grapes look tired, it will affect sales. Make sure displays are large enough to keep up with demand and are restocked regularly.”

Labor Day marks a transition time from the lazy days of summer to when family members head back to work and school. It’s a time when moms look for something quick, easy and nutritious to put on the table for dinner. **pb**

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PHOTO COURTESY OF FOODTOWN

The state's retailers, such as Avenel-based Foodtown, creatively spotlight New Jersey-grown produce.

New Jersey Produce Evolves And Advances

With high brand recognition, Jersey Fresh produce continues to diversify and reach wider markets. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**

The Dutch first settled in what today is New Jersey. In an effort to recruit settlers, principals at the Dutch West India Company sent posters back to the Netherlands proclaiming the newly settled land as the "Garden Spot of the New World". That was in the 1600s. Today, this state, which is the fourth smallest and most densely populated of the United States, continues to thrive as the "Garden State".

In fact, agricultural cash receipts in 2012 reached a record high \$1.12 billion, according to the *New Jersey Annual Statistics Bulletin*, jointly published by the National Agricultural Statistics Service, Trenton, NJ-based New Jersey Agricultural Statistics Service (NJNASS), and New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA). Within this figure, fruits and vegetables contributed \$428.8 million and were second only to the nursery/greenhouse/sod sector at \$453.6 million.

Industry Snapshot

The Sheppard family received a grant to farm land in Cumberland County and moved

from their native England to New Jersey in 1682, explains Thomas Sheppard, president of Eastern Fresh Growers, Inc., and owner of 1600-acre Sheppard Farms, in Cedarville, NJ. "Politics brought us here. We've farmed for 14 generations because of the mild climate moderated by the Delaware River to the west, the sandy acidic soil, and an ample water supply."

Some of the 10,300 farms in the state are multigenerational and relatively large at over 1,000 acres. Others are significantly smaller (around an acre or less). These smaller farms started more recently by immigrants or by weary Wall Street retirees who recognized the hands-on lifestyle and an opportunity to cash in on the "locally grown" trend. The average farm size, however, is 71 acres. Some 730,000 acres in the state are in active cultivation. Thanks to the State Farmland Preservation Program, 201,327 acres as of January 31, 2013 are permanently preserved as farmland.

"New Jersey's agricultural industry's ability to constantly re-invent itself to meet changing market demand is what keeps it vibrant," says Al Murray, the NJDA's assistant secretary of agriculture. "There's always been a produce

presence in the state. In the 1930s, however, dairy was foremost with some 3,500 farms. Then, in the aftermath of World War II, Eastern European and Jewish immigrants settled and raised flocks of chickens. We became known as the 'egg basket' of the nation. In the 1960s, truck farming picked up, and there was an increase in fruit and vegetable production."

Farming in the state has never been segregated to one commodity. "New Jersey farmers grow nearly 100 different crops, everything from asparagus to zucchini, and they make the most of their land with up to three harvests each season," says Murray.

The Philadelphia-headquartered Procacci Brothers Sales Corporation will capitalize on consumer demand for nursery products and fresh produce by marketing the plants of UglyRipe heirloom tomatoes and Santa Sweets grape tomatoes at retail this season.

Rick Feighery, director of sales for Procacci Brothers, explains, "We successfully test-marketed the plants with a few retailers last season. They can be merchandized in either floral, the garden center or produce department. We ship a mix of both plants in rack



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TOP 10 NJ FRESH FRUITS & VEGETABLES BY DOLLARS

| Item | Dollars (million) |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Blueberries | \$80.8 |
| 2. Peaches | \$39.6 |
| 3. Tomatoes | \$30.8 |
| 4. Cranberries | \$29.9 |
| 5. Bell Peppers | \$28.9 |
| 6. Apples | \$28.5 |
| 7. Sweet Corn | \$23.1 |
| 8. Cucumbers | \$15.7 |
| 9. Summer Squash | \$15.2 |
| 10. Spinach | \$12.7 |

Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, New Jersey Field Office, Trenton, NJ, 2012

PHOTO COURTESY OF SUNNY VALLEY INTERNATIONAL



displays that hold 350 units. Two racks of plants, a display of tomatoes in the middle with basil and fresh mozzarella cross-merchandized in would make an eye-catching display.”

The tomato plants are sold in a 6-inch tall pot, with a UPC code and high-graphic packaging that provides instructions on how to grow and care for the plants. The plants are expected to bear fruit in six to eight weeks.

Procacci's tomato-growing operation includes 13 acres in South Jersey, where an 11,000-panel, 2-megawatt solar farm (opened in 2010) supplies enough energy to power the 200,000 square foot packing house and its coolers.

Technology is another facet of farm life that has evolved and advanced in New Jersey.

Art Galleta, owner and president of the 1320-acre Atlantic Blueberry Company's farm, in Hammonton, NJ, says, “Forced-air cooling, soft and color electronic sorting, and regular third-party food safety audits on our fresh packaging operations, harvest operations and management systems are all standard now.”

Agriculture isn't without its challenges in New Jersey. Sheppard Farm's Sheppard says, “Labor is a real issue, as it is in other states. We use the H-2A certification program, but it's not good enough. My son is a mechanical engineer, and he's trying to design a robot to pick crops like blueberries. The problem is that it must be gentle. Cosmetic appeal is huge for fruit and vegetables sold on the fresh market.”

Promoting Jersey Fresh

Jersey Fresh is New Jersey's advertising, promotional and quality grading program. Started in 1984, it's one of the first such state branding programs. It's also one of the most recognized by consumers. According to the *Jersey Fresh Awareness and Purchase Report*, conducted by Lawrenceville, NJ-based Bruno & Ridgeway and released January 2013, total awareness of the Jersey Fresh brand by consumers in the state was 78 percent, up from 41 percent in 2002.

Dean Holmquist, vice president of perishables for Allegiance Retail Services (parent

company of Foodtown, an Avenel, NJ-based chain of 59 independently owned grocery stores), says, “We have supported Jersey Fresh for over 26 years. The program is probably stronger today than ever due to the greater interest by consumers in locally grown produce. We work closely with the staff at the NJDA and find the weekly market update very helpful in planning for what's in season and what's coming in season next.”

“The NJDA has done an excellent job supporting the growers of New Jersey produce with the Jersey Fresh program,” says Bob Von Rohr, director of customer relations for Glassboro, NJ-headquartered peach growers, Sunny Valley International. “They place timely trade and consumer ads in print media in the New Jersey Metro area, run targeted promotions for peak production periods, and continue the promotion of August as New Jersey's official Peach Month.”

“Newspaper, trade magazine, radio and TV advertising will all be part of Jersey Fresh's promotional platform this season with the theme ‘Another Winning Season,’” says the NJDA's Murray. “In addition, we'll also have our customary point-of-purchase materials such as Jersey Fresh logo'd stickers, banners, posters, pennants, T-shirts, aprons and hats.”

Top Crops

New Jersey is a national Top 10 producer of nearly a dozen fruits and vegetables. The state ranks third in cranberry, bell pepper and spinach production; fourth in peaches; fifth in blueberries and cucumbers; sixth in squash; seventh in tomatoes; eighth in apples; ninth in sweet corn, and tenth in snap beans.



PHOTO COURTESY OF FOODTOWN

TOP 10 NJ FRESH FRUITS & VEGETABLES BY POUNDS

| Item | Pounds (million)* |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Bell Peppers | 120.3 |
| 2. Cucumbers | 73.1 |
| 3. Cabbage | 72.0 |
| 4. Sweet Corn | 68.4 |
| 5. Peaches | 60.0 |
| 6. Tomatoes | 56.7 |
| 7. Cranberries | 55.0 |
| 8. Blueberries | 55.1 |
| 9. Lettuce | 39.0 |
| 10. Apples | 34.0 |

*Utilized production

Source: USDA, National Agricultural Statistics Service, New Jersey Field Office, Trenton, NJ, 2012



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Peaches

Approximately 92 growers produce over 60 million pounds of peaches on 5,500 acres. July through September are peak harvest months.

Von Rohr of Sunny Valley says, "All of our peaches are drip-irrigated to ensure optimal moisture. They do not have to be pre-conditioned because they are well matured at harvest. Every farm that harvests for the wholesale market uses the practice of hydro-cooling, which contributes to the high quality and flavor that the state's peaches are known for."

Blueberries

The highbush blueberry is native to New Jersey, and it was here in the early 1900's that it was first cultivated for commercial production. Ninety percent of the state's production is found in two South Jersey counties, Burlington and Atlantic.

Atlantic Blueberry's Galleta says, "The state used to produce 30 to 40 million pounds; now it's 50 to 60 million, and I think the potential is close to the 70-million mark. Acreage has stayed the same; however, some peach orchards have been converted over to blueberries."

"Blueberries start harvest in the middle of June," explains Tim Wetherbee, sales manager at Diamond Blueberry Inc., in Hammonton, NJ. "We start with the Duke variety, which has excellent yield and production that allows us to

hit the Fourth of July holiday, and then we finish up with Blue Crop and Elliott in mid-August to the first of September."

Tomatoes

The Jersey tomato is iconic for its recognizable taste. "Procacci grows its heirloom UglyRipe here, as well as its Santa Sweets grape tomatoes," says Feighery. "We also grow vine ripe, beefsteaks, romas and cherry tomatoes. The season starts in late June and goes until the first freeze in late October or early November. Jersey tomatoes will lose momentum with non-regional retailers after Labor Day, but regional retailers will carry them right to the end of the season."

Corn

Sweet corn "pays the bills," says Scott Ellis, owner of Ellis Farms, in Trenton, NJ, who grows 100 acres of sweet corn. Ellis grows a triple sweet variety and finds market demand is for two-thirds white kernels and one-third for bi-color. He sells chiefly to roadside stands and to three New Jersey locations of Wegmans, an 81-store chain based in Rochester, NY.

Ellis explains his arrangement with Wegmans: "At first they wanted me to deliver three times a week and sell the corn as fresh. That won't work with my name on it. So they agreed I could deliver my corn fresh daily. I have



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one truck dedicated just to Wegmans.”

Vegetables

“Asparagus has been front-runner vegetable grown by Sheppard Farms over the past 14 years,” says Sheppard. “Asparagus is a traditional crop, and it provides money early in the season. In the 50s and 60s, there was over 30,000 acres of asparagus grown in New Jersey. A disease wiped much of those acres out. Now we’re down to 1,200 acres in the state, and I have 300 of it. We now grow varieties developed by Rutgers University that are disease-resistant and yield a high quality product.”

“Demand for fresh market peppers, cucumbers and snap beans is up,” says Sheppard. Lettuce needs are also up, especially from bagged salad producers such as Ready Pac Produce, an Irwindale, CA-headquartered company that operates a regional processing facility in Florence, NJ. Sheppard Farms, which opened a new 28,125-square food packing facility in 2011, ships 800,000 boxes and Eastern Fresh 1.2 million boxes of fresh produce annually throughout the eastern U.S. and west to Texas.

New Jersey is one of the most ethnically diverse states, according to the NJDA.

Organic Fruits & Vegetables

The NJDA boasts an Organic Certification Program, and organic produce production continues to grow in the state.

Jersey Legacy Farms, owned by David Sheppard and his daughter, Michelle, farm some 100 acres of organic land in Cedarville, NJ, with another 75 acres in transition. The family grows over a dozen crops such as vine-ripe, grape and pear-shaped tomatoes, four types of lettuce, summer squash, cucumbers, eggplant and bell, mini sweet and jalapeno peppers.

The 116-acre Big Buck Farms, in Hammonton, NJ, is claimed to be the largest organic blueberry grower in the state.

