

inside... THE PUNDIT LOOKS AT WAL-MART • WHOLESALE CUSTOMER SERVICE • TRANSPORTATION LOGISTICS
AVOCADOS • SPORT SNACKS • FLORAL CARE AND HANDLING • SOCIAL MEDIA • BERRIES

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MARKETING • MERCHANDISING • MANAGEMENT • PROCUREMENT

THE 22ND ANNUAL

Mystery Shopper Report

MARCH 2010

MASTERS OF MERCHANDISING ISSUE

The Adventures Of The Sherlock Holmes Wannabees

Our cast of contributing writers goes
incognito at supermarkets around
the country.



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9th Annual
MASTERS OF
MERCHANDISING
SUPPLEMENT
Starts on page 43



Introducing the NEW Salad Guide from DOLE



Salad Guide

TASTE MILD 1 2 3 4 5 BOLD

TEXTURE TENDER 1 2 3 4 5 CRUNCHY

Part brains, part beauty, the new DOLE Salad Guide is a revolutionary new packaging feature placed prominently on the front of each DOLE blend, helping customers shop for salad in a totally new way.

The DOLE Salad Guide's easy-to-read Taste and Texture scales rate each DOLE salad to enable the customer to quickly find the type of flavor and level of crunch he or she wants. Each bag also features a "Pairs well with..." section, right below the scales. These helpful suggestions are unique to each blend and are created by our Dole Chefs, encouraging customers to spruce up their salads by sending them to parts of the produce section they never even imagined.

The new DOLE Salad Guide is transforming salad as we know it. With flavors that range from mild to bold and textures that take you from tender to crunchy, the possibilities and pairings are endless and the culinary inspiration is right there on the bag.

For more information on our new packaging or produce, please contact your Dole sales representative.
dole.com





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THIS MONTH'S WINNER:



Bull Gervasi
Store manager/
Produce buyer
Mariposa Food Co-op
Philadelphia, PA

Bull Gervasi loves working with produce. "It's the perfect intersection of beliefs that I hold high: Providing my neighborhood with healthful fresh food, reestablishing relationships with farmers, environmental stewardship and respect for workers' rights." With this in mind, it's no surprise to learn that Bull has been at Mariposa for 11 years, the last eight of which, he has been in charge of buying produce for the store.

Mariposa is a working member co-op, meaning that everyone who shops there is a member who works shifts in the store. "This helps to keep our overhead as low as possible so we can sell things at affordable prices," explains Bull. "Much of what we carry is locally grown and/or organic. We have excellent relationships with local farmers throughout South Jersey and Lancaster County, PA."

Bull has been keeping tabs on the industry with the help of PRODUCE BUSINESS for the past five years. "I enjoy the Produce Watch section and the retail perspectives are always interesting," he says. "Plus, I can follow sustainability issues, which are very pertinent to what we do here."

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

WIN A CUSINART SLOW COOKER

This 6 1/2-qt. slow cooker features a 24-hour programmable cook time, digital countdown time and three cooking modes. The keep-warm function engages automatically when cooking is done. A brushed stainless-steel exterior lends a professional look while the dishwasher-safe lid and pot make cleanup a breeze.



QUESTIONS FOR THE MARCH ISSUE

- 1) Who wrote a letter to Red Blossom commending its strawberries? _____

- 2) What program does Chelan Fresh have scheduled for the month of May? _____

- 3) In what year did Allen Lund Co. start operating? _____
- 4) What months are blueberries available from Family Tree Farms? _____

- 5) What is the street address for the California Pear Advisory Board's headquarters? _____

- 6) What vitamin can be found in Monterey Mushrooms? _____

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

Name _____ Position _____

Company _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

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Reader Service # 36



A Salad Bar in Every School

United Fresh and produce industry leaders are taking the first steps in a landmark initiative to improve child nutrition and increase consumption of fruits and vegetables in schools across the United States. Launched February 9, United's campaign, A Salad Bar in Every School, constitutes a multi-year public health commitment from the fresh produce industry that can help shape dietary habits far beyond the school lunch line.

It's no accident that United's Salad Bar in Every School campaign was launched the same day as First Lady Michelle Obama's initiative to combat childhood obesity; the objectives and strategies of both programs are a great fit. Mrs. Obama's program, called Let's Move, advocates increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, along with other dietary strategies and exercise, to help kids get and stay healthy. United is excited about the opportunity to make significant contributions to Mrs. Obama's initiative, the result of which can be millions of healthier kids.

The Salad Bar in Every School campaign is administered by the United Fresh Foundation and is driven by the personal involvement and charitable commitment of produce growers, distributors and marketers. Their commitment will help generate private funding to provide salad bars to schools across the country that will serve as demonstration models for increasing children's fresh fruit and vegetable consumption. For example, a produce company could help the foundation purchase salad bars for schools in the communities where they operate or sell product, and thereby create awareness about the great benefits of salad bars. With this momentum, school nutrition professionals, principals and teachers, parent groups and community supporters can work with local, state and federal government officials to bring salad bars to all 100,000 schools in the United States.

United Fresh donated its first salad bar to

the Elsie Whitlow Stokes Public Charter School in Washington, D.C. last fall, where it continues to help school officials foster

A produce company could help the foundation purchase salad bars for schools in the communities where they operate or sell product, and thereby create awareness about the great benefits of salad bars.

bar a big hit.

It's easy to understand why salad bars are a proven method of increasing consumption of fresh produce. They offer kids an assortment of colors, textures and flavors from which to choose, feeding into children's natural desire for independence. By fostering that independence with nutritious options, kids take away a valuable personal experience about making healthy choices — at school and elsewhere — and learn healthful eating habits that can last a lifetime.

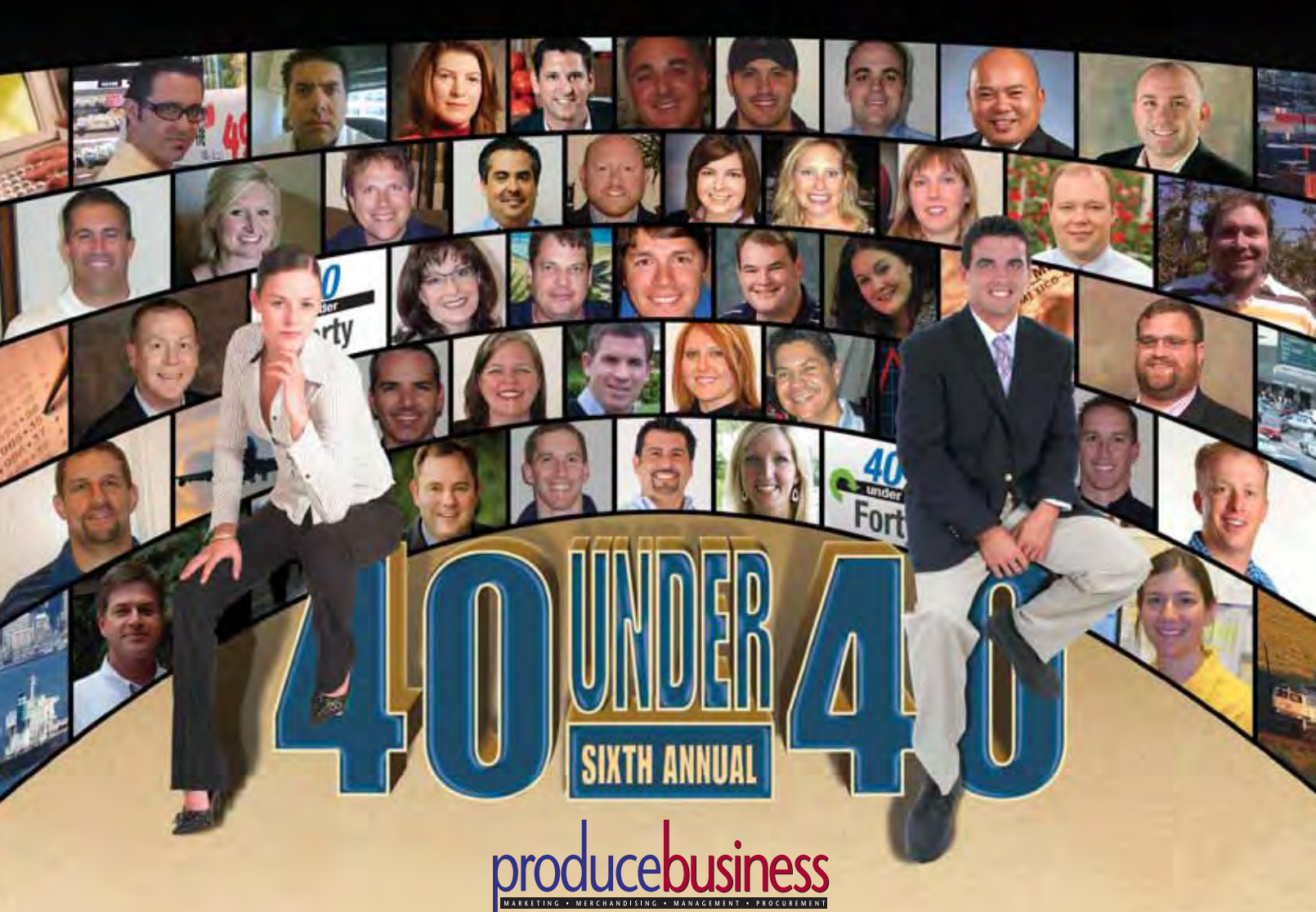
While the United Fresh Foundation launches the Salad Bar in Every School campaign, United Fresh is also making a difference in shaping federal legislation that advocates salad bars as a strategy for improving child nutrition. Last fall, United Fresh partnered with Congressmen Sam Farr (D-CA) and Adam Putnam (R-FL) on the introduction of the Children's Fruit and Vegetable Act of 2009 (H.R. 4333), which promotes salad bars in school cafeterias, supports better access to fresh fruits and vegetables in school meals and provides funding for school cafeteria equipment so that schools can store, prepare and serve more fresh produce. H.R. 4333 includes many of the priorities and recommendations made in the Institute of Medicine's 2009 report on improving school meals. United Fresh urges all members of our industry to help build broad bipartisan support for H.R. 4333 to ensure that its key policy recommendations are included in the 2010 Child Nutrition Act, which we anticipate will be reauthorized by Congress this spring.

Why not make a difference in your own community? United's Salad Bar in Every School initiative is a terrific way for your company to join with other industry leaders from across the country to improve child nutrition through increased produce consumption. Get engaged in this exciting campaign by contacting United Fresh Vice President of Business Development Claudia Wenzing at 202-303-3400 or cwenzing@united-fresh.org.



healthier choices, as well as children's interest in a variety of fresh produce offerings.

Every day, students at the school eagerly come to their cafeteria and load up their trays with a wide variety of colorful fresh fruits and vegetables. The kids and the school officials consider the salad



PRODUCE BUSINESS is accepting nominations for its Sixth 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, 1970).

To nominate someone, please go to www.producebusiness.com and click on the 40 under Forty icon, or fill out this form by March 1, 2010, 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 the back of this sheet for this)

Nominee's Professional Achievements:

Nominee's Industry/Community/Charitable Activities:

ABOUT THE NOMINATOR:

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

Fax back to 561-994-1610

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

For more information email: info@producebusiness.com



What Makes A Winning Vendor?

This issue features the 22nd annual iteration of the PRODUCE BUSINESS Mystery Shopper Report, in which we send undercover reporters to discover the quality of real world interaction between consumers and store employees. It also is the 9th annual edition to feature the PRODUCE BUSINESS Masters of Merchandising supplement, in which companies seize a leadership position in specific categories and seek to educate the retail community as to how to most effectively merchandise and market in these categories to increase sales and best serve the consumer.

Both efforts, in different ways, are attempts to address the reality that retail produce executives have a great deal on their plates and need help if they are to be highly successful at their jobs, serve their consumers in the best way possible and maximize the sales of fresh produce.

A few producers have the luxury of holding exclusive rights to varieties, product innovations or consumer brands that a retail executive may view as compelling enough to dictate a purchase decision. Almost everyone else, however, is compelled to seek alternative ways to differentiate oneself and create a compelling reason for a retail buyer to prefer to deal with a particular vendor. That is harder than it looks.

The crucial matter is quite basic: To have the product. To consistently have product of the size, grade and variety required is no easy matter, and to have it where it needs to be is even harder. Of course, few retailers will ever know what a producer has at any point in time.

So, put more subtly, the key thing is for the buyer to trust that the seller will take care of him. As it is hard to trust a company, the produce industry remains heavily a people business. It is in this gradual building of confidence that leads a retail executive to come to trust that a sales executive will always take care of his needs, that one still finds the essential glue that holds the business together. This glue is not always a sufficient adhesive for the very obvious reason that there are many sales executives and vendors who are willing to work very hard to take care of important buyers.

Also notable is that the basics of satisfying retail needs — quality, consistency, product availability, logistics capability, satisfactory pricing, etc. — are so well known and widely recognized that such capabilities are widely available. In fact, these characteristics and others, such as food safety, traceability and sustainability, are the focus of such vendor effort. Many producers who seek to adhere to the standards of the Produce Traceability Initiative (PTI) do so not because they believe in PTI or feel they have inadequate traceability; they do it because they want to be able to check all the boxes on retail forms, and they never want to give a retailer a reason NOT to

do business with their organization.

In effect, although these characteristics might all rank high in a survey of buyer needs, they are not effective ways to differentiate oneself and, in fact, represent a kind of ante — necessary to play, but not sufficient to win. Possessing these characteristics alone almost guarantees that one will be caught in a commodity trap, with price as the only variable that differentiates. Today, the margin of distinction almost always relies on getting involved in something that most produce producers consider both outside their realm of expertise and, perhaps, none of their business — retail issues.

To put this all another way, to add value, a vendor often needs to be able to offer information that addresses a retailer in the way a retailer thinks. Internally, within the retailer's own company this may mean identifying “opportunity” stores — a common

euphemism for stores that underperform compared to the other stores in the chain — and offering strategic and tactical help to bring those stores up to the mean. Externally, it may mean helping retailers to define their market share and focusing on strategies appropriate for that share — these could be bringing a chain up to the performance of its competitors or helping a store build on a strong performance to dominate its competitors.

Don't retailers do this all the time? Don't they know better than vendors how to do these things? The answer is yes ...and no. Retail organizations have much expertise, but they rarely focus that expertise on one produce item or category. It is doubtful that most retailers have any idea if they over-index or under-index their competitors on items such as butternut squash.

But they would like to win.

In other words, if a chain has an overall market share of 20 percent in a region, but only sells 10 percent of the butternut squash in the region, then a vendor who can both identify this shortfall and help to rectify it is a valuable vendor indeed, much more valuable than one who can only offer cheaper squash. In fact, even if the store is average in butternut squash, if half its stores are under-average and a vendor can help push them up to average, thus increasing the chain's overall penetration in the market, that is a winning vendor. Certainly, that kind of vendor should get the business and, just maybe, might be worthy of paying a premium.

The value intrinsic in a product is one kind of value. The value intrinsic in having a relationship with a particular vendor is another type of value all together. Success for many producers, retailers and the industry's overall goal of boosting consumption may ride on focusing on developing the value that comes from being able to really contribute to building sales. This issue is an expression of the importance of offering that value.

Retail organizations have much expertise, but they rarely focus that expertise on one produce item or category.

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SEALD-SWEET INTERNATIONAL VERO BEACH, FL

Ron Wynn was hired to the newly appointed position of general manager of West Coast sales and operations. He will be responsible for overseeing the citrus and deciduous fruit sales divisions. He brings nearly 30 years of sales and marketing experience and extensive tenure in the produce industry.



DOMEX SUPERFRESH GROWERS YAKIMA, WA

Jason Fonfara has returned to the company after spending four years with CDS Distributing. He joined Domex in September and manages both domestic and import accounts. His prior experience on the wholesale, distributor and retail side of the business will be a valuable asset to the firm. His duties will include driving category growth and sales.



L&M COMPANIES INC. RALEIGH, NC

Josh Tunstall has joined the sales team. He brings apple and cherry expertise along with exporting experience. He specializes in retail, wholesale and export services, and has worked in the Washington fruit industry for several years, most notably in the orchards and sheds. His duties will include overseeing the cherry program.



SAHLMAN WILLIAMS PUBLIC RELATIONS AND MARKETING TAMPA, FL

Gary Caloroso was appointed to president. He previously directed the company's West Coast expansion to serve its growing list of national clients from its office in Westlake Village, CA. He will continue to maintain client relationships with a strong business-centric approach while leading the company's dedicated team.



TRUE LEAF FARMS SAN JUAN BAUTISTA, CA

Julio Loaiza was hired as director of technical services, overseeing quality assurance, research and development and food safety. He has a bachelor's degree in biochemical engineering from the University of Sinaloa, Mexico and a Ph.D. in food biochemistry from the University of California, Davis.



FIRSTFRUITS MARKETING YAKIMA, WA

Joe Cozetto has joined the sales and marketing team and will work with domestic retail and food-service accounts. With nearly 30 years of experience in the produce industry, he has worked with domestic and export customers, including Rainier Fruit and Sage Marketing.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

FRESH-CUT SALAD MIXES

Pero Family Farms Company LLC, Delray Beach, FL, introduced Pero Family Farms Brand Salad CutUps, a line of four unique varieties of washed and ready-to-eat healthful gourmet salad toppings. Varieties include Asian, Garden, Tuscan and Double R Ranch. Pero's fresh, high-quality produce is cleaned, cut and packaged in individual packets.



Reader Service No. 300

TRACEABILITY SOFTWARE

FoodLogiQ, Research Triangle Park, NC, launched a free version of an innovative application for growers, produce buyers and consumers. The software solution enables growers to comply with the produce traceability initiative requirements while marketing their business directly to produce buyers, connecting with consumers and meeting labeling requirements.



Reader Service No. 301

GARLIC VACUUM BAGS

Christopher Ranch, Gilroy, CA, introduced a 6-ounce, resealable vacuum pack, featuring Christopher Ranch's California Heirloom Garlic in freshly peeled garlic cloves, freshly roasted garlic cloves and fresh organic cloves. The bags require 80 percent less packaging than the original 6-ounce jars and are 100 percent recyclable.



Reader Service No. 302

DEL MONTE VENDING LINE

Vend Natural Inc., Ventura, CA, announced the addition of the Del Monte Fresh Produce Fresh Vending Line to its healthy snacks. Products will include Del Monte fresh-cut fruits and vegetables to complement Vend Natural's current line of healthy snack and beverage selections. The products are portioned between four and six ounces.



Reader Service No. 303

FRESHPOINT INVESTS IN TRACEABILITY SYSTEM

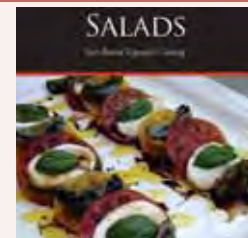
FreshPoint Inc., Houston, TX, has partnered with Dallas, TX-based SG Systems LLC. This combination of experience from SG systems and the drive and enthusiasm for production efficiency from FreshPoint, has produced a traceability system that complies with even the most stringent legislations.



Reader Service No. 304

OCEAN MIST OFFERS DIGITAL COOKBOOKS

Ocean Mist Farms, Castroville, CA, has made its new soup and salad recipe cookbooks available digitally online. The new cookbooks are the most recent in a series the company is now distributing on its Web site, which also contains cooking videos. The company modified the site based on traffic trends and consumer needs.



Reader Service No. 305

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

IPC OFFERS COST-CALCULATING TOOL

Idaho Potato Commission (IPC), Eagle, ID, is offering the Cost-Per-Each-Serving Calculator, a simple-to-use, slide tool designed to determine the price per serving. The small tool is made of durable, coated cardboard. IPC began offering the tool to help foodservice professionals understand the value and calculate the cost of an individual Idaho potato.



Reader Service No. 306

WILD BLUEBERRIES ON HEALTHIEST FOOD LIST

Health Magazine has ranked wild blueberries as second on its list of America's Healthiest Superfoods For Women, falling behind Wild Alaskan Salmon as No. 1 in its January/February 2010 issue. The article singles out wild blueberries' variety of potential health benefits, including preventing memory loss, improving motor skills, lowering blood pressure and fighting wrinkles.



Reader Service No. 307

PAIA ANNOUNCES CHAIRMAN SEATS

Peruvian Asparagus Importers Association (PAIA) announced its chairman seats for the 2010-2012 term. John Campbell Barmmer of Chestnut Hill Farms will serve as East Coast co-chair, and newly elected Chris Martin of Gourmet Trading will serve as West Coast co-chair. PAIA's main objective this year will be to enhance industry focus for increasing the consumption of fresh asparagus in the U.S. market.



Reader Service No. 308

WELL-PICT STRAWBERRIES FEATURED ON TV

Well-Pict Berries showcased its strawberries on Lifetime Television's *The Balancing Act* during a new episode on February 8 and 26. The episode is scheduled to air again on March 12. The episode includes food safety information and helpful tips on washing and storing strawberries to increase their longevity.



Reader Service No. 309

CMI PARTNERS WITH FITNESS EXPERT

Columbia Marketing International, Wenatchee, WA, and Leslie Sansone announced the release of her new instructional DVD that combines indoor walking and Pilates. Each DVD includes a card touting Ambrosia Apples and a \$2-off coupon good for any current in-store Leslie Sansone DVD. The promotion also includes recipes.



Reader Service No. 310

IPC LAUNCHES RECIPE CONTEST

Idaho Potato Commission, Eagle, ID, launched its Watching Waistlines and Wallets Recipe Contest, which offers more than \$7,500 in prizes awarded for original, healthful and affordable recipes. Fitness guru, Denise Austin, and Art Ginsburg, also known as Mr. Food, teamed up to promote the contest.



Reader Service No. 311

SOURCE ORGANIC OFFERS FRESH, ORGANIC PRODUCE

Source Organic, Santa Cruz, CA, offers volume-purchasing opportunities of fresh, organic produce direct from growers. Representing organic growers from across the globe, Source Organic will provide year-round availability of the finest organic fresh fruit, including bananas, citrus, soft fruit, avocados, pineapples, mangos, berries, apples and pears. Melody Meyer, senior director of produce procurement, is pictured at right.



Reader Service No. 312

DOLE PROMOTES BANANA DIET

Dole Fresh Fruit Co., a Westlake Village, CA-based subsidiary of Dole Food Co. Inc., has launched a new promotion to draw awareness toward the health and weight loss benefits of the new Dole Banana Diet, which recommends eating two bananas for breakfast. The diet is based on the original Morning Banana Diet, which spread across Japan in 2008.



Reader Service No. 313

HOUSE FOODS EXPANDS BUSINESS

House Foods America Corp., Garden Grove, CA, added three major retail chains — Shop Rite, Food Emporium and A&P — to its sales and distribution roster, increasing market share in the New York/New Jersey/Connecticut region from 7 percent to more than 22 percent in the past two years, while maintaining a steady 85 percent share in the greater Los Angeles, CA, area.



Reader Service No. 314

GIUMARRA BORQUEZ BEGINS ASPARAGUS IN MEXICO

Giumarra Borquez LLC, Los Angeles, CA, has begun its asparagus season in Caborca, Mexico. The division is based in Escondido, CA, and markets asparagus year-round from Mexico, Chile, Peru and California to the North American market. In 2009, Giumarra developed a partnership with Campo Pablo Borquez, a fourth-generation green asparagus grower.



Reader Service No. 315

CONCORD, SUNKIST ANNOUNCE CONTEST WINNERS

Concord Foods Inc., Brockton, MA, announced the winners of the 2009 nationwide Sunkist Smoothie Mixes. Siobhain Craemer of Harwinton, CT, won the \$500 grand prize. Two runners-up received a flat-screen TV valued at \$400 each.



Reader Service No. 316

SUN WORLD, SANTA SWEETS EXPAND DISTRIBUTION

Sun World International LLC, Bakersfield, CA, and Santa Sweets Inc., Plant City, FL, teamed up to offer Santa Sweets grape tomatoes in 1-pint and 1-quarter sized clamshells. The clamshells will be merchandised under a co-branded Santa Sweets/Sun World label for both conventional and organic products. Santa Sweets will ship the year-round product out of its Nogales, AZ-based facility.



Reader Service No. 317

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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Fresh, Healthy And Home Cooked — Reimagining The Ideal Meal

Today's consumers are eating at home more often, and according to a new online survey, fresh and healthy ingredients from the produce department are among the most important characteristics of the ideal home meal.

The study focused on shoppers who frequently dine in casual restaurants to get their perspectives on cooking at home compared to their dining experiences away from home; 221 consumers were surveyed about what inspires and satisfies them when they cook at home.

Consumers are also learning that cooking is not really that difficult, thanks to food television and a growing food culture to demystify the art, techniques and satisfaction of cooking. Value systems are shifting and the experience of a meal at home is winning out more and more over the perceived indulgence of dining out.

The Motivation to Cook At Home

Saving money is the driving force behind much consumer behavior in today's marketplace and it's no different when it comes to cooking. The top reason for cooking at home was to save money (81 percent). However, 72 percent said they are cooking at home to get their meals exactly the way they like them. The more frequently respondents cooked at home, the more important they rated characteristics like "getting good ingredients," and "to get just what you want."

Consumers talked about how easy it was to have it all when dining at home, and one comment captured it perfectly. Healthful foods and lots of fresh vegetables were a major plus for home meals. Study respondents also reported that they like the nutritional integrity

Olson Communications Inc. is a Chicago, IL, based food marketing firm that specializes in trend spotting in the food business. Find them at www.olsoncom.com.

of cooking at home.

Convenience was another positive factor consumers attributed to home cooking. Consumers reported that making home cooked meals often took less time to prepare and cook than restaurant take-out that required driving to a restaurant, waiting and then reheating and serving at home.

The Home Dining Experience

Restaurants have long held the enviable position as the destination for dining experiences, yet consumers are talking about their home-dining experiences with the same passionate vocabulary that was once reserved for special occasion dining out. In this study, consumers talked about wine and candlelight with their home-cooked meals. They also talked about not being rushed and the joy of eating with real silverware instead of disposables.

The majority of respondents in all age groups reported they were cooking more meals at home. Overall, 63 percent reported cooking the meal themselves; 12 percent said cooking was a family experience and only 4 percent admitted to bringing the meal home from a restaurant to reheat and serve. There were far more comments from consumers about the desire for someone else to clean up after the meal than there were requests for others to do the actual cooking.

The joy of sharing the meal with others was a subject of many comments from consumers. Older consumers talked of the re-emergence of childhood traditions, yet all talked of the simple pleasure of a shared dining experience, "eating good food and enjoying each other's company."

Fresh Satisfaction

Fresh ingredients were considered important or very important to 94 percent of consumers when asked to describe their ideal dining experience at home. Healthful ingredi-

ents were noted by 90 percent, local fruits and/or vegetables were noted by 74 percent. Although organic fruits and vegetables have positive characteristics for consumers, 75 percent of respondents to the survey did not see them as important in creating an ideal home-dining experience.

The desire for a balanced life related directly to opportunities for produce. Consumers identified healthful foods as synonymous with fresh vegetables. Seasonal items were standout ingredients in the ideal meal experience defined by survey respondents. There was a resounding desire for well-balanced and healthful meals.

Luxuries such as home-delivered restaurant meals or an in-home chef preparing a meal were actually chosen by very few respondents (4 percent and 2 percent, respectively). These choices speak to an emergence of consumer preferences for a new simplicity that delivers an authentic experience over a fancy dining experience.

Cooking Styles

When asked about cooking styles, more than three-fourths of respondents reported cooking from scratch and reheating leftovers for another meal at least once a week. Thirty percent of respondents say they are cooking more from scratch than they were a year ago.

Making the Fresh Connection

Consumers in this study had some good advice for their local retailer. They asked for more access to local produce and the convenience of being able to find all the ingredients at one store. "Wow" packaging had no appeal when it came to produce where minimalism and freshness were the keys to desirability. The majority of consumers surveyed did not consider their home cooking fancy — just fresh, satisfying and just the way they like it.

Is Produce Up To The Home Cooking Challenge?

At a time when consumer preferences are in flux due to economic change, there is always opportunity for businesses looking to attract those consumers. Understanding how consumers who eat out frequently at casual dining restaurants perceive eating at home may open a path for retailers to build business from these consumers. In fact, the Olson Communications research points to a more optimistic scenario for retailers than the commonly understood “trading down” phenomenon. It turns out, people like eating at home, and for reasons likely to continue even if the recession abates.

Yes, saving money is still the most common motivation, but it is not precisely clear what that means. Sure, if restaurants were free or cost precisely the same as shopping in grocery stores, they would get more business, but the implications of this research are clearly that even if people can afford to eat out, they have real reasons to want to eat home.

We read the research as speaking powerfully to the influence of health and diet advice on consumer attitudes. The respondents were people who frequently ate at casual dining establishments, but the fact that at least some of the respondents were contrasting the joys of real silverware with plastic utensils indicates that the respondents were also sometimes contrasting home cooking with fast food. Although at both casual and quick-serve restaurants it is possible to eat in a healthful manner, restaurant serving sizes, the temptation of unhealthful alternatives as well as the predominance of processed foods and high fat dressings and sauces can make it difficult.

In other words, at McDonald’s, one can eat a salad, but if one wants to eat a burger, the options are difficult for someone looking to eat healthful. Most diet advice today says that eating processed foods like the white bun on

The produce department is well positioned to capitalize on a switch in quality as it relates to dining.

a McDonald’s hamburger should be avoided, and, in fact, on a regular McDonald’s hamburger, the bun has more calories — 150 — than the beef patty, which has just 90, but McDonald’s doesn’t offer a whole grain option. If one wants to do a buffalo burger or a turkey burger to reduce the fat a bit, once again, there are no such options.

Even when restaurants seem to offer more healthful options, they are often not what the health-concerned consumer is really seeking. So Subway, for example, offers a 9-grain wheat bread option, but that bread contains ingredients such as high fructose corn syrup. Even when restaurants tout a healthful menu, they often don’t make nutritional information easy to find. Go to the web site for Applebee’s and one will be presented with its Under 550 Calories menu, but consumers find no other information, such as the percentage of calories from fat or vitamin and mineral content.

Because healthful foods are often lower in fat or sugar, they also often require different seasonings and accoutrements if people are to enjoy them. Combine all this together, and it is easy to see why consumers, who are looking to eat healthfully, may find the restaurant experience frustrating.

This may also explain a really intriguing finding of the research. Industry experts have speculated that as consumers “trade down” to retail from foodservice, they would first head to the supermarket deli. It is a reasonable enough assumption; after all, suddenly deciding to eat at home doesn’t instantly give

everyone the skill to cook. Perhaps consumers don’t want to think of what they are doing as “trading down” and instead like to think of it as moving to a more healthful kind of eating filled with fresh ingredients and local fruits and vegetables and spiced just the way they like it.

In other words, people often make the best of things and if money is a little tight, they realize they can pick up in family togetherness and better health what they might lose in ease and convenience by eating out. The produce department is well positioned to capitalize on a switch in the very meaning of quality as it relates to dining.

Whereas once this might have referenced specialty items from Europe in little jars and bottles, now, quality is intrinsically tied up with the idea of fresh. Even the expression of support for local isn’t abstract; when PRODUCE BUSINESS has done focus groups in this area, we find that consumers want local, in no small part, because they assume it is fresher.

This exciting research tells a tale: The recession has brought consumers to a point where they are now trying home cooking again, and it is to the fresh produce department that they are turning for the elements to complete meals that are healthful and fresh.

If produce departments rise to the challenge with the variety, the quality and the recipes that consumers need to be satisfied, it could lead to a generational change toward more consumption of fresh produce. Let us hope the departments are up to the challenge.

The End Of The Sam Walton Era At Wal-Mart: Navigating A New Business Model

From Jim Prevor's Perishable Pundit
February 9, 2010



JIM PREVOR'S

PERISHABLE PUNDIT

There is no question that we have written many articles on Wal-Mart. Recently, however, we have written several pieces focused on change that is transforming produce procurement at Wal-Mart. Then on Wednesday, February 3, 2010, the domestic buying apparatus that had been assembled mostly by Ron McCormick was blown up. It appears there were two conference calls that day, one for the few who made the cut and the other to discuss how people could pick up their severance packages.

Confusion still exists. It appears that Procurement will be divided into three sectors: Global Procurement, Merchandising and Local Sourcing. Financial Planning (Budgeting), Pricing, Customer Experience (Modules) and Replenishment all seem to be separate pieces of the puzzle. It is a new model for doing business, and it raises at least five immediate questions we can try to answer:

1. What is the new business model?

It is hard to understand. Details are very sparse. As far as U.S. Operations are concerned, the country has been divided into thirds. There is an executive vice president in charge of each area, and they are located in the field. No clear sense of direction is apparent at the moment, although one would suspect that a few individuals know what they are trying to do and, presumably, that will become clearer with the passing of time.

2. Does the new business model offer the hope of a sustainable business advantage for Wal-Mart?

We heard that McKinsey (a world-renowned, international consulting firm) was hired to help draft this program, although we're not able to get confirmation on that. Without a doubt, though, the consultants and key individuals at Wal-Mart who have decided this course should be pursued believe this to be true. However, the final outcome is uncertain.

3. Does this adoption of a new business model create opportunities for competitors? If so, what are those opportunities?

We can already see that huge opportunities are being created for competitors. We don't know what Wal-Mart will gain through the adoption of this new business model, but we clearly can see what Wal-Mart has lost. A supplier community that was once deeply dedicated to seeing Wal-Mart succeed now has ZERO trust in Wal-Mart — at least for right now. That being said, Wal-Mart is still a huge receiver, and its checks can be cashed. Wal-Mart will not go without produce and, if Wal-Mart keeps growing, it will be hard for suppliers to diversify away from such a large and growing buyer. A key factor to recognize, though, is that no one seems willing to believe that Wal-Mart is a long-term strategic partner. This means, of course, that the best brands and the best suppliers are open to be strategic partners with other retailers in a way they have not been for over a decade.

4. Where do suppliers of various types fit into the new model?

Is there a place for brands? Is there a place for superior quality? Is the procurement of produce now strictly a matter of price?

Brands are clearly playing a diminished role. The current leadership believes that private label is the way to differentiate. But more importantly, Wal-Mart is now purely a "margin play," so private label and F.O.B. price are the priority. With regards to quality, there are indications that Wal-Mart executives are in a state of denial. They believe that their global procurement of produce has had no impact on quality. They also believe their Great Value label is equal to national brand quality. And, what may portend a big problem in years to come, there are indications that top Wal-Mart executives are not open-minded on this subject. In fact, we understand that at least some Wal-Mart executives fear that were they to suggest that this may not be the case, they would be perceived as being "old-school," perhaps lose their opportunity for advancement, or even their job.

5. In produce they just fired a load of people. How does this impact the implementation of this new business model?

This is an important point. Experience used to be valued at Wal-Mart. Now, it seems to be regarded as being "out of touch." Pam Kohn and DeDe Priest are not recognized as highly knowledgeable produce experts. It seems as if the few remaining executives with in-depth produce knowledge are marginalized with regard to decision-making. When you are the biggest buyer in the world, one does not have to know anything. But the biggest buyer in the world should want its people to know everything. Ignorance allows others to slip things by and means one won't recognize opportunities.

...

We began this series by pointing out that this new approach was the end of the Peterson era. That was true and made sense in speaking to the produce industry, which is still filled with folks who joined with Bruce Peterson 20 years ago to build Wal-Mart's produce operation from scratch.

Yet, this is all taking place within a context much broader than produce or perishables. Most of what Bruce Peterson did was not original. What he mostly did was take the concepts that Sam Walton had developed in general merchandise and apply them to produce.

So what is really happening goes way beyond dismantling Bruce Peterson's produce-buying procedures; what is really signified by all this is the end of the Sam Walton era at Wal-Mart.

All the things that Sam Walton believed in — EDLP, item merchandising, interactive supplier interface, national brand merchants, etc. — are all being dropped in favor of a different model.

The key is to recognize that a new culture exists at Wal-Mart. Like all corporate cultures, this one will have its strengths and its weaknesses; therein lies the opportunity and the risks for Wal-Mart associates and competitors alike.

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Cathy Dickenson, Spring Hill, TN
May 23, 2009



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Reader Service # 44

The Adventures Of The Sherlock Holmes Wannabees

OUR CAST OF CONTRIBUTING WRITERS GOES INCOGNITO AT SUPERMARKETS AROUND THE COUNTRY.



While the economy may finally be experiencing a bit of an upturn, people across the United States are continuing to shop smartly, buying only what they know they will use in a given time frame. This typically translates to more frequent trips to the grocery store, giving produce associates more of a chance than ever to impress shoppers with their knowledge of produce in general and the department in which they work.

The economic crises has also lured more shoppers into grocery stores, as they attempt to save money by preparing food at home, whether that means casual hamburgers on the grill, recreating a restaurant-quality meal or trying out a new recipe from their favorite foodie magazine. (For more on this topic, see the *Fresh Perspectives/Comments & Analysis* articles on pages 14 and 15.) All of these options are bringing shoppers directly to the produce department.

Here at PRODUCE BUSINESS, we want to be sure that produce department associates across the country are knowledgeable, helpfully and happily engaging their customers. In an effort to better serve retailers and reveal the areas in which produce staff needs to improve, PRODUCE BUSINESS conducted our 22nd Annual Mystery Shopper Report. We gathered a handful of our contributing and staff editors and sent them to various stores around the country in mid-January. They were all armed with the same two recipes from Epicurious.com: *Beet and Jicama on Endive with Garlic Yogurt Dressing* and *Mango Pomegranate Guacamole*. We instructed them to ask challenging questions about the items they would need, and try to engage the employees in an effort to see how well each produce department is represented by its staff.

While our report is not meant to criticize any one store or chain, there are a few that could definitely use some pointers, while others set seriously high standards. Here's what we found.

NORTHEAST REPORT:

STORE 1: The Adventure Of The White Onions

Armed with the Mango Pomegranate Guacamole recipe, I visited a large, regional chain in a working-class neighborhood. I have never been too impressed with their produce section and have not visited the store in quite a while, so I was surprised when I entered on a weekday mid-morning to see a large, newly remodeled section with great lighting. Contrary to previous visits, the produce all looked fresh and of superior quality.

No one was working on the floor, so I browsed for some of the items on my list until a young employee hustled from the back carrying a few boxes of bagged salad. I approached this harried-looking person saying, "Excuse me, I need some help finding some items for a recipe I want to try."

"Sure," he replied, turning to me with a surprising smile. "What do you need?"

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"Well, I'm making this guacamole," I said showing him the printed recipe. "But, I don't know how to tell if an avocado is ripe."

He motioned for me to follow him to the avocado display and explained, "You want ones with a little give."

He started sifting through the avocados looking for ripe ones to give me. "None of these are really ripe enough to use today," he said. "If you can wait until tomorrow, these two here should be good."

"OK," I replied. "Is there any way to ripen them faster?"

"Just leave them out at room temperature," he answered. "Avocados tend to ripen quickly."

"OK," I said. "Next I need a cup of finely chopped white onion. How many onions do I need to buy for a cup?"

"Well, we have ones that are already diced for you in that section over there," he said, indicating the fresh-cut area. "But, those are yellow onions. Your recipe says white, right?"

"Yes," I replied. "Is there a difference?"

"The white onions are milder than the yellow," he answered. "So you probably should stick with the white ones. One should be sufficient. They're over here."

"I also need a Serrano chile," I added.

"We have Serrano peppers this way," he stated and led me to an ample display of 10 or more different varieties of chile peppers. "The Serranos are pretty hot. They're hotter than a Jalapeño, but milder than the Habanero." He pointed out both of these others for me.

"Oh," I balked. "I don't really like spicy food. Is there another pepper not as hot as the Serrano that I could use?"

After thinking for a moment, he pointed out the Poblano. "You could try that one. It's medium-hot. What else is on your list?"

"Mango is next and I need the same help as with the avocado," I said. "How do I pick a ripe one? And, the last thing is cilantro, but I don't even know what that is."

"No problem," he said jovially. "I can help with both. This way to the mango. Just like the avocado, you want one with a little give."

He selected two ripe ones for me and properly explained how to cut them. Then, he turned to the herb display. "We have two forms of cilantro, this bulk bunch and the packaged," he described. "You can pick whichever you want."

Thanking him, I selected a bunch then exclaimed, "Oh wait! I forgot the most unique thing! The recipe also calls for pomegranates."

He winced and stated, "We don't carry pomegranates anymore, just a package of the seeds."

"That's what I need," I replied. "It says here 3/4 cup of pomegranate seeds."

He led me to where the seeds were and

MYSTERY SHOPPER RECIPES

Beet and Jicama on Endive with Garlic Yogurt Dressing

For dressing:

- 32 ounces whole-milk plain yogurt
- 2-3 teaspoons minced garlic
- ½ cup chopped fresh mint

For salad:

- 2 pounds trimmed beets
- 2 ½ pounds jicamas (about 1 ½)
- 3 tablespoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon finely grated fresh orange zest
- ¼ cup fresh orange juice
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 teaspoons crushed fennel seeds
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 8 Belgian endives

Preparation:

Make dressing: Drain yogurt in a large sieve lined with double thickness of cheesecloth. Chill for at least 8 hours. Stir drained yogurt with garlic, mint and salt to taste.

Make salad: Preheat oven to 425°F. Wrap beets in foil and roast in the middle of the oven for 75 minutes, or until tender when pierced with a knife. Cool beets. Peel beets and jicamas and cut into 1/4-inch dice. Toss with sugar, zest, orange juice, vinegar, oil, fennel and salt to taste. Stir lemon juice into a large bowl of cold water. Cut ends from endives and separate into leaves. Soak in lemon water 10 minutes to keep endive from discoloring. Drain and spin dry. Spread some dressing on each leaf and spoon beet salad over it.

Source: *Epicurious*



Mango Pomegranate Guacamole

- 4 ripe avocados (2 pounds total)
- 1 cup finely chopped white onion
- 2 fresh Serrano chiles, finely chopped (2 tablespoons), including seeds
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice, or to taste
- ¾ cup pomegranate seeds (from 1 pomegranate)
- ¾ cup diced peeled mango
- ½ cup chopped cilantro

Preparation:

Halve, pit and peel avocados. Coarsely mash in a bowl. Stir in onion, chiles, ¼-cup lime juice and 1 ¼ teaspoons salt. Fold in pomegranate seeds, mango and cilantro. Season with salt and additional lime juice. Serve with plantain chips and garnish with lime wedges.

Source: *Epicurious*



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explained, "People really only buy pomegranates for the seeds so we decided to stop carrying the whole fruit and just stock the seeds."

STORE 2: The Adventure Of The Missing Jicama

My next visit was to a large, national chain in an upscale neighborhood on a slow, mid-week morning. This store prides itself on having outstanding products and services. I chose the Beet and Jicama on Endive recipe for this test, hoping it would challenge this impeccable department. After perusing the department for a while, I cautiously approached an older gentleman re-stocking bagged salads since he had not yet acknowledged my lingering presence. "Excuse me," I said. "I'm trying to make this salad I saw on television, but I need some help. I don't understand some of the ingredients."

"Yes," he said, putting down the bag in his hand and turning toward me.

"I need something called jicama," I replied.

"Oh," he indicated. "We may have that here in the specialty section."

I followed him to a large and well-appointed specialty section and he browsed quickly for the item. "Sometimes we have it and sometimes we don't," he said. "I don't see it right now. It looks something like this." He pointed to a large, off-white turnip.

"Oh no," I lamented. "Is there anything I can use in its place?"

"Your best bet is probably a potato," he suggested. "You can choose any of the white or yellow potatoes we have over there."

"Alright," I said. "Next I need beets. I did not know you could buy them without being canned."

"Sure," he said and led me to a small display of red beets.

"Oh, this is what they're like," I said. "How do I peel and chop them? Will they stain everything?"

"You can put down a few layers of paper towel over your cutting board," he suggested. "That should help. You'll want to scrub and peel them. What else do you need?"

"Fennel seeds," I replied. "I don't know what fennel or its seeds are."

"Fennel is an herb," he explained. "Although if you just need the seeds, you will probably find them in the spice aisle. It's number nine."

Pulling up my list again and indicating the recipe, I queried, "I also need some fresh orange and lemon juice. How many oranges and lemons do I need to get for these quantities of juice?"

He walked me to the citrus display and selected two lemons. "This should be enough for the lemon juice," he stated. "For the orange juice, you'll need four to five oranges.



"She proceeded to give me a thorough lesson in judging ripeness, selecting the best mangos, how to cut them and what flavors in the recipe complement them."

The bigger ones here would be better. They'll be easier for you to juice and you should get more juice out of them."

"That's great," I replied. "Finally, there is one more thing I never heard of — orange zest."

Cocking his head, he thought a bit and then admitted, "I never heard of that. Let me check with someone else."

"Hey Joe," he called to another employee on the floor. "Do we have orange zest?"

The second employee looked equally confused and shook his head. "No, I don't think so," he replied.

Turning to me, my original produce helper said, "Sorry, but I guess we don't carry that."

I thanked him for his time and help and proceeded on my way as he rushed back to his other duties. Ironically, as I shopped for the remaining items on my list, I noticed a microplane tool used for zesting hanging at the end of an aisle at the back of the produce department.

STORE 3: The Adventure Of The Fennel Seeds

My last visit was to a small, local independent chain known for its focus on fresh products. I went on a busy Sunday afternoon and there were three employees re-stocking the department. The department is small, but clean and well-merchandised with a farmers' market look. I approached an employee while he was in the middle of helping another customer, holding up the Beet and Jicama recipe.

"Excuse me," I said. "I need some help."

"Sure," he replied cordially. "Let me finish with this guy and I'll be right with you."

After directing the customer to the herbs, he turned back to me. "I'm trying to make this salad, but I don't understand all the ingredients," I explained. "It calls for jicama, but I never heard of that."

"Oh, the Mexican potato!" he exclaimed smiling. "Right over here."

He easily led me to a small end-cap where the jicama and other root crops were dis-

played in baskets. "What's it like?" I asked.

"I've never tasted it, but they say it has the consistency of a potato," he replied. "Is there something else?"

"Yes, fresh beets," I answered. "I didn't know you could get them fresh."

He laughed and led me to a small display of red beets. "Are these the only options?" I pressed. "There's only one kind of beet?"

"Yes," he said. "This is it."

"OK," I replied taking a bunch and putting them in my cart. "I also need fennel seeds. Does that mean I need to buy fennel and take the seeds out?"

He thought a moment, then replied, "We just started some new seed products here in produce, but they're so new I'm not sure what seeds they have. Come with me."

He led me to three different end caps highlighting bags of different seeds, but none included fennel. "I guess we don't have those here," he stated. "You can check the spice section. They might have them."

"OK," I said. "Next, I need endive. I've never used it before. What does it taste like?"

"It's a little bitter, but very popular now," he replied, then indicated. "It's over here."

"What about orange zest?" I asked. "It says I need some orange zest, but I never heard of that."

"Hmm," he pondered. "I'm not familiar with that either. Let me check with someone else. Julio, do we have orange zest?"

The second employee working the specialty section turned and pondered this mystery item as well, then admitted, "I don't think we do. I'm not sure about it."

"That's OK," I thanked them for their friendly and fantastic help and exited the department.

SOUTHEAST REPORT:

STORE 1: The Adventure Of The Absent Produce Clerk

I visited this small, independent suburban



**An important message for retail
produce buyers straight
from the bark**

"Let me tell you, nature blessed us last summer with the ideal conditions to grow one of the best crops ever of great-tasting New York State Apples. My limbs are still sore from supporting all that fruit. But I'm not complaining, I've got till next summer to recover. Meanwhile, you've got many popular varieties of New York State Apples to choose from – all in plentiful supply, just waiting for the word to ship to your stores."



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store late on a Friday afternoon, prior to the after-work rush. Located in the corner unit of a busy plaza, the parking lot was full. Upon entering the store, I noticed most of the shoppers were lined up at the register. There were only two lanes open, and they each must have had at least 10 customers waiting.

The store, while small, was expertly stocked — a characteristic that extended to the produce department as well. A 20-foot wet rack held a large variety of items, nearly all of which was offered in bulk, in addition to a number of beautifully merchandised

stand-alone displays in the department. While the store is located in a very upscale neighborhood, I was pleased and surprised to note the prices were not exorbitant.

As there was nobody in the produce department — be it customers or associates — I took the opportunity to locate all the items I would need for my Beet and Jicama on Endive with Garlic Yogurt Dressing. Everything I needed was there, perfectly signed and priced. Alas, there was still nobody to help me in the produce department. I took it upon myself to hunt someone down. I approached an associate

stocking the freezers and asked if there was anyone that could help me in produce.

"Look for a guy in a black sweatshirt," he said off-handedly, pointing me off in the general direction of the entire store. "He'll be able to help you," he added, before rushing off, leaving me in search of someone, anyone, in a black sweatshirt.

When I couldn't find anyone that matched that lovely description, I approached yet another worker, this time, a man working in the prepared foods department. "Excuse me," I said, "I'm trying to find someone in produce that can help me, but I haven't had any luck. Would you mind calling someone over for me? I have this recipe here, you see," I said as I lifted my list up to show him, "but I don't know much about the ingredients."

He offered to help me, but I hesitated, since I didn't think he would be as knowledgeable as a produce associate. But as there was still nobody in the department, more than 15 minutes after I had arrived, I figured I better take advantage of his offer while I could. "Thanks so much," I said. "First, I need beets. I think I saw some over there, but there are two kinds — red and golden. I don't know what the difference is and the recipe doesn't specify which ones I should use."

"I would use the golden ones, since they are a little sweeter and won't stain everything in your kitchen," he said.

"And do I just fry them?" I asked?

"No, no," he smiled as he shook his head. "You boil it first, then peel it and cut it up however you want to use it in the salad. What else do you need?"

"I need endive, too." The associate looked all around the wet rack, running his fingers right over the endive and finally told me they must not have any. When I pointed to the endive right in front of us asking, "Isn't this it? The label here says endive," I noted.

But he said, "Oh no, that's not endive. I know what endive looks like and that's not it. The label must be wrong."

As he was denying the endive's existence, a couple walked by us, shook their heads and looked right at me, "That's endive, hun," said the woman, looking me in the eye, as if to say, 'Don't believe this guy; he doesn't know what he is talking about.' Her husband concurred, assuring me the associate was incorrect.

"Well," the associate said, "I'm used to the greener kind. I've never seen this kind before." I'm almost positive he was getting endive confused with romaine hearts.

When I asked him for jicama, he looked completely stumped, and called someone over to help. Lo and behold, it was the man in the black sweater I was instructed to find. "This here's the boss," said the associate. "He'll be able to help you. This lady needs

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some jicama," he told him.

Mr. Black Sweater went right to it, picked up and started throwing it up and down in his hand like a baseball. You could tell he was very at ease with the produce and he knew what he was talking about. When I asked him what I was supposed to do with it, he said, "First, you want to peel it. Then you can chop it up and eat it raw in a salad, which is very popular lately, or you can cook it. It has a nice crunch to it."

"Ok, the last thing I need is orange zest," I told them. "Do you have that here?"

Both men looked at me and smiled. The associate piped up, "Oh no, you just need to grate an orange and get some of the peel. That's what zest is. Do you have oranges at home?"

"Oh, yes," I replied. "I guess I am all set." I thanked them and headed to the checkout counter. After I paid and was headed out the door, I noticed there was still nobody manning the produce department, nearly 45 minutes after I first entered.

STORE 2: The Adventure Of The Accommodating Associate

I visited this popular, large chain in the middle of the afternoon early in the week. The produce department was large, and while it seemed to be well-stocked, it was a bit of a mess. There was not much bulk produce being sold here, apart from the typically loose apples, oranges and stone fruit. The greens, and much of the other vegetables were packaged and priced accordingly. While the store itself wasn't too busy, the produce department was a hotbed of action. Two associates were busy restocking the shelves.

Armed with my recipe for Mango Pomegranate Guacamole, I approached one of the associates, who seemed happy to help. "Excuse me, sir, I'm looking for pomegranate seeds. Do you have any of those?"

"Seeds? Hmm....let me see. I know we have pomegranates." He walked me over to a display of varied stone fruit and found one lonely pomegranate sitting amongst the peaches and nectarines. "Hold on to this," he said, as he handed me the saddest, brown and bruised pomegranate I have ever seen. "Let me see if we have seeds for you," he said as he walked over to where the dried fruit and nuts were located. He scanned them all.

Then, as if he a light bulb went off over his head, he headed to the berry section and found a package of pomegranate arils. As I approached him, he said, "This is what you want. These are just the seeds, but this package is open!" He was in shock and said, "I guess someone wanted to taste it and they opened it. I'll have to throw this one out, but we always carry them right

here by the berries," he added. "So I guess you'll have to stick with the whole fruit I gave you."

"Ok, I also need chiles — Serrano chiles, actually," I said. At that point, he called for someone else to be. She approached me and I soon discovered she was the department manager. I explained to her I was trying to recreate a guacamole dip I ate a friend's house during Super Bowl. "This recipe calls for Serrano chiles," I told her, "but I don't know how spicy they are."

She walked me over to the chiles, which

were packaged nearly 25 to a pack. She broke open a pack, broke the chile in half, and said, "Here, try it." As I was about to take a bite, she warned, "Hold on, hun! Give it a minute. It'll hit you!" Thankfully, she didn't let me take an entire bite. When I referred back to my recipe and told her I only needed two chiles, she said she could break the package for me in the back. "What else do you need?" she asked, glancing at my recipe.

"Mango is next," I told her as she walked right over to the display.

"Are you going to make this tonight?" she

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asked? When I told her I was planning to, she informed me none of these mangos were ripe. "They need to give a little," she explained, "and they shouldn't be too green. These won't be ready for you. But we have some that are already cut and packaged," she informed me, as she crossed the store to the fresh-cut cooler and brought back a package of pre-sliced mango. "These should do. Sometimes they aren't as sweet as the whole fruit, but it saves you from having to wait until they ripen and if they are in with the guacamole, it should be just fine. What's next?"

"Oh, I almost forgot! I need avocados!" I said. She first led me to the large Florida avocados, but none of them were ripe enough, so we ended up at the Hass, which oddly enough, were on the other side of the department.

"Do you like Hass avocados?" she asked me. When I told her I didn't know the difference, she said, "Well, they are about the same anyway," and went on to choose four perfectly ripe avocados. "Anything else?"

"Just lime juice," I answered. "How many limes would I need for ¾-cup of juice?"

"Oh, well you might as well buy the juice in

the little lime over there. That's easiest, and you won't be squeezing limes all night. Here you go," she said, handing me one. "Just give me a minute and I'll go in the back and get you your two chiles," she added. Soon enough, she was back out with my two chiles.

I was impressed the produce manager went above and beyond the call of duty to help me.

NORTHWEST REPORT: STORE 1: The Adventure Of The Mango Maven

The first stop I made was a large, new store, part of a national chain, located in an upscale urban business and shopping district in a major city. Increasingly common in this area, this store forms the first floor of a combined condominium and retail project, complete with limited parking. I rolled my cart into a large, sparkling clean produce department at about 9 am on a Saturday morning. Set up was still going on and I was the only shopper in the department.

Strolling around the department, I noticed the general layout and organization was not at all intuitive; I couldn't easily locate half the items on my list.

Close to the entrance, I spotted a large, free-standing bin of mangos, a key ingredient in my recipe for Mango Pomegranate Guacamole. Leaving my cart nearby, I caught the eye of a staffer working vegetables at the wet rack. She immediately came over. I described my recipe, saying, "I hate to admit it, but I don't know anything about mangos. The recipe was my assignment to bring to a gourmet food party."

She immediately smiled and said, "Don't worry. We can make you a mango expert in no time!" She proceeded to give me a thorough lesson in judging ripeness, selecting the best mangos, how to cut them and what flavors in the recipes complement them. She even directed another staffer to finish the vegetables so she could answer my questions.

Pretty soon, she helped me collect everything I needed. I had tasted mango, fresh cilantro, a Serrano chile and learned the difference between red and white onions. I don't think I've ever been so thoroughly helped before. As the only downside, she did tell me, "We've been out of fresh pomegranates for about a week. They're out of season now."

Perhaps the only cloud on such great personal service was when I asked if there wasn't an easier way to deal with preparing fresh mangos. She encouraged me with a "You can do it," but as I left the department, I noticed a refrigerated display of cut, prepped mango that she could have offered to a novice or reluctant cook, such as myself. Perhaps the four separate mango displays indicated a dri-

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ving need to sell whole mangos fast.

STORE 2: The Adventure of the Helpful Staffer

My second stop was a large unit of a regional chain noted for friendly service and lower prices, and uniquely located in a northern suburb within about two miles of a larger, newer sister store. The suburb, known for its apartment rentals and affordable housing, brings together a middle-class population with a slightly older demographic, including Asian immigrants, Hispanic neighborhoods and a sprinkling of well-established, longtime residents. The store was busy and bustling at 4 pm on a Thursday afternoon.

I approached the only produce staffer I saw and showed him my shopping list including jicama, Belgian endive, fennel seeds, beets, fresh oranges and pomegranates. He immediately smiled and said, "Sure, we have all that except for the pomegranates and the Belgian endive. I'm afraid you've missed the pomegranate season. We stopped ordering them right after Christmas. As for the endive, we can order them for you so you could have them on Tuesday, but it's not a big demand item for us."

I asked, "What could I use instead?"

He scratched his head and replied, "Those seem like main ingredients for the recipe. I can't think of a substitute for the pomegranate seeds. What did you call them? Arils? That's a new one for me. Maybe you could skip that part? As for the endive, maybe you could use chips instead? Or how about using the inside leaves of Romaine lettuce or wrapping the filling in butter lettuce leaves?" This guy really wanted to help me with these recipes.

Moving on to the fennel seeds, I asked, "How many pieces of fennel do I need to buy to get a teaspoon of seeds?"

He looked a bit shocked, but carefully

explained fresh fennel is sold in bulbs, which has a licorice flavor, but the dry seeds come from the flowers. "You buy fennel seeds in the spice section," he clarified.

"But I don't know if I will ever even use it again and isn't a jar pretty expensive?" I asked. "I thought fresh would be better and I could impress this group."

"Here's a secret tip," he said. "There's a bulk section in the back of the store and you can buy exactly what you need. It will probably be less than 15¢ and bulk is usually fresher. It's a great way to buy spices."

This staffer had strong views on fresh oranges, too. California Navel oranges were on special at 79¢ a pound, but he encouraged me to try the California Heirloom oranges at \$1.79, instead. "The flavor and juiciness make the extra dollar worth it," he reasoned.

If I lived in this neighborhood, I'd probably shop this store for basics. The department was clean and well arranged. Signage and prices were clear and close at hand. They had good quality and apparently worked hard to match their produce selection to their demographics, but a number of higher-end or trendier items just weren't there.

STORE 3: The Adventure Of The Recipe Substitutions

My last stop was an independent retailer in a high-income area known for restaurant-quality perishables and strong appeal to Asian cooks. This large store has a warehouse look to it, broad selection and high/low pricing of produce. A cooking kiosk staffed by local chefs demonstrated products and recipes. The store is also noted for its knowledge and service, so my expectations were high.

Mid-day Friday found its parking lot full and plenty of shoppers pushing carts around the displays that had a farmers' market feel. Special buys were clearly marked and repre-

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sented excellent value for customers.

My first question to one of four staffers conversing in the produce department sought to validate seasonal information I'd been given on pomegranates at the other stores reviewed.

"I'm pretty sure they are still available in the area, but we no longer have them because of quality issues," one of them offered. "They really start to dry out and the skin changes color. For the last couple years, we've calculated what we think we'll need and contract for that amount, so once they're gone, we're out. The last ones we offered here were sold the third week in January."

When asked about possible substitutes, this savvy produce associate said, "If you like, I'll show you where they are in the frozen section. Like this, most of the work is done and you don't have to worry about stained fingers, clothes or counters."

He led me to the freezer case, but the product was out of stock. He went to the trouble of calling the section manager and was told the next batch was due in Monday. He said, "Sorry, I hate it when this happens. When do you have to have them? Maybe I can track some down for you." Not to make him go to the extra trouble, I said I needed them for that evening.

The same associate was similarly helpful and knowledgeable about mangos. He

demonstrated how to cut them, but also let me know where in the store they were available as fresh-cut, frozen, or as refrigerated jars of fruit in syrup or juice. I asked him, "How do I choose?" and he was able to point out the characteristics of each. Convincing me that starting with fresh whole mango was going to give me the flavor and texture I wanted, I left the department with the whole fruit. How could anyone be anything but satisfied with this level of service?

Another staffer, clear across the floor, became my beet mentor. I described the recipe to him, complaining that I didn't like fixing red beets because of the mess. He suggested, "Why don't you try golden beets? They have about the same flavor and are much less trouble to fix." At the display, he steered me toward the bulk, golden beets, picked out some smaller organic roots saying, "These are a great value, better than the three-beet bunch." He was right — these cost less than half!

WESTERN REPORT:

STORE 1: The Adventure Of The Knowledgeable Associate

The first market visited was not one I usually frequent due to its location, but I had heard

good things about its produce department. A smaller, regional chain, the store is located in a more affluent suburban area of Southern California. This particular store has a good-sized Asian and Latin customer base and many ethnic produce items were readily available.

There were three produce associates busy in the department when I arrived and they all looked up and nodded to me as I browsed through the aisles. Bins were full, the produce looked fresh and attractively arranged, and the department was neat and clean. The produce selection was not as large as some of the national chains, but the popular items were available, as well as a large selection of such things as dried mushrooms, fresh chiles and dried spices used in Asian and Latin cuisines.

I looked around for pomegranates or pomegranate arils for my guacamole recipe. Not finding either one, I asked one associate if they had any.

"No, we don't carry pomegranates after the holidays and we don't have any seeds. However, we do have pomegranate juice, if you can use that." He directed me to a sizable display of pomegranate juice in the department. I informed him the recipe called for the arils, but he had no suggestions for an alternative.

Then I told the produce associate that my recipe called for Serrano chiles. "Are they really hot? If I don't want the guacamole to be too spicy, what can I use?"

He took me to the display of fresh chiles, which were all in separate containers and carefully marked. He explained the different varieties to me. "If you don't want so much heat, you might try the yellow chile. It is much milder than the Serrano," he suggested.

Later, I asked the same gentleman, "I really like sweet onions. Would there be a big difference in the recipe if I substituted the sweet ones for the white ones that are called for?"

He replied, "We don't have any white onions right now, but for a little different flavor and added color you might try our red onions, which are very good. The sweet onions would be sweeter, of course, and a little milder than the white ones."

Next on my list were mangos. I interrupted his work to ask, "How do I select a ripe mango?" He went to the mango display and selected a ripe one for me. "I chose this one because of the color and it is slightly soft to the touch," he said, demonstrating how to test for softness. He added, "Just peel the fruit and you should have a nice ripe mango to eat today or tomorrow."

I asked him if that was also the right way to pick an avocado, and whether the black or green avocados were the best ones to buy. He answered, "Yes, you pick an avocado that is slightly soft to the touch in the same way. Right now, we only have the black avocados,

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which are the Hass variety, and they are excellent for guacamole.”

Next was the salad recipe. I asked how to select a good jicama. He led me to the display, handed me a jicama and said, “It should be nice and firm. Just peel it and enjoy. It will be crisp, sweet and delicious.”

The produce associate was very helpful and there was no disdain or impatience at my endless questions.

STORE 2: The Adventure of the COOL-compliant Store

The second market visited was an independent store located in a residential area of a more affluent Southern California suburban region. It is highly regarded for its meat and produce departments.

When I entered the produce section there was one associate working to straighten and replenish the displays. He looked up and greeted me as I moved along the aisles. The department had more limited space, so displays were smaller, but offered a good selection of both staples and more unusual items. Displays were neat, clean and the produce looked fresh and inviting. Items were well identified. Above each item, the source was indicated with the country name and a small flag. I found this to be an

unusual and attractive way of meeting the new COOL requirements.

I approached the associate and asked him if they had any pomegranates or pomegranate seeds for my guacamole recipe. He told me he was sorry, but they didn’t have pomegranates or the seeds, and he had no suggestions for a substitution.

I then asked him about the Serrano chiles. “If I don’t want a real hot guacamole what should I do?”

“You could still use the Serrano chile, but put in only a few seeds or none at all. Or, if you prefer, you could use the Jalapeño chile with just a few seeds for a milder dish,” he replied.

I noticed the market had sweet onions so I asked about substituting them for white ones. “You could do that. The onion wouldn’t be as strong flavored and would be somewhat sweeter than the regular white one,” he explained.

I approached him again and asked if the mango I selected was ripe. He tested it to see if it was slightly soft to the touch and assured me it was ripe. Then he asked me if I knew how to cut the mango. When I said no, he offered to show me. “Cut along each side of the large seed that is inside,” he explained. “Then peel the fruit and cut into pieces. If you try to cut the meat off the seed like you would

a peach, you will have problems.”

Next, I asked him about choosing the jicama I needed for my salad recipe. He took me to the jicama display and helped me select one. “This should be nice and crisp. Peel it and then slice into whatever size and shape you need for your salad.”

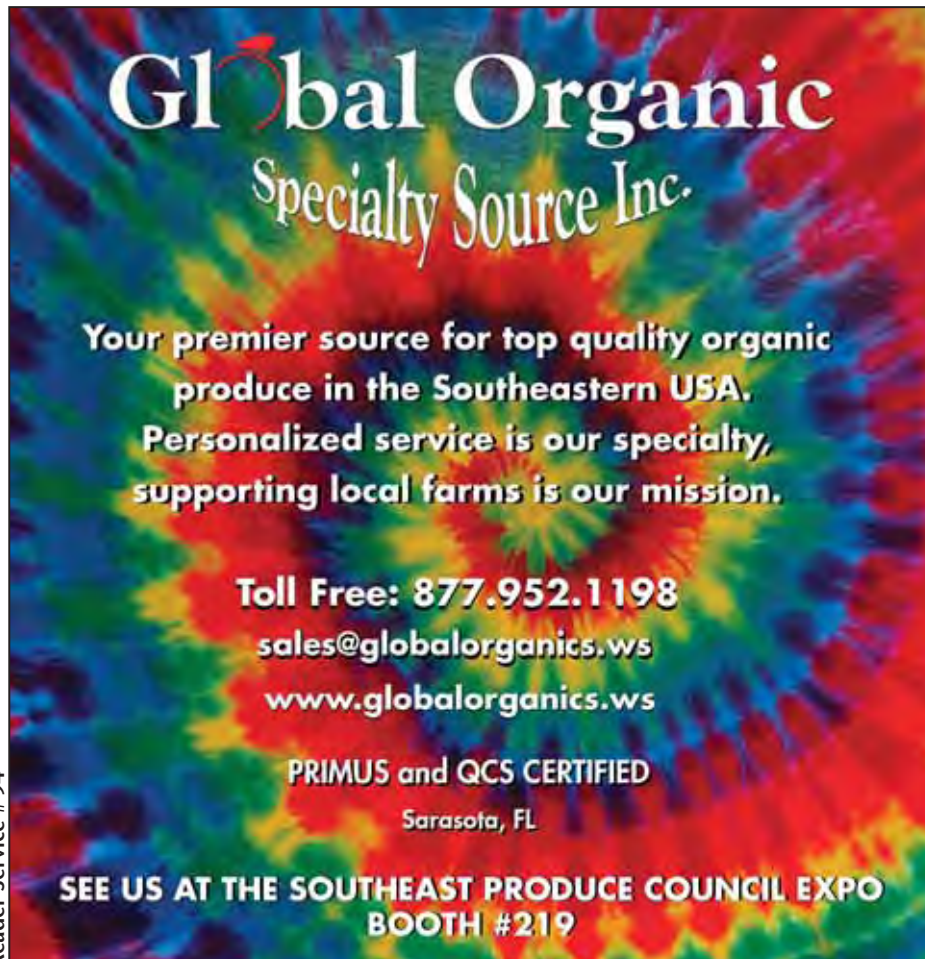
I told the produce associate the same salad recipe using jicama also called for cooked beets. “Should I peel them before cooking them, or is it better to cook the beets and then peel them?” I inquired.

Not seeming too familiar with cooking beets he said he thought they should be cooked first. I asked him when yellow beets were in season. He said he did not know and added, “We’ve never carried yellow beets.”

The associate was pleasant and helpful. He seemed knowledgeable about most items on display in the department. He was willing to answer any questions I had, even volunteering additional information. I was also impressed with how he handled other customers’ questions and his friendliness toward them.

STORE 3: The Adventure of the Orange Zest

The third market I visited, part of a large



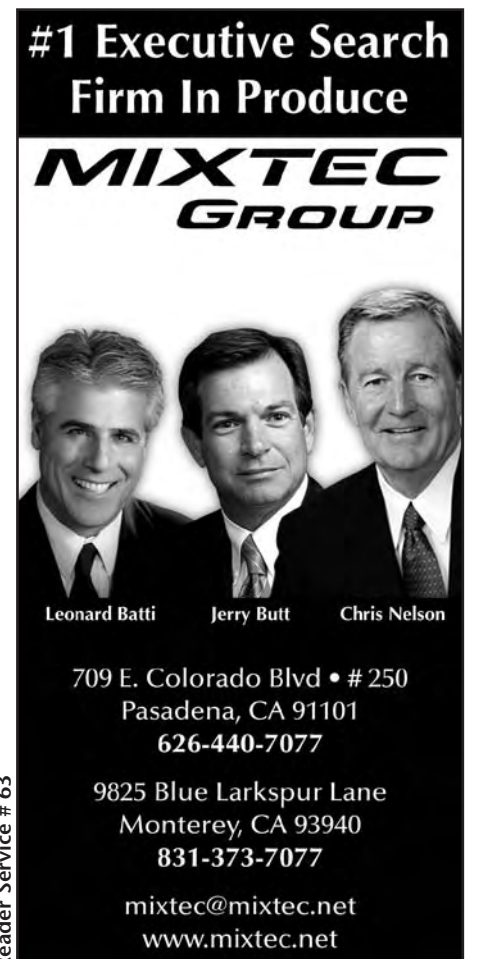
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Reader Service # 63

national chain, was located in the heart of a good-sized Southern California suburb. Its customer base has a strong ethnic mix of African-American, Asian and Latin populations. The large produce section offered a wide selection of items. It was brightly lit and clean with wide aisles. The produce looked fresh and attractive. Organically grown produce was available in a separate section. There were two produce associates working in the department during my visit.

I commented to one of the workers that I was preparing a salad for a special event and the recipe called for Belgian endive. "Endive is pretty expensive. Do you have a suggestion for a substitution?"

"No, I don't think you can substitute," he told me, "but Belgian endive goes a long way. You could just buy two heads, rinse them and slice off the larger end. Then you pull the leaves apart, and you only need one or two leaves for each serving. It's very good and easy to use."

I thanked him and said, "The recipe also calls for cooked beets. Should I peel the beets before cooking them?"

"You don't need to peel them. Just wash them well and then cook them," he explained. We were standing near the organic

section and he added, "You can use these beets with the beautiful tops, but we also have the loose beets without tops over in the regular area. If you don't need the tops, the others are nice and less expensive." He guided me to the location of the other beets.

I wandered over there and looked at them. The display had several items all piled in together, including horseradish and celery root, which took up quite a bit of room. The beets certainly didn't look as inviting as the organic ones, but he was right. If you weren't going to have beet greens, the others were much less expensive.

I also told him the recipe called for orange zest. "What is that? Is it in the produce department or should I go to the dried spice and herb area in the grocery section?"

He seemed confused and asked me to repeat it several times, which I did, even spelling the word. He was unfamiliar with the term and was unable to help me on that question. However, when I asked him about fennel seeds he said they were in the spice section and told me exactly where they were located.

I continued on my quest, pulling out my guacamole recipe, and asked him how to pick out a ripe mango. He took me to the area where they were displayed and helped

me select one. He said to look for a mango that has good yellow and red color. "It should be slightly soft, but be careful it is not too soft," he warned. "If it is just right, it will be delicious."

I told the man I was also looking for pomegranate seeds. He informed me pomegranates were out of season, and available in the fall and around the holidays. "However, we do have the seeds." He directed me to a refrigerated section that had eight-ounce containers of arils.

I didn't notice a sell-by date on the container and asked him how long the seeds would keep. He thought a moment and replied, "About ten days." Later, I checked the date given on the container and it was six days away, so his estimate was fairly good. However, it would have been better if he had referred me to the container's date, but he may not have been aware it had one.

The produce associate was knowledgeable and helpful, providing added information with much enthusiasm. I heard him answering others' questions and he really seemed to enjoy the products he was working with, which encouraged customers to purchase more. He made a major effort to try to help me with all my questions. **pb**

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The variety of products and their wide availability from Mexico means you can always promote the freshest quality product to your customers. Retailers can boost sales of many products from Mexico by focusing promotions on the flavor

of the products. Sampling fruits like mangos and papayas and certain vegetables like asparagus and specialty tomatoes will tantalize consumers taste buds and increase impulse sales.

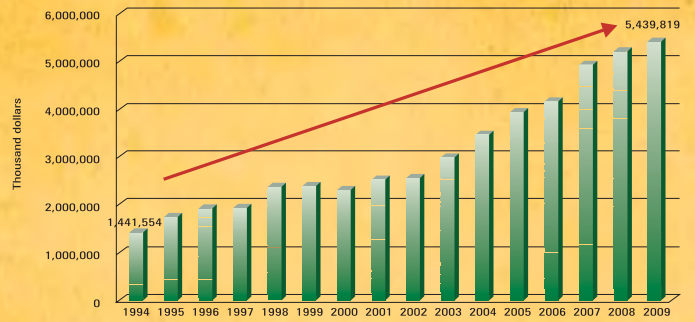
USE MEXICO'S TRADE PROGRAMS

The Agricultural Office at the Embassy of Mexico offers various opportunities to build business with Mexican fruit and vegetables. Be sure to check out these available programs. Their DIRECT BUYING PROGRAM & TRADE MISSIONS helps retailers enhance the value chain of produce from Mexico by organizing business agendas and trade missions. More than 20 of the largest U.S. retail firms have visited Mexico under this program. The MEXICAN FRESH PRODUCE

EXPORTERS DIRECTORY promotes the exportable supply of the Mexican produce sector. It includes a master catalogue with information on growers, firms, production, availability, volume, seasons and varieties, among other information. It also offers integrated public and private databases and regular updates of registered growers and is available in an annual printed edition, a CD-ROM, and via website at www.mexbest.com.

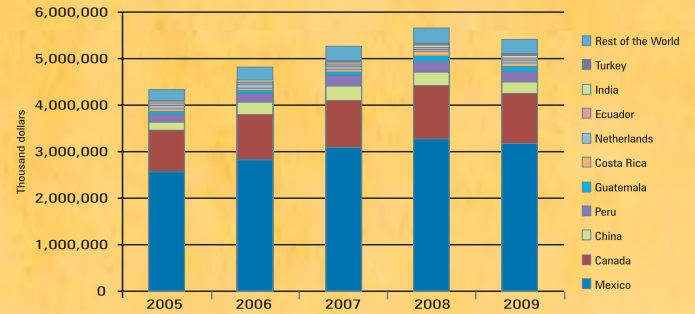
FRESH FRUITS AND VEGETABLES EXPORTS

Since NAFTA, exports of fresh fruits and vegetables had increased 377%, reaching 5.4 billion dollars.



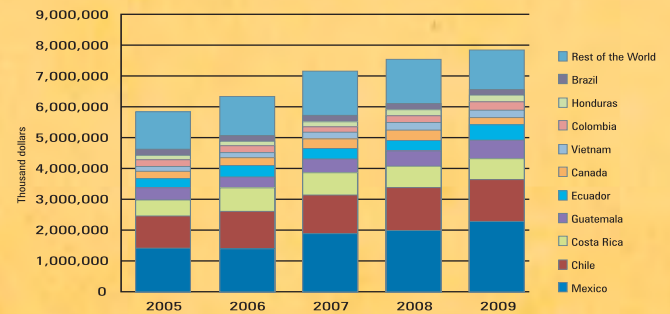
MAIN SUPPLIERS OF VEGETABLES TO THE USA

Mexican vegetables accounted to over 58% of the market share.



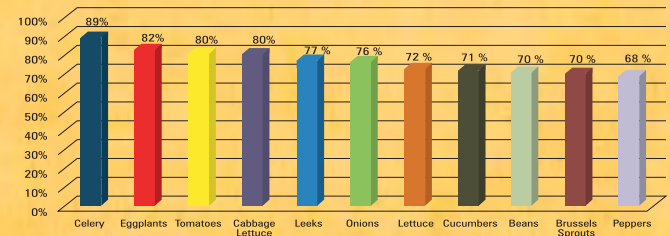
MAIN SUPPLIERS OF FRUITS TO THE USA

México's share of imports accounted to 29.2% of the total.

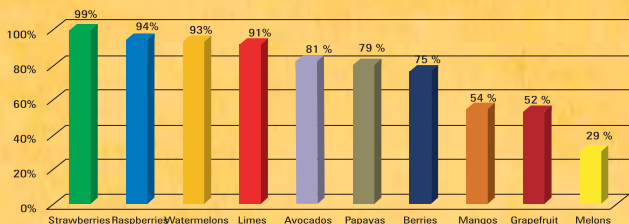


MARKET SHARE OF MEXICAN VEGETABLES IN THE USA (IMPORTS ONLY)

Mexico is the leader in the market share in a great variety of fresh fruits and vegetables imported by the U.S.



MARKET SHARE OF MEXICAN FRUIT IN THE USA (IMPORTS ONLY)



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Reader Service # 41



Wholesalers Look To Add Value For Strapped Customers

As the economy causes competition between wholesalers to heat up, many are offering more and better services for their customers.

BY JACQUELINE ROSS LIEBERMAN

Since the economic downturn began, the struggle for survival among wholesale produce merchants has been tougher than ever. In the words of one businessman, "We're dealing with it," says Matthew D'Arrigo, vice president of D'Arrigo Bros. Co of New York Inc., wholesale merchants at the Hunts Point Terminal Market, located in the Bronx, NY. "Business is probably off five to 10 percent compared to if we had not had this economic downturn."

Some have watched businesses around them crumble. "Many of our trading partners are no longer able to be in the business, both customers and suppliers," notes John Vena, president of John Vena Inc., wholesale merchants on the Philadelphia, PA, terminal produce market. "Additionally, we have to watch out for our accounts receivable."

The trouble begins, of course, with the end-user. "Consumers are a little more careful, a little less wasteful in their spending habits," says D'Arrigo. "They're wasting less. I don't think they're eating

less; they're just wasting less."

As a result, retailers and foodservice providers are also watching their inventories very closely. "Our customers are very careful about what they buy," says Tim Fleming, Jr., a sales associate at Strube Celery and Vegetable Co., in Chicago, IL. "They're not overloading their coolers if they don't have to. It forces us to be very careful about our inventory and make sure we're more aware when buying and selling."

As more consumers choose to save money by eating at home, restaurants are buying far less produce than in the past. According to Steven Piazza, president and sales director of Community-Suffolk Inc., based in Everett, MA, "The economy is tough here in Massachusetts, just like it is everywhere else. It's affecting our restaurant trade," he says, which he estimates makes up about 30 percent of the company's business.

To make up for the lack of sales, merchants are tightening their belts as much as possible. "We're just trying to keep costs down and keep labor down, more so now than usual," notes Fleming.

Smart wholesalers see the wallet-watching trend and are attuned to it. "It's making people look for value," explains Michael Maxwell, president of Procacci Bros. Sales Corp., wholesalers off the Philadelphia, PA, produce terminal market. "It's up to us to look for value for our retailers and pass it along. We're searching out value for our customers each day." For example, the company might procure smaller apples, which sell for less per-pound than larger apples. "Traditionally, retailers would prefer larger pieces of fruit," says Maxwell. Procacci pre-packs these smaller apples for retailers in multi-packs with retail prices on the labels. "When people are looking for value and they see a package of six apples for 99-cents, it says value more than \$1.99 a-pound," explains Maxwell. It also helps consumers stick to their budgets. "If you know you have \$20 to spend on produce, that's an easy way to add things up."

Consumers may also buy fewer high-priced



Photo courtesy of Four Seasons Produce

Four Seasons' receiving dock has a wide variety of produce to please its various customers.



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items and more low-priced, staple items. "We're seeing an increase in sales of staple items such as celery, broccoli, carrots, potatoes and onions," says Piazza. "More expensive items are less frequently featured for now because people are concentrating on getting more for less."

As a result, "Retail is not as vivacious as it had been in the depth and breadth of products that it's selling," notes Ron Carkoski, CEO for Four Seasons Produce Inc, based in Ephrata, PA.

But not everyone is seeing a vast drop in sales of higher-priced items. At Strube,


"There are not a whole lot of items that are down a lot, but there are not any that are up, either," notes Fleming. "Volume across the board is pretty steady."

THE UPSIDE

Wholesalers are seeing some benefit from the economy when it comes to their retail customers. "People are eating more at home," says Maxwell. Because produce is a good value for consumers looking to buy healthy food, "The economy has brought a lot of people back to the produce department," he explains. "It has helped our busi-

ness in that a lot of people are going back to the basics and shopping every week."

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"It's more about paying attention to what our customers want and need, compared to what we want to offer. Customers are the lifeblood of any organization, so we focus on helping our customers succeed."

— Ron Carkoski
 Four Seasons Produce Inc.

For John Vena Inc., what was lost in foodservice business is made up for with retail sales, according to Vena. If that has taught the company one thing, it is that "We have to continue to grow our customer base. That will sustain us," he acknowledges. "People will always buy produce, but in different ways according to their budgets. We want to do business with as many segments as possible."

Some are more skeptical about retail's ability to save the wholesale business. "You'd think people would be buying more produce because produce is a pretty cheap food source. But weather conditions are driving prices up," says Fleming of Strube.

Meanwhile, some companies actually see the current economy in a positive light. "What I love about our company is that we always try and have an idea going no matter what kind of economy we are experiencing," says Emily Fragoso, marketing manager for Coast Produce Co. Inc., wholesale merchants on the Los Angeles, CA, Wholesale Produce Market. "So during these times we try even harder. We have taken actions that help diversify our business. We have created new projects and looked outside of the box for other revenue sources. We accessed our strengths and weakness to continue to reign as an innovative company in the produce industry."

Those surviving are seeing some of their weaker competitors disappear. "We've seen a



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drop in the number of companies that are our direct competitors," notes Vena of John Vena. This provides his company the opportunity to not only gain those businesses customers and suppliers but new, skilled staff members and warehouse space, as well.

"Whoever does survive, there should be more business for them," adds Piazza of Community-Suffolk.

INCREASED SERVICE

Wholesalers duking it out for business can be good news for customers. In addition to quality and value, "Service is one of those things people are really looking for these days and they really appreciate it," notes Carkoski of Four Seasons Produce. For his company, "It's more about paying attention to what our customers want and need, compared to what we want to offer. Customers are the lifeblood of any organization, so we focus on helping our customers succeed."

Getting good prices for customers remains a key factor. "We sell commodities. Lowering prices is how we get customers," notes D'Arrigo of D'Arrigo Bros.

Piazza reports Community-Suffolk offers its customers good quality products at good prices due to the large volume the company handles. "To increase our sales, we're trying

to keep costs down to provide value to our customers," he explains.

"We're trying to get good buys," adds Fleming. "We're trying to be sensitive to what our customers need to help them out."

Shane Towne, marketing and new business development manager for Indianapolis Fruit Co. Inc., headquartered in Indianapolis, IN, reveals customers have responded strongly to the company's "market-buster" items — the four to eight spot-priced items that the company procures each week to help retailers either aggressively price that item to lure in shoppers or make larger margins that make up for slimmer margins elsewhere. But cost is not the only concern, and wholesalers recognize that. "Everybody's so consumed with price, but there's got to be a differentiation," Towne asserts. "Price might bring customers in, but service, quality and value will keep them."

Towne notes the company works hard to partner with its customers. "We have roughly 15 area sales managers and merchandisers out in the field. We have a phenomenal merchandising crew out there helping our retailers every day," he says. "That's one of our key strengths — having these experts out there helping retailers."

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Wholesalers Offer More Processing

Conventional wisdom would have wholesalers and retailers back off from processed, value-added produce as consumers cut back on spending and opt to chop and wash more for themselves. "For the first time in years we're seeing a decrease in sales of bagged salads," reports Ron Carkoski, CEO of Four Seasons Produce Inc., based in Ephrata, PA.

But even as consumers buy less value-added produce, wholesalers are offering more fresh-cuts. That is because retailers, as well as foodservice operators, can save space, time, labor, money and worries about food safety by having their processing done at an outside facility.

Indianapolis Fruit Co. Inc., located in Indi-

anapolis, IN, began offering its full line of Garden Cut processed produce about 10 years ago and has seen that business grow exponentially as retailers offer more varieties of fresh-cut produce. Despite some penny pinching, "Consumers are still looking for convenience," asserts Shane Towne, marketing and new business development manager. For retailers who have long offered produce cut in-store, wholesalers such as Indianapolis Fruit can label products with a store's private label and even customize cuts. "We can actually utilize their individual specs from their retail level," says Towne. "The consumer doesn't see a difference between what that retailer did in-house and what Indianapolis Fruit did for them." **pb**

5th annual Winning at Retail seminar," Towne continues. "Entitled *Mastering the Challenges of the New Future*, the seminar featured a vendor showcase in the evening, followed by a day of educational lectures by expert speakers answering such questions

as 'What are the trends consumers are looking for?' and 'How can retailers fine-tune their operations?'"

Other wholesalers are offering their own innovative solutions, as well. Four Seasons Produce offers its Organics Made Easy mar-

keting program via its Web site. "The program helps retailers identify the organics targeted to their customers," explains Carkoski. "It shows people how to get into it."

Four Seasons also polled its customers about the best way to introduce cost-cutting measures, as it did before reducing Wednesday deliveries. "We found out it was the slowest day of the week. It cut a significant amount of costs out and made deliveries more efficient for everyone," says Carkoski.

Considering the customers' needs is especially important as the economy gives wholesalers a chance to snag new customers who may be shopping around for bargains. "Because people are trying to be more efficient, they attempt new ways of getting produce," explains D'Arrigo. "That means you may lose some customers, but you may gain some new ones, too."