Ethnic Specialties

New Jersey is one of the most ethnically diverse states, according to the NJDA. It’s no wonder then that farmers grow a number of fruits and vegetables to suit a number of different cultural tastes.

Bill Dea, market manager and produce buyer for the Tri-County Cooperative Auction Market, in Hightstown, NJ, says, “We’re seeing

more peppers — habaneros, jalapenos and serranos — due to the Hispanic influence.”

Former New Jersey Secretary of Agriculture, Art Brown, owns 20-acre B&B Farms, which includes a blueberry operation as well as WorldCrops, a 10-acre share crop operation he and his wife helped Liberian-native, Morris Gbolo, start in 2009. WorldCrops grows African vegetables such as kittey and bitter ball eggplant, okra, sweet potato shoots, greens (such as Malabar spinach and jute leaves), and hot peppers (such as Jamaican red, yellow,

chocolate and habanero).

Ellis of Ellis Farms grows a purple and yellow variety of corn favored by Koreans. “I sold some farm land next to a Korean family some years back. They saw how I grew soybeans and wanted me to grow black soybeans for them. I tried, but it didn’t work. Then they asked me to try Korean corn, and I’ve been doing that successfully for six to seven years now. They sourced the seed for me; I grow it and they market it. It’s almost as financially valuable as sales of sweet corn.”

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Several farms in the northern, more urbanized, part of the state grow Asian pears. Varieties include Hosui, Yoinashi and Kosui.

Retailers Put The 'Fresh' In Jersey Fresh

The number of community farmers markets in New Jersey skyrocketed from 35 in 2001 to 155 in 2012, according to the 2012 *New Jersey Annual Statistics Bulletin*. Consumers also have access to a vast number of roadside stands. This competition inspired the state's retailers to spotlight their ability to provide New Jersey-

grown fruits and vegetables for their customers.

Last summer, Wegmans used social media to send early-morning tweets to its customers telling them that Jersey tomatoes had arrived to the Cherry Hill, NJ, location from Dooley Farms in Vineland, and that Ellis of Ellis Farms would visit the Princeton location with his just-picked corn.

Some chains highlight fresh with special in-store events. Acme Markets, a 114-store chain headquartered in Malvern, PA, partners with Donio, Inc., in Hammonton, to promote blue-

berries. Donio employees sample the fruit with Acme's customers.

ShopRite Supermarkets hosts day-long farmer's markets in select locations that include farmer's visits and taste demos.

Still other retailers make stocking fresh Jersey produce a season-long event.

"Foodtown stores partner with local growers and host weekend farmer's market events from April through October," says Holmquist. "The stores will hold events outside either under a tent in the parking lot or under the front canopy of the store and display Jersey produce in orchard bins. The physical set up is key. The tent, the bins dummied, bushel baskets filled, corn stalks and hay bales for decoration, and ideally a cash register so customers can conveniently ring up their purchases. I had one customer tell me she didn't usually shop at our stores, but turned in when she saw the big tent."

Foodtown also calls out its Jersey Fresh produce via ad circulars, in-store display competitions, cross-merchandising throughout the store such as bakery tie-ins of blueberries and peaches, and especially with social media (e.g., Facebook contests for customers to submit favorite recipes for a Jersey-grown fruit or vegetable for the chance to win a gift card).

Last year, Kings Food Markets made a commitment to serve its customers fresh produce with the launch of its Local Fresh 24/7 program. Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce, floral and seafood for the 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ, worked with Red Tomato, a non-profit organization based in Plainville, MA, to reach its goal of helping regional farmers deliver fresh produce to local supermarkets. Farmers took their freshly picked products to the Landisville Cooperative, in Landisville, NJ, where it was consolidated, transported on trucks (hired by Kings), taken to the chain's distribution centers, and immediately sent out to individual stores.

"In an up to a 12-foot wide area at the front of the produce department, we display produce that has been harvested in the past 24 hours or less," explains Kneeland. "It's our commitment to get our customers the freshest fruits and vegetables. After 24 hours, we rotate the product out to its regular planogram position and label it local."

Kneeland says he had hoped to kick off the program with at least 10 to 12 items, but ended up with 30 to 36 and expects the same variety this year. "It's definitely easier to fill up the trucks with more variety. It's harder to manage in-store. Produce managers are a hard sell — even if they loved the program and asked for more product."

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Rafael Gomez (left) is a key part of Andrew & Williamson's Baja harvest team.

Baja California Tomatoes

Mexico's 'ideal' combination of sun, soil and temperatures – plus shade house technology – produces a greater number of high quality tomatoes for the market. **BY BETH FRITH**

A show of hands please from those who know Baja California is in Mexico. Its northern border is California and the name means “Lower California,” but it is a state in Mexico, a peninsula separated from the mainland of Mexico by the Sea of Cortez and bordered on the west by the Pacific Ocean.

American tourists often see Baja California for the first time when they walk across the U.S. Border at Tijuana just to say they had been to Mexico. According to the website, *History.com*, over 50,000 cars and 25,000 pedestrians cross the border every day. Tourism draws many to the area, some for sport fishing along 1,900 miles of coastline. The northern Baja peninsula also features ideal conditions for grape growing, so wineries attract many visitors as well.

For retail produce and foodservice executives, Baja's greatest feature is its tomato production. According to the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS), during the summer season (May to October), Baja California growers are the main producers and exporters of fresh tomatoes from Mexico. Production is primarily the Roma tomato reports FAS, outpacing the round tomato in

that region due to demand. The Roma tomato represents 58% of tomatoes coming from all of Mexico.

John King, vice president of sales for Andrew & Williamson, based in San Diego, CA, calls the Baja area a “world-class growing region” for tomatoes based on its warm, semi-arid conditions. Sun, temperatures, and soil provide the ideal combination. The “Baja Season,” that ideal time for growing tomatoes in this part of the world, typically runs for about nine months beginning late April and going through December.

Tomatoes Right On Time

Expo Fresh, LLC, San Diego, is another provider of Baja tomatoes. Bob Schachtel, sales manager, says this season's crop will start this month (June), and he thinks it will last through December, “maybe longer.” Expo Fresh ships Roma tomatoes and vineripes as well as grape and cherry tomatoes.

“The quality and yield look excellent and it's on time,” King says. The company produces vineripes as well as Romas and higher value items, such as heirlooms, grape tomatoes, yellows, and organics.

Andrew & Williamson farms in two

different regions in Baja. One of these regions is the San Quintín Valley area, about 200 miles south of San Diego. The other is 300 miles further south in the El Vizcaíno region. The company has been farming tomatoes in Baja since 1986. King reports that Andrew & Williamson ships tomatoes coast to coast depending on the type of customer. The food-service side of the business is national, he says, but the retail business is mostly in the Midwest and West Coast regions. The company is not quite as competitive on the retail side in other parts of the United States due to freight costs and seasonal local supplies coming from other parts of the country.

Expo Fresh's Schachtel reports that the company ships tomatoes as far north as Montreal and Vancouver in addition to the Eastern and Southeastern United States. He says Expo Fresh “doesn't butt up against other deals.” Expo Fresh has farms located about 175 miles south of San Diego in the San Quintín Valley region.

Hothouse or Greenhouse?

Buyers beware. Slight terminology differences can have big implications regarding methods of tomato production.




Expo Fresh's Schachtel points out that alternative methods of growing are evolving in Baja. He says the industry has changed from a mostly outside field-grown crop to being grown in shade houses. The shade

house consists of netting over the fields that keeps out most pests and causes less wind damage. It offers many additional benefits including better quality fruit, more efficiency for harvesting, and food safety.

"It's a lot easier for the pickers," he says. Conveyors in a central spot move the fruit to the packing house so there is much less handling. He adds that growing in shade houses has reduced the amount of herbicides and pesticides that are used, likening the process to growing organically due to reduced usage of these chemicals. "It's very mild compared to what we used to use." The result is "a lot more Number One fruit," he reports.

At Andrew & Williamson, tomato harvest criteria is an important part of the company's vine-ripened program. According to King, "We select color stage 4 and higher to ensure the best flavor and consistent quality."

The Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries and Food (SAGARPA), the Mexican government's parallel organization to the USDA, reports that shade house and greenhouse production has increased 13 percent in Mexico every year since about 1998 "as producers increasingly become aware of the benefits in production, quality, pest control, and reduced exposure to climate change." SAGARPA has begun promoting this type of production to rural and poorer farming regions because the



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agency sees the benefit “as a form of social development.” The higher the technology in farming, the greater economic benefit to the local community.

Despite the improvements in quality, controversy surrounds the way these products are described to buyers. Shade houses and greenhouses are in the same category of “protected agriculture,” but are widely different. Since greenhouse-grown products are seen as “premium” tomatoes and fetch a higher price from buyers, many growers believe it is impor-

tant to have these terms defined.

Ed Beckman, president of Fresno, CA-based Certified Green House Farmers, says that California growers are “actively seeking to define greenhouse-grown” products. This definition will clarify that greenhouse products are “fully enclosed, have automatic climate controls, and you can’t call them greenhouse grown if they are grown in soil,” says Beckman.

The USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service (2010) reports that the acreage in shade house

-grown product was about 4,200 acres (1,700 hectares) and greenhouse grown was about 1,284 acres (520 hectares).

This evolving definition clarification has impacted how Baja growers are able to label their product. The term “hothouse” allows some flexibility in application because it is a broad description of “some type of protected culture,” according to the USDA’s Economic

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Side Note

Focusing on food safety strategies is one of many initiatives that San Diego, CA-based Andrew & Williamson is exploring to improve food quality and develop a better working environment on the farm.

The New York Times recently reported on a new training program that Andrew & Williamson is conducting for California strawberry harvesters. Workers who take the training learn safe food-handling methods; in exchange for incorporating improved handling procedures, the workers are compensated with a higher hourly pay. The product is then marketed as a premium strawberry and gets a better price in the market. Buyers have shown willingness to pay extra for a safer product.

The strawberry program was a pilot in California, says John King, vice president of sales for Andrew & Williamson, but the goal, he says, is “to expand in all of our farming operations.”

King says a leadership team has already been established in Baja California so that those operations can come onboard to establish the same training programs for workers in safe food handling.

The advantage to retailers? Improved quality means increased sales in the department. “The cost of shrink and throwaway also will decline,” says King.

As a result of the *Times* article, King says, “There has been fantastic feedback from consumers.” He adds that those who read the article directed comments to the company website and wanted to know what retailers were marketing the products so they could buy it.

pb



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BRED IN FLORIDA, GROWN IN CALIFORNIA

A “new tomato with an old world taste” is how Tom Deardorff, president of Oxnard, CA-based Deardorff Family Farms describes the Tasti-Lee tomato that Deardorff grows, packs and ships out of Ventura County, California.

Bred specifically for taste, researchers at the University of Florida, Gainesville “isolated high-taste characteristics from older varieties and created one that had better shelf life, flavor and a higher lycopene content—50 percent more.”

Deardorff advises putting tomatoes as an unrefrigerated end cap display to capture consumers who walk by. The

prominence of an end cap display makes tomato purchases more of an impulse buy and results in extra sales to the department.

Deardorff markets a retail-ready package with consumer information that promotes the higher lycopene content of its Tasti-Lee tomato. The company is among several licensees of the Tasti-Lee tomato, so the products can be found throughout the country.

Tasti-Lee is distributed in a one-pound package of three to four tomatoes. Deardorff believes that “this is an easier way for checkers to scan the product—the PLU is on the package,” he notes. **pb**



Research Report. “It will be up to the market (largely commercial buyers) to decide if there is a significant point of differentiation relative to those meeting the greenhouse definition,” according to the report.

USDA research reports that Baja producers represent a more “technologically

advanced” group of farmers than in other regions of Mexico and so the products are very competitive in the marketplace.

Merchandising Advice

Andrew & Williamson’s King recommends building abundant displays in produce

sections. “A big display sets the tempo for the department,” he says. He describes a display using the Roma as the Every Day Low Price “leader” that could be featured at around 99 cents to \$1.49.

As a value item, King suggests Romas should be displayed in bulk. “Don’t spend a lot of money on packaging,” he advises. King also recommends surrounding the Romas with higher value items such as organics, grapes, and heirlooms. **pb**

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Connecting with Consumers



Industry players celebrate Georgia's top producers for the nation. **BY BILL MARTIN**

Georgia is one of the leading states in terms of fresh produce production, and its citizens could not be prouder. According to the Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA), Georgia ranks second in spring onion acreage, thanks primarily to the Vidalia sweet onions in the southeastern part of the state. Georgia also ranks third nationally in production of bell

peppers, cantaloupes, snap beans, sweet corn, peaches and blueberries. It is a top producer of watermelons (ranking 4th nationally), squash (5th) and cabbage (6th).

"Georgia consumers are totally on board with the idea of 'locally grown,'" states Jack Spruill, marketing division director for the GDA. "Without regard to the kind of produce, they are seeking local providers whenever possible." While locally grown may be a national trend, Spruill believes this movement is accelerated in Georgia because of a major influx of new residents to metropolitan Atlanta over the past decade.



"These transplants to the South see our climate is ideal for vegetable production and feel that production should be close to their homes," he says.

Luminita Mlajeru is regional produce buyer for Whole Foods Market Inc., in Braselton, GA, where she purchases produce for 26 stores scattered through Georgia, the Carolinas, Alabama, Tennessee and Kentucky.

She shares the same enthusiasm with Georgians' passion for home-grown produce. A prime example of this passion is reflected in sales numbers. When Georgia peaches are in season, the fruit accounts for about 60 percent of Whole Foods' total peach sales.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGIA PEACH COUNCIL

"We are lucky to have local peaches in each of the six states [in her division]. Consumers ask for specific varieties and want to know when they will be available. They are becoming more knowledgeable

about peaches," she observes.

Kevin Hurley is a merchandiser for Sweetbay Supermarket, a 72-store chain based in Tampa, FL, that relies heavily on Georgia-grown produce. A 27-year-

GEORGIA'S AGRICULTURE LEGACY CONTINUES

The Georgia fresh produce industry has a lot of pride in its products, and many give credit to supportive state government for their success. They also take pride in the products grown and that their companies are private, family operations. For example, Jack Spruill, marketing division director for the Georgia Department of Agriculture, notes the Georgia legislature has passed a bill creating the Georgia Grown Commodity Commission in 2013, which has been signed by Gov. Nathan Deal, and becomes effective July 1.

"This is critical to the program moving forward, as it provides us with a business model giving a clear financial path for long term continuation of the program. This solid foundation will lead to more participation by both producers and retailers," Spruill says.

THE INDUSTRY SHARES ITS GEORGIA PRIDE

Bill Brim, Lewis Taylor Farms – I am so proud of our Georgia Grown program and our Agricultural Commissioner, Gary Black.

Nickey Gregory, Nickey Gregory Co. – The GDA has always been great working with farmers. They are involved with food safety and are hosting lab classes on the Atlanta State Farmer's Market. These sessions include food safety requirements

and compliance regulations.

Andrew Scott, General Produce Co. – Our agricultural commissioner, Gary Black, has done an outstanding job since taking office. He made a real difference with Georgia Grown and the consumption of Georgia Grown fruits and vegetables.

John Shuman, Shuman Produce – I am proud of the opportunity to grow Vidalia onions and raise my family in the region. We are truly blessed to have the Vidalia onion in our region of Southeast Georgia. The economic impact the onions have in our local area is tremendous.

Will McGehee, Genuine Georgia – It's hard not to be proud of our legacy. We've been growing peaches a long time as a family. I'm proud to be a fifth-generation company, because peach farming is not easy. There are not a lot of people who can do it, and the fact we have been here for 125 years is pretty impressive.

Mike Jardina, J.J. Jardina Co. – I am proud to be a part of the push for the Georgia Grown campaign, and I am proud to have Gary Black as our Commissioner of Agriculture.

Jacob Paulk, Paulk Vineyards – My life has been growing and creating a market for the Muscadine grape. I remember visiting Kroger in Atlanta. The buyer didn't want to take my grapes. I took a box of grapes when I met with him, and when

we started eating them he said, "I think I can sell these." That is how I got my grapes into Kroger stores.

Greg Leger, Leger & Son – In my opinion, the Georgia-grown watermelon is always the sweetest tasting. I handle watermelons up the East Coast as the season progresses, and Georgia is one of the strongest production areas I work. The Fourth of July is the biggest holiday for watermelon sales, and those melons are grown right here in Georgia. Georgia-grown watermelons are a tradition — sort of like the American flag.

Charles Hall, GFVGA – Our association has been a leader in providing grower assistance to guarantee they have the information and resources for a successful food safety operation. Beth Oleson, GFVGA director of food safety and education, and Katie Odrobina, our food safety consultant, work hard to be a resource for our growers. They ensure farms' operations meet the standards and operating procedures needed for successful and safe operations.

I am also extremely proud of our grower involvement in shaping policy and regulatory policies at the national level. GFVGA, and many of our growers, are called on for information, testimony, comments and input as representatives of the Southeastern produce grower.

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veteran of the company, Hurley works with Sweetbay's stores primarily in west-central Florida, although the company has supermarkets as far south as Naples and northward in Gainesville. A part of Delhaize America Inc., it was recently announced the chain was being sold to Bi-Lo Holdings, along with Harveys, and Reid's. Hurley buys a lot of Georgia produce in season.

"Locally grown seems to be big on

everyone's radar these days. Even though we wouldn't necessarily classify Georgia as being local here in Florida, because only items grown in Florida are classified as locally grown," Hurley says. "But Georgia is certainly close enough."

Georgia Peaches

The two big Georgia-grown items in Sweetbay stores are peaches and Vidalia onions. Last year Sweetbay had roadside bill boards promoting Georgia peaches

with the marketing theme, "From our Neighbors to the North." This was also supported with in-store signage. Further support for Georgia peaches came with Sweetbay having Fort Valley, GA-based Pearson Farms making a personal appearance at one of its stores.

Will McGehee heads the sales and marketing department for The Genuine Georgia Group, LLC of Fort Valley, GA, and he represents the growing operation for Pearson Farms. McGehee says a shift from volume-filled containers to a hand-packed two-layer tray over the past decade has added to the sales and popularity of Georgia peaches. Not only is there less shrink, but peaches remain on the tree an extra day before picking.

Hurley at Sweetbay agrees. He says the chain wasn't even carrying Georgia peaches until a couple of years ago, and recalls "when they picked them green and hard and shipped them volume-filled. There is certainly a value now in getting Georgia peaches from right across the border versus all the way from the West Coast, after shipping it five days. It makes a big difference and it certainly is fresher," he says.

Duke Lane III, a principal in Lane Southern Orchards of Fort Valley, GA, adds that consumers seem more emphatic about eating good quality fruit than ever — and they are specifically requesting Georgia peaches.

Lane points to Whole Foods for its support of the Georgia-branded produce and the chain's strong promotional support through large displays that highlight the freestone fruit and flavor.

Mlajeru of Whole Foods says the retailer is prominently displaying heavy peach promotions, and she invites the growers to tell local Whole Foods team members the Georgia story. "We believe in big displays and good location in the produce department to move product. If the weather allows, we even have outside Georgia peach displays," she notes.

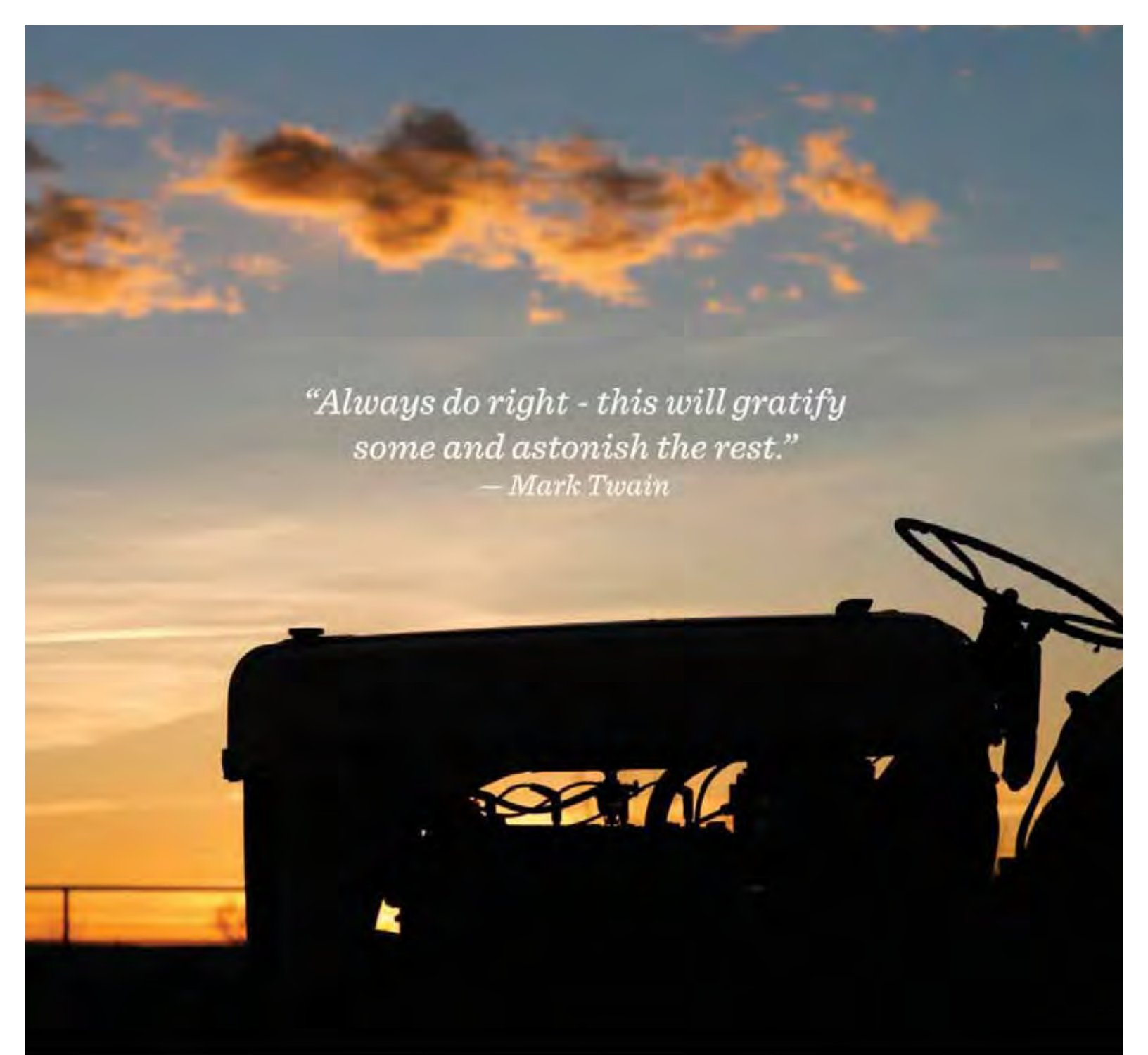
Besides having his own business, McGehee is marketing director for the Georgia Peach Council. He is expecting an "outstanding" peach crop this season, with the council having several programs in place to promote this year's fruit.