Many wholesalers are working more closely with customers to ensure their success. For example, "We work with retailers setting up programs so they're supplied and profitable," says Maxwell of Procacci Brothers.

"We like a good challenge to bring in new customers and continue to provide optimum satisfaction to existing ones," says Coast Produce's Frago. "As a produce



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company, we also look for different ways to increase overall consumption. That said, we look for new ways we can do that as a wholesaler-distributor when many shoppers turn to other fruit and vegetable options, such as canned and frozen. When you combine the best quality product with effective and innovative merchandising programs, something wonderful happens," continues Fragoso. "That something is a love of produce with the power to change the way people eat. Whether it's an entirely new way to snack, a consistent supply of quality, ethnic and organic items or a program that delivers the best produce of local regions, Coast is ready to help retailers inspire that love in their customers."

Coast Produce does that a number of ways. "In-store merchandising, as well as marketing assistance, are important components to the success of a retail operation. Coast Produce has developed a merchandising team comprised of seasoned retail produce experts to work on promotions, new item introductions, seasonal resets, contests and mentoring," explains Fragoso.

"Coast has extensive capability to design and produce custom signage for our clients," adds Fragoso. "Such signage can educate and engage consumers in new ways,

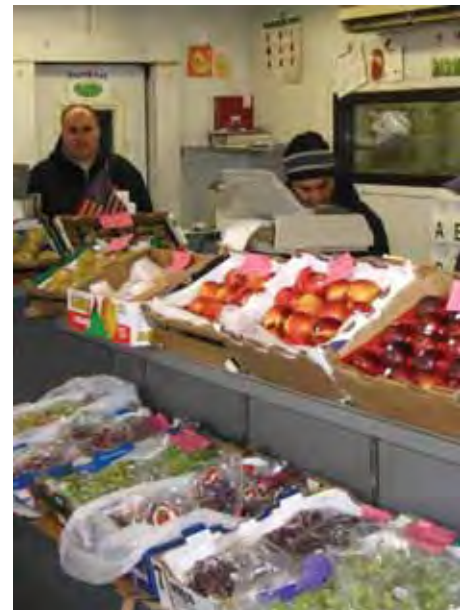
Organics Still Strong

Despite belt-tightening by many consumers, sales of organic produce continue to grow, according to Ron Carkoski, CEO of Ephrata, PA-based Four Seasons Produce Inc., which offers a full line of organics, in addition to conventional produce items. "It's hard to believe," says Carkoski. "It's the single strongest demand point that we sell."

Perhaps because of perceived health benefits or perhaps because it is more environmentally friendly, many consumers continue to turn to organics despite the higher prices. Carkoski compares the flat sales of produce to a quiet room. "The only shout you're going to hear are the sales of organic produce," he says. **pb**

increasing interest and sales of produce. As part of our ethnic programs, we can also create in-language signage to reach Asian and Hispanic customers."

As with many wholesalers, Coast Produce believes communication with cus-



D'Arrigo Bros. Co. of New York Inc. knows customers are being careful with their spending habits.

tomers is key. "Everyone can do a better job at communication and we are no exception," says Fragoso. "We want to reintroduce ourselves to our current customers and connect with new ones to say, "Here are the solutions we have, but if you don't

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see what you need, talk to us. Let's have a conversation so we can learn what you need and we will create the solution with you as a partnership. We both want more people to eat more fruits and veggies and we want to do it together."

John Vena is helping its customers, as well as suppliers, with active product promotions such as a recent Radicchio Rosso Precoce di Treviso IGP Iron Chef-style cook off between famous local chefs at Philadelphia's Reading Terminal Market's Center's Court. "We got a lot of coverage from local media from that," Vena notes. "Additionally, we've supported in-store demonstrations with our retailers, and we plan to continue doing so," says Vena. The company also sends out a quarterly newsletter and has increased its presence on the Internet with an improved Web site. And for its foodservice customers, "We have a really large sampling program," says Vena.

"We have roughly 15 area sales managers and merchandisers out in the field. We have a phenomenal merchandising crew out there helping our retailers every day. That's one of our key strengths — having these experts out there helping retailers."

**— Shane Towne
Indianapolis Fruit Co. Inc.**

Providing a high level of customer service is nothing new to some wholesalers. "It has always been a very important part of our business plan," says Maxwell. "It's a very competitive industry. Our customers rely on us and we have to earn our reputation every single day."

"Good relationships are very, very impor-

tant in a down economy, both with customers and suppliers," notes Piazza of Community-Suffolk.

Every way that a wholesaler can top its competitors is a way for it to survive. "We always try to differentiate ourselves with the quality of our product line, our delivery service and the quality of our facility," says D'Arrigo of D'Arrigo Bros.

Today, relationships are more important than ever. "We have to rely on the strength of the supply side and our customers," recognizes Carkoski of Four Seasons Produce. "This is the time to all work together."

Some believe the economy is poised to improve. "We saw a pretty dramatic drop in activity at the end of 2008," notes Vena of John Vena. "The first quarter of 2009 was pretty flat, but we made some good gains since then. I feel very strongly that 2010 is going to be a good year for my business."

In the meantime, "The produce industry has always been a very competitive business," admits Towne of Indianapolis Fruit Co. "The economic downturn has made it ultra-competitive. It's caused us to fine-tune everything that we do. It forces you to get better." **pb**



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Every once in a while, the opportunity presents itself to do well while also doing good. Such is the case with this, our ninth annual Masters of Merchandising supplement. The industry owes a tip of the hat to the collection of industry leaders who elected to invest with us in a marketing vehicle that is both promotional and educational.

As retailers consolidate, they are in a position to expect more support from producers, and intellectual capital is just about the most valuable support one can provide.

Each vendor worked hard to produce a piece of advice for the industry on how to more effectively merchandise the product category at hand. By sharing knowledge acquired while working with retailers throughout North America, these vendors help retailers move more product, help producers find outlets for production and help the world by encouraging a more healthful diet.

Increasing sales of fruits and vegetables is not only a matter of big pronouncements, such as the Fruits & Veggies — More Matters! program. Sales in general can increase only if sales of specific items increase. That means knowing how to build consumer trial and how to offer the most effective assortment; it means knowing how to market things on a day-to-day basis and how to do some out-of-the-box things just to keep consumer interest high.

Retailers, please take the time to review this offering carefully. When did you last think about how to increase sales of celery? Or plantains? Or artichokes? Here is a chance to think of things in a different way. When did you last really consider how to best sell bananas

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— was it when you were a produce department manager 10, 20 or 30 years ago? Here is an opportunity to revisit old subjects with a different perspective.

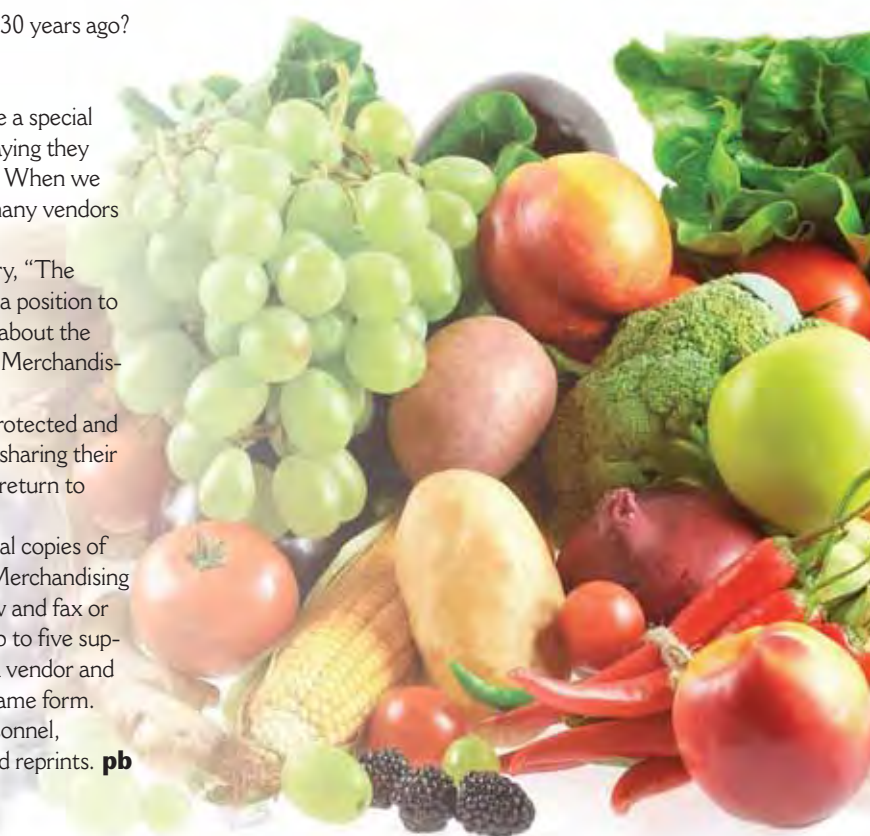
The sponsors of this year's Masters of Merchandising section are a special breed. We spoke to many producers who declined to participate, saying they simply had no idea how to merchandise their own items effectively. When we offered to help them research the matter, we encountered all too many vendors who said, "That is the retailer's problem; we just book loads."

Merchandising is everyone's problem, and in the produce industry, "The Times, They Are A-Changin'." As retailers consolidate, they are in a position to expect more support from producers, and intellectual capital is just about the most valuable support one can provide. So kudos to our Masters of Merchandising sponsors.

There is always a temptation to try to keep knowledge tightly protected and controlled, but oftentimes what goes around comes around, and in sharing their knowledge, our sponsors are giving the industry a great gift. May it return to them many times over.

As an added service to our retail readers, we're printing additional copies of this guide, so if you would like extra copies of the 2010 Masters of Merchandising supplement to give to your colleagues, please fill out the form below and fax or mail it to us. For the cost of shipping and handling, we'll send you up to five supplements, so they will be available on a first-come basis. If you are a vendor and would like to see your category included next year, please use the same form.

If you require larger quantities for distribution to store-level personnel, please call our offices at 561-994-1118 for information on customized reprints. **pb**



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APPLES

MERCHANDISING

CREATE AN APPLE DESTINATION

Over 80 percent of all people who walk in the front door of the supermarket visit the produce department and 75 percent of them make a purchase. Produce quality is the main reason a customer chooses one supermarket over another. Apples are the heart of the produce category, and Washington apples are the leading world-wide apple brand.

Washington apples consistently provide top category sales and provide high profit opportunities, setting the tone for an entire department. Be sure to keep the apple category out in front and show customers an image of quality by keeping the category clean and organized all day long. Because 80 percent of apple purchases are made on impulse, your goal is to keep consumers in the produce department as long as possible to increase overall sales.

HIGH-END BOUTIQUE

- Offer totes, gift packs, bulk and pre-pack fruit.
- Offer several apple varieties. These customers tend to be more adventurous.
- Displays can be smaller, but produce quality is critical.
- Consumers expect the best (and are paying more for it) so good rotation practices are key.
- Keep your design clean and well organized.
- Define your produce department with wood floors or other high quality flooring (tile or parquet).

CONVENTIONAL STORES

- Offer choices – bulk, pre-pack fruit and combination bags.
- Offer several apple varieties.
- Use bins to position seasonal/ promotional items at the front of the store and at the front of the produce department.
- Create attractive, high-impact graphic displays that reinforce the healthy image of produce.

FAMILY VALUE

- Be sure to offer totes, bulk and bags – perfect for moms on the go!
- Larger displays give a sense of abundance and allow more customers to access your apples.
- Use creative displays and cross merchandising to provide serving ideas that are kid-friendly.
- Be sure to leave enough space between the aisles so that moms with kids can maneuver their shopping carts.
- Keep your signage consistent with your display, particularly with pricing.

QUICK TIPS

- **Provide eye-catching displays that have a consistent look and feel (bins, posters, display cards, price cards, etc.).**
- **Drive category sales by promoting unique varietal programs.**
- **Create promotions around holidays and annual events such as Christmas, Easter and back-to-school.**

• Use point-of-sale materials to catch your customer's attention.

MANAGE LOCATION AND SPACE

Give the most space to your category's best seller. Highlight new and interesting varieties using point of sale signage; give customers a reason to "try this new

OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- **Turns out, Mom was right!™ Drive sales with this turnkey program that promotes healthy eating and Fruition® facts – www.fruitfacts.org**
- **Offer samples of unique varieties such as Grannrose™ to create excitement for all apple varieties.**
- **Promote the Naturally Delicious and Nutritious™ message throughout your department with easy to use, simple to set-up, Chelan Fresh bin sleeves.**
- **Increase revenue by using Chelan Fresh planner programs throughout the year, complete with all the high-impact graphic display items such as posters, display cards, price cards and two- or four-box sleeves.**

variety."

Position your main display in high traffic areas (such as the entrance to the produce department) and utilize multiple display locations.

COLOR BREAKS

Color breaks, particularly in large, well-organized displays, are key to catching customers' eyes. Separate solid colors from bi-color varieties and place contrasting colors next to each other whenever possible to brighten the display and create distinction between varieties.

COMMUNICATE WITH P.O.S.

Point-of-sale materials (P.O.S.) offer an important opportunity to attract customer attention, prolong the shopping experience, and provide education about apples — all key components to boosting category sales. In addition to being eye-catching, effective P.O.S. will tell the customer something they don't know that will improve their life. P.O.S. can provide information about nutrition, serving suggestions and promote the unique region where the apples are grown.

Be sure to communicate with the customer clearly — use appropriate signage for product identification and pricing.

P.O.S. options are endless and include variety identifiers, usage cards, bins, posters and many other display materials.

OFFER CHOICES

Display a good selection of varieties. Offer different sizes, large for sharing or dessert and small for children. Provide a variety of pack choices: bulk, traditional bags and handle totes.

CREATE A SENSE OF ABUNDANCE

Fresh and full displays sell twice as many apples. Abundance can be enhanced with creative techniques such as false-bottom displays that allow product to be placed on top of the bins, although it looks as if the product is overflowing from the bin. You can also achieve this by using apple carton material to fill in the display and show fruit on the outer perimeter and top.

CROSS-MERCHANDISING

Display apples with related or complimenting products, such as salad ingredients (lettuce, dressings, bacon bits), caramel, pie/dessert materials and apple juice.

Educate consumers on new uses for apples, such as pairing them with chili powder, or using them in salsa.

Sell apple slicers near the apple display to promote apples as an easy, snack-friendly food.

MORE PROGRAMS. MORE PROFIT.



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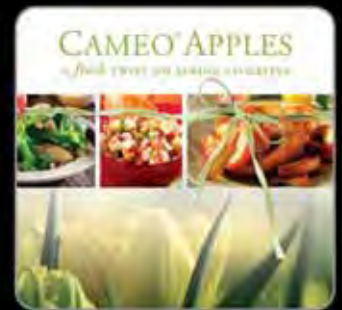
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ARTICHOQUES



ARTICHOKE AVAILABILITY

Ocean Mist Farms is the only year-round grower of fresh artichokes. Three growing areas in California along with proprietary varieties provide a 52-week harvest schedule.

SPRING 2010 CROP

March through mid-May is peak season for the classic Green Globe variety artichoke only grown in Castroville, California region. Due to new cultural practices, this year will be one of our largest spring crops in terms of volume, with plenty of promotional opportunities during the spring months.

Traditionally, the larger sizes peak at the front end in March and April with the smaller sizes peaking in April and May:

April: Heavier volume on larger-jumbo sized Artichokes (12-18-24 COUNT).

May: Heavier volume on medium and baby-sized artichokes (30- to 36-count and baby sizes). The month of May is the peak of the year for the foodie favorite size: the baby artichoke.

We recommend leveraging the variation of the crop volume by size, to maximize sales throughout the spring months.

MERCHANDISING ARTICHOQUES

Artichokes are a natural complement to the produce department. Artichokes have a rich, deep-green color that complement other produce items and “stack”

well for building large end-cap displays.

If handled properly, Ocean Mist artichokes will look and taste fresh for up to two weeks. It is important to keep them cool and moist. Here are some tips to help merchandise artichokes:

- Refrigerate artichokes on display at 34° F or 1° C.
- Asparagus trays or bowls work well as merchandising tools to keep stems hydrated.
- Remove any outer damaged-scarred petals.
- Merchandise artichokes on their sides, stem-to-stem, for easier handling by you and your shoppers.
- Place next to lemons and/or fresh garlic bulbs for color blocking and to encourage impulse purchases. Lemons and garlic are commonly used in preparing fresh artichokes.
- Create secondary displays in other departments to prompt an impulse purchase as a meal solution. Artichokes make the perfect side dish for any meat, poultry or fish entree.
- Side dipping ingredients such as mayo, balsamic vinegar and ready-to-eat sauces make a great cross promotion and encourage impulse purchases as meal solutions.
- Offer multiple sizes of artichokes for increased sales. Shoppers use different sizes for different recipes.

NUTRITION STORY A WINNER

The antioxidant level of fresh artichokes is another powerful merchandising opportunity. Seventy-nine

percent of survey respondents noted the fact that the artichokes are higher in antioxidants than any other vegetable will have a significant impact on future purchases. Use Ocean Mist's point-of-sale to draw attention to the artichoke display and educate shoppers about artichokes' nutritional value.

USE DIGITAL TOOLS TO SUPPORT PROMOTIONS

Artichoke household penetration is approximately 30 percent nationally, at approximately the same level as Brussels sprouts. With less than half of shoppers making the decision to buy at the store, it increases the importance of reaching out to people when they are not in the retail environment with information about artichoke usage, nutrition and preparation.

We see an opportunity this spring with social media tools and our Artichoke Aficionado Club members to update artichoke lovers about weekly advertised retail specials for fresh artichokes. Social media tools, such as Facebook and Twitter, will allow us to communicate advertised specials to a targeted audience. Retailers can also leverage their internal corporate digital teams for promotional support.

WHAT'S NEW: PACKAGING AND STICKERS

Ocean Mist Farms developed a PLU sticker, the first of its kind for bulk artichokes, to comply with the country of origin labeling laws. The stickers, available on two sizes of artichokes with the current PLU codes 4262 and 4084, are applied in the field during harvest. Ocean Mist worked with our packaging partner to create a special adhesive that is food safe.

The company also fully redesigned our artichoke packaging for both club and retail store items. Our 4-count handle bag includes cooking instructions in three easy steps.

All of Ocean Mist's packaging was redesigned with three areas of focus: increase product visibility (see more of the artichokes inside), provide a nutritional statement that highlights the high antioxidant and fiber levels in artichokes and direct consumers to the Web site for more cooking videos and instructions.

FROST-KISSED ARTICHOQUES

Winter months bring Frosted Artichokes from the colder temperatures causing the artichoke to flake and peel. Most foodies know that once cooked, the peeling disappears and the frosted artichoke has an enhanced nutty flavor. Go to our webpage to learn more on Frost-Kissed artichokes and order POS.

PROMOTIONAL IDEAS: HOLIDAYS BOOST SALES

- **Artichoke sales exhibit sharp peaks in both volume and dollars during holiday weeks, and elevate from February through May including Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day and Memorial Day.**
- **Artichokes are commonly considered used to celebrate three spring holidays: St Joseph's Table, Easter and Memorial Day. Seasonality shows Memorial Day weekend is the second biggest event of year. There is an opportunity to capitalize on key grilling occasions, such as Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day weekend, to increase sales and profits.**

 MULTIPLE CHOICE

WHAT'S YOUR ARTICHOKE IQ? TAKE THIS TEST AND FIND OUT.

WHO IS THE MARKET LEADER IN FRESH
ARTICHOKES, AND WHY?

- A) OCEAN MIST, BECAUSE IT HAS BEEN PERFECTING THE ART OF GROWING FRESH ARTICHOKE SINCE 1924.
- B) OCEAN MIST, BECAUSE IT IS THE ONLY YEAR-ROUND SOURCE FOR PREMIUM FRESH ARTICHOKE.
- C) OCEAN MIST, BECAUSE OF ITS IDEAL ARTICHOKE LAND BASE.
- D) OCEAN MIST, BECAUSE THEY HAVE DEVELOPED PROPRIETARY, THORNED VARIETIES THAT ARE THE BEST-EATING ARTICHOKE.
- E) ALL OF THE ABOVE.

Solution: e) All of the above



As many retailers already know, it's hard to go wrong with artichokes—as long as you rely on Ocean Mist Farms.

We've been the market leader since 1924. And with more and more consumers learning to love artichokes, we're here to deliver the best artichoke eating experience that your customers expect—time and time again—52 weeks a year.

**The more you learn about artichokes,
the better you'll like Ocean Mist Farms.**



Learn more at www.oceanmist.com



PERUVIAN ASPARAGUS IMPORTERS ASSOCIATION

Contact: Priscilla Lleras
Tel: 817-793-3133
Email: prestige@lscm.net



ASPARAGUS

Per capita consumption of fresh asparagus has increased by more than 45 percent since 1998....in the last decade alone consumption of asparagus in the United States has almost doubled, exceeding the rate of growth exhibited by nearly all other vegetables. Retailers can help promote consumption and increase sales of asparagus with just a few simple merchandising, promotion and handling techniques.

In addition to the U.S. supply sources, Peru has become a major supplier of asparagus allowing U.S. retailers to have year-round availability and thus build the category.

A variety of colors are available from Peru. The variety of color in fresh asparagus makes for attractive display alternatives. Fresh Asparagus is readily available in green, white and purple.

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

The year-round availability of asparagus supports programs designed to build the category not only during peak holiday periods but throughout the year. The following tips will all help to boost sales:

- **Strategically display** the category to ensure consumers see it. Make sure displays are especially visible and well-positioned in the produce department to gain attention.
- **Variety of sizes and packaging** - fresh asparagus now includes different forms of packaging and sizes to enhance display practices. Be sure to display several different packaging options to increase convenience for customers. Large display tables of different product forms (whole spear bunches, microwave tray-packed trimmed spears which, packaged and bunched asparagus tips, and white asparagus) will increase sales and add profits to the produce department.
- Highlighting the **nutritional benefits** of this outstanding vegetable will attract a wide variety of customers.
- **Showcasing unique colors**, like purple or white asparagus! By adding these products to displays where fresh green asparagus is featured is another way to create an interesting and impactful display.

SUGGESTED SIGNAGE/POS

Effective signage should stress suggestive usage ideas as well as the many nutritional benefits of fresh asparagus. Signage should recommend serving ideas:

great for baking
impressive for entertaining
easy-to-barbecue • totally microwaveable

Nutritional information is also a key element in effective retail signage. Asparagus is a good source of potassium, vitamin A, and vitamin C. Asparagus is low in fat and contains no cholesterol. Asparagus is also rich in rutin and folacin, which has been proven important in the duplication of cells for growth and repair of the body.

QUICK TIPS

- Display fresh asparagus in a prominent position that is visible and easily accessible.
- Display multiple SKU's of fresh asparagus to increase consumer purchase penetration and frequency of purchase.
- Refrigerate and hydrate to maintain quality.
- Educate the consumer to the ease-of-preparation and high nutritional benefits.

VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

The Peruvian season complements the supply of domestically grown fresh asparagus allowing for stores to offer customers a year-round product. U.S. domestic product usually peaks in the spring and early summer months.

"In 2008, the U.S. imported more than 308,256,000 pounds of fresh-market asparagus of which Peruvian asparagus represented over 56 percent of the Total Supply. Total value of imported asparagus reached \$303,653 (value in \$1,000) in 2008 of which Peru accounted for \$152,537 or 50 percent of total U.S. Import \$ Value."

VALUE ADDED

In an effort to increase household penetration and reach new consumers, a number of Peruvian asparagus importers are working closely with their suppliers and/or farms to bring value-added options — including microwaveable and ready-to-eat — to market that are designed for both retail and foodservice. These value-added programs provide the consumer with convenience and savings.

OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Use in-store demo programs and meal-theme-related promotions to increase consumer awareness of fresh asparagus as a convenient purchase and economical dinner component as well as a nutritious snack.
- In-store demo programs have proven highly effective in increasing consumer awareness of fresh asparagus as an "everyday" item.

PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Fresh green asparagus is traditionally heavily-promoted for the Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, but increased promotions occur during the Summer with, picnic themes and Fall cross-promotions with products. Merchandising white asparagus next to green offers the consumer more choices as well as providing a contrasting and attractive display.

Health-related promotional programs are a definite method of gaining sales because of fresh asparagus' proven nutritional benefits as well as its delightful taste.

The Peruvian Asparagus Importers Association (PAIA) has developed a Category Management Plan Outline for Fresh Peruvian Asparagus. Their focus in the development and distribution of the Category Management Plan Outline is to share information with retailers, consumers and the industry at large regarding the health benefits of asparagus, as well as provide data pertaining to the trade. The Plan is available from any member of the Peruvian Asparagus Importer's Association or by contacting their Coordinator, Priscilla Lleras.

FRESHNESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Green and white asparagus are bright-looking with closed, firm tips. The butt-end of fresh asparagus should be cleanly cut and sufficiently hydrated.

DISPLAY, CARE AND HANDLING

Ideally, fresh asparagus should be displayed under refrigeration or with the butt-end in water or touching a wet pad. Fresh asparagus has a ninety percent water content and care should be taken to avoid the chance for dehydration. If the butt-ends do not look fresh, they can be trimmed to provide a fresh appearance. If the tips are slightly wilted, they can be freshened by soaking them in cold water or by misting them.

BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

Fresh asparagus needs to be kept cold (34-36 degrees F) and moist (damp room) prior to display. The refrigeration chain should not be broken. Fresh asparagus is not ethylene-sensitive but is susceptible to absorbing very strong odors.

CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Fresh asparagus has numerous cross-merchandising opportunities such as with salad, oils and dressings, with deli products like ham and cheese, wines and during the Summer, barbecue meats and fish. Tray-packed fresh asparagus can also be cross-merchandised with packaged salad.

Fresh and packaged asparagus can also be cross-merchandised in the meat department, for example with steaks, to provide a meal solution for customers.

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CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION

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Email: dcruz@avocado.org

AVOCADOS

HASS AVOCADOS ARE NATIVES OF CALIFORNIA

- The Hass variety, so popular worldwide, originated in La Habra, California
- Over 96 percent of avocados sold in the United States are the Hass variety
- The Mother Hass Tree (1926-2002) was tended for, and named after Mr. Rudolph Hass, who patented the variety in August, 1935
- Every Hass Avocado worldwide can trace its lineage back to this California tree

CALIFORNIA AVOCADOS ARE AN IMPACT ITEM IN THE PRODUCE DEPARTMENT

- Retailers generated 108 million more dollars during the 2009 California Season (April-September) than during the prior six months (October-March)
- Retailers produced, on average, 564 more dollars per-store, per-month during the 2009 California Season (April-September) than during the prior six months (October-March)
- Consumer demand continues to climb, with retail sales growing nationwide

KEY STRATEGIES TO INCREASE SALES

- Promote and advertise California Avocados throughout the California season (April-September)
- A two-size strategy (selling both large and small size avocados) can increase category volume and sales by nearly 100 percent*
- Merchandise bagged avocados for value-conscious consumers
- Bagged avocados make an excellent secondary SKU and can generate sales of up to 53 more units per store, per week than stores without bags*

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

- Display *Hand Grown California* Avocados in a large prominent, permanent location and also in a secondary impulse location to boost shopper awareness and sales
- Avocados stickered as "RIPE" can outsell non-stickered fruit by as much as 28 percent*
- Display ripe California Avocados
- Advertise and display ripe California Avocados to capitalize on your shoppers' demand for ripe avocados (as much as four-to-one over firm fruit)*
- 77 percent of shoppers purchasing avocados plan to eat them within 48 hours*

PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

- Consumers enjoy California Avocados in a variety of ways, from everyday meals to special events and celebrations

QUICK TIPS

• Visit CaliforniaAvocado.com/Retail for merchandising information, nutrition information, retail support and to order *Hand Grown in California* POS materials

• Display and promote *California Avocados* to drive demand at retail

- Special occasions and events drive retail sales: **Cinco de Mayo, Mother's Day, Memorial Day, Father's Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, St. Patrick's Day, Tailgating opportunities, World Series, Thanksgiving, New Years, Super Bowl, March Collegiate Basketball** and local events and celebrations

SIGNAGE

- Use *Hand Grown in California* POS materials and display bins to increase shopper awareness and help boost sales
- Use "RIPE" and "Ready-to-Eat" signage on displays of RIPE California Avocados
- Feature recipes and usage ideas to spark consumer purchase
- Display nutrition information to educate shoppers on the benefits of California Avocados and to encourage purchase

NUTRITION

- Avocados are included in Fruits & Veggies-More Matters™ consumer educational program to promote increased consumption of fruits and vegetables for good health
- Avocados act as a "nutrient booster" by enabling the body to absorb more fat-soluble nutrients, such as alpha- and beta-carotene as well as lutein, in foods that are eaten with the fruit
- Avocados contribute good fats to one's diet, providing 3 grams monounsaturated fat and 0.5 polyunsaturated grams fat per 1 oz. serving
- Avocados contain 81 micrograms of the carotenoid lutein, which some studies suggest may help maintain healthy eyes
- Avocados offer nearly 20 vitamins, minerals and beneficial plant compounds that can contribute to the nutrient quality of your diet
- One-fifth of a medium avocado (1 oz) has 50 calories and contributes nearly 20 vitamins and minerals making it a good nutrient choice.
- Avocados contain 76 milligrams beta-sitosterol in a 3-oz serving of avocado. Beta-sitosterol is a natural plant sterol which may help maintain healthy cholesterol levels

DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

- Rotate and refresh displays daily, handling avocados gently to avoid bruising
- Never display avocados near misting systems, on wet-racks or on refrigerated displays below 42° F

BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

- Bring the avocados inside the store immediately upon arrival, placing boxes with soft fruit on top and those with firmer fruit on the bottom
- Breaking and ripe fruit may be stored in a cooler
- In general, firm pre-conditioned fruit can be held at room temperature for three to five days and breaking-to-ripe fruit for two to three days
- Do not store hard, non-breaking fruit below 45° F to avoid chill damage

VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

- In addition to Hass, other delicious California varieties include Lamb Hass (a summer Hass-like variety), Bacon, Gwen, Fuerte, Pinkerton, Reed and Zutano
- Organic *Hand Grown California* Avocados provide an excellent opportunity to build your category

*Based on California Avocado Commission Best Practices Research and Data

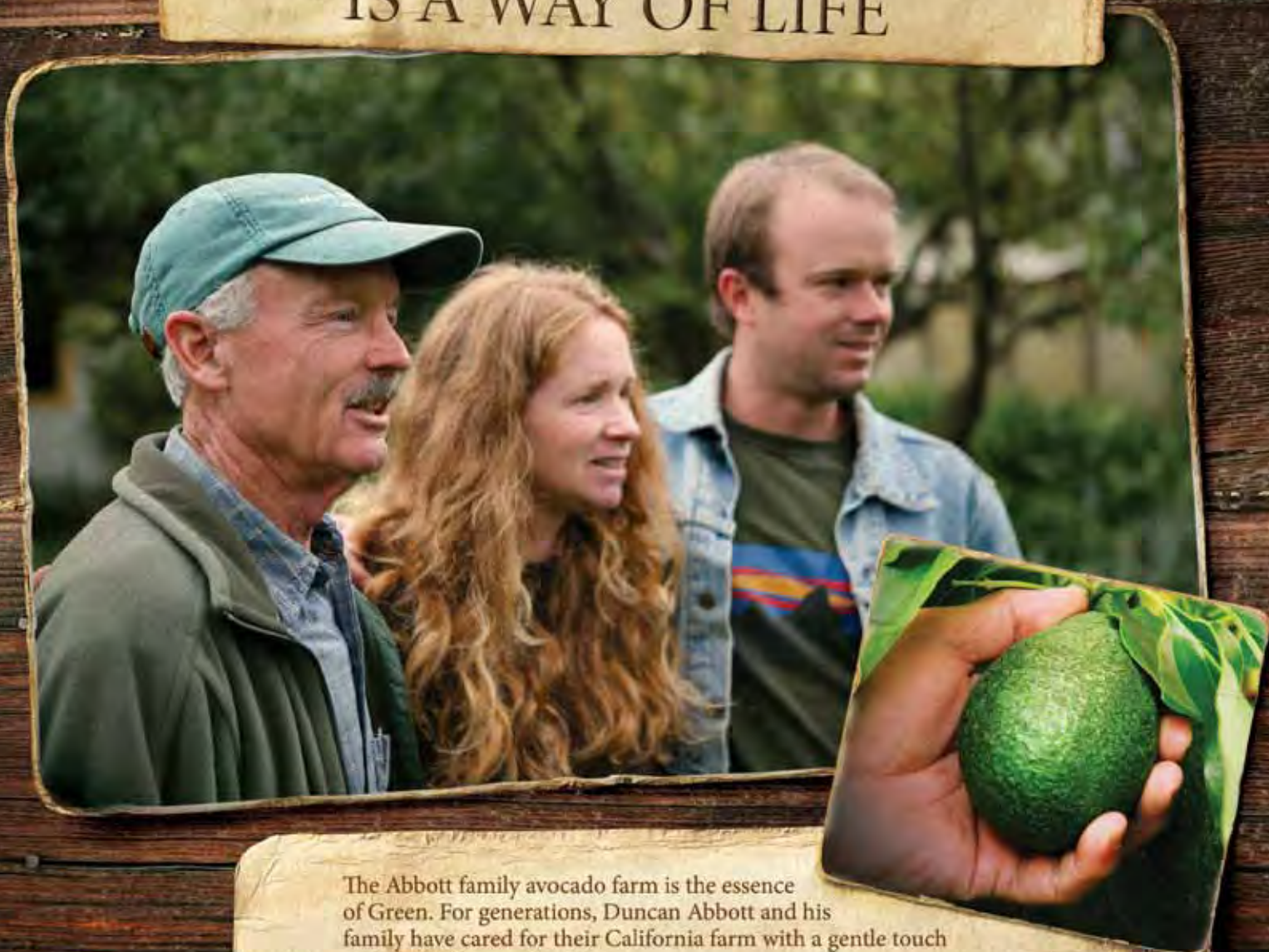
CONTACT THE CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION

For more information about:

- Consumer marketing and communications
- Custom retail promotional opportunities
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- Merchandising Best Practices research
- Ripening and handling information
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- Rolling crop forecasts
- Retail promotion planner
- California Avocado grower stories and pictures
- In-store support materials (POS)
- Display bins
- Recipes and photographs

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The Abbott family avocado farm is the essence of Green. For generations, Duncan Abbott and his family have cared for their California farm with a gentle touch and an eye for sustainability.

Their orchards thrive in soil nurtured by nature — not chemicals. Their avocados are grown, harvested and packed by hand, not carbon-emitting machines. These Green practices make Duncan one of the leading visionaries growing California Avocados.

Like the Abbott family's mission to nurture, the California Avocado Commission has hand-crafted retail merchandising programs and marketing materials to help you grow your category.

To learn more about the retail support programs or to order in-store POS materials, visit CaliforniaAvocado.com/Retail or call (800) 344-4333.

Insist on California Avocados





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INCREASE AVOCADO CATEGORY SALES WITH SLIMCADOS

It's the green-skinned avocado from Southern Florida with less fat and fewer calories.*

The SlimCado's large size complements your current avocado offering, grabbing attention from the value-conscious customer and even the dieter — normally an infrequent visitor in the avocado aisle. Don't forget your Hispanic shopper, who will appreciate having a wider selection of a favorite fruit.

Avocado Aficionados were thrilled to hear that avocados contain "good" fat. Still doctors suggest even "good" fat be eaten in moderation (70 calories a day). Those 70 calories go much further with SlimCados. SlimCado's distinctive light avocado taste can be added to:

- Green salads — morsels of SlimCados tossed in make each forkful more delectable.
- Hot soups — cold cubes of these avocados floating on the top push the soup's zest appeal over the edge
- Chunky guacamole — mashed SlimCados become the party favorite of the buffet table.
- Sandwiches or hamburgers — diced into sandwich spreads or sliced thin to top the feast, these green-skinned avocados make bagged lunches hard to beat.
- SlimCado bowls — cut in half and filled with your favorite seafood salad, SlimCados give a new meaning to dishing it out.
- Finally, there's the simple joy of a Florida avocado cut in half with just a squeeze of lime on top and eaten with a spoon.

So it's official, avocados aren't just for parties. Any meal can be made into a little celebration with SlimCados. Besides being lower in fat and calories, the Florida avocado is also rich in vitamin A, high in potassium and cholesterol-free. SlimCados are not genetically modified — they come by these characteristics naturally.

PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

Make a big splash in mid-July to kick off the SlimCado season. Look for promotional volumes of 12-count fruit in July and 10-count in August — just in time for chopping up into salads that make their yearly debut during summer barbecues.

Play up how SlimCados add gusto to the guacamole, hamburgers and salads of tailgate parties. The Florida avocado's tropical taste goes well with autumn's typical fare.

And for traditional holiday dinners, SlimCados make a healthy alternative side dish for those special meals.

Garnish in-store cooked food demonstrations with a piece of SlimCado. The food's heat will slightly melt the SlimCado for an added treat.

QUICK TIPS

- **Make sure customers know the SlimCado stays green as it ripens. To determine ripeness, give it a squeeze and if it gives a little, it's ready to eat.**
- **Keep SlimCados cool but not cold. To ripen, keep them at room temperature. Communicate this to your customers as well.**
- **Retail customers and culinary professionals can find great recipes and tips at Chef's Corner on the Brooks Tropicals Web site.**
- **New! Tropical Nutrition web site where consumers will find informative articles about SlimCado avocados and how it helps consumers meet their daily dietary requirements. Visit www.brookstropicals.com/nutrition**

DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

Display enough to sell in one day, roughly 15 to 30 pieces (depending on the traffic in your store). When replenishing, rotate any leftover day-old fruit to the front. Remember, avocados are sensitive to ethylene.

OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- **Think big displays at the beginning of the season. SlimCado aficionados wait for its arrival. As the season progresses, create small multiple displays to cross-merchandise with bagged salads and guacamole ingredients.**
- **Remember the SlimCado in mid-July; the 12-count is available in promotional volumes. It's a great spark for summer produce sales. In August, ask about promotional volumes for the 10-count.**
- **For a handy pocket care guide for SlimCado® Avocados, e-mail maryo@brookstropicals.com.**

OPTIMUM SHELF LIFE

Brooks' Continuous Cold Chain® keeps SlimCados at their best from the field to your store. The first link in the chain is the hydro-cooling that is done immediately after harvesting. Hydro-cooling takes the tropical heat out while keeping the fruit's freshness in. The chain continues with these green-skinned avocados being stored in dedicated coolers set at optimum temperature and humidity levels. The final link is the refrigerated loading docks that allow SlimCados to be shipped to your store at optimum freshness.

As the largest grower, packer and shipper of green-skinned avocados, Brooks Tropicals has a reputation for delivering this fruit with the best shelf-life. SlimCados have approximately a 4-day shelf life with the fruit being ready to eat for another one to two days.

BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

Store SlimCados by keeping their environment cool and humid, between 42° and 48° F. Do not store below 40° F. Optimum humidity is between 85 percent and 95 percent.

SlimCados are UPC/PLU-coded and boxed in flats, doubles and bruces.

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Add SlimCados to your avocado section and give your customers a choice of great avocado tastes. But don't stop there. Place SlimCados near other salad ingredients. These green-skinned avocados make delicious sense in salads. When the avocados are displayed near bagged salads, your shoppers have a quick and easy way to make their salads special.

When you're rounding up ingredients for your guacamole display, make sure to include SlimCados for a fresh-tasting guacamole.

Merchandise Florida avocados targeting your South and Central American customers. This is the avocado of choice for many Hispanic dishes.

VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY

Available July through February, Florida avocados are generally pear-shaped and green-skinned. Their weight can vary from 14 ounces to a hefty 34 ounces. The avocado will vary in size from four to 12 inches long and up to six inches wide.

**50% less fat and 35% fewer calories than the leading California avocado.*

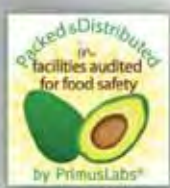
SlimCado, Continuous Cold Chain and the Brooks Tropicals logo are registered trademarks of Brooks Tropicals, LLC.



Healthy salads deserve SlimCado® Avocados

With less than half the fat
and a third fewer calories*,
there's no better way to
top a healthy salad.

Call today to get SlimCados
coming your way.



GROWER - PACKER - SHIPPER
Tel 800.327.4833 Fax 305.246.5827
www.brookstropicals.com

*Compared to the leading California avocado

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BANANAS

BANANAS ARE WELL POSITIONED TO PROMOTE IN A DIFFICULT ECONOMY

We said last year that “consumers are faced with very difficult choices as economic conditions worsen.” While policy makers, economists, and financial markets point to better times ahead, many consumers are still waiting for relief

In addition to the nutritional value, convenience, and flavor that bananas offer to consumers, bananas are also the lowest cost fruit in the produce department. Consumers clearly understand this. The table below demonstrates this by showing the change in retail dollar sales, pounds sold, and average retail price between 2008 and 2009 for the total United States.

Total US Retail Conventionally Grown Fresh Fruit Sales			
% Change 2008 - 2009			
Product	\$ Sales	Lbs Sold	Retail Price
Apples	-10.1%	3.2%	-12.9%
Avocados	11.7%	21.5%	-8.1%
Bananas	1.6%	3.9%	-2.2%
Berries	10.8%	21.0%	-8.4%
Cherries	1.2%	29.5%	-21.8%
Grapes	5.2%	8.8%	-3.3%
Melons	-1.8%	7.9%	-9.0%
Oranges	-6.3%	-3.7%	-2.7%
Peaches	-6.6%	3.3%	-9.5%
Pineapple	3.8%	13.9%	-8.9%

Source: FreshLook Marketing

After the dramatic price increases in 2008 driven in great part by skyrocketing fuel prices, the retail price for fruit moderated in 2009 according to FreshLook Marketing data.

Banana, pineapple, avocado, berry, and grape category sales increased in 2009 compared with 2008. The national trend is quite consistent across the regions of the United States; however, the competitive effects of changes in retail pricing had significant market share implications. Contact your Dole representative to review the results from your region and ensure you are getting your fair share of the market.

BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

Dole Fresh Fruit Company provides its retail and wholesale customers with services that improve the way products are received, handled, ripened and

QUICK TIPS

- Ensure proper backroom handling conditions and procedures
- Keep your DOLE Banana display fully stocked and clean during business hours
- Have nutrition and recipe information available for your customers or direct them to www.dole.com

displayed. A knowledgeable team of technical service representatives work directly with Dole customers to perfect ripening, equipment management and handling procedures.

Our team of merchandising representatives works at retail stores to help develop displays that will move more DOLE Bananas.

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

When building a profitable banana display at retail, there are several items to take into account. Brand recognition and loyalty are key. A recent independent study showed that consumers look for specific brands that they trust to buy. The study found, “DOLE continues to stand out as the brand consumers say they seek out and buy when available.” Thirty-five percent of respondents surveyed said they buy DOLE products. The next brand mentioned received only 14 percent.

Your DOLE Banana display should be positioned in a prominent area, preferably the front-end display unit in the produce department.