The Georgia Peach Council has scheduled a number of TV cooking demonstrations during the season and has a "Georgia in July" promotional kit for

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retailers in the Midwest, Northeast and Southeast. The retail kit includes point-of-sale merchandising display bins highlighting freestone

peaches, Georgia Peaches farm market bags, recipes and nutritional information.

A successful Facebook application from last season will once again be available for retail social media campaigns. Consumers also will be able to send a "virtual" Georgia peach to someone.

Finally, the council's mascot, Big Fuzzy, will be in Atlanta on July 4, where an estimated 60,000 runners are participating in the Peachtree Road Race. Participants will

“There is certainly a value now in getting Georgia peaches from right across the border versus all the way from the West Coast, after shipping it five days. It makes a big difference and it certainly is fresher,”

— Kevin Hurley, Sweetbay Supermarket

receive a sweet Georgia peach at the finish line.

Vidalia Sweet Onions

Another popular Georgia product for retail promotions is the Vidalia sweet onion. "This is a huge crop for us to

promote," states Hurley at Sweetbay. "We always joke that everyone's crying for them, but they don't make you cry. It's a great item."

John Shuman, president of Shuman Produce Inc., of Reidsville, GA, says, "Sweet onions continue to drive the overall onion category growth, and consumers value them for their great flavor and versatility in cooking."

Referring to the Vidalia onion as "world famous," Shuman says one of the more successful promotions is the annual Produce for Kids (PFK) campaign, which was launched in 2002 and now includes 17 retail banners in 33 states and more than 40 produce growers and shippers. Shuman Produce is a founding sponsor, and he notes PFK has raised over \$4.2 million for children's hospitals and charities in local markets of the retailers that support the campaign.

Georgia Produce Promotional Trends

Charles Hall is the executive director of the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association, based in LaGrange, GA. He cites a good example of Georgia-grown produce being promoted is through the Georgia Watermelon Association. It works with the Atlanta Braves, where an old-fashioned wooden-handle fan encourages those at the ball park to eat more Georgia watermelons.

Greg Leger, a principal in Leger & Son, Inc., of Cordele, GA, grows and ships watermelons from a number of states including his home state of Georgia. "Watermelons have really grown more and more to be a year-round product," Leger relates. "Consumers expect it. Retailers, even in the winter months, have watermelons, whether in quarters, halves, or slices."

Leger points out the Georgia Watermelon Queen conducts in-store promotions throughout the season providing "field to fork" information to consumers. "It is exciting for the

GEORGIA COMPANIES SPEAK OUT

Andrew Scott, General Produce – "Based on our sales dollars, our wholesale distribution operation is a Top 100 privately owned company in the state of Georgia."

John Shuman, Shuman Produce – "We are a family-owned company and have been since the Shuman family started in the sweet onion business nearly 30 years ago. After I was faced with more than a few hardships following in my father's footsteps, I feel very blessed to work in the Vidalia onion industry and continue our family farm. One day, I hope our children will take over the business and continue the family tradition in the Vidalia onion industry."

Duke Lane, Lane Southern Orchards – "People obviously know us as peach growers, but we also farm about the same amount of acreage in pecans. Collectively, we are farming about 5,000 acres of peaches and pecans."

Will McGehee, Genuine Georgia – "We have been growing peaches since 1888. Peaches tend to be sexier and get the headlines, but we also farm pecans – nearly 3,000 acres of pecans. Most people do not know we have a huge pecan business that rivals our peaches."

Jacob Paulk, Paulk Vineyards – "It is very hard for a small company like us to get our Muscadine grapes out there. However, I believe with its unique taste, the product will gradually be accepted around the United States."



John Shuman

Greg Leger, Leger & Son – "We are not the biggest grower/shipper of watermelons, but that is not one of my goals. I think we are one of the best when it comes to quality, value and service."

Mike Jardina, J.J. Jardina Co. – "We specialize only in fruit and are a family owned business. It will remain family-owned as long as I have anything to do with it."

Nickey Gregory, Nickey Gregory Co. – "We pride ourselves in quality, service and price, but it is sometimes tough to meet these goals because of the economy. Price becomes a big factor. You have to look at a lot of variables and talk with customers to help them understand certain factors. For example, a label might cost more, but if you look at the volume you received from that label (which can reduce shrink) it makes sense. You are more than order-takers. You have to be a salesman."

consumer, and naturally it is exciting for the kids," he says.

Leger also points to the National Watermelon Promotion Board and the National Watermelon Association working as co-sponsors with NASCAR in the Camping World Truck Series season.

Nickey Gregory is a principal in the Nickey Gregory Co., a wholesaler on the Atlanta State Farmer's Market. He says organically grown Georgia vegetables are becoming more widely grown, as well as some fruit. He specifically mentions organic beans and squash. "We don't handle organic, but there is a very big possibility we will be in the near future," Gregory says.

Andrew Scott, sales and procurement manager for wholesaler General Produce, Inc., in Forest Park, GA, says more traditional Western-grown vegetables, such as broccoli, romaine, green leaf and even pears and persimmons, are now being grown in Georgia. "Last fall, we had a very successful Georgia-grown sweet potato ad during Thanksgiving that went better than expected; so much so, that we were able to be aggressive with pricing, both at the buyer-level and at the store-level. Due to the increase in volume with this ad, we sourced product just 200 miles from our warehouse, and did not short the customer financially."

Mike Jardina is president of wholesaler J.J. Jardina Co., in Forest Park. The wholesaler specializes in fruit distribution, and he cites Georgia-grown apples as "one of the most demanded items we carry. Sales are growing every year."

Jardina says varieties gaining popularity range from the Pink Lady to Galas and Fujis. Georgia apples in three-pound bags are particularly popular with consumers.

Gregory says Kroger Co. has had lots of success in his area promoting Georgia-grown product. "Kroger filmed a lot at Georgia farms with beans, squash, peppers, greens, cabbage, etc. A lot of people are starting to ask the retailers if the product is locally grown."

Gregory points out, for years the only Georgia item ever publicized was the Vidalia onion. He praises the Georgia Department of Agriculture for supporting the Georgia Grown program and notices its efforts really growing the sales of Georgia produce in the future.

One item starting to receive more

recognition is Muscadine grapes, grown and shipped by Paulk Vineyards of Wray, GA. Principal Jacob Paulk has devoted himself since 1975 to the product and says he is now the world's largest grower. He and his son, Chris, have 500 acres of the seeded grape, mostly produced for the fresh market. A year ago, Jardina began handling sales and marketing for the Paulk in the Atlanta area.

"We sell to Publix and Kroger's Atlanta

Division. We hope to expand more into the Midwest and Northeast. I believe we'll get into the New York City market this year," says the 81-year-old entrepreneur.

Greg Cardamone is general manager of vegetables with Raleigh, NC-based L & M Companies, Inc., shipper of Georgia-grown product. He has found success with retailers in promotions involving Georgia



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cantaloupes, sweet potatoes, cucumbers, bell peppers and squash.

"We provide our customers with bios of the growers and the town (or area) in which the product was grown. This really makes a good connection with the consumers," Cardamone says.

Identifying Challenges

Every segment of the produce industry has its own unique challenges, and this is certainly the case for those who grow, ship, distribute, buy and sell products grown in Georgia.

For example, Paulk says when he started out, there was no commercial market for Muscadine grapes. He recalls visiting a Jacksonville, FL, wholesaler who had failed handling his grapes. So Paulk visited roadside stands in the area and told them if they needed more grapes to call that wholesaler. Within a week, the wholesaler called ordering 100 boxes.

With the popularity of seedless grapes, Paulk says his biggest challenge

is convincing people his seeded grape, with its "unique and beautiful taste," will sell successfully.

Jardina says his wholesale distribution company's biggest challenge is keeping up with the product specifications of the many different customers ordering from his warehouse.

At General Produce, Scott names various challenges ranging from "chasing money" from slow-paying customers to keeping vendors compliant with food safety and traceability issues on their end — this is especially true with importers. He also cites the challenges of controlling expenses such as labor, fuel and costs associated with shrink.

Lane at Lane Southern Orchards agrees with Scott regarding increasing costs. Rising labor costs and the availability of good, reliable labor are concerns of Lane. He hopes meaningful proposed immigration legislation will help improve the situation.

Hall of the GFVGA weighs in on the topic specifically pointing to labor and food safety issues. "It doesn't matter how

good a crop our growers produce if we can't harvest it or sell it because of a foodborne illness outbreak," Hall surmises. "We have to solve our immigration/labor issues on the national level. And this year, the Food Safety Modernization Act will be a major issue with which we have to provide education for our growers."

Gregory, the company namesake, points to transportation issues as their biggest challenge. The wholesale distributor runs about 25 of its own tractor trailers. It is quite challenging remaining in compliance with U.S. Department of Transportation rules and regulations.

Shuman of Shuman Produce says this year's Vidalia onion crop is his biggest challenge. Colder and wetter weather conditions in March and April hampered the start of the season. Shuman and other growers then had to deal with widespread seed stem issues, which reduced the amount of onions for sale to retailers. Fortunately, the affected onion can be easily graded and discarded, with the remainder of the crop unaffected. **pb**

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10 Solutions For Selling More Grapes

Produce decision-makers share their tactics for overcoming grape challenges. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**



Varieties, colors, packaging, growing preference, display size and pricing are among the considerations retailers grapple with to increase grape sales.

Grapes have shifted from a summertime favorite to a year-round staple. In doing so, they've become strong profit centers that contributed 5.8 percent to total produce dollar sales during the 52-weeks ending February 23, 2013, according to data provided by the Nielsen Perishables Group, a Chicago, IL-based fresh food consulting firm.

According to Scot Olson, director of produce and floral of Grocery Outlet, a 185-store chain headquartered in Berkeley, CA, "I'd say that during Q3 and Q4, grapes are one of our top 10 produce categories. Customers definitely look for imports too, but the volume and quality are peak during summer and fall when grapes come from right here in California."

Selling more grapes at retail is not without its difficulties, despite this fruit's registering potential. Here are 10 common retail challenges and their money-making solutions:

1. Stock A 52-Week Supply

Grapes have been available and customers have purchased these sweet bite-sized fruit year-round for some two decades. This is clear in the fact that category dollar contribution to produce sales changes little over the quarters. For example, in 2012, grapes represented 5.2 and 5.0 percent of produce dollar sales in Q1

and Q2, respectively, and 6.2 and 6.7 percent in Q3 and Q4, respectively, according to Nielsen Perishables Group data. However, at times, retailers find it nearly impossible to stock a complete assortment of high-quality red, green and black grapes.

Traditionally, a smooth transition occurs between the major domestic and offshore growing regions. Gordon Robertson, vice president of sales and marketing for Sun World International, LLC, in Bakersfield, CA, explains, "The domestic season can go as long as mid-May through January, and supplies from Brazil in October, Peru in November, and Chile in December through May. The transition from Chile to Coachella and Mexico is generally smooth. However, with all of these transitions, challenges arise due to weather conditions and product quality in each growing region."

"Crimsons transition smoothly, therefore there's generally no lack of or interruption in the supply of red grapes," says Tim Dayka, managing partner at Dayka & Hackett, LLC, in Reedley, CA. "However, as the Southern Hemisphere starts to finish with green grapes, there is the potential for a small gap."