A beautifully stocked display will draw consumers into your produce department. Stocking is important. With the busy lifestyles that most people lead today, the time people shop is scattered around the clock. The morning and afternoon will bring in the stay-at-home-mom crowd, as well as seniors. Both of these demographic groups are loyal DOLE Banana consumers. In the evening, late at night and on weekends, you will have an influx of shoppers who work full time and fit shopping into their schedules.

All these consumers have one thing in common; they all like to buy their DOLE Bananas from a neat, fully stocked banana display. If the display appears half-empty, they get the impression the fruit has been picked through, leaving them with the leftovers. This is why it is critical to keep your DOLE Banana display fully stocked, cleaned and culled throughout business hours

GIVE YOUR CONSUMERS MORE OF WHAT THEY LOVE... MORE OF WHAT IS GOOD FOR THEM

Bananas continue to be the top selling item sold in grocery stores with household penetration exceeding 90%. Consumers love the banana’s sweet taste, nutrition, and convenience. Still, the average retail banana transaction size remains at roughly 2.5 pounds.

This is due in part to the established daylight banana consumption patterns by consumers centering around breakfast or a snack early in the afternoon. DOLE has seized upon an opportunity to educate consumers about delicious and exciting new usages for bananas, nutritional benefits, and other incentives that promote purchasing more of the bananas they already love.

The goal of this integrated promotional strategy is to increase the average retail transaction size by one-half-pound without resorting to steep retail promotional price reductions. DOLE provides its customers with customized turn-key, easy to execute promotional programs that will increase the banana transaction size and banana profits!

DOLE provides retailers with all of the customized components to ensure success; including eye-catching point of sale materials that communicate clear messages to the consumer; in-store posters, take-one educational materials, and retail-specific webpages.

DOLE is committed to making it easy for retailers to give their consumers more of what they love, and more of what’s good for them. Contact your DOLE representative today to start building your extra half-pound!

OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Entice consumers with incentives to increase more bananas

- Feature “Fourth Pound Free” Promotions

- Arrange for Bobby Banana to make a surprise visit to your store



Bobby Banana



ORGANIC/SPECIALTY BANANAS

ARE YOU LOSING REVENUE AT THE CHECK STAND?

Consumer interest in fresh organic fruit continues to grow. From 2008 to 2009 US fresh organic fruit dollar sales increased 11% and pound sales jumped 21% according to FreshLook Marketing data. Consumers have shown a willingness to pay a premium price for organic fruit in exchange for the reassurance that the bananas were grown in a more earth-friendly manner. Berries, apples, and bananas are the top selling organic fruits in the produce department, while bananas are largest when ranked by pounds sold.

Total US Retail Organic Fresh Fruit Sales			
% Change 2008 - 2009			
Product	\$ Sales	Lbs Sold	Retail Price
Apples	16.3%	52.2%	-23.6%
Avocados	9.3%	12.8%	-3.1%
Bananas	4.5%	7.6%	-2.8%
Berries	2.5%	16.1%	-11.8%
Cherries	819.8%	1468.0%	-41.3%
Grapes	1.2%	8.6%	-6.8%
Melons	-33.9%	-24.3%	-12.7%
Oranges	-36.2%	-43.3%	12.6%
Peaches	22.8%	69.8%	-27.7%
Pineapple	-14.9%	-9.3%	-6.2%
All Other	16.3%	52.2%	-23.6%
Total	10.8%	20.7%	-8.2%

Source: FreshLook Marketing

Unfortunately, retailers do not always realize the price premium between the organic and conventional produce item at the register. Unlike packaged goods with UPCs that are scanned at the checkout for an accurate ring every time, random weight perishable produce items still rely on the cashiers to key in the correct PLU code for the right price. While expediting the purchases of busy consumers, it is difficult for a cashier ringing large numbers of items, to differentiate between organic and conventional bananas.

To ensure retailers do not lose any banana revenue and to avoid confusion at the check stand, Dole has developed an attractive band to wrap around organic banana clusters. The band prominently highlights ORGANIC and the PLU code, making it easier for cashiers to identify it.

In parallel, the industry is now making strides

toward the adoption of a new barcode: the GSI Databar. The data bar is encoded with a 14-digit GTIN (global trade identification number) that identifies the product and its supplier and also distinguishes from conventional and organic. This bar is small enough to fit on bananas, and most other products, and ensures the correct price is charged to the consumer.

Having cashiers scan the Databar on a banana instead of entering a PLU will allow retailers to ring the correct price for organic bananas and not lose any revenue at the check stand. Walmart and Loblaws are already scanning the Databar in some stores. Your Dole representative can assist you to maximize organic banana sales and reduce shrink due to misidentified product at the checkout stand.



PROMOTE SPECIALTY BANANAS

Make sure specialty bananas are clearly visible, in good condition, and merchandised with point of sale material that provides consumers with sufficient information on how to select these exotic treats and practical ideas to best enjoy them.

These tasty varieties can add excitement and color to your produce department as well as generate additional margins.

Your Dole representative can help customize a specialty banana program tailored to the demographic makeup of your stores.





Dole leads the way
in nutritional education,
helping consumers to
achieve a healthy lifestyle.

The DOLE brand is
synonymous with
high quality and safety
standards for fresh
fruit and vegetables.



Reader Service # 21

www.dole.com



Driscoll's®

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BERRIES

BERRIES ARE THE NO. 1 PRODUCE CATEGORY

Berries taste great alone as snacks but are also fantastic additions to a variety of dishes for every meal. They are also low in calories and packed with nutrition. That is why berries are the number one fruit category in the produce department, with 7.2 percent of dollar sales.¹ Expandable consumable is the perfect definition of the berry category. Berries are consumed within days of purchase and great opportunities exist to increase the number of berry users, per-capita consumption and berry uses.

NO. 1 IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE

Not only is the berry category No. 1 in total produce department dollar sales, but berries are also an effective way to differentiate your store. A recent survey by Willard Bishop found that 73 percent of respondents said that setting themselves apart from the competition was their highest priority. The produce department offers the best opportunity to differentiate yourself and berries are an item that can set one retailer apart from the others. Berries done well, with a destination Berry Patch featuring consistently high quality berries like Driscoll's, makes a resounding statement about your store's commitment to quality. A poorly stocked display of inconsistent quality berries says something quite different.

MORE ROOM TO GROW

Even with sales per-square-foot for the berry category at almost twice the produce department average, the berry category still has room to grow. Each berry variety has its own consumption profile with opportunities for increased sales. Strawberries have a user base over 94 percent and consumers will continue to buy them as long as they are available and great tasting. Per-capita consumption of strawberries is up 50 percent in the last decade.

Blueberries are one of the fastest growing produce items, expanding in both user base and per capita consumption. The blueberry user base is almost 75 percent and per-capita consumption is still a long way from reaching its full potential. Raspberries and blackberries



Blackberry and Brie Omelet

are both on the steepest growth curve. Raspberry consumption has increased four and a half times this decade and blackberry consumption is on the rise as well. Both are extremely popular with berry lovers, but user-base and per-capita consumption for both berries have unlimited potential. And, don't forget about organic berries, which are increasing in availability and demand every year.

THE BERRY PATCH DYNAMO

When you put all of these very popular, high growth, high velocity, expandable consumables in one spot in the produce department, the results are dramatic. Berry Patch displays are becoming a destination spot in most supermarkets. The result is one of the highest dollar-and profit-per-square-foot locations in the store.

WAYS TO PUMP UP THE VOLUME

The Driscoll's branded Berry Patch strategy is the best way to increase volume, sales and consumer satisfaction. Driscoll's mission is to continually delight berry consumers. That means focusing on flavor, texture, appearance, and aroma — everything that gives the consumer a delightful eating experience with every berry, every day. With year-round availability of Driscoll's strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and blackberries continuing to grow, you can count on Driscoll's great quality and distinctive flavor every day.





Raspberry Tequila Lime Pie

LET'S TALK ABOUT HEALTHY EATING

More and more good news continues to surface about berries. Strawberries are low in calories with no fat and a single serving provides 160 percent of the daily dose of vitamin C. Blueberries have been shown to combat the effects of aging like no other fruit. Raspberries are a great source of fiber, vitamin C, folate, potassium and magnesium and blackberries were recently identified as a top cancer fighter. Each berry is a super food in its own right

SAFETY FIRST

Driscoll's berries are grown with the highest standards of care and food safety possible. Driscoll's international food safety program requires all growers to pass a GlobalGAP, GFSI, Primus or equivalent independent third-party audit annually. In addition, Driscoll's growers are subject to random and scheduled internal food safety audits — a safety program second to none in the produce industry.

THE ART OF GROWING BERRIES

Driscoll's is passionate about producing great berries. The Driscoll's family has been growing berries for over 100 years, and developing new and better berry varieties is a vital part of our company's heritage and reputation. Driscoll's mission to continually delight berry consumers drives us to always seek ways to improve the berries we produce, balancing the art and science of berry farming. Driscoll's berries are grown with an eye to sustainability so we can preserve the Driscoll's heritage for future generations.



Beef Fillet with Brandy Flambeed Blueberries (above) and Strawberry Almond Butter Sandwich (below)



BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

- Receive berries directly into refrigerated warehouses.
- If berries arrive wrapped in plastic, remove the plastic immediately.
- Optimal temperature for berries is between 32° to 34°F with humidity levels at 90 to 95 percent.
- Transport to the store on refrigerated trucks.
- Quickly move berries from the loading dock to the cold storage room.

DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

- Keep your berries refrigerated from the receiving dock to the shelf.
- Keep berries dry. Any moisture will hasten breakdown, shorten shelf-life and shrink sales.
- Make sure your Berry Patch display is fully stocked at all times.
- Remove packages with leaky or moldy berries. One bad berry package will impact your sales and store image.





Set Yourself Apart
with **Driscoll's**





Create a Driscoll's Berry Patch in your produce department...

and watch the results stack up—and profits grow!

Consumers are passionate about fresh berries. Show that you are, too, by creating a power-packed display of Driscoll's premium fresh conventional and organic berries. A year-round, destination Driscoll's "berry patch" in place will generate category sales far exceeding national averages.



Driscoll's
The Finest Berries in the World.®

www.driscolls.com

Reader Service # 64



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BROCCOLINI®

Complete your specialty vegetable category by stocking Mann's Broccolini®, a natural hybrid. From the pages of leading culinary magazines to the Food Network, Broccolini® is a "foodie" favorite. Capture more Broccolini® sales today by stocking and merchandising both the more affordable bunched version and/or the washed and ready to eat value added SKU — especially during peak holiday cooking occasions.

BROCCOLINI®

Developed by Sakata Seed America and grown and marketed by Mann Packing, Broccolini® is Mann's trademarked brand of sweet baby broccoli. It is a "one and only." Don't be fooled by new knock-off varieties hitting the market. Just like a Pink Lady apple doesn't taste like a Red Delicious, Broccolini®'s sweet, delicate flavor and elegant appearance has been hard to match — it's head and shoulders above the rest.

"The vegetable to have if you're having vegetables," according to *USA Today*, Broccolini® continues to take the culinary world by storm. This elegant vegetable is a natural hybrid of broccoli and gai lan (also known as Chinese Kale). World-class chefs, food editors and food network personalities regularly feature Broccolini® so take advantage of these media mentions and stock up. This is a special occasion vegetable people love to serve when entertaining.

Recommended Display Ideas:

- 1) Show off stocks, not crowns
- 2) Use color breaks and place around, but not next to broccoli.
- 3) Use point-of-purchase material to draw attention to the subtle differences between items.
- 4) Other successful display areas include adjacent to Asian specialty produce items, organics and asparagus.

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Build a "Little Italy" section featuring Broccolini® along with garlic, shallots, sundried tomatoes and mushrooms. Broccolini® can do anything asparagus can do so merchandise them side-by-side.

If your store has a cooking school or guest chef



QUICK TIPS

- Monitor inventories closely to avoid out-of-stocks.
- Keep displays consistent so consumers know where to find specialty niche vegetables.
- Use point-of-purchase signage to draw attention to the category.
- Promote, promote, promote...leverage Mann's customer support programs to keep Broccolini® fans coming back for more and engage new users.



programs encourage them to feature Broccolini®. Its versatility and great taste makes it ideal for a number of ethnic cuisines.

POINT-OF-PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Use the following POS information to promote sales:

Broccolini® has a sweet, delicate flavor with a subtle, peppery taste. The flavor is milder and sweeter when cooked. When eaten raw, the vegetable has a tender, yet crunchy texture.

Broccolini® is completely edible, from flower to stem, and its texture is less fibrous than either broccoli or asparagus. The stem does not need to be peeled

before being eaten.

Developed with natural plant breeding methods, Broccolini® is not genetically modified.

Broccolini® is a nutrition powerhouse:

- Good source of vitamin A, folate, iron and potassium
- Excellent source of vitamin C
- 35 calories per 3 oz. serving (around five to six stalks)

USAGE IDEAS FOR CUSTOMERS

Promote the following usage ideas to educate customers and increase sales:

- Lightly steam or blanch Broccolini® to accentuate its delicate flavor and deep green color.
- Microwave Broccolini® for a quick and nutritious snack.
- Stir-fry Broccolini® with a selection of other fresh vegetables and add a ginger soy sauce for an Asian-inspired, light meal.
- Dip Broccolini® in a flour and beer batter and deep-fry for a delicious and crunchy appetizer.
- Sauté with olive oil, yellow onions and capers for a flavorful side dish to accompany a favorite entrée.
- Grill Broccolini® for a smoky, sweet summertime treat; wrap the flower tip in foil to prevent charring.
- Add to: Couscous, pastas, soups, tapas, chilled crudites, sushi rolls, vegetable chilis, stews, quiches, macaroni and cheese, casseroles, crepes, salads and quick breads — the possibilities are infinite!
- Broccolini® is a great finger food — easy to nibble on; perfect for party appetizer trays or elegant hors d'oeuvres.

DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

Merchandise washed and ready to eat specialty niche vegetable items in the value added produce case next to packaged salads and refrigerated dips/dressings. Proper temperature control is paramount to the success of these items. Keep constantly refrigerated between 34° and 38° F. Bunched Broccolini® can be placed by specialty Asian produce items or asparagus. Remember to show off the stalks so consumers don't confuse it with other items.

BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

Refrigerate immediately upon receipt. Even a few minutes at room temperature will greatly impact the shelf-life and quality. Small yellow flowering is normal and expected — that is the gai lan characteristic coming through.



Broccolini® with Sweet and Spicy Chicken



Broccolini® & Beef Samurai Sticks

The One and Only: Broccolini®

Ten years and counting, Broccolini® is America's most popular gourmet vegetable. Featured on America's finest menus and most popular cooking shows, Broccolini® is a "foodie" favorite.

Stock Broccolini® today and discover what this "one and only" can do for your specialty vegetable sales.



Fresh Vegetables Made Easy.™

www.veggiesmadeeasy.com

Reader Service # 18

Broccolini is a registered trademark of Mann Packing Co., Inc.



A family of *Growing* companies.™

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CARROTS

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Carrots are among the categories that have most benefited from the value-added revolution. The merchandising opportunities available have led to dramatic increases in carrot category volumes, which justify substantial attention being paid to the proper merchandising and marketing of carrots. Some key display points:

- 1) Carrots sell best when they receive a high-visibility central display that includes the full range of carrot items plus a generous secondary display in the produce department, tying into similar items and being used as color breaks throughout the department.
- 2) The main carrot display should include baby carrots, microwavable petite carrots for cooking, carrot chips, carrot Stixx, crinkle-cut coins, shredded carrots, multipack baby carrots and Carrot Dippers snack packs, jumbo carrots, table carrots, cello carrots, bunch carrots with tops.
- 3) A large secondary display with other value-added produce should include baby carrots, carrot chips, carrot Stixx, crinkle-cut coins, shredded carrot and microwavable petite carrots for cooking.
- 4) In addition, both baby carrots and table carrots, with their natural orange color, should serve as a terrific color break for use throughout the department.
- 5) Don't forget to include carrots as part of your organic display. Bunny Luv and Cal-Organic brands offer 52-week-a-year availability of a large range of certified organic carrots. Organic carrots consistently rank among the top selling organic items.
- 6) Salad bars also benefit from a full complement of carrot items. Grimmway offers foodservice packs perfect for putting baby carrots, carrot chips, carrot Crisps and shredded carrots in any salad bar.
- 7) Finally, all juicing programs require fresh

QUICK TIPS

- Carry the full variety of value-added Grimmway carrot products.
- Emphasize the healthful attributes of carrots.
- Display carrots in multiple locations in the store.

carrots to be a success — the sweet juice of the carrot makes it a perennial favorite for those ordering fresh juices.

POINT-OF-PURCHASE / SIGNAGE

Carrots are a naturally healthful snack. Let consumers know that the top messages are:

- All natural
- No fat, no cholesterol
- The kid-friendly vegetable™

Channel strips are an excellent way to grab the shoppers' attention. At Grimmway.com, we offer a range of point-of-sale material including a set of 1x 8-inch strips to add eye-catching clarity to your carrot displays.

OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Merchandise carrots in the deli next to fresh roasted chickens and other ready-to-eat items to integrate a healthful, colorful, vegetable meal-solution display.
- Put carrots in the meat case next to the assortment of ready-to-cook meal items to remind consumers to serve healthful fresh carrots with their protein-based main course.
- A display of baby carrots at the seafood counter reminds consumers of the need for a fresh vegetable with their fine fish.

VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Grimmway Carrots are available year-round with consistent quality. California's abundant sunshine and range of growing areas produce approximately 85 percent of the nation's carrots.

PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Due to their brilliant orange color, carrots can be part of eye-catching displays.

Carrots and carrot products are appropriate for sampling. You can keep up with Grimmway's latest ad campaigns on our Web site: Grimmway.com.

DISPLAY, CARE AND HANDLING

With bulk carrots, maintain temperatures from 33° to 35° F with relative humidity of 98 to 100 percent. Bulk carrots can be lightly misted but are ethylene-sensitive and should not be stored or transported with ethylene-producing items as they give carrots an off flavor.

The tops of bunched carrots should be fluffed to maintain air circulation.

Beware that the tops draw moisture from the carrots themselves and will cause these carrots to have a shorter shelf life.

If the exterior of carrots starts to appear white, dunk them in ice water to freshen the carrots.

Maintaining the cold chain is of prime importance with value-added carrots including baby carrots.



CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Carrots and fresh-cut carrots are traditionally cross-merchandised with dips and salad dressings; one can also use peanut butter, yogurt, etc.

Carrot cake is a favorite for everyone. So cross-merchandise with all the ingredients. Sample carrot-cake cupcakes and give out a recipe.

Soups and stews create many cross-merchandising opportunities. And signage indicating that any salad can be enhanced with carrots is always a good idea.

Finally, don't forget to suggest carrot curls as a garnish with holiday meals.



the Very Versatile Carrot



Babies

The "Good For You" snack

- ✓ Great for lunches
- ✓ High in Vitamin A

Chips, Sticks & Coins

The "Entertainers"

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The "Salad Maker"

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CELERY

VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Nobody knows celery like Duda Farm Fresh Food, Inc. Since 1926, when we brought our first commercial crop of celery to market, we've grown to become one of the world's most successful producers and processors of agricultural products. Considered to be the largest celery growers in the world our reputation stands on the research and development of new and exciting celery varieties. Through our celery research program Duda Farm Fresh Foods is generating 1,000 to 1,200 lines of celery a year, focusing on characteristics such as flavor, nutrition, texture and appearance. Consumers benefit from Duda Farm Fresh Foods years of celery breeding expertise.

Today we grow Dandy® brand celery from one of our many proprietary varieties, specifically adapted to our regional growing conditions. Our year-round availability provides options for regional specific programs supplying sustainable options for retailers.

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Research on celery destination shows consumers are looking for convenience in their shopping trips. Merchandising can help provide this convenience by locating celery products adjacent to one another. Whole celery, hearts, sticks and branches located in the same display space make it easy for consumers to find and make selections.

There are two types of celery consumers — those consuming celery primarily as a snack and those using it

as an ingredient in recipes. The snackers are helping grow the value-added segment as celery sticks are gaining in popularity. This presents a great opportunity for retailers to increase their celery business through sticks, sticks with dips, and snack packs for lunch boxes.

Research also indicates consumers in general would like to see more choices and new product options for celery like Dandy® brand washed and ready-to-eat celery sticks and trimmed, washed and ready-to-use Dandy® celery branches.

POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Celery is a natural and healthy snack. Key health messages on in-store signage should include:

- Naturally Fat Free
- Naturally Cholesterol Free
- A Low Sodium Food
- Good Source of Vitamins A, C and K
- Good Source of Dietary Fiber

Channel strips and danglers are a great way to grab your shoppers' attention. Consider offering these in multiple languages if that makes sense for your store demographics. Duda Farm Fresh Foods will help you customize in-store display signage.

PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Back page advertisements and the buy one get one free (BOGO) promotions are the most effective type and result in large dollar and volume lifts and positively impact the entire category.

DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

Maintain temperatures from 32 to 36° F with relative humidity of 90-98 percent. Bulk celery may be lightly misted to maintain freshness but are ethylene sensitive and should be kept away from ethylene producing fruits. Celery tends to absorb odors from other commodities and should not be stored or transported with apples or onions.

If discolored or damaged, ribs should be removed from the stalk. If celery appears white at the ends or limp submerge in ice water to freshen. Maintaining the cold chain is of utmost importance in keeping celery fresh and crunchy.

CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Traditional cross merchandising items for celery include fresh dips and salad dressings. Peanut butter, caramel, and chocolate work well as additional items.

Hand out recipes for traditional celery stuffing during the holidays and merchandise all the recipe ingredients together. For an everyday recipe item such as peanut butter stuffed celery with raisins, merchandise the recipe items alongside the celery category items.

A mirepoix mix, consisting of diced celery, onions and carrots is at the heart of countless flavorful recipes, from stocks and sauces to hearty soups, stews and braised meats and casseroles. A mirepoix is used all over the world to build the first layer of flavor in many familiar specialties. Providing this tip near the celery, onions or carrots and tips on knife skills and proportional dicing of vegetables will show the cooker how these items further fit into their lifestyle.



OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Shoppers of celery are cooks or snackers. To capitalize on the cooker consumer category, cross-promote private branded eggs, sugar, flour, or milk since these tend to be basic staples in the cook's kitchen.
- Center-of-the-plate proteins (meat or deli counter) offer a great way to cross promote for this category as well.
- The snackers category would enjoy seeing celery next to the fresh dips and salad dressings.



INDISPUTABLE PROOF THAT OUR CELERY IS TASTIER.



Duda Farm Fresh Foods, the global leader in celery innovation, has recently been awarded patents for two new commercial celery varieties developed from more than 12,000 lines to create the best flavor, texture, nutrition and appearance. We have also adopted an innovative DNA "fingerprinting" technology that ensures you're getting what you want: only the tastiest varieties of Dandy® brand celery products. So what's next? Look to Duda Farm Fresh Foods, where fresh ideas keep on coming. For proven marketability, contact us at 866-792-DUDA or dudafresh.com



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COMMUNITY.



@Dandy_Fresh



Dandy Fresh Fruits and Vegetables



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CHERRIES

Cherries are one of the freshest, truly seasonal items available in the produce department. The fruit is ripened on the tree and picked at the peak of flavor. Warm, sunny days and cool nights make the Northwest one of the premier cherry growing regions in the world. For best results, feature dark sweet cherries and super sweet Rainier cherries when available and let your customers know they are at the peak of flavor when they arrive from the Northwest. Prominent displays, clear and enticing signage and consistent rotation are all key to providing your customers with “An Exceptional Eating Experience.”

CHERRY CATEGORY ANALYSIS

NW cherries from Sage Fruit are the category leader during the month of July and are a leader during all summer months for the produce department.

During the month of June, fresh cherries are one of the strongest contributors of dollar sales for every square-foot of retail rack space. Cherries had the second smallest shelf space for the month of June, yet still were the second strongest contributor per square-foot, which illustrates that even as the season begins, cherries are driving strong sales. During this period cherries had an average of \$165 per-square-foot and utilized 21 square feet of retail space for average dollar sales of \$3,475 per-week, per-store.

As July rolls around, both dark sweet and Rainier cherries take the spotlight in produce departments as highlighted items during the 4th of July. During July, cherries again had the second smallest shelf space, but returned the strongest sales efficiency of all fruits — \$208 per-square-foot and 21.5 square feet of space for average dollar sales of \$4,455. In August, cherries had the highest correlation between space and produce department dollar sales. This indicates that the cherry display/category should continue to be a focus through the end of the season.

An increased awareness of the health benefits of NW cherries has enhanced the continued growth of cherry consumption across the United States. This product awareness has contributed to a 400 percent growth in per-capita cherry consumption over the last 12 years. Research has shown the correlation between fresh cherry consumption and the fight against several diseases and the effects of aging.

Cherries are one of the healthiest items in the produce department. Cherries are powerful antioxidants and contain vitamins A, C, and E. They are an excellent source of fiber, which makes them an ideal choice for a late night snack. Cherries are an excellent source of nutrients and can be an instrumental selling tool for customers concerned with a healthy lifestyle. With the

QUICK TIPS

- **Don't mist cherries on display, as they will absorb water and soften.**
- **Departments should have clearly marked pricing on dark cherries and rainier cherries. Hang up posters/header cards near cherry display to draw attention for increased sales.**
- **Promote cherries in a high traffic area using secondary displays for additional sales.**
- **Provide an assortment of packaging options for the consumer.**

continued aging of the baby boomers, these benefits can become helpful selling tools for retail, as nearly 40 percent of all cherry consumers are in the baby boomer category.

CHERRY DISPLAY RECOMMENDATIONS

In many retail locations produce is the first department the customer sees and nothing says fresh more than a large, eye-appealing fresh cherry display. Good, easy-to-read signage with clear details on price and variety is a must. During the peak of the season, a secondary display toward the back of the department or an out-of-department display will generate additional sales. Be sure to keep a good mix of packaging options including clamshells and 2-lb. containers, along with a nice selection of both dark red sweet cherries and delicious

OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- **Build cherry displays using two different sizes of cherries. Promote small cherries for a price-point consumer and promote larger cherries for the higher end consumer.**
- **Promote dark sweets and rainier together. This makes for a great display and increased sales.**
- **During heavy traffic days, place cherries near the entrance of the store and close to cash registers for increased impulse purchases.**
- **Run cherries in radio, print and television ads weekly during the cherry Season.**

Rainier cherries. NW Rainier cherries have become a tasty family favorite and they continue to grow in popularity among all demographics.

The most important component to successful cherry sales is to have cherries throughout the entire selling season. Cherry season extends for multiple weeks in the summer and it is important to plan for this critical time.

AD FREQUENCY

Ad planning is the key to a successful cherry season. Set goals for cherry sales for your produce departments. During the peak season, run ads every single week. Not every single ad has to provide the same discount, but the discount needs to be noticeable to consumers. There is a limited window to capture extra sales and with cherries ranking No. 1 in dollars-per-square-foot, promote frequently. Each cherry season is different, and as harvest approaches determine what sizes of cherries you would like to handle. If the crop is going to produce many large size cherries, consider running a jumbo cherry ad.

MERCHANDISING

Cherries must be kept cold. If refrigeration is not available, rotate cherries and put extra cherries in the cooler each night. This will help keep your fruit firm and fresh. During higher traffic days consider displaying cherries in a high resolution graphic-based secondary display unit outside of the produce department. It increases dollar sales by an average of 22% for dark red cherries and 31 percent for Rainier cherries.

Display cherries in the entry way, by the cash registers, and by the dairy section to catch consumer's eyes. In the produce department, make sure displays are in high traffic areas as cherries are definitely an impulse item. Merchandise dark sweet and Rainier cherries together to try and maximize category dollars. This way, your customers don't have to search for each variety. Make sure ample cherry display space is available for your departments June through early August. Educate all members of the produce department about cherries and encourage them to share knowledge with consumers when they are working the cherry display.

SELECTION AND AVAILABILITY:

Sage Fruit NW cherries are available from June to Mid-August. While the Bing cherry continues to be the primary variety known to consumers, there are several other varieties that have grown in popularity and help extend the season on the front and back end. Rainier cherries are typically available from mid June to late July, which give retailers an outstanding selling period with huge profit potential.

QUALITY CHERRIES DELIVERED AT THE PEAK OF FRESHNESS.



Providing amazingly sweet cherries of the highest quality.

Owned by growers, Sage understands quality fruit is a priority for you. It's ours too. From growing and packing to loading and warehouse services, you can be assured our delicious cherries are always ready for your store shelves at the peak of freshness.



Sage's fruit is grown in the heart of the Pacific Northwest. We use the most efficient growing methods, provide good stewardship over our land, and employ a knowledgeable staff of produce specialists. A philosophy of excellence from farm to shelf, Sage is a label you can trust.

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CITRUS

YEAR-ROUND SUPPLIES AND PROFITS

With the availability of great tasting citrus year-round, retailers now have the opportunity to grow citrus sales and profits significantly. Navel oranges from Florida complemented by imported summer navels from Australia, South Africa and Chile lead the way for a full year of navel profits. Clementines are available nearly year-round, and imported from Chile (mid May - August), South Africa (June - September), Morocco and Spain (October - February), in addition to being grown in California. They continue to be very popular with all ages because they are easy to peel and virtually seedless.

Specialty items, such as Minneolas in the summer from Australia and South Africa and during the winter from Florida and California, along with a full line of Tangerines (Fall-glos, Sunburst and Honeys) can bring even more profits to the line up. Finally, delicious juice oranges from Florida are available during most of the winter season for your customers who love fresh-squeezed orange juice. California Valencias are also available most of the summer as well.



Florida and Texas grapefruit offer consumers the best tasting grapefruit available in the world. Peak flavor often comes in January and February. However, fruit is eating well as early as late October to November depending on the season. Pre-Christmas, large sized fruit always seems to sell better. After the holidays through the cold winter months, a 5 - 8- or 10-lb. bag offers a good value and convenient way to take home some vitamin C, and they mix well in fruit salads or for cooking. Running a 1/2-carton of grapefruit for a one-week citrus extravaganza also is a high ring for the retailers at peak season.

The lemon and lime category is growing with a nearly year-round supply from California, Mexico, Arizona, Florida and imported from Chile and Australia in the summer.

QUICK TIPS

- Promote citrus during its peak flavor.
- Offer both bulk and bagged citrus.
- Conduct in-store sampling.
- Provide recipe and usage suggestions.

PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

It is important to provide an assortment of packaging to maximize your sales. Offer both bulk and bags to appeal to the different consumer segments; some consumers like to pick their own fruit and feel they are getting value while your convenience-oriented shoppers find bagged produce appealing. We suggest rotating your ads in winter between clementines, grapefruit and navels to keep the category from getting stale. Run sub-features on tangerines and juice oranges.

Since 75 percent of customers buying decisions are made in the store, in-store sampling is a key way to promote and sell citrus. Sampling stimulates trial, builds awareness, generates a sales lift and increases repeat purchasers. Roughly 25 percent of consumers that sample the product will become buyers.

Focus your promotions during the peak flavor periods to meet the needs of the consumer by offering good quality tasting fruit to entice them to become repeat buyers.

DISPLAYS

Consumers today are looking for valued added information pertaining to the product such as where it was grown, health benefits, serving suggestions and nutritional value. It is important to include this information in



your signage or POS materials.

Free-standing, high-graphic display bins can expand your citrus display. These eye catching bins add lots of color to the produce section and provide a secondary citrus display.



CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Showcasing citrus through promotions and cross-merchandising attracts consumers to the category and maximizes sales. At DNE, we offer opportunities to cross merchandise with Ocean Spray juices. This not only increases product sold during the promotion, but also grows both of the categories by introducing fresh citrus to the juice consumers and Ocean Spray branded juice to the fresh citrus consumer. It is a win-win situation. Right after New Year's is a great time to cross-promote the Ocean Spray Grapefruit juices with the 5-lb. bags of Ocean Spray fresh grapefruit either from Florida or Texas. It's during the cold and flu season and the kick off to many diet programs.

OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Conduct contests or promotional giveaways to drive traffic and increase sales.
- Use child-friendly packaging and displays to attract children to the product while promoting healthful eating.

DNE



World Fruit Sales



www.dneworld.com

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FRESH-CUT VEGETABLE SOLUTIONS

Apio Inc. is the recognized industry supplier of value-added fresh-cut vegetables and a category growth leader at retail, offering a complete selection of Eat Smart® brand fresh-cut vegetables in a variety of product sizes and configurations. Nationally, Eat Smart sells the fastest and has contributed \$485 per million of total store sales, exceeding our closest competitor by \$115 (Perishables Group Fresh Facts Online, 52 weeks ending 10/29/09).

SUPERIOR QUALITY

At Apio, we take pride in our extensive quality assurance programs. Our food safety program from field to consumer includes post harvest physiologists on staff, a microbiological lab on premises, annual third-party and retail food safety quality audits, a complete HACCP program, vendor certification program, GAP and GMP/ Food Safety Training Programs as well as a California Leafy Greens Agreement signatory. Apio also utilizes proprietary Breatheway® modified atmosphere technology. A patented temperature switch feature adjusts membrane permeability to compensate for mild fluctuations in the cold chain and extends shelf-life naturally by providing ideal package atmosphere. Breatheway® helps to reduce shrink and increase sales, as well as provide a better eating experience.

DISPLAY STRATEGIES

Creating a prominent fresh-cut vegetable section within the produce department is a key component to driving sales in the category. Whether it is a 4-foot vertical, a 4-foot with half, maybe two or three shelves — whatever quantity of fresh-cut products that are sold best — it is important to display them separate from the salad category. Our research has shown that consumers looking to purchase fresh-cut vegetables don't look in the same area where bagged salads are kept. The best place is actually alongside the same commodities sold in bulk. Consider eye-catching channel strips or shelf-talkers to draw attention. Generate interest with periodic new product introductions and a variety of sizes such as Apio's new broccoli salad kits, Grab n' Go cup program and organic offerings.

ADVERTISING AND PROMOTIONS

To make the most of peak holiday periods and special events, display Eat Smart Party Trays near the front of the produce section to stimulate incremental sales.

To maximize impulse "special occasion" sales, promote larger format Eat Smart Party Trays, which are available with beef, turkey and cheese for added variety.

QUICK TIPS

- Create a prominent fresh-cut vegetable section. The best place is alongside the same commodities sold in bulk.
- Focus on the category and develop periodic promotions and display tactics that maximize sales.
- Frequent promotions and cross merchandising keep fresh-cut top-of-mind and bring new users to the category.

Year-round, offer smaller format trays as a healthful snack item for the office, home or as an alternative to chips and soda.

Our patented flip-tray design, which includes a rigid serving base unmatched in both durability and convenience, has contributed to Apio being the fastest selling and #1 selling branded party tray in the United States with 11.2 percent market share, exceeding our closest competitor by 7.6 percent. (Perishables Group, Fresh Facts Online, 52 weeks ending 10/29/09.)

THE KEY IS FOCUS!

One store program that applies periodic display strategies during peak periods saw volume triple in the first year, and has seen consistent increases between annually.

VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Over 40 Eat Smart fresh-cut bags, salads, trays and salads — including popular dips, dressings and ingredients — are available every day. New items include 12oz. Salad Kits, Grab n' Go Cups and Organic bags.

RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

Fresh-cut vegetables should be received from adequately refrigerated trucks and transferred immediately into storage rooms ideally cooled to 33° to 38° F. Shelves should be well stocked and products culled with attention to code date.

CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Promoting fresh-cut vegetables with center-of-plate items, such as poultry or fish, helps shoppers quickly identify healthful solutions for their entire family. A few key ingredients, such as a bag of Eat Smart fresh-cut vegetables paired with whole grains, lean meat and spices can open the door to a variety of custom-tailored meal options. In addition, Eat Smart Party Trays complement deli, meat and snack displays during peak holidays. Large cross-promotional displays featuring barbecue themes, tailgate parties, summer picnics or sporting events will entice shoppers to pick up all of their supplies for entertaining in one central location.

Innovative merchandising and cross promotions with refrigerated dips and dressings or slaws and salad toppers also keep focus on the category and increase the opportunity to bring in new users.



Eat Smart sells faster.

Which gives you more time to count your money.



Don't settle for less. In the U.S., Eat Smart® sells the *fastest* in the category and contributes \$568 per million of total store sales, exceeding the competition by \$341.* So while Eat Smart is ringing in the sale, you'll have more time to do what you enjoy most. Count your profits.

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*Source: Perishables Group Fresh Facts® online, 52 weeks ending 12/26/09.

Reader Service # 52



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GARLIC

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Garlic lies at the confluence of all that is hot and happening in produce. Ethnic cuisines? Garlic is key. Health-oriented eaters? Garlic is prominent. Dieters? Garlic instead of salt anytime. It also is a product family that runs the gamut from staple to specialty items — red garlic, elephant garlic, peeled, packaged, braided and certified organic.

It is a category that includes both fresh garlic and various processed and semi-processed items, such as whole peeled garlic, chopped garlic, minced garlic and a multitude of jarred products. There are even garlic options that can serve highly decorative purposes — such as braided garlic. Garlic can also be used to adorn holiday wreaths and other holiday decorations. Many items are sold in both bulk and consumer package sizes.

The key to making good garlic displays is to avoid the specialty jinx in which a small area is set aside for a tiny row, or worse, a little basket of garlic. Instead, think

QUICK TIPS

- **Display and promote the full range of garlic items.**
- **Use jarred and fresh garlic, red, white, elephant and conventional garlic and garlic braids to make the section intriguing to consumers.**
- **Focus on increasing usage, as that is the key to increasing sales long term.**

of the romance of garlic: The Egyptians, Greeks and Romans all knew of garlic, and this rich heritage carries through to the cuisines of today, justifying generous space with a full range of garlic products displayed.

And it is well worth it to cultivate a garlic-buying clientele because garlic is never consumed alone. So every sale of garlic means the sale of other items both in produce and in other areas of the store.

POINT-OF-PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Signage and POP material near garlic should always have a three-fold message: First, make sure to highlight variety items, such as elephant garlic; this attracts attention to the overall garlic section and sparks consumer interest. Second, always highlight the health benefits of garlic: fat-free, saturated fat-free, sodium-free, cholesterol-free and certified 100 percent organic are all watchwords that are permissible with garlic and attract the interest of health-oriented consumers. Third, always provide recipes and usage ideas.

Garlic is a product whose sales directly relate to consumers adopting recipes that require garlic, so always have one type being promoted. Also remember that a festive arrangement of garlic braids is great signage pointing to a garlic display.

VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Garlic is available year-round with supplies coming from California and outside of the United States, including Argentina, Mexico, Chile and Spain. In recent years, Chinese-grown garlic has become prominent in the marketplace. Its use as both a seasoning and an ingredient in food means that year-round promotion is appropriate.

PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Because of its comparatively long storage life, deep discounts on garlic are likely to steal sales from future periods. As such, the focus in garlic promotion should be on usage.

If it is barbeque season, promote the use of garlic in salads, marinades and rubs. Suggest that consumers try cooking whole garlic on the barbeque to serve whole as a butter substitute.

If the Super Bowl or another sporting event is coming up, do a promotion in which you suggest the use of fresh garlic to make salsa with a kick.

Salad dressing is a great garlic use. Have a salad dressing of the month that is always under promotion and always uses garlic.

Suggest ways that garlic can add flare to old favorites. Garlic mashed potatoes, for example, are a great way to jazz up a dish that may have grown boring.

And at major holidays, suggest adding an ethnic dish. For example, it is an old Italian custom to serve a fish dish, almost always prepared with garlic, at major holidays. Use the trend to ethnic food, healthful eating and variety to tie in garlic.

DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

Garlic should not be misted, and rotation is important since fresh garlic sitting out for long periods will tend to dry out. In addition, the skins of garlic tend to shed with handling so frequent attention to the display to keep it clean and dry will result in better sales.

BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

Garlic should be stored in a cool, well-ventilated place and kept dry.

CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

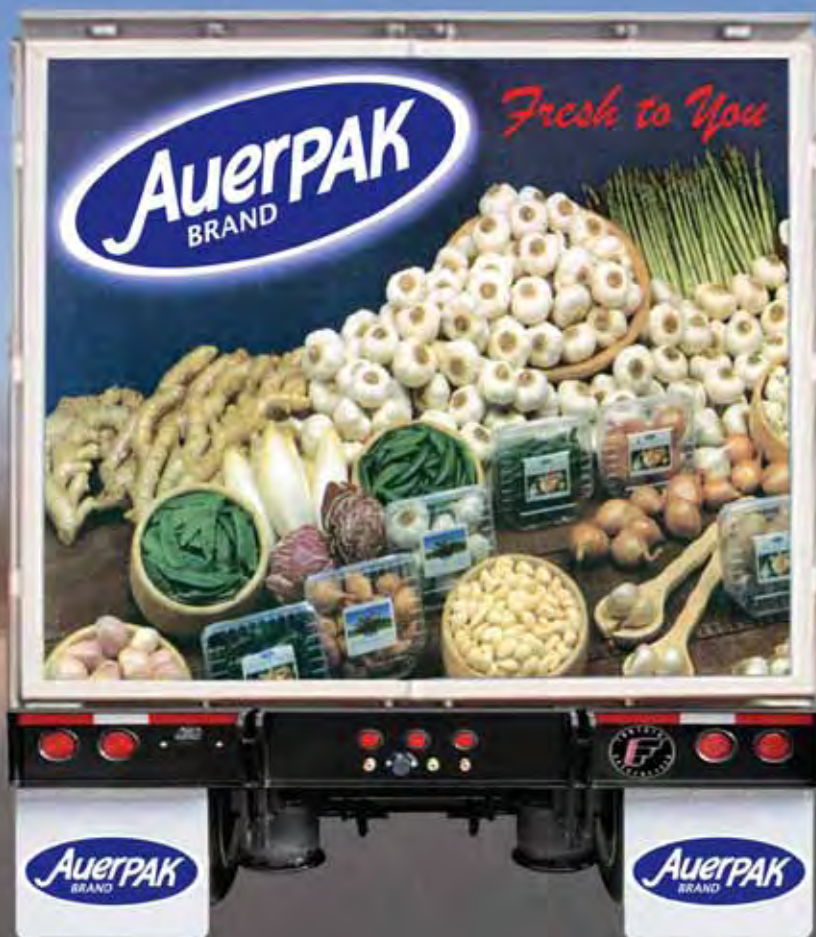
Garlic is a cross-merchandiser's dream as it is always used in conjunction with other products. Cross-promote in the produce department with salad items since garlic is frequently tossed into salads as an ingredient as well as used in salad dressing. Put garlic next to ripe tomatoes, basil, cilantro, etc., to promote salsa. Suggest a make-your-own-pasta-sauce center with garlic, tomatoes and other ingredients.

Also consider secondary displays of garlic next to meat and poultry to promote as a rub and even next to baguettes in the bakery, promoting roasted garlic as a delicious and healthful alternative to butter.

OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- **Have a demo with the bakery in which roasted garlic is served with sliced French baguettes. The mild flavor, without the fat of butter, will make it a favorite with many consumers.**
- **Educate your customers about the taste benefits of rubbing the outside of their Easter lamb with cracked garlic prior to roasting.**
- **Provide recipes encouraging holiday chefs to insert whole peeled garlic cloves into slits cut with the point of a sharp knife into their holiday roasts prior to cooking. Watch your garlic (and meat) sales take off!**
- **Do a sauce competition in which consumers make homemade pasta sauce using garlic. Get a local newspaper to judge it and have the winning sauce recipes be part of a "saucy special."**

Fast and Fresh!



At Maurice A. Auerbach, Inc., location is the key to getting produce to you fast and fresh.

From our South Hackensack location, our network of refrigerated trucks covers the tri-state area. With unsurpassed service to all Northeast area retailers and distribution centers, we provide the highest quality garlic, asparagus, radicchio, sno peas, ginger root, Belgian endive, shallots and many other produce specialties.

Maurice A. Auerbach, Inc.

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GRAPES

Grapes are available on a year-round basis. Besides adding bright colors, which help drive impulse sales, the bottom line is very impressive. From a seasonal standpoint, grapes can generate \$96 per-square-foot and are the highest dollars per-square-foot for the produce department's fruit category from September through December. Moreover, for the same period, grapes ranked as second highest dollars per-square-foot for the produce department. (Source: California Table Grape Commission)

We at Sunlight International Sales are specialists in California Table Grapes. As the marketing arm of Jakov P. Dulcich & Sons LLC, we are growers, packers and shippers of the finest quality and most flavorful grapes in the world.

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

California table grapes should be prominently displayed from Memorial Day through Christmas. Two fundamental goals should always be kept in mind when building a display: quality and abundance. An abundant, fresh, high-quality display will generate even greater grape sales. Customers are inclined to buy more grapes from an abundant display. No matter how good the quality of product on display, partially stocked displays will make customers think they are getting lower quality, leftover product other shoppers did not want. To protect their quality while visually providing a picture of abundance, grapes should not be stocked more than one layer high. Fill and maintain the display frequently throughout the day/evening.

POINT-OF-PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Point-of-purchase materials are used to draw customer attention to the display and drive impulse purchase activity. The key to success with point-of-purchase materials is to use the materials to create excitement at the display without taking away from the

QUICK TIPS

- Carry several colors and varieties — green, red, black, seedless and seeded.
- Rotate stock frequently for bright, fresh-looking product.
- Promote grapes frequently with expanded displays.
- Fruit must be kept at proper temperature to preserve shelf life. Once chilled, keep chilled. The grapes should be kept refrigerated whenever possible.

image of the produce department.

Signage is yet another call to action for customers to buy more grapes. Nutritional and variety information at the display or in the informational directories in the produce department fulfill customer needs while generating increased sales. With high consumer trust and preference for California-grown grapes, signage highlighting California provides additional sales opportunities.

A great source for POP material can be accessed from the California Table Grape Commission at www.freshcaliforniagrapes.com

VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Variety is the spice of life, and we have plenty of variety. Jakov P. Dulcich and Sons produces 15 different varieties of California Table Grapes, including two new

green seedless varieties, Luisco and Autumn King and two new red seedless varieties, Magenta and Scarlet Royal. All four will be in good production in 2010. With today's sophisticated shopper, displaying and promoting a wide range of red, green and blue-black grapes will generate excitement and sales. Research shows that chains promoting multiple varieties received up to 71 percent item lift over baseline volume. Try displaying an eye-catching mix of product that generates a greater choice of product availability. Variety, display creativity and freshness all stimulate impulse purchase behavior.

PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Red, white and blue for the Fourth of July; back-to-school with grapes packed in a lunch box for snacks; festive holiday ideas with recipe cards that include grapes for Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter. Marketing studies show front page grape ads generate a 72 percent increase in volume as opposed to back page placement, which generates only a 20 percent increase in volume.

RIPENESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Grapes will not mature or gain sweeter flavor after harvest. We at Sunlight and Dulcich harvest only fruit that has matured to the optimum flavor and sweetness nature provides.

DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

To maximize sales, straighten grape displays when passing by to work on other displays. When rotating the display, always move older product to the top and center of the display. Whenever low or poor quality product is found, it should be removed. When product on display begins to look tired, remove or rework the product to maintain a fresh quality image and maximize profitability.

Refrigerated displays will extend the shelf life of grapes. Cool temperatures will prevent grapes from drying out.

BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

Never wash grapes in preparation for display. The natural protective layer created by the grapes, called bloom, will be removed, allowing for dehydration or water loss to occur. While water may be refreshing for some produce, it will harm grapes. Always store with other fruits that require cold temperatures. Grapes should be kept at 34° F and high humidity. Never store grapes next to onions or other items that emit strong odors.

CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

1. Wine, cheese and crackers.
2. Whipped cream and gelatin.





For The Biggest & Best In California Table Grapes,
All Varieties Lead To Dulcich

AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY THROUGH



Jakov P. Dulcich & Sons



For more information contact Nick Dulcich, George Galloway, Bert Boyd or Madeline Sabovich at 661.782.6360 www.Dulcich.com



CALAVO PREPARED FOODS DIVISION

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Santa Paula, CA 93060
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Website: www.calavo.com



GUACAMOLE

As value-added and convenience items continue to play an integral role in the produce department, ready-made guacamole offers retailers great opportunity to offer a quality, convenient product to customers. Fresh avocados have opened new doors with year round availability and as such, they've allowed the opportunity to offer fresh, prepared guacamole year-round.

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

- Prepared guacamole should be displayed year-round with greater emphasis around Super Bowl, Cinco de Mayo and Baseball playoffs.
- Offer prepared guacamole in multiple sizes and flavors to increase consumer selection, interest and purchases.
- Display in a refrigerated case near fresh salsa, vegetable party trays or pre-packaged salads to increase cross-merchandising opportunities.
- Adding prepared guacamole in the produce department opens up the opportunity to increase your bottom line. Place product face-front at eye-level.
- Offer heat variety! Consumer tastes vary, as well as their recipes. With a variety of options from mild to spicy, shoppers can better incorporate guacamole into their menus.

POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

- Use colorful signage to attract attention and increase impulse sales.
- Add images of serving suggestion that vary with the seasons.

PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

You can't miss with in-store demos, they are always

QUICK TIPS

- **Keep refrigerated to properly retain shelf life of up to 70 days.**
- **Carry different degrees of spiciness such as Calavo Authentic Recipe - Mild, Calavo Pico De Gallo Recipe - Medium and Calavo Caliente Recipe - Hot.**
- **Promote year-round with any sporting event or holiday promotion including Easter, Fourth of July and Christmas.**

a hit. Fresh Calavo guacamoles are all-natural with no preservatives and they taste great. Given the tasty opportunity to sample this mixture of fresh ingredients, shoppers will buy and give your department an added jump in sales. Offer recipe suggestion take-aways outside of the normal chip and dip offering.

BACKROOM RECEIVING AND DISPLAY CARE

- Keep prepared guacamole cold by storing with other fruits that require cold temperatures upon delivery. Remove from cooler as needed.
- Keep your display well stocked and refrigerated.

HEALTHY ENTERTAINING

Increased awareness of the nutritional value of avocados has risen. They are not only known for their great

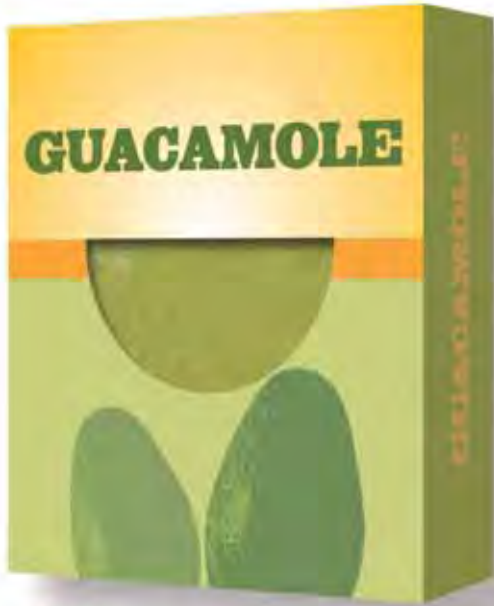
taste and versatility, they are known for the nearly 20 vitamins and minerals these green gems are packed with. Calavo Guacamoles are made with fresh avocados and all natural ingredients in a manner that preserves the taste, texture and the nutrients the health-conscious consumer wants. Prepared guacamole offers the consumer a convenient way to enjoy this amazing fruit at any time.

- Made fresh with Hass avocados
- No additives or preservatives
- All natural ingredients
- Kosher certified
- No trans fat
- Gluten-free
- Packaged fresh, never frozen

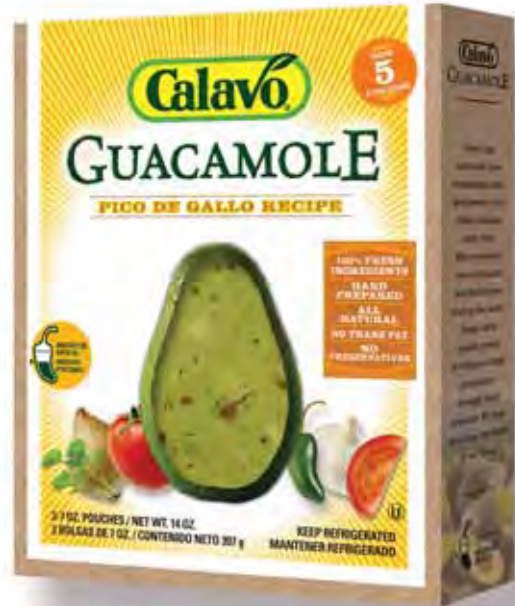


OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- **Bring pre-Easter (Lent) excitement to your produce department by promoting prepared guacamole as an ingredient in fishy dishes, halibut and guacamole tacos anyone?**



This guacamole went to market.



This guacamole went home.

Ounce per ounce, fresh Calavo Guacamole adds value to your produce department by offering the best fresh avocado alternative. Each package of Calavo Guacamole is made with 100% Hass avocados, onion, garlic and other natural ingredients. There are no additives, no preservatives and no trans fat. Even better, we're available all 52 weeks a year, no need to wait on seasonal or import availability.

Interested? To learn more about fresh Calavo Guacamole for your produce department contact us at 1-800-4-Calavo.



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 Email: info@livegourmet.com



HYDROPONICALLY GROWN LIVING BUTTER LETTUCE

Since 1996, Live Gourmet brand hydroponically grown living butter lettuce has offered an improved category solution for innovative produce merchandisers across America. With its extended shelf-life and protective, interlocking, and easily merchandisable clamshell package, Live Gourmet butter lettuce has saved hours of labor, significantly reduced shrink and generated higher dollar rings, creating increased gross margins for the butter lettuce category.

Live Gourmet butter lettuce is "Absolutely Fresh because it is still Alive!"

By harvesting our butter lettuce with its roots intact, we provide each delectable leaf with a source of nutrition after harvest, helping the leaf remain fresher



and more flavorful for days longer than butter lettuce harvested in the conventional manner. Fresher lettuce means higher flavor profiles and greater nutritional value, which generates higher levels of consumer satisfaction and helps drive increased purchase frequency.

Our lettuce is pest free naturally as we utilize integrated pest management (IPM) regimes — a natural, more ecologically sound pest control method. IPM incorporates naturally occurring pest regulators and beneficial predatory insects that reduce harmful insect populations in the growing environment. No organophosphates or carbamate pesticides are ever used.

The Live Gourmet clamshell packaging concept — we like to call it a mini-greenhouse — provides a micro-environment around the lettuce helping it stay fresher longer. The clamshell protects each delicate leaf from physical damage during handling and acts as a food-safety barrier between the product and the consumer, an area of increased interest for many consumers.

The clamshell's interlocking feature aids in ease of maintaining a presentable, attractive display on your produce section shelf. Just place and replenish the

QUICK TIPS

- **The prime location for our Live Gourmet butter lettuce is directly next to iceberg lettuce in the leafy green section of your produce display.**
- **Place and reface frequently; with the clamshell package, daily trimming and product refreshing will be nominal.**

facings daily. Our clamshells are made from post-consumer recyclables and are Level-1 recyclable, a very important feature for most of today's shoppers.

Live Gourmet Advantages:

- Absolutely fresh because it's still alive!
- Consistent uniform product quality all year-round
- Pest free naturally
- Extended shelf-life and reduced shrink that helps you sell more units
- Attractive, see-through and easily merchandisable packaging

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Live Gourmet butter lettuce is truly a value-added offering and can be merchandised successfully in several locations within the produce section of your store. Refrigerated free-standing island displays, end-cap displays and second- and third-level shelving above the wet

rack can prove to be excellent merchandising zones, depending upon your store's produce department configuration.

Our research suggests the prime location for our Live Gourmet butter lettuce is directly next to iceberg lettuce in the leafy green section of your produce display. This requires closing of the wet-rack mist system nozzle directly above our product display, thereby eliminating unattractive water spots on the container.

We find that merchandising the product in the bagged salad case is often the area of last resort, and it may lead to buyer confusion. The bagged salad shopper is looking for tear-and-pour convenience, and our product requires processing before use. In every instance, eye-level multiple facings that create attractive displays help generate increased sales velocity for our product.

CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Combining offers with other salad ingredients — from croutons to gourmet cheeses and salad dressings — can help acquaint your shoppers with this uniquely fresh butter lettuce.

Promoting your private-label salad dressing in conjunction with our butter lettuce is a great way to generate increased velocity for both categories. Interdepartmental cross-promotional offers, such as a BLT promotion that offers the ingredients for a bacon, lettuce and tomato sandwich, can drive traffic to several areas throughout your store.

Use of cents-off coupons for ingredients located at displays of the corresponding items can be used to draw your meat department shopper into your produce section and bakery goods section of the store.

RECEIVING, STORAGE AND HANDLING TIPS

Maintain the cold chain at all times and observe suggested temperature ranges to extend the product's shelf-life.

Inspect all shipping cartons for the enjoy-by-date or best-if-used-by date and maintain proper product rotation in the storage cooler and on the store shelf.

Visually inspect each clamshell during placement on the shelf to insure your display is the very best it can be.

BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURE

Observe the enjoy-by-date stamped on each package and maintain a proper rotation to insure maximum value for your customer.

Place and reface frequently; with the clamshell package, daily trimming and product refreshing will be nominal.

OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- **Be the first in your region to offer a greenhouse-grown section in your produce department. Merchandise greenhouse-grown lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes, bell peppers and herbs in one central location.**
- **Stress the benefits of controlled environment growing, uniform quality and reduced pesticide use to generate cross-selling and up-selling of your produce department shoppers.**

Consistently Superior Quality

Day In - Day Out



Live Gourmet® Living Butter Lettuce:

- Superior product uniformity paired with an unsurpassed quality assurance program gives your customer a product they can count on.
- Year-round availability and stable year-round pricing helps build your category sales with higher gross margins and increased category velocity.
- Our unique mini-greenhouse packaging protects every leaf, extends shelf life, limits merchandiser inputs and merchandises attractively on your shelf while reducing shrink.
- Sustainably grown in state-of-the-art greenhouses where we minimize, conserve and recycle all agricultural inputs.
To find out more, please visit www.livegourmet.com/sust.html

Offer Your Customers the Best! Live Gourmet®

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Email: info@taproduce.com



LETTUCE

Following the sun from Salinas, to California's Central Valley, to Arizona, Tanimura & Antle, third generation growers and shippers, supply superior quality lettuce year-round.

Iceberg lettuce continues to be the flagship item of the produce department. Other popular lettuce varieties include Romaine Hearts, Red and Green Leaf Lettuce and our newest items, Artisan Lettuce and hydroponically grown Living Lettuce.

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Lettuce displays that are neat and well marked, featuring fresh trimmed produce, draw consumers and simplify buying decisions. Display similar varieties and price points, starting with naked leaf lettuces, salad vegetables gradually transitioning into packaged lettuces.

Tanimura & Antle Artisan Lettuce® and Living Lettuce are cross-over products, not value-added or commodities. Merchandise with Romaine Hearts between bagged salads and alongside leafy greens to establish consumer value perception. If store format allows, display an open clamshell to show the freshness, texture, volume and value.

POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Use POP materials and signs to highlight a display area and generate impulse purchases. Signs should provide a visual queue that directs consumer attention to this area. POP materials should emphasize key benefits or data to inspire a purchase.

PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

The year-round availability of high quality lettuce and the wealth of varieties let consumers enjoy refreshing and healthy salads at any time of the year. Lettuce is an excellent counterpart to several other produce items

QUICK TIPS

- Suggest Artisan Lettuce® for those shoppers looking for the next Romaine Hearts.
- For shoppers looking for sustainable and locally grown product, suggest hydroponically grown Living Lettuce.
- Merchandise varieties of lettuce with like-use and like-priced items.
- Accurately anticipate inventory to prevent out-of-stock and shrink.
- Support promotions with secondary display area and store signage.
- Keep clamshell product away from misters and foggers.

that are seasonal (see Cross Merchandising Opportunities).

We have developed a Sales Tool Kit for our newest products, Artisan and Living Lettuce. Based on our research, the materials were created and Best Practices developed that can translate into sales at the store level. Support materials include Ad materials, a Merchandising Plan-O-Gram and POS materials.

DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

Keep the area well stocked, straightened, lit and misted if displaying naked product. Trim as necessary and rotate first-in, first-out to ensure fresh product.

Leaf Lettuces should appear fresh and crisp, free of dark spots or cracked ribs, with even colored leaves.

Iceberg lettuce should be springy-firm, with compact heads. Leaves should be even medium to dark green, opening to a pale yellow heart.

A slightly brown core end is not a sign of old lettuce; it's merely oxidation, nature's way of sealing the harvest-cut.

BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

- Ideal Storage Temperature: 34 -36° F/90-95 percent relative humidity.
- Store lettuce away from cooler fan units to minimize rapid dehydration.
- Store away from ethylene-producing fruits to minimize spotting, russeting and decay.
- First-in, first-out rotation.

CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

- Deli salads, chicken, tuna or potato, for quick wrap meal solutions.
- Bacon, tomatoes, refrigerated dressings for classic BLT wedge.
- Seasonal fresh fruits and salad toppers.
- Asian stir fry sauces for lettuce wraps.
- Fully cooked shrimp and cocktail sauce.

OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

Promote lettuce year-round in your produce department year-round with these clever and creative "Saladbrations!"

JANUARY: Chinese New Year Chicken Salad

FEBRUARY: Valentines Day Salad with Ruby Red Vinaigrette

MARCH: St. Patty's Day Salad topped with corned beef

APRIL: Al Capone IRS Avoidance Chopped Salad

MAY: Cinco de Mayo Taco Salad

JUNE: Father's Day BLT Iceberg Wedge

JULY: Independence Day Red White and Blue Salad featuring summer berries and blue cheese

AUGUST: Hot August Nights BLT Salad featuring salad peppers

SEPTEMBER: Back to School Salad with Apples and Grapes

OCTOBER: Christopher Columbus Italian Chopped Salad with cold cuts and cheeses

NOVEMBER: Pilgrim Salad with Thanksgiving Day Leftovers

DECEMBER: Rudolph Red Leaf Salad

The possibilities are endless with always available, always local (U.S.A.) grown lettuce from the Salad Bowl of the World!





COMING TO YOU
LIVE!

FROM TENNESSEE



Born and raised in Tennessee, Living Lettuce offers legendary freshness that's sure to be a crowd pleaser. Meet consumer demand for fresh produce that's locally grown. Available year-round and packed live for maximum freshness, Living Lettuce offers the flavor and quality your customers croon for.

Fresh Picked Flavor



**Call today to book Living Lettuce
center stage in your store!**

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LIGHTING

THE LED CONVERSATION

A conversation almost every supermarket executive in the land is having right now is: To LED or not to LED? While 50,000 operational hours might seem like the pot of gold at the end of the proverbial rainbow, is there an actual treasure trove of savings to be had?

The search for “green” lighting that truly delivers the lowest cost of ownership without sacrificing the quality of product illumination and store atmosphere is proving to be just as elusive as that pot of gold.

PROFITS THROUGH PRESENTATION

If your competitor up the street has opted to use to LEDs in search of operational savings, a window of opportunity has opened for you.

The ability to differentiate your market from the big box store and others by providing your patrons with a shopping experience that surpasses their expectations and exceeds the competition will result in longer and more frequent visits by those shoppers. Visually arresting displays of peppers and apples, colorful presentations of strawberries and carrots are results of great lighting. The result of great lighting is fuller shopping carts.

WHAT IS GREAT LIGHTING?

Especially in the fresh food areas, lighting is crucial for superior product presentation and for creating an atmosphere that customers want to return to again and again.

With claims of being able to effectively replace



QUICK TIPS

- **Separate signage from product lighting with different color tones and increased brightness to draw extra attention to your message.**
- **Make sure your lighting system provides UV protection to keep your produce fresh.**
- **Give your produce displays a beauty test — place products under varied light sources to see the enormous differences HID, fluorescent and LED lighting have on your product.**



existing lighting systems, the LED's relatively low light output and general color performance leave some store owners doubting their investment.

To illuminate produce departments — as well as floral, bakery, meat and seafood areas — it is not enough to provide a minimum amount of foot candles. The lighting must serve several functions and serve them all well. Lighting should accentuate all the carefully chosen color palettes of both the décor and merchandising displays while creating subtle, but distinct color changes for each separate department.

That same lighting must enhance the appearance of all products from peonies to peppers to prime rib providing heat protection and UV protection for each. On top of that, lighting that has true quality should create a warm, relaxing atmosphere with “shop-ability,” and it should do so with a level of energy efficiency that meets

the standards of today and tomorrow. If your current lighting design does not serve all of these functions, it might be time to look at other lighting options.

THE POWER OF COLOR

At this point, you have to ask yourself the question: “Do I want to simply light my department or do I want to light it well?” If you choose to be better than the competition, then sacrificing color probably is not the path you want to take. To customers, color means quality and freshness, and the power of color in displays, whether apples or azaleas, translates directly into sales. Impulse buys are increased and store brands are enhanced by quality lighting.

The most efficient way to harness this power is with the newest generation of High Intensity Discharge (HID) lighting.

Compact versions of metal halide and high pressure sodium lamps provide the color “pop” and light quality that creates product displays, which entice shoppers to fill carts. They impart a lively light, which provides for the contrast of colors and textures, the base for any successful produce display, while providing greater lumens-per-watt ratios than LEDs.

THE REST OF THE STORY

While the benefits of a lighting system that might last 50,000 hours or more are undeniable, make sure you know the rest of the story.

First, it is a fact that ceramic metal halide (CMH) lamps are far more energy-efficient than the LED fixtures on the market today. With an output of around 100 lumens per watt, CMH lamps provide much more bang for your buck than the LED average of 50 or so. Saying a 20-watt LED fixture can replace a 70-watt HID fixture is like saying a Cremlin can replace a Ferrari. Sure, it might get you there, but are you going to enjoy the ride or attract any attention — positive attention that is?

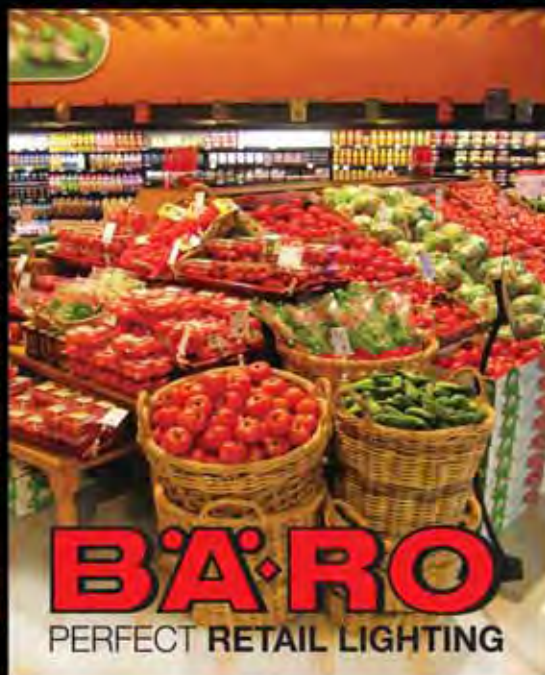
Second, take time to perform your own side-by-side in-store comparisons of the two systems and encourage shopper input. A lighting system that lasts a long time will not do you any good in an empty store.

Third, make sure you know everything about your lighting options, including the advantages and disadvantages. For example, some questions you must consider are: After those 50,000 hours are up, then what? Do I have to buy all new LED fixtures? How much of the 50,000 hours is covered by warranty? Those are just a few starter questions as you search for the end of that rainbow.

ILLUMINATE DIFFERENTIATE RISE TO A NEW LEVEL WITH BAERO

With roots based in the markets of Europe, BAERO North America specializes in lighting for grocers and retailers wanting to set their stores apart from the competition.

The quality of BAERO lighting allows you to achieve high levels of energy efficiency without sacrificing presentation.



Reader Service # 82

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-Call and ask us for a free live demonstration in your store-

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MANGOS

Mangos, the most consumed fruit in the world, are an important dietary staple across many cultures worldwide. Known for their mouth-watering taste, culinary versatility and nutritional benefits, mangos are an important category because of their increasing sales potential. Consumption of fresh mangos in the United States has near doubled in the last 10 years, and will continue to augment, partly as a result of changing demographics, and as a result of increased consumer awareness, along with collaborative industry promotional efforts.

MERCHANDISING AND DISPLAY IDEAS

To help bolster sales at the retail level, we recommend setting up large, eye-catching displays to showcase the fruit. To help sell more fruit, retailers can use bigger displays and run multiple ads. Merchandising mangos in their boxes encourages and promotes sales of mangos by the case.

It is very important that retailers have ripe fruit on display. Riper fruit moves faster and boosts repeat purchases. Green, immature fruit, on the other hand, will guarantee you won't have repeat customers if they are uneducated about a mango's ripening process and proper selection. Having ripe fruit available is essential because it allows customers to see how mangos are supposed to taste. It also ensures customers have a good experience while eating the fruit, whether it is at home or sampling it at the store for the first time. Having mango varieties, such as Haden and Ataulfo, at the right ripeness stage is a good option.

There is a difference when merchandising mangos to ethnic populations, rather than to Caucasians. Ethnic customers (primarily Asians, Middle Easterners and Latinos) are very familiar with the fruit and they already consume it. Caucasian customers, on the other hand, are not as educated about mangos, and a more educational strategy will work best when trying to boost mango sales to this demographic. This includes providing them with ripe fruit to sample at the store, and information such as the nutritional properties of mangos, proper selection and handling instructions and information on how to eat the fruit, including cutting charts and recipe ideas.

Produce managers can also mix up their displays by merchandising mangos using a wider assortment of varieties, sizes and fruit that is in varying stages of the ripening process. Offering ripe, ready-to-eat fruit plays an important role for customers who don't want to wait for the fruit to mature and for those who have not tried a mango before and would benefit from an in-store sample. Repeat purchases are more likely to occur if consumers experience a soft, sweet, ripe fruit the first time they try it.

QUICK TIPS FOR PROPER HANDLING

- **Never place mangos on a cold rack. It is a tropical fruit and matures best at room temperature.**
- **Never store mangos below 45°F. This causes internal chilling injury to the fruit.**
- **Never place mangos next to ethylene-sensitive items. Mangos emit the gas as they mature.**



VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Available year-round, mangos are primarily supplied to the United States by Mexico, with increasing imports from Peru, Ecuador, Brazil, Guatemala and Haiti. Though there are hundreds of mango varieties in the world, the United States primarily markets these varieties:

Ataulfo (February - August): This smaller, kidney-shape variety is a deep golden yellow when ripe, and has an intensely sweet taste. Only the finest Ataulfo is marketed in the United States under the Champagne® mango label, which has a velvety texture due to minimal fiber and a small pit.

Haden (February - June): This larger fruit has an oval-round shape and has a firm texture with slightly more fiber. Its skin develops a red blush with some yellow when ripe.

Tommy Atkins (March - July): This variety has a more oblong, oval shape and has a moderately fibrous texture. The skin develops a deep red blush with some

green areas.

Kent (June - September): Slightly larger, these mangos have green skin with a slight hint of a red blush. They have a sweet flavor with mild fiber.

Keitt (June - October): This oval-shaped fruit has green skin with a hint of a rosy blush. It has a flavorful aroma and smooth texture.

PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Mangos are available in many varieties all year long, creating untapped promotional opportunities for retailers. The fruit can be promoted as a key ingredient during the spring and summer months for use in salsa and guacamole recipes, or as a different take on glaze for barbecuing fish and chicken in the fall. Mangos are also a great addition to frozen drinks, including fruit smoothies for the family, or mango mojitos and daiquiris for the over-21 crowd.

By displaying appealing, easy-to-prepare recipes alongside mango displays, retailers can help persuade customers to purchase the fruit.

RIPENESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Mangos are very firm when green, and gradually soften as they become more mature. Allow them to ripen at room temperature to help them achieve optimal maturity and sweetness. A mango is ripe if it feels soft when you gently press your fingers on it, and if a sweet-smelling scent emanates from the stem-end of the fruit. Unlike bananas, color is not the best indicator of ripeness for mangos because some varieties do not change color and stay green, even when fully mature. Among the varieties more prone to color change are Haden, whose smooth green skin turns a soft yellow with a rosy blush, and Ataulfo, which turns from a lime green to a deep golden yellow when fully mature.

DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

It is important that produce managers know how to handle mangos on the back end, to prolong shelf life and to uphold the integrity of the fruit. Mangos are best stored at temperatures between 50 – 55°F. Anything lower makes mangos susceptible to chilling injury. Mangos do not require misting, and their typical shelf life is seven to 14 days, on average.

SUCCESSFUL STRATEGIES

- One retail client saw sales increase with a 10-for-\$10 promotion.
- Other retailer clients have had success selling mangos by the case.
- Selling in multiples is catching on in many retail environments.



The one and only.

There's only one Champagne® mango. Everything about it is unique: its incomparable taste, its smooth texture and rich golden color. From flower to harvest, the Champagne is the most pampered of all mangos. They flourish in the fertile volcanic soil of central Mexico and are caressed by mild south Pacific breezes gently drifting through meticulously cultivated mango groves.

There are no finer mangos available at any price. And you can only get them at Ciruli Brothers.*

* Champagne® is a registered trademark of Ciruli Brothers

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Reader Service # 9



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MUSHROOMS

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Research shows that sales can increase up to 40 percent by grouping all varieties together, providing proper space allocation and positioning mushrooms next to the salad section. Demographics play an important role in determining space allocation.

- Exceptional departments should allocate 32 linear feet in the multi-deck case.
- Larger departments should allocate 24-28 linear feet.
- Smaller departments with lower income shoppers should allocate 16 linear feet.
- Small departments and higher income shoppers should allocate 20-24 linear feet.

SECONDARY DISPLAYS

Because of the versatility of fresh mushrooms, secondary displays are effective in bringing meal solutions to the minds consumers. On-going secondary displays in the salad case and the meat case will generate 12 percent growth in category sales. In addition, seasonal displays can be utilized to feature eggs, potatoes, rice, pasta, tortillas, cheese, onions and other cooking vegetables. Organic, natural, and diet meal solutions are other ideas that are effective with mushrooms.

POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Attention brought to the category through use of section signage, recipe cards, shelf-talkers (on usage, selection, care and handling) will drive sales. Mushroom consumption will grow only if consumers become more educated on usage and benefits, such as mushrooms' contribution to nutrition and weight management. Most stores carry 15-25 varieties/package types, so consumer education about what to do with various types of mushrooms is important.

CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Meal solutions can easily be achieved year-round by cross-promoting sliced mushrooms with bagged salads and capitalizing on grilling opportunities with steaks, stir-frys and shish-kabobs on the grill. Steak-Mate thick-sliced mushrooms are outstanding displayed in the meat section, as are Portabellas during grilling season. Mushrooms are an ideal item to utilize as a flavor enhancer and meat replacement or complementary ingredient in pastas, soups, eggs, rice, casseroles or pizza.

VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Maintaining a full variety of white, portabellas, specialty, and dried mushrooms will help drive sales. Practice maximum assortment, which includes a variety of whole and sliced, Portabellas, Organics, Baby Pearls and value-added, specialty mushrooms, dried and bulk.

QUICK TIPS

- **Keep mushrooms refrigerated and dry.**
- **Promote mushrooms consistently year-round and particularly throughout the summer. Vary promotions to include all varieties. Deep discounts are not necessary. In-store promos help, too.**
- **Utilize multi-item advertising highlighting all category segments.**
- **Merchandise based on department sales and consumer demographics. Use sampling, educational info and recipes to encourage trial, repeat purchase and to drive sales. Definitely add a second display of sliced mushroom packages in the salad section. Cross-merchandise with complementary items.**
- **Promote larger pack sizes and exotics. Use promotions to build consumer awareness of specialty varieties and trade them up.**

Look for new varieties, such as Monterey's Grill-A-Bella®, and sliced whites and browns that provide Vitamin D benefits for the consumer.

Mushrooms are available throughout the year, so it is important that they continue to be well displayed and promoted, especially when you consider the average mushroom dollar ring is more than two dollars, and mushrooms generate over \$60 in sales per square foot display space.

PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Mushrooms need promotional activity to help bring shoppers to the category. However, they are not price sensitive, so deep discounts are not necessary. On average, promotions should be utilized six to eight times per quarter to maximize overall sales. Discounts should generally be between 20-33 percent. Two-for-\$X, or multiple pricing, tends to be the most effective method of promoting mushrooms. Research shows that multiple-item ads in the mushroom category generate the most volume and profit for the category. Feature advertising should be utilized once per quarter to highlight mushrooms.

RIPENESS RECOMMENDATION

Mushrooms are highly susceptible to breakdown and should be refrigerated upon receipt. On average,

mushrooms have a shelf-life of six to eight days; therefore it is critical that backroom inventory be kept to a minimum. It is important to note that mushrooms gain more flavor as they age, so white mushrooms with a tinge of brown can still be sold as fresh. Brown and specialty varieties usually have an extra day or two in shelf-life.

DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

Mushrooms must be displayed and stored between 32 to 36° F; 85 to 90 percent humidity. For every five-degree increase in temperature, mushrooms lose a day of shelf-life. Due to their high perishability, mushrooms should never be stacked more than two high. Rotate product properly.

RECEIVING, STORAGE AND HANDLING TIPS

To manage shrink effectively, holding coolers should carry minimal overstock. Avoid out-of-stocks. Plan accordingly for promotions and feature ads. Refrigerate mushrooms immediately. Additionally, store mushrooms up high and off moist floors, away from warm doorways, out of direct airflow and away from odorous perishable items.

OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- **Promote and merchandise Monterey's Grill-A-Bella® mushrooms in the high profile biodegradable tray. Provides 100 percent daily requirement of Vitamin D per serving for consumer health benefits.**
- **Sell bulk Portabellas by the unit versus pound — sales increase up to 300 percent.**
- **Merchandise Monterey's Sliced Mushrooms with 100 percent Vitamin D in the new "Resealable Bag" on pegs for maximum visibility near the bagged salad section, to increase your sales and expand your profits. Plus, your shopper will appreciate these time-saving mushrooms that help save 10 minutes of prep time and provide Vitamin D!**
- **Pictures of recipes on-pack, like Monterey's Bag products, or in the section get the consumer thinking immediately, "What's for dinner?" Serving suggestions and healthy recipes are on every bag.**

Did You Get Your Vitamin Today?



**Fights
Breast
Cancer***



**Develops
Strong
Bones**



**Helps
Develop
Cognitive
Skills**



**Heart
Healthy;
Improves
Life**



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20 Minutes Exposure Daily



NATURAL

One 3 oz. Serving Daily (400 IU)



SUPPLEMENT

Approx. 400 IU Daily



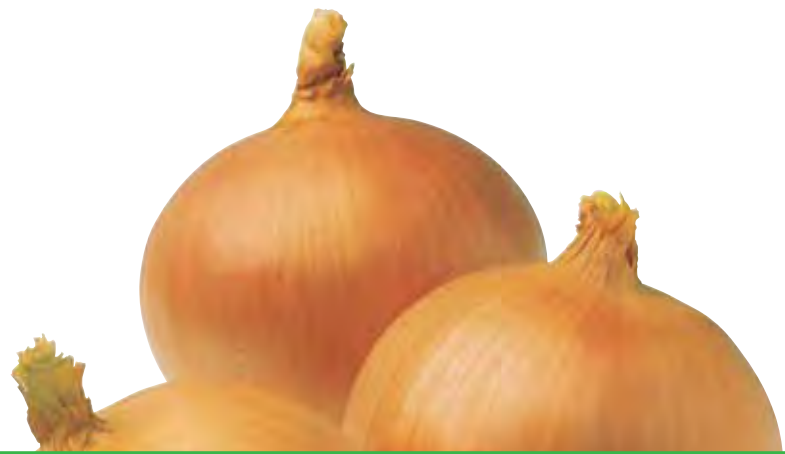
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* Studies have shown that Vitamin D may be effective in fighting certain types of cancer, including breast cancer.



IDAHO-EASTERN OREGON ONION COMMITTEE

P.O. Box 909
Parma, ID 83660
Phone: 208-722-5111
Fax: 208-722-6582
Website: www.BIGONIONS.com



ONIONS

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions are versatile onions that may be used at any meal or in any favorite onion recipe. The appeal of Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions is their golden globe shape and their remarkably mild flavor. Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions retain their texture when cooked, adding flavor and consistency to any dish.

When it comes to displaying Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions, we say, "The bigger, the better." The bigger and more dramatic you can make your displays, the better your sales will be.

Good signage that distinguishes the different varieties and versatility of onions will go a long way in increasing sales. Full-color Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion price cards will make the display even stronger.

POINT-OF-PURCHASE /SIGNAGE

Make quick-idea recipes available near the onion section to encourage impulse purchases.

To help consumers decide which onion to purchase, display an Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion sizing chart and poster next to the onions. For example, large-size onions reduce preparation time while their firm flesh makes them ideal for blooms, ringing, slicing and dicing.

VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions are available in yellow, red and white varieties. Harvest begins in

QUICK TIPS

- Promotional materials and recipe cards should tout Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions as great raw, on burgers and for cooking.
- In-store sampling and co-op advertising drive retail sales and product awareness.
- Don't forget: "The bigger the better."

August with onion availability lasting from August through March.

During the growing season, the Idaho and Eastern Oregon Onion region provides from approximately 30 percent of the bulb onions consumed in the United States.

PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

In-store sampling and co-op advertising drive retail sales and product awareness. The aroma of onion rings sampled in the produce department is sure to draw a crowd. Contact the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee office to learn about the promotional opportunities for your store. The Idaho-E. Oregon Onion Committee also holds an ONION LOVERS' Retail Display Contest each January and offers premiums for entering and cash prizes to winning displays.

Funds are also available to retail outlets that wish to increase the promotion of Idaho-E. Oregon onions through creative media advertising.

Plus, the Idaho-E. Oregon Onion Committee has developed a new label that will be sure to draw customers to an attractive display of consumer packs and 10lb. bags. Many shippers carry the new label, so ask for it on your next order!

DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions are known for their long shelf life. You can increase profitability by reducing shrink if you follow these simple steps:

- Onions should be kept dry and unrefrigerated at retail. Good air circulation is critical for onions.
- Keep product rotated and remove separated and loose skins from the display bin.

BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

When onions are received, they should be placed one foot away from the wall for proper air circulation. Air circulation is crucial for long-term storage of onions.

Remember not to use plastic pallet wrap on onions in storage, as the plastic wrap limits air movement.

Onions should be kept cool and dry, ideally at 34° to 45° F with about 65 to 70 percent humidity.

Onions should not be stored with other produce that gives off moisture, such as potatoes.

CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Precut onion blooms filled with a variety of cut produce could be offered in microwavable containers for take-and-bake onion blooms.

In addition, try cross-merchandising onions in the meat department. Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions are the perfect size for topping hamburgers, and king-size onion rings will just naturally have your customers thinking steak for dinner. For summer, try merchandising onions along with barbeque sauces to suggest a perfect outdoor grilling accompaniment.

Salad tie-ins have proven successful, too.

Display onions right next to other salad ingredients and see how they help sell more of your other produce items.

OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

• Onions are one of the most frequently used ingredients in recipes around the world. The Idaho-E. Oregon Onion Committee has over 100 flavorful recipes listed on their website: www.BIGONIONS.com and has a wide variety of point of purchase material including recipe cards that can be conveniently displayed near onion bins to let your customers know about the many ways to use onions.

• Contact the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Committee for more details.





Spanish Sweet Onions... Part of an Active Lifestyle!

**Choose Idaho-E. Oregon Onions
for your customers! It will be a PERFECT STRIKE
for your produce sales!**

Also, ask for the new Idaho-E. Oregon Onion Label. Now available
through many of the region's shippers.



www.BIGONIONS.com
208-722-5111



BROOKS TROPICALS

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www.brookstropicals.com/nutrition



PAPAYAS, CARIBBEAN RED

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Display papayas as whole fruit as well as cut in half and shrink-wrapped. Use both methods simultaneously for increased sales.

Cutting a ripe papaya lengthwise shows customers that it might have some green on the outside, but inside the fruit is red, juicy and ready to eat. Demonstrate that the papaya can be eaten by the spoonful or cut up for salads, salsas or smoothies. Increase overall sales by selling it as an edible bowl filled with other fruits, yogurt or salads.

Whole papayas, when displayed with other tropical produce, make for a colorful, unique and interesting display, piquing the curiosity of new consumers. Generate excitement by displaying a large number of papayas — 15 or more pieces of Caribbean Red.

Keep an eye on your papaya display. Be quick to sort out any fruit that is less than cosmetically-appealing. This fruit is still great tasting, so chop it up to add a tropical taste to prepared fruit salads or blend into fabulous smoothies or, as Hispanics call them, *batidos*.

POINT-OF-PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Brooks Tropicals provides placards and tear-off pads for your produce department. The placards provide details on the papayas' origin, taste, color, availability, size and quality, as well as preparation and storage tips and nutritional information.



QUICK TIPS

- Caribbean Red papayas have an abundance of vitamins and contain papain, an enzyme that aids digestion. More nutritional information is available on our Web site, including a one-page factsheet with suggestions on merchandising, storing and displaying papayas.
- Sprinkle fresh lime juice over cut papayas to preserve the fruit's naturally bright flesh.
- New! A Tropical Nutrition Web site where consumers will find informative articles about Caribbean Red papaya and how it helps consumers meet their daily dietary requirements is now available. Visit www.brookstropicals.com/nutrition

VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Brooks Tropicals is the exclusive grower of Caribbean Red papayas. Brooks grows, packs and ships these papayas year-round from food safety audited facilities in Belize, Central America. North America distribution available from Homestead, FL and McAllen, TX.

PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Brooks Tropicals actively works to increase consumer awareness. We work with food editors, TV producers and celebrity chefs to promote the benefits of including papayas in healthful diets. Our Web site, which is included on our label, is a favorite go-to spot for answers on papayas.

RIPENESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Caribbean Red papayas are ripe starting at 50 percent color break. If the fruit gives when gently squeezed, it's ready to eat.

BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

Caribbean Red papayas can be stored at 42° to 58° F to minimize ripening. Storing them at higher temperatures will speed the ripening process. Storing at 40°F

or below for prolonged periods may cause injury to the fruit.

DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

Papayas have soft skins, so they are delicate when ripe. Stack up to two or three deep. If using wicker baskets with uneven bottoms and sides, provide a layer of protection between the wicker and the fruit. Do not mist papayas. Keep them at room temperature. Caribbean Red papayas have a shelf-life of two to five days depending on ripeness; If possible, display papayas with the larger more colorful end up.

CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Don't fence these papayas in. Occasionally display them outside the tropical produce section by grouping with other popular recipe ingredients, such as salsas or fruit salads. Display a cut-in-half papaya with lime wedges and a plastic spoon in the meals-to-go section.

OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Salad bars take on tropical flair with chopped papayas. A little signage can tempt first-time eaters paving the way to additional whole fruit sales in the produce aisle. Don't stop there, make chopped papayas a part of ready-to-go fruit salads. Salad bars and fruit salads are easy and effective ways to use great tasting papayas that are past their visual prime.
- For a salad to go, cut a papaya in half and fill with mixed berries. Overwrap and display for a grab-and-go meal.
- Build a salsa ingredients display including the tasty papaya. Show how easily an exotic tropical salad can come together by grouping papayas and other tropical fruits. Suggest using a tropical-flavored yogurt instead of mayonnaise.

From **OUR** Papaya Fields
to **YOUR** Store

CARIBBEAN RED®
Papayas



Caribbean Red Papayas have sell-thru, coming by that reputation not by accident but with a lot of hard work:

- Ongoing research and development
- Food safety audits
- State-of-the-art packing house
- Papaya ripening rooms
- Quality control team
- Continuous Cold Chain® from field to your store



QUALITY
FROM BROOKS

All that hard work delivers quality – Caribbean Red Papayas with great taste, proven shelf life and year-round volumes. Call Brooks Tropicals today to get Caribbean Red Papayas coming your way.



**BROOKS
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CALIFORNIA
P E A R S

CALIFORNIA PEAR ADVISORY BOARD

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Fax: 916-446-1063
Website: www.calpear.com
Email: chris@calpear.com



PEARS

MOSTLY GREEN

Ripen at home at room temperature, and enjoy the ripe, sweet flavor in just a few days!

①



MOSTLY YELLOW

Crisp, fragrant and ideal in salads, or for enjoying after a day or two of home ripening!

②



YELLOW

Ripe, juicy and ready-to-eat, with a smooth, buttery texture - refrigerate to preserve ripeness!

③



AMERICA'S PEAR SEASON STARTS IN CALIFORNIA

California kick-starts the summer pear season with promotable volumes of Sunsprites, Red Pears, Bosc and category-leading Bartletts. Starting in July, fresh, new crop Bartletts drive category performance, contributing 67.4 percent of total category sales! Fresh, new crop Bartletts available in July should be the No. 1 pear on your shelf for the big summer months of July and August. Make the most of this profitable opportunity by following a few simple, proven guidelines:

CONDITION FOR COLOR

Three-out-of-four consumers prefer Bartletts with "more yellow, less green." So make sure your Bartletts receive proper conditioning and handling. Treating pears to "breaking" stage generate an average of 18 percent greater sales than non-treated green Bartletts — the more golden the skin, the more golden your opportunity for optimum sales!

FEATURE WITH THE FLAVORS OF SUMMER

Most consumers consider the Bartlett to be a "summer pear." Capitalize on that connection by displaying Bartletts alongside tree fruits during July and August. Retailers displaying Bartletts next to tree fruit instead of apples enjoyed an 11 percent increase in sales during the summer!

STAY PROFITABLE FROM SUMMER TO FALL!

California pears are available far beyond summer Bartlett season, with varieties like Bosc, Comice, Seckel, Forelle and Red pears. Extend your sales season by letting these varieties ride on the popularity of the Bartlett. Retailers displaying other varieties with their Bartletts keep consumers interested in the pear category and enjoy a 14 percent increase in sales!

Start in California — stay in California — with resources from California Pears!



Bartlett

Availability: *July - November*



Sunspire

Availability: *June - July*



Bosc

Availability: *August - October*



Comice

Availability: *August - November*



Forelle

Availability: *August - October*



Red Pear

Availability: *July - October*



Seckel

Availability: *August - October*



WHERE YOU DISPLAY YOUR BARTLETTS CAN MAKE A DOUBLE- DIGIT DIFFERENCE.

Your customers think of the Bartlett as a "summer pear." Cash in on that connection by displaying California Bartletts alongside your summer tree fruit during July and August – a small move that can earn you big rewards. Historically, retailers displaying Bartletts next to peaches, plums and nectarines enjoyed an **11% increase** in pear sales during the summer!

Enjoy a double-digit increase by simply relocating your Bartletts. It's your move.



CALIFORNIA
PEARS

California Pear Advisory Board • 1521 "I" Street • Sacramento, CA 95814 (916) 441-0432, FAX (916) 446-1063 • www.calpear.com



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PLANTAINS

The time has come to move plantains from a product to a category.

Plantains have grown from an ethnic product to a staple item in many areas.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Plantains have shown to be a great tool to attract ethnic consumers to stores, and at the same time, other consumers have shown interest in experimenting with new and exciting products.

HOW DO WE BUILD ON THIS SUCCESS?

Expand the product line to include new varieties.

VARIETIES

Our traditional plantains have always been the *Horton* variety. Turbara produces *Horton* plantains because they provide the best market flexibility. This is a unique variety that can be merchandised in both its green and ripened stages.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Burros are about six to eight inches long, and up to two inches thick. The fruit has very little curvature. Consumers can enjoy this fruit ripened like a fruit or in its green stage as a vegetable.

Hawaiian plantains can grow to nine inches in length and three inches in diameter. Consumers use it as a vegetable.

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

To appeal to shoppers, it is important to:

- Keep the display full and well maintained.
- Display the three varieties together as a category.
- Differentiate the products by showing the names of each product and providing a short description for each of them.
- Display both green and ripe plantains.

Many shoppers who consume plantains are of ethnic origin, they always look for their own plantain preferences and for good quality.

QUICK TIPS

- Plantains should always be cooked, never eaten raw.
- Keep plantain display full and well maintained.
- For increased sales, display both green and ripe plantains.
- Specify the differences between the different plantain varieties to educate consumers.

American shoppers are interested in trying new varieties if they look appealing. A large display with adequate padding will definitely spark their interest. Another key element to boost sales is to implement a two-color program by displaying both green and ripe plantains together.

PRICING

It's been proven that sales of *Horton* plantains increase when they are sold by the dollar instead of by the pound (i.e., 4/\$1).

As *Burros* and *Hawaiians* come in clusters, it is recommended to sell them by the pound.

POINT-OF-PURCHASE / SIGNAGE

It is important to include signage and POS materials at the point-of-purchase to differentiate each variety of the plantain category and increase sales. Turbara offers its customers advertising material with recommendations on ripening and storage as well as an array of recipes for consumers who are interested in sampling them. Teaching mainstream Americans how to prepare plantains will boost your sales; they have a very positive response once they realize how delicious plantains are!

Turbana also offers bilingual signage with nutritional content in both English and Spanish. Many shoppers

who eat plantains are Hispanic and seeing their own language in your store will make them feel welcome, which builds loyalty.

PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Plantains are a staple food among ethnic groups. Stores located in areas of high Hispanic household density should advertise in Spanish through local radio stations, cable TV or through flyers to help them reach this audience. Turbara can help you with your advertising needs in Spanish.

Sampling plantains at different stages is a great way to teach consumers the many different ways to cook them and to show how versatile plantains are.

RIPENESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Unlike bananas, plantains are grown with the intention of being cooked in every stage of ripeness, from green to yellow to black. The riper it is, the sweeter the taste. The taste changes as the plantain goes through a series of biochemical reactions as it ripens, which is an ongoing process of converting starches to sugars.

Burros can be used as a fruit or cooked as a vegetable. They are harvested and shipped green. If the fruit is ripened like a banana the fruit reveals an interesting taste somewhat between a strawberry and a banana. If used unripened, the fruit is often fried to make excellent *tostones*. Consumers like the versatility of this fruit.

The *Hawaiians* are used as a vegetable. They are known to have no fiber and with their larger diameter they are used to make excellent *tostones*. Also, they can be baked either ripe or green.

Plantains can be prepared and enjoyed at many stages in the ripening process. This versatility is why most consumers would like to see them offered in both the green and ripened stages.

DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

Store *Horton* plantains at a room temperature between 47 and 50° F, away from freezers and loading dock doors. For *Burros* and *Hawaiians* fruit should be stored at 58° F.

Use cardboard boxes to transport fruit to display area to minimize handling. Plantains should be displayed on padded shelves to avoid scarring and/or bruising.

CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Plantains are most commonly consumed with black beans and rice among Hispanic populations, so putting black beans and rice around the display makes good business sense. To appeal to mainstream Americans, place honey, whipped cream, chocolate or other fruit with the display to encourage sweet dessert ideas.





Burro

How do you turn a plantain into a category?

Variety.



Hawaiian



Traditional

Not long ago, consumers were unsure if a plantain was a fruit or vegetable. Today it is becoming one of the fastest growing categories in the produce department, with Traditional, Hawaiian and Burro varieties. Whether sweet or starchy, with Latin, Caribbean and Pacific influences, more and more families are discovering plantains as an alternative to potatoes, rice and pasta. We are the leading importer of all varieties of plantains in North America. Let's grow together.



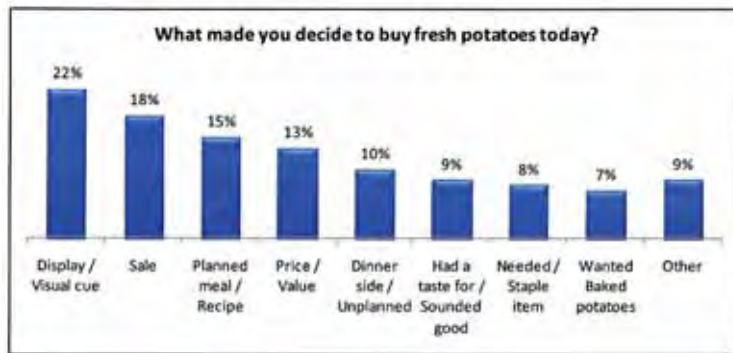
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US POTATO BOARD

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POTATOES

The United States Potato Board (USPB) is committed to creating a consumer-driven potato category that drives sales throughout the supply chain. By understanding the potato consumer, leveraging current trends and developing a consumer-centric category based on proven Best Practices, retailers can ensure potatoes continue to maintain their dominance in the produce department.

Fresh potatoes have experienced consumption declines nationally over the past 20 years. To counteract this decline, the USPB has worked with retail partners to educate consumers on the nutrition benefits of potatoes. Through consumer research, the USPB learned there are two important messages critical to reaching consumers: Potatoes are healthful and can provide a convenient meal solution. Unlike bananas for example, consumers are unaware of the high potassium levels found in potatoes, as well as potatoes' 45 percent of daily vitamin C requirements. This, along with the low caloric content, makes potatoes one of the most affordable, healthful and often overlooked categories in produce.

MERCHANDISING MORE CRITICAL THAN EVER

In summer 2009, the USPB conducted in-store surveys with potato consumers across the United States to understand drivers of potato purchase behaviors. While potatoes are largely a planned purchase, with nearly 70 percent of shoppers planning to purchase before entering the store, this percentage has declined from prior years. Interestingly, the potato display was the No. 1 driver of impulse purchases. More than ever, there is considerable opportunity to influence consumers at point-of-sale with attractive displays, ample variety and consumer education.

Also critical to shoppers is finding meal solutions that provide value in a quick/convenient way. While this may be reflective of current economic conditions, combining enticing displays, meal solution suggestions that utilize the grill or microwave, as well as value messaging, is a way to bring impulse shoppers into the category.

EDUCATING CONSUMERS

The "Potatoes...Goodness Unearthed™" industry platform, developed in 2008, has successfully delivered new opportunities for the U.S. potato industry to reach consumers with impactful messages on potatoes. This platform is based on extensive consumer research to identify the right message that will reach the target consumer in the most effective and meaningful way. The platform was developed into a print campaign entitled, "Peel Back the Truth."

In the first year (2008/2009), the media plan gener-



ated 90.3 million impressions and reached 45 percent of the target audience. Currently, we are in our second year (2009/2010), and the media plan is generating 126 million impressions and reaching 51 percent of the target audience. This advertising positively positions fresh potatoes BEFORE shoppers enter the supermarket.

In 2009, the USPB developed a variety of unique signage vehicles, leveraging the look and feel of the "Peel Back the Truth" print ad to deliver the messages of potato health and convenience and tested them across the United States.

The signage debunks the carb-heavy myths of potato nutrition. In addition, recipes showcasing convenient/quick potato preparation were provided. Used at more than 60 test stores across the nation, the signage drew consumers to the category, educated them about unique varieties, and offered affordable meal solutions for their families. In all cases, sales performance results proved there was a positive lift on sales from the placement of the innovative POP.

One thing is clear: Consumers want product education more than ever. By utilizing creative POP at your potato table, you will drive new consumers to the category, expand existing consumers' product knowledge and exposure and debunk negative nutrition myths that may have existed about potatoes.

RESULTS TO BE PROUD OF

- Through a combination of USPB marketing efforts, in and out of store, on- and off-line, we are seeing improvements in the household primary shopper's attitudes towards potatoes. The USPB's annual Usage and Attitude Study confirms consumer's positive attitudes towards potatoes have increased 6 percentage points since 2008. The USPB is committed to continuing a strong communications and merchandising program of potatoes that results in increased demand at retail.

INNOVATION IN THE INDUSTRY

Many fresh categories have evolved through the introduction of convenient and innovative offerings. The potato category has and continues to develop value-added products such as the microwaveable baked potato, the steamable potato bag and refrigerated pre-cut potatoes.

To continue to integrate innovation into the category, the USPB worked to develop a new microwaveable potato product. The product, a fresh mashed potato kit, includes a plastic container, red potatoes and a seasoning packet. With 10 minutes in the microwave, followed by the addition of the seasoning packet and milk, consumers can simply smash the potatoes and serve!

Tested at a Midwest retailer, it was clear the product fulfilled a customer demand for convenient meal solutions. By providing in-store demos, new consumers were introduced to a category often perceived as inconvenient. Product signage was used to draw attention to the new product and to educate consumers on the product attributes.

In recent interviews with retailers, new product innovation was mentioned as an area in which to tread carefully given the existing economy. However, there are many value-added products that continue to thrive in produce, such as single-wrapped microwaveable potatoes. Retailers indicated supplier support through enticing signage, retailer and consumer education, flexible distribution vehicles and marketing efforts is critical to establishing success in the existing environment.

Retailers were quick to mention potatoes as a front-runner for varietal innovation. While value-added packaging has been a significant innovation across produce categories, the new varieties of potatoes offer new usages to consumers from the conventional potato category. Fingerlings and gemstones cook faster and provide new flavor profiles outside of traditional russet and white potatoes. Again, retailers encourage suppliers to provide the appropriate merchandising and consumer education, such as recipe solutions, to entice consumers to try new varieties.



**A boring
category that's past
its prime?**
Guess again.

Peel back the truth!

**Actually, there are several low-cost,
high-impact ways to increase sales
and profits in your potato category.
So a little respect please.**

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POTATOES
GOODNESS
UNEARTHED

For more information on how to increase sales and profits in your potato category,
please contact the United States Potato Board at 303-369-7783.

Reader Service # 56



TRINITY FRUIT SALES

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PRE-CONDITIONED TREE FRUIT

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

The combination of peaches, plums and nectarines displayed side by side with signage that depicts their special ripe characteristics would work very well.

POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Signage should let the consumer know that this fruit has been pre-ripened naturally in order to give them an outstanding piece of fruit every time. Recipe tear-off cards are proven to drive sales.

PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

In-store tasting demonstrations are the ultimate promotional tool for these commodities. The taste will sell the product since all the ripening work has been done at shipping point. When done in tandem with conventional newspaper ads, look forward to an explosion in sales.

RIPENESS RECOMMENDATION

Peaches and nectarines should be displayed at eight to ten pounds, plums at four to six pounds.

RECEIVING, STORAGE AND HANDLING TIPS

1. Upon receiving, take firmness pressures on 10 pieces of fruit per lot. Pressures should be taken on the shoulder, tip and both cheeks, then averaged. Pressures should be taken on fruit that has pulp temperatures in the 68 to 70 degree range.
2. Fruit with pressures at eight to ten pounds average should be stored at 34 to 36 degrees. Higher temperatures will increase rate of ripening.
3. Pressures should be monitored daily to guard against over-ripening.

VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

- Peaches, plums and nectarines are available from late May through September.
- We can provide a continuous supply of all three commodities throughout the season.

QUICK TIPS

- Preconditioned fruit will be protected against internal breakdown if the shipper has conditioned fruit for at least 24 to 48 hours with proper humidity (85-95% Relative Humidity).
- Monitor storage temperature and fruit pressures daily to maximize fruit quality and minimize loss. Pressures must be taken on fruit that is room temperature and representative of a given shipper's lot specifications.
- The aroma of pre-conditioned fruit is great for advertising because the aromatic appeal catches customers' attention.

OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- **Fabulous Tie-In** whether it be a garnish, appetizer, salad, dessert or an extraordinary addition to your favorite dish. Think California Pre-Conditioned Fruit.
- **For conventional or organic, Trinity Fruit** will assure that you and your customers are guaranteed a sweet and fresh taste.





**PRE-CONDITIONED PROGRAM AVAILABLE
CONVENTIONAL AND ORGANIC**

**WHITE & YELLOW FLESH PEACHES, WHITE & YELLOW FLESH NECTARINES, PLUMS,
PLUOTS®, APRICOTS, APRIUMS, KIWI, TABLE GRAPES, APPLES, POMEGRANATES,
PERSIMMONS, CITRUS, ASIAN PEARS, CHERRIES, BARTLETT PEARS, ASPARAGUS AND RAISINS.**

**Brands: Ripeway®, Señor Blanco®, Trinity®,
Trinity Vineyards®, Flavor Zone® & Green Giant Fresh®**

**David E. White, John Hein,
Vance Uchiyama, Dennis Surabian Jr., Oscar Ramirez**

559-433-3777 • fax: 559-433-3790

www.trinityfruit.com

Reader Service # 12



FULL STEAM MARKETING & DESIGN

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RETAIL MERCHANDISING

WHY MERCHANDISE IN THE PRODUCE AISLE?

There is an extensive landscape of products competing for space in the produce section, including a growing population of private label brands, which can dilute the impact of your branding efforts. In order to engage the customer and clearly differentiate from competing brands, it is essential that produce suppliers adopt an assertive merchandising strategy.

Today's consumer is armed with information on health and nutritional needs and trends in organic foods and produce varieties. A successful merchandising strategy in the produce aisle will educate the consumer on unique health benefits, nutritional value, flavor and texture attributes, preparation instructions and recipe and serving suggestions.

A well-planned and executed point-of-purchase (POP) merchandising solution will reinforce and secure recognition of your brand, and create sales lift.

MATERIAL MATTERS

There are a number of considerations when choosing the right materials for your POP solution:

- **Ensure that danglers "dangle" correctly – avoid droop, excessive rigidity, or sharp edges that can snag or injure a customer.**
- **Design shelf strips for an easy fit – thick enough to stay in place; thin enough to slide easily in the channel.**
- **Request a good UV or laminate coating – moisture in the produce department can curl or distort signage.**
- **Right-size shelf talkers and danglers – make them big enough to attract attention, but not so large that they infringe on adjacent shelf space or interfere with access to product.**
- **Always distribute coupons or recipes via a tearpad or dispenser, and make it easy to attach. Loose items are not practical for retailers.**

QUICK TIPS

- **Keep your POP message concise and focused on key points of differentiation.**
- **Use your POP material to reinforce your brand attributes.**
- **Design for ease of execution across multiple retail environments.**
- **Understand your retailers and their unique store environment.**

CONSTRUCTING YOUR POP SOLUTION

Depending on the retail environment, produce items may reside in an aisle display, an endcap or a wet rack. For maximum versatility, a POP system should be constructed with interchangeable components that can work together in multiple configurations. The following steps will help guarantee a cohesive and effective solution:

- **Research:** Understand your retailers and their retail environment; look at trends in merchandising solutions and materials.
- **Planning:** Evaluate how your product will stand out in its POP environment. Tools such as a planogram or 3D simulation can help the retailer visualize the proposed solution in their store environment.
- **Design/engineering:** Create engaging graphics that pop and accurately represent your product brand; conduct research into suitable material and specifications. Build and test POP components — using a prototype or full-scale mockup, if applicable.
- **Fulfillment:** Maintain inventory of finished materials for ongoing distribution to designated stores.
- **Sales support:** Provide retailers with an easily accessible resource for ordering, customer service, and consulting on any retailer-specific requirements.

THE POP MIX

A POP system consists of a family of components that can be used in conjunction to create your brand's point of destination in the produce section:

- Customized racking systems are an effective way to showcase and carve out your niche in the wet rack or aisle display.
- Eye-catching visuals at the point of purchase include shelf danglers or talkers, channel strips, case cards, header cards, or other hanging, stand-alone or on-shelf signage.
- The shipping carton itself may become a component of the POP display, or a dual-purpose shipper display can function as both a shipping unit and display case.
- For in-store promotions, items such as couponing systems, value-added recipe cards or recipe tearpads, circular advertising and demo kits for in-store sampling are successful tools for engaging and soliciting action from produce shoppers.

BACKBONE OF THE POP SYSTEM

Behind the visual appeal of your POP signage, the underlying hardware components can make the difference between a robust, functional display and an ineffective, disorganized display. Purpose-built racks and springloads can ensure that products are displayed correctly and allow for ease of rotation and restocking.

Acquiring detailed knowledge of the retailer's existing configuration of racks and coolers is a critical step in designing a POP solution that can be easily executed by the merchandising team.

RETAILER-SPECIFIC MERCHANDISING

Every retailer has a distinct and specific footprint for their produce section, and this can vary between regions and individual stores. This is where ongoing research, regional testing and collaboration with retailers can provide the necessary criteria on which to base your POP strategy.

Since some retailers will not accept all the materials you develop, your POP solution should be designed in a modular fashion where different combinations can be used to satisfy the needs of all participating stores. An important consideration is ease of execution. If an item requires extensive assembly or is a challenge to install, it may quickly be rejected.

YOU'RE ONE STOP SHOP FOR MERCHANDISING SOLUTIONS

WE MAKE YOUR BRAND P-O-P

From channel strips to digital 3-D prototypes of proposed store layouts, Full Steam offers custom merchandising solutions.

- Aisle and case displays
- In-store promotional materials
- Branded signage systems
- Springloads and shelving systems
- Refrigerated case conversion kits
- Shipper displays
- In-store demo kits
- Virtual tours of store displays
- Couponing
- Packaging design and prototypes

DESIGN, SEALED, DELIVERED

The design of eye-catching P-O-P materials is just the first step. You can count on Full Steam's comprehensive merchandising services.

- Custom design and engineering
- Printing
- Storage of materials
- Inventory management
- Quality control
- Fulfillment
- Sales support
- National and regional rollouts

Reader Service # 57

FULLSTEAM.COM/MERCH
1.800.552.1222
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DESIGN > PROCUREMENT > STORAGE > FULFILLMENT > DISTRIBUTION



Marie's

MARIE'S BRAND DRESSING AND DIP

Ventura Foods, LLC
40 Pointe Drive
Brea, CA 92821
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Website: www.maries.com
Email: mmiddleton@venturafoods.com



SALAD DRESSINGS

Refrigerated salad dressings are a great opportunity to add profit to the produce department. Homemade flavor, freshness, quality and variety are all areas where refrigerated produce department dressings can be promoted. Based on SRP, a typical retailer profit is approximately \$1.50-per-unit.

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

At Marie's, we believe the best types of promotions ultimately help our consumers put a great tasting, meal or side-dish on the table easily. That means trying to get consumers to pick up a jar or bottle with every produce purchase. To do this effectively, it is less about straight discounting and more merchandising product directly adjacent to produce to help the consumer recognize that there are easy ways to transform that produce into a meal!

Merchandising fresh produce and dressings together or through effective point-of-sale creates a strong linkage that not only delivers consumer benefit, but also assists in driving increased sales and profits. For instance, by attaching a recipe booklet and a coupon for our Marie's Potato Salad Dressing to every 3- or 5-pound bag of potatoes and merchandising the dressing next to the potato display, you can not only assist the consumer in figuring out how to transform a commodity into a meal, but also create a link between fresh produce and the fresh, homemade dressings.

VARIETY AND INNOVATION

The refrigerated dressing category delivers a wide variety of delicious, homemade flavor and fresh taste. From the category leading Chunky Blue Cheese Dressing to innovative new Yogurt Dressing and Potato Salad Dressing, all shopper needs can be met. Marie's is committed to growth through innovation. As we look forward, Marie's will continue to focus on delivering new products that help consumers turn produce into extraor-

QUICK TIPS

- Merchandise with fresh vegetables for an increased produce ring.
- Cross-merchandise with slower moving products for double benefit.
- Use POS throughout the department to remind customers to check out the dressings.

inary meals and we encourage our retail partners to join in building on the role that produce can play in shoppers lives.

TASTE AND NUTRITION

Refrigerated dressings also present a healthier and more wholesome alternative for customers — attributes which can also be promoted and are particularly applicable to the produce department. Help customers to understand the taste and ingredient benefit they derive from a produce department refrigerated dressing through educating them on the ingredients as well as providing tastings when possible. Most refrigerated dressings, and all of Marie's line, are natural, which means:

- No Artificial Preservatives
- No High Fructose Corn Syrup
- No Modified Food Starch
- No Artificial Flavors

Ensure your entire category is natural and then take

advantage in promoting this fact to your fresh-minded produce customers.

POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

POS materials and signage are an effective way to get consumers to link the use of dressings and fresh produce with serving suggestions and recipes. Marie's has a variety of point-of-sale items designed to complement our refrigerated dressing products.

CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Refrigerated dressings present a host of cross-merchandising opportunities. Their location right in the produce department gives produce personnel easy access to utilizing them in a variety of cross-promotions. From utilizing signage to actually incorporating the dressings as part of a temporary promotional display, the creative prospects are endless. Dressings can successfully be used with slower moving produce items to give them a kick in sales, for example, Coleslaw Dressing with cabbage, Potato Salad Dressing with potatoes, or Chunky Blue Cheese with celery and chicken wings.

USAGE SUGGESTIONS

Suggesting particular usage ideas to customers will help increase sales:

- Marie's makes any occasion a special occasion.
- Chunky Blue Cheese works great as a dip.
- Marie's Creamy Yogurt Dressing is a healthier dressing alternative.
- Four of Marie's Vinaigrette Dressings are made with Extra Virgin Olive Oil.

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OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Take advantage of Marie's Yogurt Dressing and present a healthy and unique alternative to your customers. Marie's Yogurt Dressing is naturally low in fat and calories, helping you reach health-conscious consumers. They are premium-positioned items that trade consumers up, driving additional profits to your bottom line. And, they're based on award-winning formulations, ensuring great, homemade taste.



Marie's®. What we do for salads, we now do for potatoes!

New! Introducing Marie's Potato Salad Dressing
for Quick & Easy Potato Salad.



Dijon Herb -
Tangy mustard and
aromatic herbs

German Style - Tangy,
yet sweet with a touch of
hickory smoked bacon

Classic Style - Creamy and
flavorful All-American dish

*Just Prepare Potatoes,
Pour in Marie's and Serve!*

The Potato Category is \$1.7 billion, making it
one of the biggest fresh produce categories.*

Drive more profit through related item sales by linking
Marie's Potato Salad Dressing with a 3lb. bag of potatoes.

Help your customer put a great tasting,
easy side dish on the table.

Marie's®

Makes the ordinary... **EXTRAORDINARY!**™

www.maries.com

For more information on Marie's products, contact your Marie's Representative or
Matt Middleton at 972.569.6813 or mmiddleton@venturafoods.com.

*Source: Unit sales, 52 Weeks Ending 11/30/2009
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Reader Service # 76



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STONE FRUIT

Nothing announces the arrival of summer quite like a big display of fresh, delicious stone fruit from California. Stone fruit is the family of fruit that includes peaches, nectarines, plums, plumcots (also known as Pluots), apricots, Apriums, and cherries. While nearly everything in today's produce department now has year-round availability, stone fruit from California remains one of the few truly seasonal highlights. Here are some ways to capitalize on that consumer anticipation.

VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Late April – May

The stars of the early season are apricots, white peaches and cherries.

June - August

All stone fruit commodities are in full swing.

Yellow peaches and nectarines: Be sure to try some of the new nectarine varieties that offer a sweeter flavor profile.

White peaches and nectarines: The popularity of our Great Whites brand continues to grow as consumers discover their distinctive, sweet flavor.

Saturn peaches: Peak availability in June makes it easy to highlight this specialty item.

Plumcots: The peak of the season brings a wide assortment of plumcot varieties, each with their own unique appearance and flavor profile.

Plums: Red and black plums continue to be traditional favorites for many consumers.

September – October

Great tasting late varieties of white peaches and nectarines, yellow peaches and plumcots enable you to carry summer sales energy into the fall season.

QUICK TIPS

- **There's one item on nearly every shopping list these days, and that item is value. Value, in simple terms, is "expectations met or exceeded relative to the amount of money spent." High quality, flavorful stone fruit will bring the consumer back on a regular basis much more than a short term price reduction will.**
- **Once you've made the decision to focus on flavor, make sure your customers know it. Talk up your commitment to flavor in ad circulars, with in-store signage and whenever possible, by offering samples to your customers.**

POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Good signage is so much more than just the product name and a price. Signs that provide information about flavor, texture, nutrition and usage should be viewed as part of your produce staff. POS signs are constantly "on duty" helping to sell product. This is especially true with products like plumcots where each variety looks and tastes a little different.

With Family Tree Farms as your stone fruit supplier, you can create an additional connection with your consumers by introducing them to the actual farmer. "Meet the Farmer" signs and stories help create an emotional bond between your customer and your stone fruit.

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

While extra space is normally allotted for ad items, a large display with relatively equal space devoted to each item is a good, everyday approach for the stone fruit category. Consumers are often reluctant to try "specialty" produce, but when all items appear mainstream, they are more likely to try new things and purchase multiple items.

PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

The first products of the season offer many natural outlets for advertising excitement. Cherries and apricots are both limited-time products. Prominent display locations, "get 'em while you can" signage and good ad support all work together to convey this message and spur sales. Ad circulars are not just a place to highlight a sale price? they can be used very effectively to educate the consumer and pique their curiosity about an item. Include at least one descriptive term about the product in your ads. For even more impact, plan at least one sidebar or "advertorial" on a stone fruit product during the summer. Family Tree Farms will provide you with just the right copy for your printed or online format.



OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- **Our basket pack is a proven sales booster. The attractive open design gives the fruit a farm-fresh appeal. Consumers often pick up the basket as displayed, resulting in a larger sale than they might have otherwise considered. The random weight unit has the PLU number prominently marked on the handle of the basket. Each Euro master contains 12 baskets with approximately two pounds of fruit per basket.**





Much has been written over the past couple of years about the state of our industry and how various sectors might fare in the current economic uncertainty. As a farmer, I can tell you that good years and bad years have always been a part of the package. It's how you approach and react to those years that will make or break a farmer.

At Family Tree Farms, our mission statement - To consistently produce, package and market the most flavorful fruit in the world, - is what guides us year in and year out. Our steadfast determination has led us to seek out and plant the most flavorful varieties the world has to offer. We consistently harvest fruit at the highest possible maturity and pack a box that delivers unparalleled quality to the end consumer. We high standards is not without challenge. Increasing labor costs, food safety and traceability programs are just a few examples of things that can bring a company to its knees. For us, finding ways to face challenges head-on while maintaining our reputation for quality will always make us stronger and better.

I want to personally thank our family of like-minded trade partners. Your ability to see what is possible beyond the daily buy/sell relationship has allowed us to stay true to our mission, in good times and bad.

Our growth plans are strong and bearing fruit - literally. If our company philosophy sounds a lot like yours, we look forward to welcoming you to our family!

David Jackson

David Jackson
Family Tree Farms



Family Tree Farms

**TOLL FREE 1-866-FLAVOR1
(1-866-352-8671)**

www.familytreefarms.com

White Peaches and Nectarines; Plumcots,
Apriums, Apricots, Conditioned Yellow Peaches
and Nectarines; Plums, Cherries and Blueberries





Keystone
Life should be this sweet.

KEYSTONE FRUIT MARKETING

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Website: www.keystonefruit.com

SWEET ONIONS

Onions are the most consumed produce item in the world.

Average annual onion per capita consumption in the United States is 21 pounds.

Flavor Matters... The ability to ensure a consistent sweet onion flavor profile is important. Retailers can now ensure their consumers an enjoyable eating experience every time! That equates to repeat sales and loyal customers.

Since Certified Sweet® onions are available year-round it is easy to see why Sweet Onions are the recognized driver of the onion category.



AVAILABILITY GUIDE:

GREAT NEWS – Certified Sweet® onions are available 365 days a year. Feature year-round availability to consumers and use regional freshness as an educational vehicle to educate consumers on uniqueness of recognized sweet onion growing districts while maintaining the same great taste they expect. Creating brand awareness translates to consumer loyalty and repeat sales.

CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Sweet Onion usage is very diverse and cross-merchandising opportunities are virtually limitless. Their sweet mild flavors make them fantastic on a hamburger or in a fresh salad — simply slice and enjoy. As an ingredient they are guaranteed to enhance your favorite recipes; sweet onions will take any menu offering to a whole new level!

Emphasize Certified Sweet® onions' great taste and nutritional benefits with salad ingredients for a healthful New Year's "New You" resolution. Great with guacamole and fajita mixes for Super Bowl and Cinco de Mayo promotions. Perfect with steaks, burgers and kabobs — "grillin" promos are always a hit! And don't forget the fresh fruit baskets – sweet onions are terrific with fresh fruit.



Available: Spring and Summer



Available: Summer and Fall



Available: Fall, Winter and Early Spring

QUICK TIPS

- **Back to our Roots campaign:** Feature pictures, biographies, history of growers (real people) who produce sweet onions.
- **Education:** Sweet Onion University featuring preparation tips, such as cooking and cutting; educational tips, including storage and handling; and usage ideas, such as recipes and how-to's. Issue certificates of course completion and use in advertising.
- **Utilize Keystone Kitchen Web site, Vidalia Onion Association, Walla Walla Sweet Onion Committee Web sites, etc...**
- **Schedule a celebrity chef demo at new store openings.**
- **Feature customer testimonials and share real consumer's photos and stories regarding new recipes, first time users or special dinner party/favorite recipes using sweet onions.**



In-store demo with Chef Dave



Keystone Vidalia® grower Jim Cowart

"The flavor I count on are the brands you can trust."
- Chef Dave Munson



Certified Sweet®

Flavor you can trust – your sweet onion guarantee!

For more information on our Mayan Sweet Onions, recipes, Chef Dave and the Keystone Kitchen, please visit us at: www.KeystoneChefDave.com

"Certified Sweet" is a registered trademark of National Onion Labs, Inc., Collins, GA.

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

GO BIG!!! Capitalize on one of today's hottest trends – fresh produce. It's healthful, colorful and bursting with freshness. Nothing says, "Buy Me," quite like big, prominent bulk and consumer bag displays. End caps, stand-alones, value-added product offerings, multi-size strategies and consumer bagged displays offer consumers multiple buying options and ensure incremental sales lift!

FLAVOR AND NUTRITION DIFFERENTIATION

Product differentiation gives consumers reasons to buy with confidence. Emphasizing the quality, flavor, nutrition and food safety differences of Certified Sweet® onions over regular cooking onions will promote higher rings at the cash register. The top two reasons people eat fruits and vegetables are taste and nutrition. Product education and tasting demos allow consumers to experience products and always generate sales lifts.

PROFITABLE PARTNERSHIPS

Consumers respond to brand recognition. Consistently purchasing the highest quality sweet onions brands from only reputable industry leaders is the easiest way for retailers to provide consumers with confidence that they are buying the highest quality, safest, freshest and most flavorful sweet onions all year long. Forming a win-win relationship between vendors and retailers provides long-term, sustainable and uninterrupted supply.

Establish secondary display areas, especially during promotional periods, to increase sales and consumer awareness. Effective point-of-purchase materials and signage also help to showcase the nutritional benefits and outstanding flavor of high-quality sweet onions to consumers. Thirty percent of consumers said they would buy and eat more fruits and vegetables if they knew how to use them – go ahead and help them...

Keystone
Life should be this sweet.

KEYSTONE FRUIT MARKETING

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TOMATOES

The Produce Exchange was founded with one goal in mind: Transform the unpredictable nature of the fresh produce industry to an exceptional level of reliability through the relentless creation of extraordinary successes together with our partners. To achieve this, we've enhanced the produce business model allowing us to deliver increased value to the entire supply chain from seed to fork.

We carefully select and grow tomato varieties developed to achieve optimum quality, flavor and yield. Microclimates, soil and availability of natural water supply are a just a few of the components used to identify sourcing regions. Our farms adhere to protocols and practices ideal for both open field and protected culture environments maximizing supply chain values. A diversity of growing areas and grower selection strengthens our depth of supply providing an increased selection of commodity mix, driving load building efficiencies while maintaining cold chains for increased shelf-life.

Our dedication and hard work assures attention to detail and results in your success.

RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Because tomatoes account for 8.5 percent of produce sales, they should be merchandised in a prime area of the produce department. Adjacent to salad fixings is an ideal location. This increases eye appeal and exposes consumers to all options, and improves the overall perception of selection and image of the store.

GUIDELINES

- Merchandise all tomato items together.
- Display packaged items next to bulk like items.
- Place premium segments next to value segments
- Customers should be enticed to the tomato display by merchandising a premium item into the department's flow of traffic

Consider working with a category management partner like The Produce Exchange to achieve the best overall category performance.

POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Point-of-purchase specials and signage will increase effectiveness of new item introductions, seasonal specials and on-ad specials. When introducing new items, signage can provide that critical educational component that can make or break an item's success. Information on product usage, storage and recipes will let consumers know you support the newest items.

VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

TOMATO VARIETIES:

Grapes — The pop 'em in your mouth size is per-

QUICK TIPS

- **Display rounds and loose tomatoes on the outer ring of your tomato display.**
- **Change your selection based on seasonal availability for top-notch tomato sales year-round.**
- **Keep tomato displays fully stocked and fresh.**
- **Signage can promote healthy aspects of tomatoes like Vitamin C and lycopene, which may help protect against diseases such as cancer and heart disease.**
- **Limit cross-merchandising on the tomato table to a few items, such as avocados, tomatillos and cucumbers.**

fect for snacking.

Cherry — Great for salads, dips or as a garnish, also in pastas where served whole.

Romanitas — A tasty tomato with a great finish, Romanitas are versatile for snacking, sweet sauces, sliced in half in salads, pastas, oven roasting, kabobs and many others.

Romas — The ultimate sauce tomato! With full flesh and little moisture, the classic roma is the perfect paste tomato. The Roma is used in Italian cooking with good reason. These tomatoes cook and puree to a smooth tomato sauce.

Heirlooms — These colorful tomatoes are a treat

when sliced with basil and mozzarella. Heirlooms come in many colors, shapes and sizes and can be used for just about anything. Vine ripened from heritage seeds, these tomatoes are some of the most flavorful of the bunch.

Slicers (includes Tomatoes on the Vine, Beefsteak and various greenhouse varieties) — Used in sandwiches, burgers, sliced in salads, the slicers are the most common tomatoes on the market. When making a BLT or stuffing a tomato, reach for these.

PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Promote around holidays and seasonal availability. Capture seasonal opportunities for high volume pushes.

- **4th of July** — Beefsteaks for burgers, salads and snacking trays.
- **Memorial Day** — Cook-out BBQ Kabobs with TOVs, peppers and onions.
- **Summertime means Heirlooms**
Promote colorful and farmers' market-type displays.
- **Superbowl** -Avocados/onions/grape tomatoes match perfectly on party trays.

RIPENESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Tomatoes are best when picked at peak or near peak ripeness. The Produce Exchange only picks ripe tomatoes, ensuring great flavor from order to order.

DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

- Proper temperature is crucial to tomato quality. The ideal storage temperature range is 55-65°F; with 85-95 percent relative humidity. Temperatures below 50°F retard color development and destroy tomato flavor and texture.
- Do not refrigerate.
- Store and display tomatoes stem up to preserve quality. If you must keep tomatoes in the cooler, wrap them in thermal blankets and store them near the door to minimize chill damage.

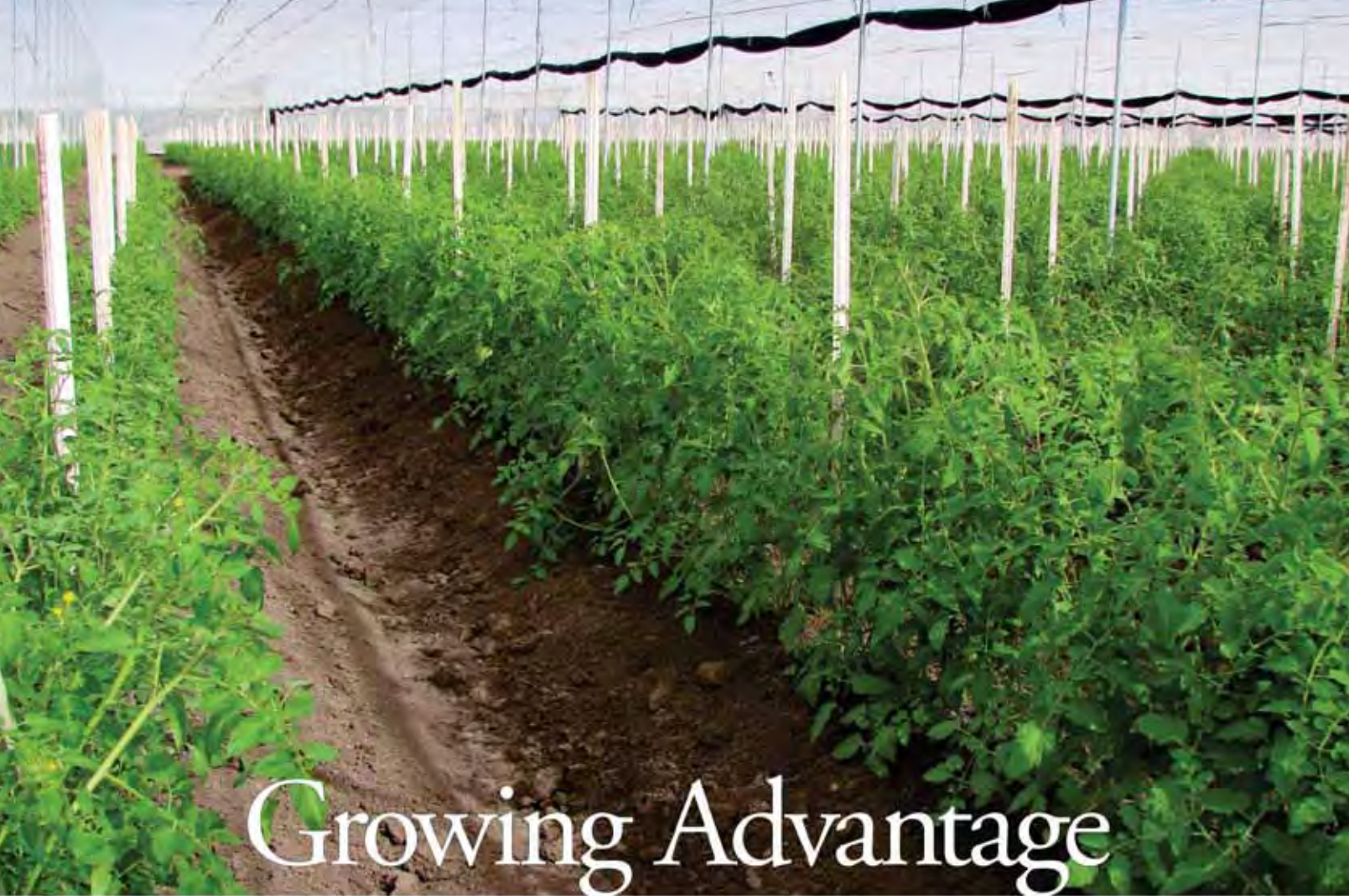
CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Cross promotion with complementary items such as avocados, garlic and onions can increase category performance in multiple categories, making these campaigns very effective and consumer favorites.

- **Grape Tomatoes** with bagged salads and salad-like items.
- **Beefsteak Tomatoes** with burgers and buns.
- **Heirloom Tomatoes** with specialty cheeses, breads, balsamics and basil.
- **Snacking Tomatoes** like Romanita's with back-to-school specials like baby carrots,

OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- **Create a mini farmers' market in-store during the summer months promoting the wide variety of specialty tomatoes available.**
- **Create a salsa display with tomatoes, jalapenos and onions.**



Growing Advantage

The selection of products from our farms are only matched by the selection of services from our warehouses. Seed to plate, we've got your tomato and dry veg needs covered.

From farm protocols and crop management to packing, sales and distribution, the Produce Exchange offers a complete line of products and services to deliver your most demanding produce needs. Be it consolidation, custom repacks or private labeling, we deliver value every step of the way.



Victory Garden Sweet Grape Tomatoes



THE PRODUCE EXCHANGE

Tel. (925) 454.8701 • Fax. (925) 454.8710 • 7407 Southfront Rd. • Livermore, CA 94551 www.tpeonline.com

Reader Service # 46



GLOSSARY OF MERCHANDISING TERMS

In the day-to-day practice of produce merchandising, it sometimes becomes easy not to see the proverbial “forest for the trees,” because our efforts are usually focused on promoting those items that are on ad this week, or are new to the season. But every once in a while, it’s a good idea to step back and examine the overall issues and considerations for merchandising as a whole — decisions you make every day on an item-by-item basis that may have unintended consequences for the profitability of your entire department.

For example, almost any produce professional would agree that bananas are one of the top volume items in the produce department. If you were to poll a hundred of your peers on whether or not they thought putting bananas on ad with a price reduction was a good way to draw customers into their stores, invariably most would answer with an enthusiastic “yes!”

But other issues need to be considered before you can say with complete confidence that a particular promotion will be successful. For example, if you cut the price of bananas by half and as a result, double your sales volume for the week, you may say you’ve broken even in dollar sales, but drew in customers who made additional, unplanned purchases.

But did you really “break even,” or boost your department’s total profits? Consider the tremendous amount (and cost) of labor that went into continuously stocking that banana display. And don’t forget that your gross margin was probably decimated by the price reduction. Also ponder that even if customers bought more bananas this week, does it necessarily mean that sales will stay higher for subsequent weeks (because you taught them about an unfamiliar item, or got them to use bananas in a new way)? Probably not, and you may have been better off doing a drastic price promotion on kiwi, with hopes that because some consumers may have tried kiwi for the first time, lured by the price reduction, they’ll continue buying kiwi later on, even at a higher price.

Thus, our basic merchandising dilemma here is that when you push one item (give it more space, highlight it in advertising, etc.), you’re taking away the space and hoopla from another item, which may or may not be the most profitable choice for your department. So what criteria do you use when planning merchandising strategy? Why are considerations in the produce “big picture” that must not be overlooked?

What follows is a guide to the primary considerations every retailer must weigh when making merchandising decisions. Because each chain’s — or individual store’s — clientele, department layout, regional availability of produce, etc. is so varied, produce merchandisers must still apply these guidelines subjectively to their own situations. This guide is meant as a tool to help you think through various considerations when devising your own produce merchandising strategy.

ADVERTISING - Publicizing produce specials usually takes the form of newspaper ads, television commercials, mailers to customers, outside signage in front of the store, or signs with the store and produce department. Most retailers usually use advertising to promote a price reduction, announce the arrival of a seasonal product, or perhaps draw attention to an unfamiliar or slow-moving item. Whatever the medium or reason, the intended outcome is usually the same — to spotlight that item so consumers will buy more of it and to attract customers to your store.

There are several points retailers need to consider when contemplating advertis-

ing. One primary dilemma is determining which items to put on ad, and why they should be put on ad this week vs. other items.

Some things that need to be considered are, first, the goal the retailer hopes to accomplish by placing the item on ad, and how this benefits the department as a whole. If the item is seasonal, such as cherries, then its season is naturally the best time this item can be promoted.

Advertising a long anticipated seasonal item is one sure way to create excitement and draw people into the produce department. It doesn’t necessarily matter that the beginning-of-the-season prices are higher (than later in the season). Sometimes, just having that item is news in itself, and consumers aren’t worried about price as much as availability.

One note of caution, however. Sometimes early season items may be picked too early to get them to retail as soon as possible. If the item is immature and the flavor is not good, this may turn consumers off for the rest of the season, thinking this year has a “bad crop.” Make sure when you advertise and offer early season produce that it’s mature enough to eat.

But with so many items now available on nearly a year-round basis, and with counter seasonal imports filling in domestic availability gaps, there aren’t too many items that can utilize advertising like this to its full advantage. Price does become a consideration, which leads the retailer back to the critical decision of deciding what to advertise in order to maximize department sales. There are several guidelines that may help.

First, if the item is aligned with a specific holiday, such as apples for Halloween or cranberries for Thanksgiving, consumers are probably likely to buy these items anyway. Promoting a good price is one way to assure that your regular customers won’t go to a competitor for their holiday shopping. Another consideration is whether the product is a stand-alone item, or if it can be used as a “loss leader”

(meaning you may even lose money on the item itself, but it can be used effectively to draw people into the produce department to pick up other things).

For example, consumers rarely buy Iceberg lettuce to eat by itself. They’ll usually buy other salad vegetables, maybe a bottle of refrigerated salad dressing, or a tomato or bean sprouts if they’re going to make sandwiches. So if the retailer advertises a low price on Iceberg lettuce, some shoppers may plan to make more salads for dinner that week, and also stock up on tomatoes, green peppers, celery, etc.

An item like oranges, which is typically used as a snack, may not have that same complementary appeal, but its stand-alone nature may also have advertising merit. For example, the retailer may find that his stores in suburban, family-oriented areas do a particularly high sales volume when they advertise small bagged oranges, because parents will include oranges in the kids’ school lunches (particularly if they’re such a good bargain this week).

The retailer also has to make sure he’ll have adequate supplies of those produce items he plans to put on ad and that the item matches its description in the ad. Nothing damages hard-earned customer goodwill more than annoying that shopper by running out of those Honeycrisp apples she made a special trip across town to buy because of your ad, especially on the first or second day of the ad!

And describing your advertised strawberries as “extra large, plump, ripe, red California berries” may make mouthwatering ad copy, but if that shopper patrons your store anticipating those beautiful berries and comes across shriveled, white-shoul-

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dered, smashed-looking strawberries, she won't trust your advertising in the future. And chances are she'll feel that if the items your store is trying to draw attention to look that bad, the rest of your produce is probably of equal, or worse, quality.

BOOKING — The practice of placing orders for a particular commodity in advance to reserve a specific quantity when needed for a promotion (either price or seasonal, or both). This is commonly used in seasonal promotions to make sure the chain gets enough of an item to back up its advertising and promotion programs.

One advantage to booking orders is being assured, somewhat, (barring unforeseen circumstances like freezes and natural disasters) that you'll have enough melons to back up that "Melon Extravaganza" you've scheduled for early June. This type of an arrangement also helps the produce buyer or merchandiser develop his or her relationship with the supplier, as the retailer is considered a serious customer with orders already in the bank. This could help the retailer get a good price, good quality product, timely delivery, and make ordering easier in the future.

Another advantage to booking produce in advance is the certainty of a fixed price or a lid price, which will enable the produce merchandiser to prepare ads, circulars and other promotional materials in advance.

Booking, like any other "hedge," also has its disadvantage. The retailer may be confident that he's getting "some" product by a certain date, but he doesn't know how good that product is because, in essence, he bought it sight unseen. If he has the type of agreement with the shipper that locks him in at a certain price, the market for that item may go down, and the retailer is still liable to pay the contracted price over market value.

BOUNCE PATTERN - When the produce department has a long aisle with two parallel rows of product, the retailer may position the items strategically so the consumer has to "shop" the entire department, in effect "bouncing" from one station to the next.

In order to make a pattern like this work, the retailer has to establish what "strategic placement" really means. If, for example, he puts Iceberg lettuce at the very far end of the department, some shoppers may not feel like having to turn their carts around and hunt for the other salad vegetables they want. Or this could seriously impede impulse purchases. If all salad vegetables were grouped together, for example, the customer may pick up radishes because she saw them next to the celery. But she may never think to look for them if they have been placed far from other salad items.

BULK DISPLAY - Displaying fruits and vegetables loose or unpackaged. This display method is very popular because it allows consumers to select their own items, giving them the feeling of being in a farmers' market. A bulk display also has the feel of "field fresh" as if it just arrived from harvest and was placed, untouched, right into the produce department.

With many retailers, bulk vs. packaged merchandising is an overall store philosophy. Many retailers go with bulk because it creates a uniform appearance for the store. Their customers generally shop there because they like being able to select their own.

One disadvantage to bulk, however, is that not all consumers like picking out their own produce. Some shoppers may be in a hurry and appreciate having those apples or tomatoes in cello-wrapped packages ready for them to grab. Or they have large families and it's more convenient, and possibly cheaper, to buy a bag of oranges rather than hand-selecting a dozen individual fruits.

Bulk also takes more labor to maintain the display, as smashed fruit or shatter (loose fruit, as in grapes) needs to be constantly monitored and removed to keep the display looking clean and the floors safe. Also, bulk may be viewed by some as "unsanitary" since many consumers have the opportunity to handle the produce while making their selection.

Many retailers display bulk produce with some packaged items to provide maximum variety and choice for consumers. Packaging can be used to boost the average sale. For example, if your average potato sale is 3 ½ pounds, perhaps offering a 5-lb bag will give consumers the incentive to pick up some extra potatoes.

CROSS-MERCHANDISING - the practice of incorporating complementary or like-use items in the display with the corresponding fruit or vegetable. Adding a display of shortcakes to the strawberry display, or hanging batter dip kits near the sweet onions for making onion rings are two examples of cross-merchandising.

Another advantage to booking produce in advance is the certainty of a fixed price, or lid price, which will enable the produce merchandiser to prepare ads, circulars and other promotional materials in advance.

Produce items may also be cross-merchandised with each other if they have like uses or complementary tastes. For example, retailers can cross-promote apples with raisins for baking apple pie, or mushrooms, green peppers and onions as grilling vegetables for a barbecue.

The premise behind cross-merchandising is that positioning complementary items together gives consumers meal ideas they may not have had when they walked into the produce department, and encourages them to buy the related items on impulse. This leads to expanded sales for the produce department, especially if the cross-merchandised item (whether it is non-fresh or something normally found in produce, like dried fruit and nuts) is rung up on the produce key and credited to produce sales. It also provides the consumer with ideas for future meals; if her children like the chocolate-covered banana pops and this got them to eat their fruit with no resistance, she's likely to buy both items again in the future.

Cross-merchandising also may give consumers incentive to buy produce they hadn't planned on purchasing. For example, a shopper may have not planned to buy avocados, but seeing guacamole mix next to the avocados gives her the idea to buy four avocados and the mix to make a dip for her upcoming dinner party.

While cross-merchandising is generally encouraged for all its obvious benefits, the retailer also has to weigh its downside and strike an equitable balance in his department. If he decides to cross-merchandise various produce items, and starts bringing in an abundance of compatible grocery products (such as cereals, cheese, sour cream, meats, etc.), the produce department could become a very confusing place for the shopper.

The fresh look would become distorted by all the non-produce items, and the excitement of a new usage idea would lose its novelty. The retailer is better off planning a cross-merchandising program in which maybe one or two selected items per week are cross-promoted with a tie-in product.

Note that non-produce items often offer compelling sales advantages that appeal to a retailer, such as no shrink and frequently available money for demonstrations (common practice for branded grocery products).

DISPLAY - The way the retailer displays his produce items is the cornerstone of his merchandising efforts, and its presentation plays a significant role in selling it. The retailer may have the most friendly, educated staff around, may have extensive recipe and usage information for every item, and may advertise his produce extensively in every medium available to him. But if his display looks unkempt, or if the customer becomes frustrated shopping in his produce department, all the other merchandising variables he performs so successfully will be wasted effort.

The ways different produce items are grouped together and presented to the customer comprise the display. There are several ways the retailer can group his produce together. He may use one way, or combinations of several ways, throughout the department. The produce department is probably the one area in the supermarket where the retailer can let his imagination run wild and unleash his creativity. Produce comes in so many shapes, sizes and colors, and is not bound by shelf facings. The display opportunities are endless, and can be as exciting or as mundane as the retailer wishes.

Produce is commonly grouped by the following categories: color, family, like uses or temperature requirements. Color "breaking" or "ribboning," the practice of dividing up items by their color, is an effective way to draw attention to the contrasting, vivid colors found in produce. The retailer may place a row of bright Red Delicious apples near oranges and grapefruit, so the color contrasts make each item stand out. This is a bit more difficult to do on the wet rack, as many items there are the same basic color (green). But the retailer can use items in contrasting colors such as radishes and carrots, to break up those solid green clusters.

Items also can be displayed by "family," such as grouping all citrus products together in a citrus "section" or having a "berry patch" featuring strawberries, blueberries and raspberries. Again items in the same family may not necessarily be of the same color, so the blueberries could be positioned between the red strawberries and raspberries to create a color break; the same with yellow and pink grapefruit providing a break between Navels and Tangerines. The advantage to displaying items by family is that it makes it easy for the customer to find them, plus it makes the retailer look like he offers a wide selection of berries or citrus when they're all presented together.

Displaying produce by usage is a great way to stimulate impulse sales. For example, grouping salad vegetables together in a row helps remind the consumer that he can add mushrooms and celery to his salad, in addition to tomatoes. Because items of related usage are grouped together, it is not only a convenience to the consumer, but



also reminds him to pick up other complementary items he may not have thought of if they were positioned elsewhere in the department.

Finally, some items are grouped together because they require the same basic care and handling. Wet rack items are grouped together because they all require refrigeration and moisture. But within that wet rack, items can be subdivided by like usage, and further divided by color to really target sales. For example, many retailers report that carrots and turnips are displayed together not only for their like uses, but because they have basically the same shelf life and temperature requirements.

Remember to keep in mind that some items, although they have like uses, have very different temperature requirements that take precedence over usage grouping. For example, tomatoes would logically be grouped with lettuce and salad vegetables because these items are typically used together. However, salad vegetables depend on refrigeration, while tomatoes suffer quality problems when exposed to cool temperatures. Therefore, tomatoes are typically placed somewhere adjacent to the wet rack, still near the salad vegetables but on an unrefrigerated display table.

Retailers also must keep in mind the compatibility of certain items with ethylene given off by neighboring items. For example, limes emit tremendous amounts of ethylene, which may affect an ethylene-sensitive item, such as kiwi.

FIXTURES - The fixtures of the produce department are the merchandiser's tools in creating enticing displays. Fixtures include such things as bins, tables, wet racks, misting systems, coolers and display cases.

Although the merchandiser's goal is to have the produce noticed, rather than have the fixture supporting it noticed, it's still important to pay attention to the appearance of the fixtures. They should "fit" together, meaning that they should have a uniform look, and provide accessibility of the produce to customers. For example, if a produce department has oak-finished tables throughout the department, and then purchases a bright red laminate bin, that bin will look out of place, and the shoppers' eyes will tend to be directed at that mismatched fixture, rather than at the produce.

The most successful fixtures, then, are those that blend so well together that they aren't even noticed by the average consumer, whose gaze is directed at the produce. Achieving a uniform look in your fixtures, preferably in a neutral or subdued color that makes the bright colors of the produce really stand out, is a goal of good merchandising.

Fixtures also should be positioned flexibly to allow for changes in department layout to prevent customer boredom. For example, an extender can be added to the apple display during a special promotion, and used the next week to make a waterfall display out of nectarines.

ISLAND DISPLAY - A display that is open on all four sides. Island displays are usually located in a central or highly visible area of the produce department. The goal of the island display is to encourage shopper movement, and make it very accessible to shoppers to select items from the display.

The retailer may elect to display only one item on an island, such as a high-volume advertised special like apples or lettuce. This creates the effect of a heaping bulk display, which should get shoppers' attention and provide access to the display from all side.

The retailer also may display two items, back to back, on the island display. This may work well when two items aren't heavy enough to sellers to merit their own island, but still need considerable space.

The retailer also can display three, four or more items on an island. He has to be careful, however, to position his items so that the consumer picking up produce at the back end of the island may not see what is being displayed on the front side, and has

little incentive to walk around the island unless the retailer directs her there through the positioning of produce items.

For example, the retailer can place complementary items or tie-in products on islands or aisles across from that back end, in effect leading the consumer "around" the island until she comes to the other side.

LIGHTING - the way the produce department is illuminated. There are a few theories on the best ways to light a produce department, but all would agree that the customer needs to see the produce in order to buy it.

One theory on lighting is that the department should be totally illuminated so that everything has a "bright" appearance and the consumer can easily see the displays, as well as the aisles. One drawback to this method is, although everything is easily visible, nothing really stands out if all items are lit the same.

The other faction stresses aiming lights on specific displays to spotlight them and draw the customers' eyes. This doesn't necessarily mean that the aisles are dimmed, or that some items are left in the dark. Lighting technology for supermarkets today has progressed to where lighting fixtures can simulate natural sunlight, and can be aimed on the display to create a sunny, bright ambience.

Lighting, therefore, affects the "look" of the entire department, from a modern "spotlight" effect to an old-fashioned sunny "country" ambience.

Retailers must caution, however, in selecting a lighting system for the produce department, that the lights themselves don't project heat that can expedite spoilage. Many lighting companies offer systems that brightly illuminate the produce, while maintaining low levels of heat.

LOSS LEADER - An item that is priced below cost to draw customers into the store. The retailer may place an item on ad, or have an in-store special at a price much lower than the competition, so that customers will come into the department and hopefully make other purchases.

The retailer needs to caution, however, that he doesn't price the item so low that he has to see enormous quantities of other produce to make it up. Some consumers will still buy only the advertised special. Certain items lend themselves better to encouraging impulse purchases of other items. Iceberg lettuce is one example.

MULTIPLE PRICING - Offering more than one unit for a certain price. For example, selling 3-for-\$1, or 5-for-\$1.29. Multiple pricing encourages consumers to buy items in quantity, therefore getting them used to making multiple purchases. It is an effective way to get customers comfortable with using an unfamiliar item. The theory is that if they buy several of the item, they'll be encouraged to use it in a recipe or eat it more often.

For this reason, multiple pricing has worked particularly well with items like kiwifruit. When consumers were encouraged to buy five kiwifruit for a dollar, they suddenly found more uses for it, or ate the fruit more often.

NUTRITION INFORMATION - Providing information on caloric, fat, cholesterol, vitamin and mineral content on fresh fruits and vegetables to address consumers' concerns about nutritional benefits. Fortunately for the produce retailer, all news is good, and he can use the very positive nutritional benefits of produce as a merchandising tool.

Using nutritional information to promote produce is perceived as very positive with consumers. Retailers can promote kiwi as having "as much Vitamin C as an

The most successful fixtures are those that blend so well together that they aren't even noticed by the average consumer, whose gaze is directed at the produce.

orange" to get shoppers to try them. With the latest trend toward fat-free diets, retailers can place signs throughout the produce department touting their offerings as "100 percent fat-free," and providing low-fat recipes using produce.

POINT-OF-PURCHASE MATERIALS -

Paraphernalia that is incorporated into the display, or within the department, to draw attention to the produce item, convey a message or provide additional information. Types of POP materials include signs, posters, price cards, recipe leaflets, nutritional information leaflets, tear-off pads, pre-printed boxes and header cards.

If used correctly, POP can be a good way to provide customers with the nutritional information they want, or to get the shopper excited about a delicious strawberry shortcake or fresh salad brimming with tantalizing vegetables. Many POP materials are in full color and use mouth-watering photography to present the produce item in its best light.

The sources of POP may differ. Some chains, for instance, have custom POP in the form of price cards and signs (nutritional or informative) made specifically for that chain so that all stores have the same "look." Then there is POP designed and supplied by commodity boards promoting that specific item, like strawberries or potatoes. This POP is used to draw attention to the commodity and promote "generic" demand for the item. Finally, many suppliers provide POP materials to promote their brands. The intent is to use them in displays with the branded product to reinforce the brand name association with that produce.

POP materials can be positioned on the display racks, hung over the display from the ceiling, or placed out on the floor to stand next to the display. Many retailers prefer materials that don't take up any extra space from produce, or make it difficult for the customer to get to the display. For this reason, the hanging POP materials have gained acceptance.

One consideration for balancing POP usage is to select which produce items will be promoted for the week, either through an ad or by display (such as with a seasonal item being moved to a center island, for example). If the retailer has attractive POP for those promotional items, he can use the POP to further direct attention to the display.

The retailer should refrain from using POP just because he received a huge batch of it, or because it has a nice photograph. He should use it where it makes sense, at the proper time (such as a holiday promotion), and use it with discretion. Just as well-placed POP creates excitement for a product, too much POP creates a cluttered appearance that can frustrate shoppers and detract from the main items that should be showcased - the fresh fruits and vegetables.

RIBBONING - Placing a row of produce of one color next to a row of produce with a different color to create a contrast. These "ribbons" of color provide a way for the produce to stand out from each other, rather than looking like a monochromatic mass. (Also see Display.)

ROTATION - Moving product so that the oldest product put out on display or brought into the back room is the first to be sold (in other words, "first in, first out"). This helps assure that the freshest product is available to the customer at all times. Since most product put out on display is sold within a relatively short time frame, keeping product rotated helps the retailer ensure that the produce is sold while it is still fresh.

Rotation begins in the back room with receiving practices. When today's shipment of lettuce comes into the cooler, the easy thing to do is to stack it in front of yesterday's delivery. But when produce clerks are grabbing boxes of lettuce to put out on display, they'll usually pull boxes from the front row because that, too, is easier. So the newest product gets put out first, leaving the older boxes to get buried behind new shipments.

Some retailers have developed numbering or dating systems to keep track of when the product came in. Retailers need to train employees to move the old shipment to the front when receiving a new load, so clerks can easily pull the oldest product from the front and put it out to get sold.

The same principle is true for the display. If the potato display is getting low, the easiest thing for clerks to do is dump a new box of potatoes over the old product. But since consumers tend to select produce from the top of the display, the product on the bottom could sit there until it gets rotten, while the newer product gets sold. Retailers need to train their staff to rotate product from the existing display to the top,

The retailers should refrain from using POP just because he received a huge batch of it, or because it has a nice photograph. He should use it where it makes sense, at the proper time (such as holiday promotion), and use it with discretion.

and place the newer product on the bottom.

SAMPLING AND DEMONSTRATIONS -

Showing customers how to prepare a dish using a particular produce item and offering them a taste of that dish (demonstration), or simply cutting up a produce item and putting a tray of it out for customers to try (sampling). These two practices are closely related, and the goal of both is to make the customer taste the product so he'll buy it.

Sampling is an effective way to get consumers to try something new, or remind them how good something they may have taken for granted tastes. It can be as simple as cutting up a cherimoya and putting out slices on a tray with toothpicks and a sign that says, "Try me," or having an employee or hired person walk around the store with a tray inviting people to take a taste. These demo people should be cautioned, however, to avoid handing our samples to children without parental approval. Some

children have food allergies, and the store should protect itself from liability if a child accepts a sample and suffers a bad reaction.

Sampling, coupled with a demonstration on how to cut, peel or prepare a produce item, is doubly as effective in getting the message across to consumers. If customers can actually see how that item was cut, they may feel more comfortable about picking one up and trying it themselves. Providing recipe suggestions, plus a taste of the finished product, gives them ideas they can take home. The retailer should back this up with recipes on tear-off pads, and having cross-merchandised items for making the recipe available in the display.

One memorable sampling anecdote comes from a retailer who wanted to push several varieties of seasonal melons, including lesser-known melons like the Casaba and Juan Canary. He offered mixed packs of cut melons in his melon bar, but customers tended to gravitate toward the more familiar cantaloupes and honeydews. Then he put out a tray of cut melons, labeling each variety. Customers tasted the exotic melons, loved them, and not only bought his mixed pre-cut packs, but whole melons, as well.

SPACE ALLOCATION - The amount of produce department space a retailer devotes to a particular item. This space, of course, varies according to produce department size, the amount of items the produce department carries and the clientele the store services. For example, a large supermarket serving a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood may devote a whole island to plantains, while a smaller store in an urban area without Hispanics might reserve only one foot, if that, for the same product.

Space allocation is an important decision retailers must make based on their clientele and the types of goals they have for their produce departments. Allocation can be based on sales volume of specific items (the amount of space is proportionate to the percentage of total department sales it delivers), contribution of the item to total profits, or image-building.

In the case of image-building, a retailer may not realize significant profits or sales volume from exotics, but he may want to devote ten percent of his department space to them anyway because he's trying to build an image of having extensive variety.

One good way for a retailer to assess which variables he wants to base his space allocations on is to make detailed records of every item. Figures he should keep for each item he stocks are: its percentage contribution to total sales, percentage contribution to gross department profits, and direct product profit (profit after taking into consideration all costs such as labor). All figures should be recorded in percentages and dollars.

Because space allocation practices should be flexible with produce availability and promotions, he should record this information every season. Having comparative information on how much an item contributes to either sales or profits, based on a particular time of the year, should help give the retailer a rough estimate of how much space that item needs during that time of year. Again, the retailer has to factor in allotting enough space for promotions, as well as reserving space if he's trying to build a certain image for his department.

TRAFFIC PATTERN - The route customers take when shopping a produce department. The goal of positioning fixtures is to get the shoppers to walk the entire produce department, not just in a straight line. Staple items need to be strategically placed so that shoppers will have to walk past other items in order to get to those basics. For example, many retailers position iceberg lettuce on the far end of the wet rack so shoppers have to pass other salad vegetables along the way.

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The Next Branding Frontier: Social Technology

Whether you Tweet, Facebook or are LinkedIn may make a big difference to future consumers and their response to your brand.

BY JODEAN ROBBINS

The proliferation of technology in the last decade has provided new tools for many companies to harness in branding.

Companies currently using and investing in online formats are not only reaching a growing number of tech savvy consumers, but are building a base for the future. "We've taken on a very strong technology base in our branding message," says Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa's/World Variety Produce Inc., headquartered in Los Angeles, CA.

"Technology is definitely something we will be using to drive the consumer to our products or retailers going forward," states Ronnie Cohen, vice president of sales for Vision Import Group LLC in River Edge, NJ.

Until recently, most online focus was on Web sites. This remains the base for technology branding today as companies strive to better utilize their sites. "Monterey Mushrooms is constantly updating our Web site and has recently started a company blog for our Vitamin D products," says Joe Cald-

well, vice president of Monterey Mushrooms Inc., in Watsonville, CA.

"This year, in particular, we did an overhaul and update on our Web site, gave it a new look and feel with more recipes and information, and made it interactive with chef demos," reports Schueller.

However, this newest frontier is so much more than just Web sites, as technologies such as Facebook and Twitter have exploded onto the scene. The quick entry and success has made these newer technologies somewhat confusing to some, not to mention the new vocabulary developing with them. "There is an umbrella term called social technology under which comes social networking, social media and social relevancy," explains Scott Klososky, partner with FPOV LLC, based in Oklahoma City, OK, which helps clients understand and harness technology trends. "Social relevancy is about how well you're thought of on-line, how many people are connected to you, how good the information you're writing is."

"Social media is the use of things such as YouTube, which uses media as a way of communicating," Klososky continues. "Social networking includes Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and other sites that allow you to communicate with other people. In general, social technology is a collection of technology allowing people to communicate and share materials and concepts on a one-to-one or one-to-many basis."

Regardless of the generation or technological know-how, companies point to the increasing importance of being able to use and manipulate these new tools for branding purposes. "There are many young consumers who don't read a newspaper or watch TV, but use the Internet as their primary means for news, entertainment, products and services," says Kevin Fiori, vice president of sales and marketing for Sunkist Growers Inc., headquartered in Van Nuys, CA. "Sunkist is engaged in communicating to consumers through our Web site, Twitter, Facebook and other outlets.



Dole's latest campaign, centered on the company's Salad Guide, disseminates information via its Twitter page.

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There is no doubt social technology will increase as a method of communication to the consumer."

"Online brand experiences are extremely important in encouraging sales in today's marketplace and produce should not be an exception," states Dionysios Christou, vice president of North American marketing for Coral Gables, FL-based Del Monte Fresh Produce North America Inc. "Consumers are online researching and interacting with brands, and if your company is not there they are liable to forget about you. Digital couponing has become more prevalent and consumers are looking on company Facebook pages and Web sites for special discounts and promotions."

TARGETED MARKETING

One of the biggest benefits offered by social technology is the ability to get down to very specific target markets. "Social technology gives people a way to do very targeted marketing," explains Klososky. "We can concisely find women under 35 years old that are athletic and living in the South, for example. We have the ability to target much better than we've ever targeted before. Facebook provides 60 different elements advertisers can target by."

"We do a social marketing branding campaign through Twitter," reports Melissa's Schueller. "We have multiple Twitter accounts each catering to a different collection of markets. Examples of our Twittering include Melissa's Gift, Melissa's Recipes and Melissa's Foods. Each has different followers. I do one specifically called Favor Produce, which is our most popular Twitter account right now. It gives a day-by-day perspective on the most highlighted item in produce departments across the country. Each of these tools communicates to the consumer what they want to know. For example, if you're a chef, you'd want to follow the foodservice-based Melissa's Foods."

"Social technology allows communication directly with those consumers most likely to purchase the newly reinvented Dole Salads line or other Dole products," says Bil Goldfield, communications manager for Dole Fresh Fruit Co., based in Westlake Village, CA. "It also allows consumers to connect with the Dole Salads spokesperson they see in the TV spots, magazine ads and online presence. And ultimately, this buzz has a carryover effect to the mainstream market."

As produce companies mature online, they are capitalizing on their ability to use these mediums to educate consumers and create demand for their product and brand. "Stemilt has a strong Web site and micro

sites for products such as Piñata apples and Applesweets [the company's sliced apples] as well as one on everything you want to know about cherries," says Roger Pepperl, marketing director with Stemilt Growers Inc., headquartered in Wenatchee, WA. "We also have a Piñata Facebook page and are on blogs and Twitter."

"At Del Monte, we have embraced the digital age, and in recent months, have found our way on to social sites such as Facebook and YouTube and are offering digital coupons for our Del Monte Gold Extra Sweet pineapples," reports Christou. "Our Facebook page keeps fans of Del Monte connected and up-to-date on the company, current promotions and products. Facebookers can also write their thoughts on the page discussion board. We send out bi-weekly e-newsletters that feature health and nutrition information, recipes and information about Del Monte promotions and products. Consumers can send in their fitness and nutrition questions and will receive responses from our dietician or trainer, depending on the question."

"We're currently investigating this entire area for King's," says Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral for Kings Super Markets, based in Parsippany, NJ. "Whole Foods is out there pretty big with it. Balducci's does a good job with Twitter and Facebook. I think there is a tremendous value to it and potential for free marketing. Talk about targeting customers! This is a great way to communicate directly and specifically with those interested in what you have to offer."

LOW COST, HIGH DISTRIBUTION

The other tremendous benefit of social technology is the low cost compared to the potential distribution rate. "The cost is so low," says FPOV's Klososky, "and the underlying tools are free. You can create a video for under \$10,000 and put it on Facebook at no cost. People will forward it to their friends. If you go online and look at the Dove Evolution commercial, which was only on the Web and never on TV, it got almost 10 million views and cost them nothing in distribution."

"It's easy and it's free," agrees Schueller. "The key is to have a successful message so people want to follow you. We find success in telling people what they want to know. In a communication I sent before Thanksgiving, I commented on how to make a unique Thanksgiving feast by incorporating Melissa's chestnuts. People are always looking for new and unique information, especially around the holiday season."

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Social Tech 101 Glossary

Social Technology: Umbrella term for the collection of online communication tools.

Social Media: Use of online technology to communicate.

Social Networking: Use of online technology to network directly with others.

Social Relevancy: How you're perceived or thought of online.

Go Viral: Produce increase in information awareness through self-replicating processes, analogous to the spread of pathological and computer viruses. For example, Fred sends your post to 10 friends and they send it to 10 friends and they send it to another 10 friends.

Link Juice: The power (or lack of) you receive from having someone else recommend you (or criticize). For example, "Oprah just recognized my site and gave me some major Link Juice."

pb

"Social networking sites, such as Facebook, are becoming increasingly valuable because they are an easy and effective way for companies to interact with consumers on a daily basis," says Del Monte's Cristou.

The potential distribution for these technologies approaches infinity. Klososky explains, "The goal is for your information to 'Go Viral,' meaning you've created content so good that if you hand it to one person they'll send it to several others. It creates a life of its own and you get really large numbers of people, possibly in the hundreds of thousands, viewing it. These technologies promote e-word of mouth. Word of mouth has always been recognized as the most powerful form of advertising, and now, social technology allows you to do that electronically."

Electronic word of mouth has previously unimaginable capability. "Whole Foods has 1.5 million people following them on Twitter," reports Klososky. "They've done an awesome job using Facebook and Twitter to send out recipes and promote what they sell."

"Right now, we have about 2,000 followers combined in our accounts," says Melissa's Schueller. "It's a newer technology and one we're just discovering as well. We've noticed just this year how Twitter has become big in the food industry."

Produce companies are increasingly capitalizing on the versatility and effectiveness of these outlets to reinforce their brands. "We have a Facebook page with more than 600 fans to date," says Cindy Jewell, director of marketing for California Giant Berry Farms, headquartered in Watsonville, CA. "We use Twitter to communicate our cycling team race results in a timely fashion to fol-

lowers. We also will be utilizing YouTube and blogs this year to communicate with consumers. It reaches our target audience in a very immediate and cost effective way. We find it very useful and enjoy participating in this new way of communicating."

Goldfield reports, "Dole Fresh Vegetable's national campaign for Dole Salads features the Dole Salad Guide, a compelling new spokesperson who guides consumers through their prepackaged salad purchases and encourages them to broaden their salad horizons. Essential parts of this program are dedicated Dole Salad Guide Facebook and Twitter pages, allowing us to share his knowledgeable but fun personality, as well as Dole Salad messaging, directly with salad enthusiasts."

By partnering with Hungry Girl, the quirky nutrition and healthy eating website, Mann Packing Co. Inc., in Salinas, CA, reaches over 800,000 daily e-newsletter subscribers. Hungry Girl started out as an e-mail blast to friends and has grown into one of the Internet's most read food blogs. Hungry Girl is on Facebook, Twitter, Weight-Watchers.com and yahoo.com and continues to leverage new media to reach hundreds of thousands of people.

"Mann and Hungry Girl are collaborating on new packaging for our products," reports Lorri Koster, co-chairperson and vice president of marketing. "The co-branded products have Hungry Girl's approval, recipes and great ideas, but Mann also has brand presence. The co-brand reaches Mann's target audience of young women, moms and aging baby boomers. Hungry Girl has featured Mann's products on her e-newsletter for over a year and each time Mann receives a huge response from consumers

for recipes and coupons."

FUTURE GROWTH

Social technology provides an unprecedented opportunity for any produce company to increase the exposure and impact of its brand. "If I were a mushroom company, I would see an awesome chance to influence the general public to eat more mushrooms, which I've never had the chance to do before without spending a lot of money," says FPOV's Klososky. "I would create 10 awesome mushroom recipes and find every outlet I could to have people share the recipes. Then I'd create a page with the general information about mushrooms and put the link after the recipe. I can do a Twitter search and find the Top Ten people that tweet about recipes and then give them the recipes if they will distribute them. They'll like it because it gives them something useful to put in their stream. Pretty soon, you'll have thousands of people seeing those recipes."

"Social technology gives people a way to do very targeted marketing. We have the ability to target much better than we've ever targeted before. Facebook provides 60 different elements advertisers can target by."

**— Scott Klososky
FPOV**

Klososky continues, "If you want to go further, create a very clever series of videos that highlight the use of an onion. Then you do the same thing. You get that video out and try to get it to go viral. So you get a hundred-thousand views of your cool onion video."

Companies that want to access the consumers of the future will need to expand their efforts in this area. "We believe social media will continue to expand for shopper marketing," says Caldwell of Monterrey Mushrooms. "It is a cost effective way to reach consumers and communicate mes-

sages. It continues to be a challenge to connect your message with so many media impressions consumers receive each day.”

“Consumer-wise, the social sites are working for us now,” says Stemilt’s Pepperl. “Developing a consumer brand will require you to use these mediums. We enjoy it and find it a great way to get more exposure.”

“We are trying to enhance some of our connectivity to our consumers and further build our relationship, as well as their understanding of how to use our products,” says Bud Floyd, vice president of marketing

with C.H. Robinson Worldwide Inc., based in Eden Prairie, MN. “Like many others, we are intrigued by social media. We’re looking at Facebook and testing some things so we better understand it. We’re going to be in a learning mode this year.”

Seeking good help is the first step to maximizing use of social technology. Klososky explains, “Companies should hire someone who is experienced and knowledgeable to advise them because it’s so complex. You have a lot of companies now that are working in chaos because they have no

rules or structure set out for the use of this.”

An example of some basic start-up consulting is FPOV’s 90-day program for companies at a cost of \$15,000. “We built this because there were so many companies that wanted our help and this is a great place to start,” says Klososky. “It’s a 90-day coaching program for companies. We take companies from chaos to a very organized plan and train their employees on how to use it. This is a world that is big, complicated and growing very fast. It takes some time for the learning curve to come up from zero.”

Fresh For Ellen

Dan’l Mackey Almy, the namesake behind Irving, TX-based DMA Solutions Inc., a boutique marketing and business development group dedicated to serving the needs of the fresh produce industry, is an expert at harnessing the power of social media. Beyond the company’s Facebook and Twitter pages, it also runs *The Core*, a digital publication focused on fresh marketing ideas. But the biggest news-maker of the moment out of DMA’s office is its new Fresh For Ellen campaign, an online-based effort to assist Ellen Degeneres in reaching her goal of removing all processed and refined sugars from her diet by replacing them with fresh produce or, “nature’s candy,” as Almy refers to them.

So why Ellen? “I believe marketing today is about making a connection to consumers,” Almy explains. “Ellen is widely appreciated and very well known all across the country. Her show has nearly 1.7 million friends on Facebook. She made a promise on-air to become sugar-free. We already give away a ton of fresh produce, so why not connect it philanthropically with Ellen?”

More than just supporting Ellen’s sugar-free journey, Fresh For Ellen hopes to encourage people across America to include more fresh produce in their daily diet, most notably by making donations to local food banks, churches and schools.

“By the end of March, our goal is to have the fresh produce industry donate more than 100,000 pounds of fresh produce,” says Almy. And from the looks of it, Fresh For Ellen is well on its way to meeting this lofty goal. So far, Coast Produce Co., Del Monte and Duda Fresh



The Fresh For Ellen Facebook page had more than 1,000 fans in just a week’s time.

Farms have stepped up to the plate, donating fresh produce to a variety of local causes. What’s more, after only a week online, The Fresh For Ellen Facebook page already had more than 1,000 friends, while its Twitter page had more than 100 followers.

Almy asserts, “The opportunity to communicate directly with consumers is there for us. It is readily available and affordable. Apart from PBH [the Produce For Better Health Foundation], which I fully support, I don’t see that many messages getting directly to consumers and social media can help those in our industry accomplish that. That said, it’s important to recognize social media is a huge platform, but it is not a strategy to connect with consumers. It is a tool. The industry needs more strategies to connect with consumers.”

pb

“Our Facebook page keeps fans of Del Monte connected and up-to-date on the company, current promotions and products. We send out bi-weekly e-newsletters that feature health and nutrition information, recipes and information about Del Monte promotions and products.”

**— Dionysious Christou
Del Monte Fresh Produce
North America Inc.**

Despite the temptation of easy and cheap access to consumers, use of social technology should be like any other tool in your branding belt — carefully planned before executed. “A company needs to look carefully at its core customer base before it embarks on any media effort, including social media,” advises Veronica Kraushaar, president of VIVA Global Marketing, located in Nogales, AZ. “The overall strategy of personal communications with customers is here to stay. The important thing is to stay in close and consistent contact with your core customer. The venue you use to do this should be one your customer uses.”

pb

Spirit Of Cooperation Needed When Transporting Produce

Transportation providers and receivers must work together, say experts.

BY CHUCK GREEN

While the road to economic recovery has been studded with hairpin turns, there is no room for similar perils in the relationship between transportation providers and receivers — particularly given the current climate, according to industry experts.

In light of plummeting rates and “beat up” drivers, it makes good business sense for shippers and receivers to maintain cordial ties with transportation companies, especially with the reported likelihood of a capacity shortage, which could make it particularly tricky to secure drivers and quality trucks, says Kenny Lund, vice president of support services for Allen Lund Co. Inc., based in La Canada, CA. “You need a company that will be available 24/7, especially in the produce industry,” he adds. “You have to be able to work closely with your transportation brokers to be flexible.”



Trucking companies receive incentives on fuel expenses in an effort to be green and efficient.

Speaking of beat up, in the previous downturn, employment in trucking peaked in April 2000, nearly a year before the official start of the recession, according to the Washington, D.C.-based Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). In addition to peaking before the economy as a whole, employment in trucking continued to fall for 36 consecutive months, 17 months after the official endpoint of the recession, as designated by the National Bureau of Economic Research, located in Cambridge, MA. During this time, the trucking industry cut 91,000 jobs from payrolls, or more than six percent of employment. The present downturn has witnessed a similar trend within the industry, the BLS reports. The most recent employment peak occurred in January 2007, 11 months prior to the official starting point of the current recession. Since then, employment within the industry has declined for 35 months, resulting in the loss of 208,000 jobs, or just over 14 percent of employment, reports BLS.

In any event, receivers want three things from their providers: Safe, dependable operation; fair, predictable rates; and capacity, notes Noel Perry, principal of Green Bay, WI-based Transport Fundamentals LLC and managing director and senior consultant at FTR Associates, located in Nashville, IN, which covers the freight transportation industry.