This possible interruption is due to a 2010 federal marketing order that establishes April 10 as the cut-off date for importers to bring in anything less than U.S. Number One graded-

seedless grapes. Green grapes blemish more easily than dark-color reds, so this makes their importation after this date a riskier proposition. Some 99 percent of Southern Hemisphere green grapes will typically come in prior to April 10, while offshore Crimsons will continue to ship until mid-May.

"The earliest Northern Hemisphere green grapes, such as Perlettes, don't start shipment out of Mexico until May 15 or 16," says Atomic Torosian, co-owner of Crown Jewels Marketing, in Fresno, CA. "Our Mexican deal seems to be getting later. Only 15 to 20 percent of the crop harvests in May with 80 to 85 percent now compressed into a heavy June program."

Rob Spinelli, in sales at Anthony Vineyards, in Bakersfield, CA, sums up this tricky time frame: "Retailers are watching their inventory of green grapes during the first two weeks of May. After that, time is needed to fill the pipeline, so it's the last week in May before things start to settle down for green grapes."

Similarly, due to lower demand and total availability—as well as quality and perishability issues—there can be a gap in black grape supply in early May.

This isn't the case for green and black grapes on the back end of the domestic deal. Dayka & Hackett's Dayka explains, "Traditionally, Thompsons would finish harvest in late

In the next five years, Anthony Vineyard's Spinelli predicts, "California shippers will have good volumes of better quality late-season green and red variety grapes well into December."

September or early October, and we'd put them in storage after that. Now, newer green grape varieties such as Autumn King and Luisco, as well as proprietary varieties, harvest into November. That means we're only pulling for one month out of storage before the imports come in rather than three months."

In the next five years, Anthony Vineyard's Spinelli predicts, "California shippers will have good volumes of better quality late-season green and red variety grapes well into December."

"This coming season, Sun World will be the first grape grower to offer proprietary late-season varieties in all three colors," says Sun World's Robertson. "This provides retailers with extended availability, superior quality and more opportunities to promote and grow the category."

While a full assortment year-round grape supply seems to be the industry's Holy Grail, breaks in supply at retail don't necessarily have to be a bad thing. In fact, it can prove advantageous. It's all in how the gaps are positioned.

John Pandol, director of special projects at Pandol Bros., in Delano, CA, says, "We've had this foreign concept from the can-stacker category management world invade the produce department dictating that the grape display should be the same 52-weeks a year. That's not what Mother Nature says. At certain times of year, from certain places, and in certain years, the grapes are just better. One retailer uses a 'good, better, best' designation at retail to indicate peak of season."

2. Sell By Color, Variety Or Flavor

"Customers at Grocery Outlet purchase grapes by flavor and freshness," says Grocery Outlet's Olson. "They aren't overly concerned with variety name. But when you talk to the buyers, they know each and every variety and purposely seek out specific ones that will create the best eating experience for the customers."

Red grapes represented 55.3 percent of category dollar sales during the 52-weeks ending February 23, 2013, with green at 38 percent, according to Nielsen Perishables Group data.

"Some retailers have started to carry two to three varieties of the same color of grape," says Dayka & Hackett's Dayka.

Nick Dulcich, owner of Sunlight Interna-

tional Sales, Inc., in Delano, CA, agrees. "Retailers carry numerous varieties of apples, pears, or plums, many the same color or appearance; why not two varieties of green or red grapes?"

"There are great differences between colors and varieties of grapes, both in flavor and texture," explains Karen Brux, North American managing director of the Chilean Fresh Fruit Association (CFFA), in Fresno, CA. "Retailers can benefit by educating their customers on the attributes of the various varieties on display."

Pandol Bros.' Pandol offers a creative solution to this debate, "It's kind of funny that we sell grapes by color. Why don't we sell a 'tart' grape with a tannin taste characteristic like a Flame and a 'sweet' grape with a low acid finish like a Crimson? In the new variety samplings we do at retail, it becomes very clear that flavor and texture are what light up consumers."

3. Bump Up Black Grape Sales

Black grapes are a tough sell. Only 5.7 percent of category dollar sales were of the black/blue variety for the 52-weeks ending February 23, 2013, according to Nielsen Perishables Group data.

Grocery Outlet's Olson says, "Some consumers still think the black varieties have seeds. Also, the higher sugar levels in some black varieties cause them to break down faster. These two points have caused consumers to shy away. It's a shame, because there are some newer great-tasting black grape varieties out there like Fantasy Seedless and Sun World's Midnight Beauty."

"The right promotion can drive trial, which is an opportunity to introduce shoppers to a color they haven't tried before," says Sun World's Robertson. "We've experienced this with our Midnight Beauty black grape, where promotional pricing drove a major increase in the black seedless category and also spurred repeat purchases after the promotional period. The black seedless promotion also drove total category growth as shoppers decided to trial the new variety and also buy their staple grape."

Megan Schulz, West Coast business development manager for Giumarra Companies, in Los Angeles, CA, adds, "We see that consumers are more willing to purchase black seedless

grapes when the grapes are merchandised alongside red and green grapes."

4. Offer Seeds In A Seedless Market

Americans love seedless grapes. In fact, 84.9 percent of grape category dollar sales during the 52-weeks ending February 23, 2013, were seedless, according to Nielsen Perishables Group data. Seeded represented only 15.1 percent of grape sales. Red Globes represent a lion's share of the seeded grapes sold in the U.S.

"It's the large size, pleasant crunch and beautiful red color that makes Globes attractive to customers," explains Grocery Outlet's Olson.

In addition, Gina Garven, manager of sourcing business analytics and vendor managed inventory for C.H. Robinson Worldwide, Inc., in Eden Prairie, MN, says, "Globes are still mainly driven by ethnic consumers. However, the popularity of Globes is growing outside of ethnic consumers due to the increase in recipes—including this specific variety. Most families are still reluctant to deal with seeded grapes since this item is mainly eaten as a snack. Nonetheless, when a recipe is calling for this particular variety, retailers see purchases increase and add to overall category sales."

5. Address Organic Availability Issue

Organic grapes accounted for only 2.1 percent of total category sales for the 52 weeks ending February 23, 2013, according to Nielsen Perishables Group data. One reason for such a low annual percentage is a lack of year-round availability. The CFFA's Brux says, "There are no Chilean organic grapes in North America."

"On the domestic front, we can keep our customers supplied with organic grapes from July to January; no problem," says Jon Zaninovich, vice president of Jasmine Vineyards, Inc., in Delano, CA.

"Anthony Vineyards is working to expand its availability of organic grapes through adding new acreage," says Spinelli. "We now have red and green organic grapes from May to November without any gaps and are working to extend this availability to December. We're also working on offering all three colors from May to October. Demand is increasing from the natural food stores, and conventional stores are starting to give a bigger focus to organic."

There seems to remain a catch-22 to future growth in organic grape availability. "Organic grape growing takes a commitment and many growers are not in a position to make this commitment," explains Sunlight's Dulcich. "Organic grape sales are a very small part of the total. FOB's have drawn much closer to conven-

tional grapes and a loss of incentive to the grower has occurred.”

At the same time, “research in 2012 by the St. Louis, MO-based research division of Fleishman-Hillard International Communications shows that while consumers are willing to purchase organic grapes, they don’t want to pay over 10 to 20 percent more for organic grapes than conventional grapes,” adds Cindy Plummer, vice president of domestic marketing for the Fresno, CA-based California Table Grape Commission (CTGC).

6. Consider Packing & Merchandising

Few retailers sell grapes without some form of packaging. Today, pack types range from clear plastic clamshells to conventional plastic slider bags—which tend to dominate sales due to their low cost.

“Clamshells are king at Grocery Outlet,” says Olson. “We don’t have scales in our stores, therefore we sell 2-pound fixed weight clamshells. They make it easy for customers to pick up and inspect the quality of the fruit. Clamshells also protect the fruit, reduce shrink, are easier to stack on display, and prevent slips and falls due to the fruit falling on the floor.”

Clamshells also make it easier for retailers to sell two or three colors in one pack.

As for bags, Sun World raised the bar with its new clear pouch bag, which is designed for better product visibility. “Bag clarity is one of the top five influencers of grape purchasing,” says Robertson. Sun World uses a new high clarity cast polypropylene. “The industry standard is currently polyethylene, and it tends to amplify bag cloudiness, which is one of the top five negative influencers at the point of purchase. In addition, this pouch bag is designed with a gusseted bottom that allows for stand-up merchandising and a slider zip function for easy and convenient resealing,” explains Robertson.

One step further, some growers and shippers have introduced a high graphic grab-and-go bag with handles. This new-style bag provides a canvas for graphics and marketing messages. It can also be sold as a variable weight package, which improves the retail price point.

Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce, floral and seafood at Kings Food Markets, a 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ, finds this bag-style attractive. “It shows the grapes

well and is easy for customers to pick up because of the handles. It’s a good mover.”

The retailer challenge is to compare added cost to improved merchandising and impulse purchases in selecting the optimal packaging.

Anthony Vineyard’s Spinelli offers the numbers: “A clamshell costs about 20 cents, a gusseted high-graphic bag costs 9 cents, and a slider bag costs 3 cents. That means the extra 6 cents of going from a slider to gusseted bag can add up to an extra \$1.2 million a year on 20 million bags.”

7. Create Display Space

Grapes are offered on an average four-foot refrigerated destination display at Grocery Outlet. “The cool temperature not only reduces shrink, but increases impulse sales,” says Olson. “Customers love to buy and eat cold grapes.”

Research by the CTGC shows that space allocation of more than 25 feet can generate up to 63 percent more dollars per store per year than sets under 18 feet. In addition, studies demonstrate that during grape season in California, a maximum sales lift is obtained with displays measuring at least 25 to 30 square feet.



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The CTGC's Plummer explains how retailers make room for grapes in stores. "In addition to a prominent primary display of grapes, don't forget secondary displays. Secondary displays can raise the visibility of grapes and ensure that they get noticed. They're also a great way of highlighting unique or new varieties."

This is just the tactic utilized at Grocery Outlet. From June to October, Olson and his staff place 3x3-foot field bins of grapes at the front of the store. Plus, they utilize slant, metal-rack mobile merchandizers filled with four to five cases of grapes as end cap displays alongside of tree fruit or at the check-out registers.

Sun World is introducing bins this summer to spotlight its proprietary brands and highlight grapes as a healthy snack. The bins include beauty shots of the product, a nutrition label, as well as a 'Sweet & Healthy' call out, and a QR code leading to a mobile-friendly web site with more information and recipes.

Secondary display ideas within produce include merchandising grapes next to lettuce or salad kits. Displays outside the department work well in Deli or Wine and Cheese.

8. Recipes Boost Grape Sales

"Eaten fresh out of hand is the main focus for grapes," says Nick Bozick, president of Richard Bagdasarian, Inc., in Mecca, CA. "Never discount the recipe factor; however, offering recipes doesn't hurt."

Consumers in focus group testing say they want to know more ways to use grapes and that this knowledge will spur them to purchase more, according to 2012 Fleishman-Hillard International research conducted on behalf of the CTGC.

"Because of this feedback," says CTGC's Plummer, "we are now featuring usage images in our advertising campaign. QR codes are included in the print advertising campaign and take shoppers to a mobile site that includes recipes for the usage images. We have recipes and photos available for retailers to incorporate in their customer communications including social media pages."

9. Give The Best Promotional Price

"Grapes are price-promoted once per month year-round at Kings Super Markets," says Kneeland. "In peak season, we'll drop as low as \$1.49 per pound."

The days of 99 cent-per-pound ads are, or

should be, gone. Pandol Bros.' Pandol explains: "Pushing for really low FOBs/retails when the grapes are at peak freshness encourages growers to store grapes. Then retailers/consumers pay the highest prices for the oldest grapes. With regard to 99-cent ads, the industry went through a long period where grape ads drove traffic but stores didn't make much money on grapes. The quality and condition of 99 cent-per-pound grapes were so bad it didn't drive traffic. Now ad prices are in the \$1.25 to \$1.50 range, and all of a sudden, retailers are seeing the category dollar increase in grapes—similar to what they've seen in berries the past few years."

According to 2012 Fleishman-Hillard International research conducted on behalf of the CTGC, consumers think grapes are a bargain at \$1.20 a pound, reasonable at \$1.70 per pound, and begin to seem expensive when the price per pound reaches \$2.80.

Price isn't the only way to promote grapes. "Giumarra offered Fair Trade Certified red, green and black seedless grapes this spring grown in Sonora, Mexico, by the Salazar family [in Hermosillo]," Schulz says. "Grapes sold under the program were packed under the Nature's Partner label and had a Fair Trade Certified sticker. The fruit was sold at a premium, and the resulting funds were returned to a worker council of Salazar farm employees."

10. Plan A Merchandising Strategy

"Grapes are popular in winter and summer," says Kings' Kneeland. "We encourage customers to try freezing grapes for a refreshing warm-weather snack."

Dayka & Hackett's Dayka agrees. "Like bananas, you could make the argument that consumers' purchases of grapes aren't that seasonal anymore."

Research conducted in 2010 by the Perishables Group on behalf of the CTGC shows that five promotions per month in spring/summer generate five times the volume lift of one promotion, while four promotions per month in fall/winter generated 85 percent more volume lift than one promotion.

"While consumers might not differ in their grape purchasing habits by season, retail handling of grapes should," says Pandol Bros.' Pandol. "Southern Hemisphere grapes are generally a month old when they hit the shelf. Springtime and summertime grapes are fresher. Adopting a supply chain that minimizes dwell time is the best strategy spring and summer. In the winter, inspection and cullage is key."

pb

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Logistics – noun – the planning, implementation, and coordination of the details of a business or other operation.

Where Do Suppliers Envision The Stone Fruit Category In The Year 2020?



PHOTO COURTESY OF KINGSBURG ORCHARDS

The consensus among suppliers is that flavor issues will be resolved before year 2020.

DOVEY PLAIN
Marketing Administrator
Family Tree Farms
Reedley, CA

New produce items from around the world will continue to battle for shelf space. Consistently great flavor is how stone fruit suppliers will earn their right to maintain shelf space. Growers will continue to seek ways to beat the competition and win the flavor battle.

The front line in that battle is currently variety selection. Family Tree Farms is definitely ahead of the curve regarding selection, and we have finalized exclusive arrangements with most of the world's top stone fruit breeders. Giving retailers a flavorful and unique variety, specifically available through us is an advantage for us as growers and

marketers, but we are aware that others are close behind us in this area.

Hopefully, "flavor" and "trust" are two words that will dominate the stone fruit arena in 2020. If the past 10 years have taught us anything, it's that we can't grow and ship just anything, regardless of how it tastes, and expect to maintain consumer loyalty. Retail buyers are keenly aware that they have to provide outstanding flavor to their customers.

Buyers will continue to be educated about the commodities they purchase, to the point of selecting certain varieties and rejecting others — all based on flavor. This is happening now and will surely become more prominent in the years to come.

The next wave of farm innovation is going to be geared toward efficiency as farming

input costs skyrocket and labor shortages become commonplace. The challenge will be to find efficiencies without compromising quality. Consolidation in the stone fruit industry will have leveled off by 2020, but the number of actual growers will likely have shrunk to an all-time low, as small- to medium-sized growers are squeezed out by rising costs.

Local and organic will probably grow in popularity over the next seven years. Perhaps the middle ground of "pesticide-residue free" is where real growth opportunity is in stone fruit. Most consumers do not understand the concept that pesticides break down naturally over a set period of time. After that time, there can be virtually no trace of the pesticide on the fruit. Educational efforts, certification and

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“The next wave of farm innovation is going to be geared toward efficiency as farming input costs skyrocket and labor shortages become commonplace. The challenge will be to find efficiencies without compromising quality.”

— Dovey Plain, Family Tree Farms

residue-testing programs could go a long way toward alleviating public concern.

BOB MAXWELL
Director of Sales
Kingsburg Orchards
Kingsburg, CA

I will be 70 years old this December. For at least 60 years, I have been a real fan of Snickers candy bars. I buy a minimum of two a week. So, in 60 years, I've purchased over 6,000 Snickers, and not once have I purchased a bad one. What you might be asking is, “What does this have to do with my vision of the future of the stone fruit category?”

Well, in the same 60-year period, I can't tell you the number of poor peaches, nectarines, plums, and apricots I've purchased. Admittedly, I've bought a lot of good ones as well, but really it's a 50/50 proposition. Is being disappointed half the time really acceptable? At Kingsburg Orchards, we're doing something about it.

We've invested heavily in aggressive proprietary nursery programs. We've pulled out hundreds of acres of trees in that effort. We've replaced those trees with trees from our test blocks — proven varieties with high sugar, low acid, wonderful texture, cosmetic appeal, durability, but most importantly, flavor. Fruit that tastes like fruit — not tasteless mush.

We've put this fruit in our premium labels: Sugar Tree, Season Opener, and Flavor Farmer. When you see those labels, you can buy with confidence. We are completely committed to one principle — it's not size, not “tree-ripened”, not local, not imports, not

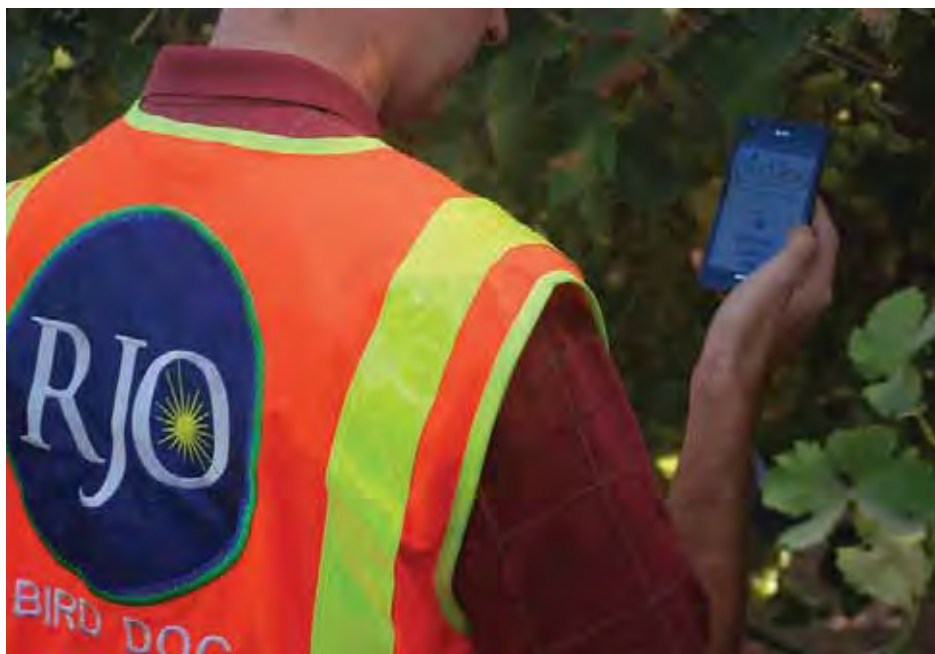


PHOTO COURTESY OF RJO PRODUCE MARKETING

“Brix will no longer be the measuring stick for stone fruit, but other components such as a ratio of sugars and acids will be taking its place.”

— Duke Lane III, Lane Southern Orchards

displays, not organic — it’s flavor, flavor, flavor.

Our vision for 2020, and beyond, is for customers to buy a peach, plum, or nectarine with the same confidence that I’ve had buying Snickers bars for the last 60 years.

DUKE LANE III
Vice President of Sales
Lane Southern Orchards/
Georgia Peaches
Fort Valley, GA

It’s August 22, 2020. Georgia Peach enthusiast, Rosy Sweets, goes to her local Publix in Indianapolis looking to duplicate the eating experience she had last night with her fresh Georgia Peach and blueberry fruit bowl. Already calculating her list, “4 pounds of Georgia Peaches at \$3.99 a pound...I need \$17 or so!”

Rosy is shocked to see the digital Georgia Peach display now read Sweet Georgia Peaches...\$4.99. Recognizing she is short of cash, and not willing to accept the change, Rosy seeks out the produce manager and demands yesterday’s price, and more importantly, an explanation. Well aware of the question and the emotional angst, the

produce manager begins explaining the concept of just-in-time pricing.

“You see Ms. Sweets, yesterday’s inventory at the store level was six cases. Our warehouse was empty. The next load is not scheduled for arrival until tomorrow. As the inventory dwindled, the price began to rise. This process is called just-in-time pricing. It allows us to adjust prices accordingly. Once store inventory reaches a certain threshold, pricing changes.

The good news is that when tomorrow’s load reaches the stores, pricing will drop back to \$3.99. You better hurry though; Georgia Peaches are hot item this month.”

The West Coast will continue to develop creative crosses of stone fruits and other fruits. Flavor will continue to drive sales — now more than ever. Tree-ripened anything will be expected. Brix will no longer be the measuring stick for stone fruit, but other components such as a ratio of sugars and acids will be taking its place. Some commercial production of stone fruit will be in every contiguous state in America, but Georgia will still remain, “The Peach State.” Demand for organics will remain high and availability will remain low. Chilean imports will eat great most of the time. Imports of all stone fruit

will rise sharply.

Store-level digital pricing will begin to take shape. Unique weather patterns will create more over-stocks and out-of-stocks. Retailers will learn price can control inventory and limit supply gaps. Stores will be brighter with better lighting. Devices that manage ethylene will be discreetly placed throughout the produce department. Kits for salsas and other fruit/spice blends will be displayed alongside certain loose fruits.

ROB O’ROURKE
Senior Vice President
RJO Produce Marketing
Fresno, CA

Our motto at RJO is “Quality Driven; Quality Delivered.” We believe that the issue of quality will continue to drive the industry as the science of growing pushes the quality ever closer to perfection. Consumers will likely support quality and will be willing to pay for it.

RJO pioneered new technologies, as an extension of RJO’s acclaimed Bird Dog Inspection Program, and is able to instantly track crop quality in the field. It allows RJO Bird Dog inspectors to photograph, collect and instantly classify the quality of any fresh produce they are inspecting.

The system allows the Bird Dog to input a broad range of characteristics for each commodity and variety from size, color and solidity to brix and overall appearance. An extension of the application is the ability to track product quality today and over time via the Bird Dog Quality Scoring System (BDQ), where each characteristic is instantly coded and assigned a BDQ score.

Product-scoring algorithms have been reviewed and modified to allow adjustments based on customer-specific quality specifications. BDQ scores reflect the key attributes determined by the customer to measure their desired quality against the market and over time. In 2013, RJO customers now have the ability to assess and quantify the quality of fresh produce in ways never done before. This new process brings the Bird Dog app and BDQ scores full circle providing unbiased, quantifiable, pertinent information based on their specifications. Buyers are no longer working off a “best available” or “this ranks #1”.

We believe that technology will continue to influence our industry in unimaginable ways. By 2020, the advancements in the science to grow, harvest, pack, grade, condition and transport fresh stone fruit will have advanced — which will, no doubt, present



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“The remaining players have survived by maintaining a keen focus on the most flavorful varieties, ruthlessly eliminating those that don't eat well.”

— Dave Parker, Rivermaid Trading Company



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new challenges. With increased production comes increased regulation and environmental concerns to carefully navigate.

Companies (like RJO) are responsible for helping customers around the world manage these variables, so as to ensure quality to the end user will no doubt be in high demand.

DAVE PARKER
Marketing Advisor
Rivermaid Trading Company
Lodi, CA

Strength in small numbers is the way to go. In recent years, we have seen a consolidation of marketing and sales into the hands of fewer stone fruit companies. As recently as 10 years ago, fewer than 30 companies marketed 80 percent of the category. Today, the same volume is handled by no more than 11 entities, suggesting that the industry is capable of a stronger stance in the marketplace.

Finding a platform for growth is crucial. At the same time, there has been a reduction in overall volume, from approximately 65 million cartons in the late 1990s to perhaps 47 million cartons this year (2012 was an anomaly, with the pack out reduced by hail to around 42 million packages).

Culling varieties of new stone fruit will continue to emerge. The remaining players

have survived by maintaining a keen focus on the most flavorful varieties, ruthlessly eliminating those that don't eat well. This discipline will continue, coupled with an ongoing drive to deliver high quality and high maturity fruit to shoppers.

Bio-Solutions are swelling; Bio-pesticides, bio-fungicides and bio-herbicides will obviate concerns about pesticide residues. California will, most likely, lead in adopting this change.

“Local” will be more accessible through technology. Improvements in refrigerated transportation and assiduous utilization of the new systems will enable better cross-country delivery of riper fruit.

Abundant consumer data, including behavioral data and social intelligence, will drive decision-making in the supply chain. Consumers will get most of their information about food from their mobile devices, and they will provide much of the supply chain data directly through their networks.

A combination of excellent varieties, improved delivery and better information will result in more widespread consumer satisfaction with stone fruits. The industry will readily increase production of juicy, flavorful fruits to meet the renewed demand. By 2020, stone fruit volume could begin to surpass the historic benchmark of 65 million cartons. **pb**

How To Successfully Market Dried Plums In Produce

Capture the millennials while keeping mature customers happy. **BY MICHELE SOTALLARO**



Retailers and marketers diversify efforts to attract a growing dried plum audience with appealing displays and nutrition messaging.

With the name change of the California Prune Board to the California Dried Plum Board 13 years ago came a successful migration of new consumers who discovered they loved dried plums (or prunes). Most dried fruit companies continue using both names to appeal to all consumers. But along with great achievements come new challenges, like how to maintain the customer expansion and how to obtain premium floor space.

It's evident that with the new breed of health-conscience consumers, dried plums were reintroduced as a healthy alternative to satisfy sweet cravings. The industry is capitalizing on the benefits dried plums offer, such as: vitamins as a nutrient-rich powerhouse, minerals that promote bone health, and outstanding fiber content to improve digestion.

Health Benefits Lead Sales

"With the health initiative spreading in North America, consumers are looking for healthy snacking alternatives," says Joe Tamble, vice president of sales at Sun-Maid Growers of California, in Kingsburg, CA. "We snack quite a bit, and dried fruit offers an excellent oppor-

tunity for consumers to fill that need. The idea is to continue to communicate that health and nutrition message to people who shop in the produce department and the whole dried fruit category. Whether it is raisins, cranberries, apricots or prunes, these foods really piggyback off fresh fruits, so it makes sense to include dried plums as part of that product portfolio."

"There's so many foods that people weren't eating five to 10 years ago that they're eating now, like dried plums, because of the health benefits," says Dick Stiles, director of operations for produce at Redner's Warehouse Markets in Reading, PA. "Continuing to share the health benefits messaging builds momentum and helps us promote the product."

"We play up the health aspects," says Chad Hartman, director of marketing for Tropical Foods in Charlotte, NC. "The soluble fiber found in dried plums is helpful for weight loss and diabetes."

Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce at Kings Food Markets in Parsippany, NJ, takes another approach to support sales, "We stock organic dried plums, and they move more than conventional. We highlight dried plums as ideal for snacking, great value, and to help lower cholesterol," adds Kneeland.

Impulse Shopping Mindset

In addition to participating in a healthier lifestyle, consumers — especially younger generations — are increasingly becoming an impulse-driven society. "Produce is a great department for impulse purchases. When customers make a shopping list, they write: milk, eggs, cereal, fruit and vegetables — not exact produce items. There's room to choose from 'fruit' and 'vegetables'. We take advantage of that fact, and make people buy more stuff," admits Kings' Kneeland.

As Michael Sansolo, president of Sansolo Solutions, Washington, DC, explained during his "Inside Today's Consumer" lecture at the 2013 United Fresh conference, consumer marketing is no longer defined by demographics. Instead, the shopper's "need state" is the driving force. To understand consumer's needs, moods, and lifestyles is to know what is impacting purchase decisions. Society moves at an exponential rate, yet individuals like to behave at an incremental pace.

June Jo Lee, vice president of strategic insights for Bellevue, WA-based Hartman Group, spoke at the United conference as well. Her lecture on food culture supported this sporadic buying theory. As a food ethnographer (someone who studies the systematic

California Dried Plum Board Talks Future Strategy

The youngest demographic that we're finding is 18 to 25 years old. These millennials are cresting more and more toward whole foods in general — rather than supplements — which really has the market coming to us," says Donn Zea, executive director of the Sacramento-based California Dried Plum Board. "We're trying everything we can to reach out to this group, as well as our core audience, from a traditional standpoint. We're pivoting off our more robust nutrition research each year so that every demographic will benefit from the food they eat."

Zea explains that the digestive health significance behind dried plums went from a message for primarily older citizens to a message for everyone. "It's important for people to understand how beneficial dried plums are for digestive health — which is the cornerstone to our overall health. Certainly that affects the young as well as baby boomers and older folks," says Zea.

"From the standpoint of overall health, there couldn't be a better product than dried plums. They're convenient and

taste good," says Zea. "It's critical that we expand the opportunities given to consumers to try them, especially for younger people."

Increasing dried plum meal options along with extensive research is how Zea hopes to propel the category. "There are a number of things that we already know about dried plums, so we trust our advisory panel to help guide us," Zea explains. Consisting of highly regarded nutritionists from around the country, the advisory panel highlights opportunities and data that would be of most interest to a younger population.

"From a domestic standpoint, we're looking into easy-to-prepare meal choices for people on the go," says Zea. "Dried plums are the best low sugar/low glycemic index option to use as a savory topping on salads and other dishes."

Zea is grateful for the partnership between the California Dried Plum Board and one of its brand ambassadors, Olympic swimmer and gold medalist, Natalie Coughlin. He reveals that she was instrumental in helping California Dried Plums break into the sports nutrition and

performance category with performance-oriented recipes for energy bars.

The Natalie Coughlin partnership is not the only high-profile endorsement for California Dried Plums. "We had a 30-day digital promotion with DoctorOz.com," says Zea. The series provided healthy eating tips, recipes, workout videos and highlighted nutrient-rich foods such as California Dried Plums. Natalie Coughlin also represented California Dried Plums on HelloGiggles.com (the crafty lifestyle web site co-founded by the popular 33-year-old actress, Zooey Deschanel).

In addition to the younger-demographic web efforts, one of California Dried Plum's registered dietitians, Leslie Bonci, developed a platform that connects with high school sports programs. "She educates kids that it's not about how many reps you can do, but what you're putting into your body to allow you to do those reps," says Zea.

The California Dried Plum Board plans to expand upon these marketing efforts and health messaging for younger audiences with future campaigns. **pb**

recordings of human cultures), she discovered that society is "picky" with their food. Lee told the story of one subject who went to a grocery store to forage for lunch and had not begun to think of what to eat for dinner.

"Dried plums are a non-seasonal item, so retailers are able to offer a product that is available year-round to consumers. There are also cross-promotional opportunities within different categories like granola, baking, trail mixes, etc.," says Jen Driscoll, the dried fruit product manager of SunSweet Growers Inc., based in Yuba City, CA. "Providing a well-rounded secondary display program creates impulse purchases and provides unique offerings. Retailers can also educate consumers on different usage occasions," adds Driscoll.

Produce-Placement is Priceless

"The total dried fruit category is a very profitable segment for produce retailers. When dried plums are sold in Produce, sales do better," says Sun-Maid's Tamble. "In fact, research from IRI data points out that when the dried fruits are shelved and positioned within the produce section (or adjacent to produce), dollar sales velocity can improve up to 30 percent higher versus grocery or center-

store," reports Sun-Maid's Tamble. "Sun-Maid encourages all sale opportunities — especially in the produce section. After all, it is fruit."

"In our experience, when retailers sell dried plums in produce versus grocery, results show between 10 to 15 percent higher margins, because the prices are higher in produce," explains SunSweet's Driscoll. "Stores are also able to attract new consumers who might not shop the dried fruit aisle. Bringing new consumers into the category means incremental profit from new consumption."

Increased sales, visibility and consumer awareness are excellent benefits for suppliers and retailers, and that's why everyone is scrambling for space in Produce. "Space is something to fight for!" says Tropical Foods' Hartman. SunSweet's Driscoll agrees, "Space is always an issue since the produce section is so large, and we also see challenges from heavy competition to other fruit and nut brands."

Sun-Maid's Tamble surmises, "The if you build it, they will come" visual exposure can be challenging." The classic *Field of Dreams* movie quote is not the only tactic Tamble believes. "We work with retailers to find adequate space and encourage using shipper displays in Produce. Once they try it, they see product move."

Redners Markets' Stiles also uses shippers and alternate displays that can be showcased in various places throughout stores. "They help toward impulse sales, and they're so handy," says Stiles. "Space is at a premium these days with all the different products retailers carry. When you can get product on a shipper so people see it — and it's not hidden down the aisle with 50 other items — I think that generates sales. You just have to get the product out there and get people to try it."

The unanimous push to promote dried plums' health benefits, shipper displays and impulse options is just the beginning of the product's evolution catering to a younger market. These elements are trends homogenizing to tell the story of dried plums and its bright future.

"Over the past five years, the dried fruit category has grown significantly every year. So this category is robust, it follows the trend of health and nutrition," says Sun-Maid's Tamble. "Consumers continue to understand (and are being made aware of) the benefits of dried fruits, and that is fueling part of its growth along with variety, exposure, unique items, advertising and a positive playing field for the growth to continue." **pb**

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STRATEGIC PLANNING AND FLEXIBILITY



Around this time of year, retail management begins to think about planning for the final two quarters of the year and the first quarter of the next year. This is an important exercise for nearly every department in the store. The one key exception is the produce department.

Each time I participated in a strategic planning session like this, I only encountered blank stares of disbelief from the other

departments when I presented the “planning schedule” for Produce.

The plan for promotional activity and items for the third and fourth quarter and the first quarter of the following year was always presented “in pencil.” The retail and marketing management always seemed to have a problem with this strategy and did not understand the reasons behind it.

The sessions were originated to save costs for the advertising department. In their world, the farther out you plan your advertising, the less it will cost. These lead times are segmented into cost values based on advanced notice. Nearly all the other departments in the store can project out as far as 36 weeks due to the perishable nature (or lack thereof) of their products. The other departments can plan their production to fit their projected schedule.

The one exception is Produce (and Floral), which cannot, with any certainty, project accurately items to promote on any given week. To try to project such a schedule is to court disaster for the produce operation. Some retailers try to project a schedule of produce items based on previous history and seasonality; however, this most often results in promoting the wrong item at the wrong time. In my experience, I have tried many strategies to meet the requirements of such a planning session. Each attempt resulted in (as outlined above) promoting the wrong item at the wrong time. Even in the case of planning “in pencil,” the variability of Produce undermines any such planning.

The major shortfall of any long-term produce planning is the fact that to remain competitive, and be relevant to your market, requires changing your promotional item as conditions dictate. This defeats the overriding purpose of this planning process, which is cost control for advertising.

However, the benefits of having the flexibility to change items in the ad four weeks out (acceptable) or two weeks out (best) allows the

rest of the store to take advantage of these cost savings and allows the produce operation the ability to promote the best possible item. The progressive retailers that engage in such a strategic planning exercise allow for this type of flexibility for their produce operations.

Conversely, the majority of retailers that participate in this process consider the official schedule to be permanent and unchangeable. This type of planning ties the hands of the produce operation and invariably results in an unimaginative, boring, play-it-safe department. This version of item-selection eliminates the benefit of any seasonal opportunities as well as the use of different varieties of items in the ad. Another casualty of this type of planning is any “theme” promotion,

such as “Melon Mania,” “Berry Patch,” “Pear Perfection,” etc., which requires proper timing to include as many varieties as possible. With this many moving parts, it is difficult with maximum flexibility to promote “theme” promotions on the correct week.

While this planning is good for holiday marketing, sched-

uling for promotions such as those for Cinco de Mayo, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Easter, Thanksgiving, etc., can still present the possibility that the key item for these promotions may not be available. The wildcard of weather conditions and its effects on produce commodities will always be the reason that this type of long-term planning needs to be modified.

Of course, it is necessary that Produce be involved in these strategy sessions. The sessions provide helpful information on what the rest of the departments are planning, as well as any major themes that marketing management has planned for the next 36 weeks. The key to surviving in this environment is convincing your marketing and advertising management that it is in their best interests to allow flexibility in selection of items for the produce operation.

Not only can you use the information and affects of weather in the major growing areas on supply and timing, you can utilize the weather conditions locally to illustrate the unpredictability of Produce especially in the local area. Your efforts to negotiate a minimum of four weeks flexibility in selection of items, and if possible the optimum of two weeks for revising the item selection, will pay dividends in terms of having the right item at the right time. This will enable you to generate the sales profits from key seasonal items. This effort allows you to be on the “cutting edge” of produce availability and seasonality while blending your efforts with the rest of the store. **pb**

Even in the case of planning “in pencil,” the variability of Produce undermines any such planning.

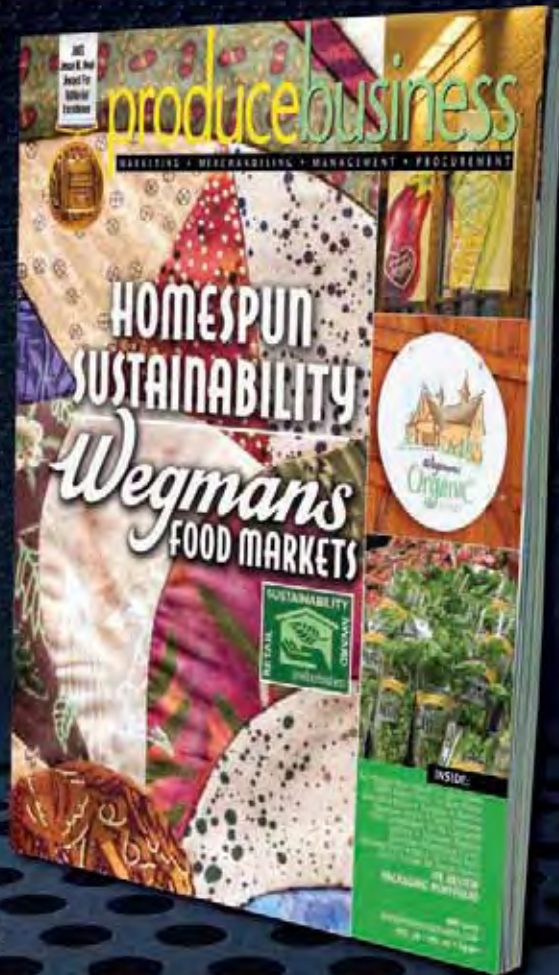
By Don Harris

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

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LESSONS WORTH TEACHING

Interview conducted by Mira Slott, excerpted from the *Perishable Pundit*, June 11, 2013



In April, Freshfel Europe sent a letter to the European Commission's Commissioner for Agriculture, Dacian Ciolos, questioning the appropriateness and the timing for change considerations to the European Commission's CAP (Common Agriculture Policy) schemes on agricultural products to school children. The European Commission looked for a number of options for improving the functioning of

schemes targeting children under the CAP. The main trouble was that the latest proposed changes were directed toward inclusion of other agricultural products in the schools, thus diluting specific efforts of the school fruit scheme.

Philippe Binard, secretary general of Freshfel Europe in Brussels, Belgium, discusses the conflict with the *Perishable Pundit*.

Freshfel's Philippe Binard fights for Europe's school fruit scheme.

Q: What sparked the proposed changes, and why do you view them as detrimental?

A: The European Commission is looking at whether the school fruit scheme needs to have its own functioning, or in simplification, should be merged with other agricultural products; that could be a benefit of extending the school scheme to a broader range of products.

This is where we conflicted with the Commission. The background of how and why the existing schemes came about are quite different. The main reason for the fruit scheme, and why the background is important, is the need to educate children on fruits and vegetables.

When you have public money, it's important to know how to monitor the program and see its benefits. A broader scheme defeats the ability to do that if you add milk, grain, cereal or meat products in the scheme. There are even talks about adding flowers.

Q: What happened to the proposed increased funding?

A: When institutions participate in the scheme, the EU supports 50 percent of the product. There is a financial proposal to raise the EU contribution to 75 percent.

Another element of the proposal is to have the EU co-finance the accompanying promotion measure that needs to be taken in any school scheme. If you don't have activity to educate the children, the scheme won't be effective. This is something that had to be financed by each of the countries. This could help to convince more countries to jump into the system.

Q: What are the implementation impressions from each country?

A: There are countries strongly using the scheme — Italy is the biggest

user. It receives close to 20 million Euros out of 90 million available for the school scheme.

The U.K. hardly uses it. It has a system that is not aligned with the EU's. The U.K.'s school scheme goes through its National Health Service with other parameters. It prefers to go its own way, which is very specific to the status of the U.K.

As far as the distribution of money for the fruit scheme by country, the second biggest is Germany. If we take the whole budget, Germany will have 11.5 million Euros, Poland close to 10 million as well as Romania, and then France and Spain, both with roughly five million.

Q: Do you think the proposed budget for the scheme will pass?

A: It's on the table now almost 18 months because it has a budget. Just like you have the fiscal cliff in the U.S., we have something similar in the EU. There are major discrepancies between the Commission's proposal for the whole budget and what member states are willing to accept. The member states are reducing budgets. Our budget line

for the school scheme is 90 million Euros for the time being. With the proposal to change it to 150 million Euros, that budget line for 2014 to 2020 has not been affected. However, as long as there is no final deal with the budget, the approval for the school theme is dependent on that.

Q: Isn't there a lot more work to be done to build meaningful long-term results in changing children's eating habits and increasing produce consumption?

A: The scheme exposes children to new eating experiences. To really make the differences we come to the EU to argue it needs to be much more ambitious. The 90 million Euros corresponds to one piece of fruit per child per week. With one piece, you won't change eating habits of children, and the scheme needs to be accompanied by more educational programs.

The most effective cases are where the programs are more intense with measures to raise awareness and bring the message home to benefit the family. The comprehensive programs show something happening from the health aspect and overall attitudes of the children.

What's important is to include diversity of produce. In an apple-producing region, what is brought to school are apples. If the supplier in Spain distributes oranges or mandarins, the likelihood is the children are used to the taste because they have them in their backyard garden. It's important for kids to discover new products, learn to cut a kiwi or how to prepare broccoli or carrots. These elements of diversification are happening, but need to be more. We have strong support, yet we cannot rest on our laurels. We must remain vigilant.

pb

Philippe Binard

Binard has a legal background from the University of Leuven (Leuven, Belgium). In 2001, he was appointed General Delegate of Freshfel Europe (the European Fresh Produce Association) located in Brussels, Belgium. This association is the European fresh fruit and vegetables representative body incorporating more than 200 members (associations and companies) from the fresh produce sector.

RICHARD J. BYLLOTT, CPA

Chief Financial Officer, Nathel & Nathel, Inc.
Founder, We Are Many Foundation



5 MILE RUN FOR "THE MANY"

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THE FACTS:

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- 1 out of every 4 girls is sexually abused each year.
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- There are 42 million adults today in this country who were sexually victimized in their youth.

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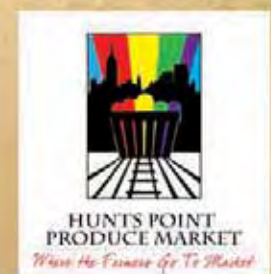
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BLAST FROM THE PAST

KFI RADIO PRESENTS: BRANDT FARMS

Back in the late 1960's, television continued to forge its way into American homes. But with Bell Laboratories' transistors, radios were made smaller, better and cheaper for houses and cars. In 1965 there were roughly 228 million radios in the U.S., and a typical AM/FM radio cost \$30.

Suspense-filled crime stories and heart-wrenching dramas may have made their way to television, but automobile commuters still needed entertainment and news while in transit.

Nelson McIninch was Farm Director at radio station KFI AM 640 when this photo was taken on June 29 in the late 1960s. He is interviewing Jack Brandt (seated on far left), founder of Brandt Farms, while F.A. Preuss (standing in suit) and K.A. Boyajian (standing behind McIninch) show their approval of the plums presented to McIninch.

F.A. Preuss was a grower in Sanger, CA, and chairman of The California Fresh Plum Advisory Board—a state promotional program that dissolved around the early 1970s, along with a variety of other fruit boards, to jointly operate under the umbrella of the federal program known as the California Tree Fruit Agreement (CTFA). The CTFA was established in 1933 to affect the marketing of pears, peaches, plums, cherries, apricots, and persimmons by educating consumers, food industry professionals and media about the fruits. In 2003, the CTFA disassembled due to internal conflicts. K.A. Boyajian was a local grower and board member of The California Fresh Plum Advisory Board as well.

"Usually in early summer, McIninch would host a 'meet the grower' segment during his broadcast to kick off the marketing year for plums," says Wayne Brandt, son of Jack Brandt.

Located in Reedley, CA, Brandt Farms was established in 1941. Wayne's father started the business by growing and packing his own nectar variety peaches and hauling them to the San Francisco market. The business expanded when neighbors asked Jack Brandt to handle their fruit as well. Brandt Farms now has 72 years and three generations of experience in growing, packing and marketing California peaches, nectarines and plums.



The *Blast from the Past* is a regular feature of *PRODUCE BUSINESS*. We welcome submissions of your old photos, labels or advertisements along with suggested captions. Please send materials to: Editor, *PRODUCE BUSINESS*, P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425, or e-mail info@producebusiness.com

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| New Jersey Blueberry Industry Council | 65 | 609-292-8853 | |
| New Jersey Department of Agriculture | 63 | 609-292-8853 | www.state.nj.us/agriculture |
| New York Apple Association, Inc. | 31 | 585-924-2171 | www.nyapplecountry.com |
| Ocean Mist Farms | 100 | 831-633-2492 | www.oceanmist.com |
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| Produce for Better Health Foundation | 21 | 302-235-2329 | www.pbhfoundation.org |
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