Over the past couple of years, conditions for shippers have been optimal, with a surplus of equipment and falling rates — both in terms of margin and fuel — yielding unlimited capacity at low prices, Perry reports. However, the tide is turning, he adds. Although, as a whole, the produce side will have less of a problem than the non-perishables side, prices will spike because of some capacity shortages, Perry explains. It's the latter that really counts during recoveries, he notes. Consequently, at more than any other time in a relationship with a carrier, shippers will want dependable capacity, says Perry. “It will be, ‘Can I get you to come to my loading dock when I ask, or will you stiff me in favor of someone who will pay you a big premium?’”

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TRUCKING COMPANIES HAVE LONG MEMORIES

Some receivers could pay for the fact that trucking companies have long memories, Perry notes. "A whole bunch of shippers have reneged on existing contracts during the downturn and wanted to renegotiate down with shippers," which he labels a breach of trust. "If you're a carrier, you're angry. A lot of carriers remember that." He says they'll probably reciprocate in an upturn, which is where a good relationship can pay dividends. "If you help your carriers during downturns, most of them will return

the favor in an upturn."

Still, it takes two to tango, points out Matthew D'Arrigo, vice president of D'Arrigo Bros. Co. of New York Inc., located in the Bronx, NY. D'Arrigo expects a steady supply, fair pricing, quality performance, up-to-date insurance and timely delivery. And he deplors mysteries, so reliable communication is also a must. Furthermore, D'Arrigo says one of the most important aspects of doing business with a provider is its response should be a claim be lodged against a driver. "You don't want your truck broker trying to become a defense attorney every

time the temperature recorder in a truck is high or low. They make the job very tedious. We're not here to hurt anyone; we just don't want to be hurt by a bad temperature ride on a truck." These circumstances can help parse professionals from others, he notes.

And brokers certainly don't help their cause if they disappear when trucks get short, as many have in his experience, D'Arrigo admits. "That's when you realize where you rate as a customer on their list. Those who have better relationships with the drivers are more likely to get better trucks."

Joey Battaglia, produce director and buyer at Western Beef Inc., a 27-unit supermarket chain in Ridgewood, NY, occasionally has been frustrated by a trucking company, especially when he's left in the dark about a delinquent delivery, he notes. "A lot of companies do not know where its equipment is. They find out when we call looking for that specific truck," he explains. "A good company knows where its trucks are and provide instant updates. That's service," he says. To survive, a trucking company "has to be the best."

"A lot of trucking companies don't know where their equipment is because they show up late and you have to call them. The good ones know where their trucks are and provide instant updates."

**—Joey Battaglia
Western Beef Inc.**

Jeff Moore, vice president of sales at the St. Louis, MO, office of Tom Lange Co. Inc., headquartered in Springfield, IL, says several factors should be considered when selecting a transportation provider, including its history and track record, longevity and its ranking on trading practices and integrity. Ultimately, however, its success comes down to quality of service, he notes. "Just-in-time delivery is more than a slogan



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LUKEWARM ON EDI

One tool that can help enhance communications and provider effectiveness is electronic data interchange (EDI), which facilitates the exchange of information electronically, such as shipment status and invoicing. However, while his firm is EDI-capable and is required to use it by some customers, Jimmy DeMatteis, president and CEO of Des Moines Truck Brokers Inc., headquartered in Norwalk, IA, isn't so sure it's the answer for the produce industry. He prefers personal communication, he says. "I don't think we can ever lose sight of that, especially when you're dealing with perishable products. I think we can do anything EDI can."

D'Arrigo finds EDI merely the "latest thing on the technological belt," and doesn't think much of it. "There's no substitute for getting someone on the phone."

While his company has worked with EDI for some time and increasingly is "coming of age," Lund of Allen Lund Co. believes it's difficult to use it in produce due to the number of changes inherent to that segment. He doesn't feel EDI "does well with multiple changes."

Some of his customers also require it, but Fred Plotsky, owner of Cool Running in Kenosha, WI, considers EDI a "waste of money." The system simply adds an extra layer in the work flow process and lards additional expenses on carriers required to use it, he explains, translating into a charge to receivers. "A carrier can't do it for free."

PUSHED TO THE WAL-MART MODEL

Paul Kazan, president of Target Interstate Systems Inc., located in the Bronx, NY, does not mince his words regarding EDI, or anything like it. His office functions electronically, "much to my chagrin," he admits. "I'm an old timer, but everything we do is through emails, or customers go onto our Web site." When considering the relationship aspect of doing business, he emphasizes, "Now, it's all done slam bam. Everything is electronic, especially when you're dealing with chains and bigger people. In this era, every business has been pushed to the Wal-Mart model of doing business," where personal communication is scant, he bemoans.

Fair freight rate for service is another important aspect of doing business between companies and providers. "We give receivers bang for their buck," says DeMatteis. "There's a learning curve with some cus-

tomers where they'll shop and go with low-ball pricing," but often, a number of those companies don't take care of the details, he observes. "What does it cost them by the time they re-educate a carrier and make extra phone calls to shippers?"

Adds Plotsky: "You try to offer fair rates. If it doesn't work, it doesn't work. They might have to go elsewhere, but then they might realize that you get what you pay for."

When you talk about fair freight rate, you're getting into "What's a fair rate?" says Lund, who notes it's up to the market, "and no one's bigger than the market." His company seeks fairness in negotiations, and doesn't like "chiseling" on rates. "That makes me nuts. We'll provide great transportation for a company and get cut out for \$25. That's a recipe for trouble down the road." Transportation decisions based on price alone aren't decisions made for the long run, he explains.

Looking down the road, fair markets are dictated by supply and demand and always will be, points out Kazan. "I'm always fair with my regular customers, and they're fair with me. That's the idea of partners. There's always a balance. Sometimes scales tip one way or the other."

"You're in the world of negotiation," adds D'Arrigo of D'Arrigo Brothers of New York Co. "I think if you only ask one broker what the rate is every day, he gets to know you don't check the numbers." Consequently, a receiver will pay several hundred dollars per-load higher than if he shops, he says.

"Basically, receivers see who can be \$100 more, who could be \$100 less. They know the name of the game," adds Battaglia.

**"I'm always fair
with my regular
customers, and
they're fair with
me. That's the idea
of partners. There's
always a balance.
Sometimes scales
tip one way or
the other."**

**— Paul Kazan
Target Interstate Systems**

REALITY CHECK

There's a "reality" to fair freight rates, explains Duff Swain, president of the Tricon Group, headquartered in Columbus, OH. "It's like anything else; there's an average, below average and above average." Some in every market command more money because of a special level of service or they're in a special market environment, he notes. On the other hand, there are those who "run cheap and the service level is cheap, too." It's an industry that, in the final analysis, survives on providing good service, he adds.

Also in the final analysis, like EDI, "going green," and its impact on the environment seemingly has met varying degrees of enthusiasm in the industry.

Des Moines Truck Brokers has carried out measures to embrace the green movement, such as document imaging to reduce the amount of paper it produces and purchasing bikes for staff members, notes DeMatteis.

Allen Lund Co's Lund explains trucking companies receive incentives on fuel expenses, for instance, to be green and efficient. "It's a good thing to be green, but hard when people who have never been a truck driver or even in a truck try to impose rules on trucking."

Meanwhile, D'Arrigo says he's paid the issue little heed. "It's another thing where the industry will be driven by forces beyond my control."

Swain explains the industry has gone as green "as it can." There's a "huge new movement" within the industry to adopt the green philosophy, yet, there also are obstacles, he points out. The biggest problem is that fossil fuel is still burned. That's how drivers operate their trucks, and they run on tires basically made of rubber and originating from a carbon-based product, he points out. "It's difficult for them to be efficient because they're not a manufacturer; they're not generating what they do; they're supplying a service." He says many are attempting to adapt technology that makes long-term sense and projects the industry in the best image possible.

PEOPLE COUNT

One thing receivers and transportation companies pay rapt attention to is carrier accessibility, and many seem to highly value a live human being, rather than multiple levels of push-button menus on a phone or Web site, notes Lund, adding that transportation brokers play a key role of bridging the communication gap between the shipper and the carrier. "We think it's critical to talk to people," Lund emphasizes. "You can

better decipher what's going on with a driver by the tone of his voice, rather than something like text messages, which impacts the quality of service. There's no personal relationship with pushing buttons and this is a personal relationship business."

"We don't do business if we have to deal with menus," D'Arrigo says. "We want to dial, hear that ring and that get right to someone."

Tom Lange's Moore agrees, noting that for his company, performance means competing for the best carriers and perpetual accessibility to customers and drivers. "Our mobile phones are with us 24/7 and are answered

when they ring," he says. In fact, not only is the company quick to pick up calls, it pays drivers fast, and well, emphasizes Moore. "We're only as good as their performance."

It tends to work that way, although Swain notes some might get the impression a system is push-button if they phone into anyplace because of the phone set up. He believes that, for the most part, trucking companies remain "pretty entrepreneurial. Most of them are small, managed by closely held corporations and it's easy to reach the top layer of management when you're talking to someone there." **pb**

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Ten Ways To Sell More Berries

Berries continue to be a top contender in the produce department, thanks to a near year-round supply and creative cross-merchandising.

BY CAROL BAREUTHER, RD

Berries are a long-time staple in the produce department. Yet, in recent years, this category has blossomed into a major force at retail. According to FreshLook Marketing data for the 52 weeks ending December 27, 2009, the berry category represents 8.2 percent of total produce sales. This figure ranks berries among the top dollar-generating categories in the produce department.

Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral for Kings Super Markets Inc., a 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ, says, "Berries were the saving grace last year. Category growth outpaced everything in spite of the economy."

Drivers of this growth, and what savvy retailers are steering on in merchandising efforts, are a continued expansion in the variety and quality of berries available year-round, increased item count spurred by different packaging options, and a super-food status that is touted to consumers in the media.

1. JUMP ON A RIPE OPPORTUNITY

No matter how you look at it, the berry category is a ripe opportunity. Brian Boccock, vice president of sales for Naturipe Farms LLC, in Naples, FL, says, "Berries were one of the few items at the trough of the recession that continued to gain dollar and volume share."

Berry category dollar sales were up 10 percent and pounds up 20 percent last year, according to FreshLook Marketing data. This outpaced total produce, which was essentially flat with dollar sales up only 0.3 percent and pounds up 6 percent. Thus, the berry category is growing at a much faster



Creating a berry patch in the store leads to higher rings and repeat purchases.

pace than the produce department.

Tom DeMott, executive vice president and chief operating officer of Encore Associates, headquartered in San Ramon, CA, who analyzed the FreshLook data, notes, "Only two produce categories surpassed berries last year. Avocados were up 21 percent in pounds and up 12 percent in dollar sales, so they were a strong tonnage gainer. Cherries increased 38 percent in tonnage and dollars were up 7 percent. Therefore, berries ranked third in growth in pounds behind avocados and cherries and second in dollar growth behind avocados."

Gloria Chillon, director of marketing for Watsonville, CA-based Driscoll's, says, "Berries are not just the top sales item, but one of the most profitable as well. This is a

huge change from just a few years ago and attests to the strength of year-round consumer berry demand."

According to FreshLook Marketing for the 52 weeks ending December 27, 2009, the average price for all berries was \$3-per-pound, down 27-cents or 8 percent. Meanwhile, the average price of all fruit and vegetable categories was \$1.46 per pound, down 8-cents or 6 percent, during the same time period.

2. FEATURE STRAWBERRIES

Ed Laster, produce specialist for Metropolitan Markets, a 6-store chain headquartered in Seattle, WA, acknowledges, "Strawberries are still king of the berry category in terms of sales."

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Strawberries contribute 4.6 percent of total produce sales, according to FreshLook Marketing for the 52 weeks ending December 27, 2009. In addition, strawberries represent 74 percent of berry category pounds and 58 percent of berry category dollars. Strawberry pounds are up 16 percent and dollars up 8 percent in the last year.

Indeed, says Bocock, "Strawberries out-sell blueberries 3-to-1, raspberries 4-to-1 and blackberries 5-to-1."

The average price for strawberries during the 52 weeks ending December 27, 2009, was \$2.29, down 19-cents or 8 percent, according to FreshLook Marketing.

There's additional lucrative news about strawberries coming out of the Willard Bishop Total Store SuperStudy, released in October, 2009. According to the Fresh Strawberries Key Findings, as provided by the Watsonville, CA-based California Strawberry Commission (CSC), strawberries rank 35th in total store weekly sales, and this included all departments of the supermarket except pharmacy and liquor. Only two other produce



"More blueberries are now going to the fresh market because of increasing demand. Out of 407 million pounds in the 2008 crop, 220 million pounds went to the fresh market. In 2009, we estimate 268 million pounds out of 437 million pounds will have been marketed as fresh, rather than processed."

**— Ed Villata
North American
Blueberry Council**

categories ranked higher — bananas and apples at 22nd and 26th, respectively.

Vincent Lopes, vice president of sales for Dole Berry Co. LLC, based in Monterey, CA, says, "The strawberry consumer is valuable to the retailer."

According to a 2009 AC Nielsen Study, as provided by Dole, strawberry consumers are in the stores more often than the average consumer and they spend more per trip — 77 percent more when strawberries are in the basket."

Strawberries are available from January through March primarily out of Florida and Mexico, says Naturipe's Bocock. "California starts into volume about the third week in March and goes pretty strong until the first week in September. The volume out of California falls off from September through December. Florida is back in the market in December."

According to Michelle Deleissegues, marketing director for Red Blossom Sales Inc., headquartered in Fresno, CA, "The toughest time for strawberry availability is December, but this gap is closing because of production in Central Mexico."

Sue Harrell, director of marketing for the Plant City, FL-based Florida Strawberry Growers Association (FSGA), reports, "Our peak is late December through March, but berries can be scarce during unusually cold weather then there are freezing temperatures like we had in January."

"Some retailers will stay with us into the beginning of April, especially those on the East Coast where there's a freshness advantage," says Gary Wishnatzki, president and

CEO of Wishnatzki Farms, in Plant City, FL. Wishnatzki Farms recently introduced its new consumer label featuring Misty the Wish Farms Garden Pixie.

Chris Christian, vice president of trade and nutrition for the CSC, reports, "California supplies more than 85 percent of the strawberries consumed annually in the United States, with peak promotional availability from March through August. We had a record strawberry production in 2009 of more than 173 million trays and expect similar production this year."

"This season," says Driscoll's Chillon, "we have significant production growth from our Oxnard, Baja and Santa Maria regions to help fulfill consumers' strawberry demand from January to early May. We have been planning for this strawberry growth for the past few years. We will also have additional strawberries available from Northern California starting May through July."

3. BRING ON THE BUSHBERRIES

Metropolitan Markets' Laster asserts, "Blueberries have really come on fast. There's more availability and more ability to sell them. Blackberries, too, are gaining. The quality and shelf-life have really increased, especially out of Central America and Mexico."

"Blueberries, raspberries and blackberries experience excellent year-round availability," maintains Keith Mixon, president of Winter Haven, FL-based Sunnyridge Farm Inc. "When domestic berries are not available, import season fills the gap."

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Blueberries contribute 1.9 percent of total produce sales, according to FreshLook Marketing for the 52 weeks ending December 27, 2009. In addition, blueberries represent 16 percent of berry category pounds and 24 percent of berry category dollars. Blueberry pounds and dollars are up 34 percent and 11 percent, respectively, in the past year. The survey also reported the average price for blueberries was \$4.48, down 91-cents or 17 percent.

Stan Crafton, general manager for The Giumarra Companies, in Los Angeles, CA, notes, "We are able to offer blueberries year-round from our growers in the United States, Chile, Argentina and Mexico. Peak times are May through August for the domestic season and November through February for the import season."

Tom Tjerandsen, spokesperson for the Chilean Fresh Fruit Association (CFFA), says, "There was a 45 percent increase in the sales of Chilean blueberries last year and we project a 35 percent jump over that for this year."

New acreage and significant plantings over the past five years has led to an increase in blueberry production, explains Mark Villata, executive director of the North

American Blueberry Council (NABC), headquartered in Folsom, CA. "I think we can expect this to continue over the next three to five years."

"Even though blackberries have the least overall sales and volume compared to strawberries, blueberries and raspberries, they have the largest percentage increase in tonnage growth over the past couple of years."

**— Cindy Jewell
California Giant Inc.**

On the front end of the domestic season, Family Tree Farms Marketing LLC, in Reedley, CA, expects to harvest 3 million pounds of blueberries as early as March from acreage planted in the Kettleman Hills or the West end of the San Joaquin Valley, remarks Don Goforth, director of marketing. "Mid-April is a more realistic start with the heaviest volumes in May and tapering off in June. This is a great window with not a lot of oversupply." Family Tree Farms has also planted test blocks of Australian blueberry varieties in Mexico. The Mexican crop is expected to harvest in February and March.

Villata adds, "More blueberries are now going to the fresh market because of increasing demand. Out of 407 million pounds in the 2008 crop, 220 million pounds went to the fresh market. In 2009, we estimate 268 million pounds out of 437 million pounds will have been marketed as fresh, rather than processed."

Raspberries contribute 0.9 percent of total produce sales, according to FreshLook Marketing for the 52 weeks ending December 27, 2009. In addition, raspberries represent 5 percent of berry category pounds and 11 percent of berry category dollars. Raspberry pounds are up 23 percent and dollars

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up 111 percent in the past year. The study also noted the average price for raspberries were \$6.74, down 69 cents or 9 percent.

There is year-round availability for raspberries. However, Naturipe's Bocock points out, "January is a light month, although Chile does fly some in and there's some Mexican production, too."

Blackberries contribute 0.6 percent of total produce sales, according to FreshLook Marketing for the 52 weeks ending December 27, 2009. In addition, blackberries represent 4 percent of berry category pounds and

7 percent of berry category dollars. Blackberry pounds are up 64 percent and dollars are up 34 percent over the past year. The average price for blackberries was \$5.51, down \$1.21 or 18 percent.

Cindy Jewell, director of marketing for California Giant Inc., headquartered in Watsonville, CA, thinks the big trend in the berry industry now is the growth in blackberries. "Even though blackberries has the least overall sales and volume compared to strawberries, blueberries and raspberries, they have the largest percentage increase in

tonnage growth over the past couple of years," she rationalizes.

"Quality, taste and the ability to deliver a product to the market with a good shelf-life are driving blackberry sales," says Bocock. "Blackberry availability does suffer some 'holes' in supply, though, primarily in late September and early October."

4. DON'T FORGET THE ORGANICS

Bocock believes, "An important factor in the growth of the berry category is its significant presence of organic items."

Organic berries represent 15.6 percent of all berry category pounds sold at retail and 4.97 percent of berry category dollar sales, according to FreshLook Marketing as of December 27, 2009. Strawberries represented 54.6 percent of organic berries sales, while raspberries, blueberries and blackberries captured 22.9, 15.9 and 6.6 percent, respectively.

"Successful retailers feature a dedicated berry patch display either in a No. 1 or 2 position in the produce department all year. When berries are very visible and in a consistent, high-traffic location in the store, consumers buy them more frequently and buy more of them each trip."

— Gloria Chillon Driscoll's

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Stephanie Hilton, director of marketing for Beach Street Farms LLC, in Watsonville, CA, acknowledges, "We have seen consistent



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growth in demand for organic strawberries. Over the past year, with the state of the economic landscape, some retailers pulled back on organic as consumers became more conscientious about their spending. However, the devoted organic customer seemed undeterred and continued to purchase organics."

Demand for organic strawberries led Wishnatzki Farms to expand from 15 to 40 acres in Florida. Next year, Wishnatzki plans to expand even further. "Our goal is to get production up and costs down," he says.

According to a 2009 AC Nielsen Study, as provided by Dole, the organic strawberry buyer spends 20 percent more per trip than the average consumer and more than double when organic strawberries are in the basket.

As for organic bushberries, Naturipe's Bocock admits, "It is still an underdeveloped category. There are plenty of windows of opportunity that we're not yet able to supply, but that should change in the future as volumes increase out of a number of growing areas."

5. PRESERVE QUALITY, PREVENT SHRINK

"Maintenance of the cold chain is essential to preserving berry quality," emphasizes Giumarra's Crafton.

Driscoll's Chillon adds, "Berries thrive at optimum temperatures of 32-34° F. Berries should be moved into cold storage as soon as they arrive, either at the warehouse or at the store."

"When a strawberry's ambient temperature is raised from 32° to 50° F, its deterioration rate increases two- to four-fold," warns Christian of the CSC.

Keep berries away from misters and other forms of humidity, suggests Chillon. "Water causes berries to begin to break down, decreasing shelf-life."

The advent of refrigerated island tables at retail means that berries can be featured in large displays and still be cooled. However, when on ad and with proper cold chain management, Hilton advises, "Strawberries can be displayed on dry tables for maximum exposure and movement. Rapid turnover is the best defense against shrink. Keep all displays well stocked, especially during peak shopping hours of 4 to 8 pm."



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Most importantly, rework berry displays throughout the day, says Sunnyridge's Mixon. "Sales slow when the display and fruit begin to look old."

California Giant's Jewell notes, "We offer training for our retail customers to help store-level personnel in care and handling techniques. We are also in the process of producing short-form videos for consumers on how to select the best quality at store-level and maintain freshness once they get berries home."

6. PUSH BIGGER PACKS

"Large size packs of berries are popular with customers at Metropolitan Markets," acknowledges Laster, "but it has to represent a value. Price point is an issue. If the price

is too high, then you have to drop back and offer customers a smaller size."

Crafton agrees and adds, "Large packs of berries offer value to consumers when you can offer attractive pricing during peak production periods. This means blueberries in pints or larger, raspberries in 6-oz. clamshells and some larger, and blackberries in 6-oz. or pints."

For bushberries, Encore's DeMott reports, "Data shows that the 4.4-oz. size is declining and the action is moving up to 12- and 18-oz. on blues and blacks."

For strawberries, Red Blossom's Delesegues says, "The 1-lb. clamshell remains the primary strawberry package, but we expect to sell more 2- and 4-lb. units in 2010, with the larger units continuing to experi-

ence strong growth." Clamshells of strawberries in 1-lb. sizes represent 80 percent of category dollar sales, while two pounds represent 13 percent and four pounds represent 3 percent, according to FreshLook Marketing data for the 52 weeks ending November 22, 2009, as provided by the CSC.

Jim Grabowski, marketing manager for Well-Pict Inc., located in Watsonville, CA, says, "As an industry, we want to push larger packages for increased volume sales. I'd like to see the 2-pounder as a regular stock item. So often, retailers will run an ad with the 2-pounders and then not carry them off ad."

DeMott adds, "Two- and 4-lb. units of strawberries represent 20 percent of pounds sold at retail. However, best performing retailers see 48 percent of their sales in 2-

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and 4-pounders.”

Deleissegues asserts, “Retailers increase sell-through and reduce shrink on larger packages with expanded displays. Studies show that sell-through of 2- and 4-pounders can increase by 7 percent and 19 percent, respectively, when positioned in expanded displays alongside 1-pounders.”

Concomitant with a trend toward larger packages, there is also an increased awareness about the amount of packaging in the marketplace, says California Giant’s Jewell. “As a result, we are working with our suppliers to reduce the amount of corrugated packaging per truckload and increase the overall units in each shipment to maximize efficiencies in transportation. For example, we recently introduced a configuration that ships six 2-pound clamshells versus the old standard that shipped four. We also ship a container that holds three 4-pound containers instead of the old standard of two.”

7. MAKE BERRIES FRONT-AND-CENTER

Sixty percent of all strawberry purchases are on impulse, points out Beach Street’s Hilton. “A prominent and attractive display will win customers over.”

Strawberries rank 3rd in produce department sales, but 25th in square-foot facings. Increasing strawberry displays linear feet by 25 percent can generate an additional 14 percent in weekly department sales and 5 percent in true profit per-store, according to findings in the Willard Bishop Total Store SuperStudy.

The FSGA’s Harrell says, “We offer posters,

“As an industry, we want to push larger packages for increased volume sales. I’d like to see the 2-pounder as a regular stock item. So often, retailers will run an ad with the 2-pounders and then not carry them off ad.”

**— Jim Grabowski
Well-Pict Inc.**



bin wrap and recipe tear-off sheets for display. New this year, we also had a short, animated video available for retailers to loop in their berry display. The video features our new mascot, Jammer, and provides customers with information on storage, handling and the nutritional benefits of strawberries.”

At Metropolitan Markets, berries are merchandised as a year-round destination display. “With the better availability of raspberries, we can carry all four berries year-long. This creates a nice opportunity for the customer to be able to buy multiple berries. Sure, there are peaks and valleys in supply with the individual berries. We just adjust the display size for that berry accordingly, but we don’t stop carrying them.”

Berries have become a power category because of the destination berry patch, remarks Driscoll’s Chillon. “Successful retailers feature a dedicated berry patch display either in a No. 1 or 2 position in the produce department all year. When berries are very visible and in a consistent, high-traffic location in the store, consumers buy them more frequently and buy more of them each trip.”

As for the ideal composition of the patch, Chillon adds, “Every retailer needs to adjust the product mix and offering to match its consumer base. For example, golden raspberries may not work in all stores, but they are a great new item in the right environment. The same is true for long-stem strawberries.”

Display berries in secondary locations, recommends Dole’s Lopes. “This includes the deli, the dairy case, cereal aisle and the check stand. This past year, we introduced a

new, jumbo strawberry pack that was ideally purposed for this strategy. We will offer the jumbo pack again this year.”

8. CROSS-MERCHANDISE CREATIVELY

Metropolitan Markets’ Laster says, “Crepes and shortcakes are items we cross-merchandise in the berry display.”

Provide solutions to the consumer, says California Giant’s Jewell. “Consumers still enter the produce department and purchase berries based on impulse. If the retailer provides a solution-based display that includes companion items such as glazes, pie shells, crepes, other berries and even recipes, they will increase sales.”

Sunnyridge’s Mixon points out, “You often see a lot of dessert and breakfast cross-merchandising with berries. Consider additional cross-merchandising with items to create a main dish. Feature in-store cooking demos making items such as a berry wine reduction sauce on top of pork chops. Put all the necessary items together for an easy meal solution.”

“There are also a number of excellent salad recipes that feature berries as a star ingredient,” says Giumarra’s Crafton, “such as a spinach salad with blueberries and feta or blue cheese. Try point-of-sale materials and sampling to highlight this.”

9. PROMOTE HEALTH

The health benefits of berries are promoted to customers at Metropolitan Markets in ads, says Laster. “We use words such as ‘antioxidants’ in ads, especially with blueberries.”

Berries' nutritional benefits are a key selling point, says Crafton. "Consumers who are aware of the health benefits are more likely to purchase berries. Push the health message at the point of purchase."

Signage with nutritional information is always a good idea, says Jewell. "Both strawberries and blueberries are listed as superfoods and all berry types are heart-healthy and provide vitamins, few calories, no fat and they taste great. It's a great story to share with the consumer."

This year, CSC's Christian says, "We continue to work with our spokesperson, Registered Dietitian, Dave Grotto, to promote the benefits of strawberries through online media, consumer media outreach and educational events for health professionals."

10. PROMOTE JOINTLY AND FREQUENTLY

Strawberries, blueberries and blackberries are frequently promoted together for multiple sales at Kings Super Markets, says Kneeland. "We'll sell them perhaps 3-for-\$10, depending on price and volume. Sometimes this will be with 1- or 2-lb. strawberries, 6-oz. blueberries — although we promoted an 18-ounce blueberry over the Christmas holidays — and a 6- or up to 12-ounce blackberries."

Buy-one-get-one-free (BOGO) is a frequent promotional strategy, says Driscoll's Chillon. "However, expand that concept to multiple berry purchases — buy two raspberries and get a strawberry free. When customers try the idea of buying and using multiple berries in common situations, such as on cereal in the morning or with cottage cheese as a snack, they will continue to do so, even when not on promotion."

Dole's Lopes adds, "Research states that bushberries will sell better when paired with a strawberry ad."

According to FreshLook Marketing data as supplied by the CSC, when strawberries only are on ad, the sales lift is 113 percent. When strawberries plus one other berry item are on sale, the lift is 140 percent. Christian adds, "In general, retailers upsizing and advertising 2-lb. and 4-lb. packages maximize their incremental sales per ad. An ad featuring a 2-lb. clam of strawberries provides a \$100,000 incremental sales lift per ad, on the average. An ad featuring a 4-lb. clam of strawberries provides a \$165,000 incremental sales lift."

Berries are promoted year-round at Kings Super Markets, says Kneeland. "However, we'll run half as many promotions in the winter as in summer."

Summer is a ripe time for berry promotions at Metropolitan Markets. "There are a

lot of local berries in the summer, such as boysenberries, currents, gooseberries and golden raspberries, in addition to strawberries, blueberries, blackberries and red raspberries. We'll run big local berry promotions — berry bonanzas — where we'll display all of the berries and tie them into the weekly ad."

Peak promotional periods for strawberries are spring through mid-summer, says Red Blossom's Deleissegues. "Be sure to promote pre-holiday, holiday and post-holiday to maximize holiday sales."

Close to 50 percent of the New Jersey

blueberry crop sells over the Fourth of July holiday, reveals Tim Wetherbee, sales manager for Diamond Blueberry Inc., based in Hammonton, NJ. "We suggest retailers promote buying extra blueberries to freeze so consumers will have them for when the local crop is finished."

"The most successful promotions," says Sunnyridge's Mixon, "are those that encompass multiple store locations and are supported by an air of excitement through contests, coupons and cross-departmental promotion." **pb**

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Ten Ways To Sell More Avocados

The growing popularity of avocados makes them a ripe category for smart, creative merchandising techniques.

BY CAROL BAREUTHER, RD

Avocados are shaking off their image as an exotic fruit. A near doubling of supply over the past few years, consistent year-round availability from multiple growing regions and hefty promotional dollars aimed at touting health benefits and usage suggestions beyond guacamole are putting this tropical fruit on more consumer shopping lists nationwide.

Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral for Kings Super Markets Inc., a 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ, says, "There's no question that avocados are mainstream. They're a huge item."

Avocados represented 1.91 percent of total produce dollar sales for the 52 weeks ending October 31, 2009, according to Chicago, IL-based Perishables Group.

In addition, from 2006 to 2008, total U.S. avocado category retail dollars grew 22.9 percent, outpacing the produce trend (11.1 percent) by 11.8 points, according to statistics supplied by the Irvine, CA-based Hass Avocado Board (HAB). These numbers add up to the opportunity to increase dollars and profits by merchandising avocados innovatively.

1. DIP INTO THE OPPORTUNITY

Per capita consumption of avocados is projected to exceed 3.25 pounds in 2010, up from 2.88 pounds in 2004. However, consumers nationwide are not homogeneous in their avocado buying habits. For example, 82 percent of shoppers in Western markets, where the Irvine, CA-based California Avocado Commission (CAC) has invested in long-term marketing and advertising support, said they purchased avocados the prior year, compared to 48 percent for the rest of



Photos courtesy of the CAA

Chilean avocados help create a year-round supply of avocados.

the country, according to the Fall 2009 Avocado Tracking Study, funded by HAB.

Tim Hallows, western regional marketing manager for Mission Produce Inc., headquartered in Oxnard, CA, says, "Households purchasing avocados are still under 30 percent in every U.S. region except the West and Southwest, where penetration is at 89 and 76 percent, respectively. So even with the growth, we are seeing there is a huge opportunity gap."

Rankin McDaniel, president of McDaniel Fruit Co., headquartered in Fallbrook, CA, recognizes, "Midwest and East Coast markets are two areas that have substantial room to grow."

Use of fresh avocados in foodservice is one way consumers are learning about this fruit, relates Ed Figueroa, category manager for avocados at LGS Specialty Sales, in the Bronx, NY. "Fast food restaurants in the West serve slices of avocado on hamburgers and chicken sandwiches. Now, we're starting to

see this in the Northeast."

Mary Ostlund, director of marketing for Brooks Tropicals Inc. out of Homestead, FL, says, "Consumers are learning avocados are no longer just an ingredient for guacamole. They have begun to add them to sandwiches, salads and even as a topping for soup."

There's an influx of new items that make it easier for consumers to enjoy avocados, adds Hallows. "For example, more companies are now producing 'fresh-alternative' items, such as UHP [ultra high-pressure] refrigerated guacamole and packet mixes that have fresh ingredients to add to avocados to make your own guacamole," he explains. "We are even seeing some retailers making their own fresh guacamole at the store level, which sells alongside of the commercial pack. Both varieties are doing well."

As a result, says Jose Luis Obregon, managing director of HAB, "Category volume increases on a percentage basis in developing markets now exceed those in



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core markets.”

2. STOCK HASS YEAR-ROUND

Consumers look for the Hass variety of avocado at Kings Super Markets, says Kneeland. “We carry a green skin variety, but it doesn’t sell as well, because it’s two to three times larger. Customers seem to like a smaller avocado, which are the right amount for one meal.”

In the United States, Hass avocados represent 91.9 percent of avocado dollar sales at retail, compared to 4.7 percent for green-skinned and 3.4 percent for ‘other’ varieties, according to the Perishables Group for the 52-week period ending October 31, 2009.

Mission’s Hallows recollects, “Twenty years ago, we saw so many varieties on the shelves seasonally, but consumption was flat and usage was respectively low. Consumers bought hard fruit, and ripening varied by variety. Consistency was very erratic. Today, the Hass is a smoother, more flavorful variety that ripens more consistently and turns a darker color when ready.”

Hass avocados have broad appeal, asserts Emiliano Escobedo, the Los Angeles, CA-based marketing director for APEAM (Avocado Producers and Exporters from Mexico). “The strongest Hass avocado consumer is aged 25 to 54, with a large household, including children. In the top-performing stores for Hass avocado sales, 61 percent of consumers live in affluent urban and suburban areas and 17.8 percent live in downscale urban areas. Hispanics comprise 20.4 percent of consumers, while other non-Hispanic ethnicities — dominated by Asians — make up 11.1 percent. More than a quarter of consumers have incomes over \$100,000. College graduates represent 35.7 percent of consumers.”

A variety that is increasing in acreage is the Lamb Hass, says Jan DeLyser, vice president of marketing for the CAC. “Developed in California, it is a late summer Hass-like variety with many characteristics similar to the Hass variety.”

“The chief selling points of the Lamb Hass are its large size and small pit,” says Giovanni Cavaletto, vice president of operations for Bloomington, CA-based Index Fresh Inc. “There are significant plantings in California and more plantings in the major growing countries, including Mexico and Chile.”

Mission’s Hallows says, “We still have pockets of consumers who like regional green skin varieties, such as in Florida and the Southeast, but even that is eroding as the popularity of the Hass grows and other varieties fade. Even countries that import

Cooperation Counts For Hass Avocado Groups

Approximately 95 percent of the avocados sold in the United States are Hass avocados. All Hass avocados sold in the United States operate under the Hass Avocado Board (HAB) umbrella, including Hass avocados from California, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, New Zealand and other countries. Through HAB, associations representing growers from the three main growing regions — the California Avocado Commission (CAC), Chilean Avocado Importers Association (CAIA) and the Mexican Hass Avocado Importers Association (MHAIA) — work together to encourage avocado demand through marketing support and consumer research.

Giovanni Cavaletto, vice president of operations for Index Fresh, Inc., in Bloomington, CA, says, “In the early 2000s, there was confusion. However, in the last 18 months to two years, we’ve seen willingness from all the associations to work together and we’ve seen this in two ways. First, all three associations are collectively providing input on interest areas for nutritional research, and second, there’s been cooperation on promotional activities.”

In 2009, HAB, CAIA and MHAIA joined forces on a comprehensive, multi-discipline marketing campaign tied to the professional baseball playoff season that runs from late September through late October. The campaign was named The Big Hit.

Jose Luis Obregon, managing director of the Irvine, CA-based HAB, says, “The

baseball promotion was very well received by the industry and the consumer. This shows how associations can work together while maintaining each of their independent programs. I believe that being able to coordinate promotional plans has been an effective way to reach out to various markets, targets and distribution channels.”

From the grower/shipper/importer viewpoint, Tim Hallows, western regional marketing manager for Mission Produce Inc., based in Oxnard, CA says, “We work closely with all the associations representing the different countries of origin to promote and sell more avocados. It can be a challenge when we have crossover periods and we are setting promotions specific to country-of-origin, but with solid communication, we have become pretty good at making it work behind the scenes while the consumer benefits and keeps eating more fresh avocados.”

Finally, from the retail perspective, Jim Pohndorf, produce supervisor/merchandiser at PW Markets, a 7-store chain based in Milpitas, CA, says, “We tie-in in-store with point-of-sale and other materials available from each of the associations. For example, we participated in The Big Hit promotion and saw a sales increase for avocados that we didn’t traditionally see this time of year. Likewise, if the California folks are running TV ads during their season, we’ll tie in with their materials. It all enhances avocado sales and that’s what is important to us.”

pb

avocados have planted and grown mostly the Hass variety.”

Even so, Brook’s Ostlund contends, “The appeal of the green skin Florida avocado, or SlimCado, is that it has half the fat and one-third fewer calories than a Hass avocado. We send placards in every box that provide this information so retailers can share it with their customers. We also have a downloadable fact sheet for produce managers.” SlimCados are available from June through January, with peak production in July, August and September.

LGS’ Figueroa says, “Customers from the Caribbean and Central America are familiar with and will buy the green-skinned avocado. However, when these are not available, they’ll migrate to the Hass.”

“Heightened consumer interest in avocados is the direct result of an increase in sup-

ply into the United States,” says Doug Meyer, vice president of sales and marketing for West Pak Avocado Inc., in Alvarado, CA.

Lee Cole, president, chairman and CEO of Calavo Growers Inc., headquartered in Santa Paula, CA, says, “This year, we, as an industry, expect to sell 1.3 to 1.5 billion pounds of avocados in the United States.”

There is a seamless 12-month supply of Hass avocados, says McDaniel Fruit’s McDaniel, “chiefly from the three major growing areas — California, Mexico and Chile.”

The California harvest starts slowly near the end or first of the year and builds to a peak in March with supplies through the fall, Hallows reports. “The Mexican deal runs year-round, but peaks with different blooms in the winter and spring. Chile brings fruit into the United States from fall



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through early spring, peaking late in the year into the first of the year," he continues. "Historically, avocados have been most scarce in the summer and late in the year. But volume is such that we hardly notice it on good production years."

Hallows adds, "The big new opportunity and challenge will be the Peruvian deal, which as just been approved by the USDA for shipment into the United States beginning in February. This fruit will compete against the domestic fruit season in California, but will probably be heavier into the East Coast. There will be a learning curve as we assimilate the potential volume into the mix and get used to the mandates for fumigation until the growing regions can be certified pest-free. Expect the deal to start cautiously and build a presence."

3. OFFER ORGANIC

Organically grown avocados were featured in a Super Bowl promotion last year at Jungle Jim's International Market, a single specialty supermarket in Fairfield, OH, where they were promoted at 5-for-\$5.

Organic avocados have seen steady growth at retail with a sales increase of 8.7 percent in 2009 over 2008, says the CAC's DeLyser. "From 2006 to 2008, volume grew 106.9 percent and dollars grew 260.1 percent, and its share of the avocado category grew 1.6 points to 2.5 percent."

Hallows agrees, reporting, "We continue to see heavier demand for organics and more growers are converting acreage to organics as the category continues to gain strength."

Cavaletto of Index reminds, "Organic avocados are available year-round."

4. SELL RIPE AVOCADOS

Customers don't like to wait for their avocados to ripen, says Kings Super Markets' Kneeland. "Offering a ripe piece of fruit is a value-add. We use ripe stickers to let customers know the avocados are ready to eat."

Jim Pohndorf, produce supervisor/merchandiser at PW Markets, a 7-store chain based in Milpitas, CA, says, "We offer a mix of ripeness — fruit that's ready to eat that day and is an impulse buy and fruit that's ready to eat in a few days. Two stages of ripeness means two purchases."

"Seventy-seven percent of shoppers purchasing avocados plan to eat them within 48 hours of purchase," reports DeLyser. "As a result, retailers nationwide that have adopted a ripe program have seen a monthly average lift in sales of 11 percent." She adds, "While it varies by retailer and market, research has shown that offering avocados in various stages of ripeness can increase

volume by up to 7.3 percent, sales by up to 10.2 percent and gross profits by nearly 12 percent. Using ripe stickers has led to sales increases of up to 28 percent."

However, warns Mission's Hallows, "Offering too many stages of ripeness can be confusing and can create shrink if they are not well managed."

"Avocados rank sixth in dollars per-square-foot in the produce department, but rank twenty-sixth in space allocated. You have to give them room to make you money."

**— Tim Hallows
Mission Produce Inc.**

"In general, ripe fruit on display translates into less spoilage, not more," asserts Calavo's Cole. "That's because ripe fruit will move more quickly. Ripe fruit outsells hard green fruit 6:1."

5. HANDLE WITH CARE

Ripe avocados will bruise easily, says Hallows. "Even hard fruit will bruise and then show the marks under the skin as it ripens."

The CAC recommends avocados be stored with boxes of ripe fruit on top and firmer fruit on the bottom. Hard, non-breaking fruit stored below 45°F is susceptible to chill damage. Breaking and ripe fruit may be placed in a cooler for short-term storage. Firm, reconditioned fruit holds three to five days at room temperature and breaking to ripe fruit for two to three days. DeLyser adds, "Avocado displays should be rotated and refreshed daily, and should not be near misting systems or on refrigerated displays below 42°F."

APEAM has launched a training program for retailers which features the S.M.A.R.T. (Storing Merchandising Arranging Ripening Training) Kit. The kit includes a training DVD on handling and merchandising in English and Spanish, backroom posters in English and Spanish, a training brochure and an opportunity for produce managers to

earn the 'S.M.A.R.T.' certificate.

6. MERCHANDISE BY THE PIECE & PACKAGED

Most avocados are sold by the piece. Packaged avocados represented only 4.8 percent of avocado category dollar sales in the 52 weeks ending October 31, 2009, according to the Perishables Group. The key to maximizing sales is to sell both loose and packaged fruit. LGS's Figueroa says, "Once a retailer starts to carry ripe fruit and sales increase, they naturally develop another SKU and this often is a bag."

Bagged avocados can serve as an excellent first, second or third display offering, says CAC's DeLyser. "They appeal to the value customer who wants smaller fruit." According to the CAC, adding bagged avocados can generate an additional \$435 dollars per-week, per-store. Bagged avocado sales increase by 15.59 percent when displayed next to onions and 6.18 percent when displayed next to lemons.

7. CREATE WINNING DISPLAYS

Avocados were once buried in the tropicals section. Not anymore. They now command a destination display of their own. Mission's Hallows reports, "Avocados rank sixth in dollars per-square-foot in the produce department, but rank twenty-sixth in space allocated. You have to give them room to make you money."

The most effective displays are well stocked, not piled too high as to damage the fruit and are located near tomatoes for color and usage tie-ins, Hallows adds. "High-traffic areas are always good for promotions and profit building."

"Build at least two displays of avocados," recommends DeLyser. "Have one primary, fixed location at or near the front of the department and a secondary or even third location can be located next to the packaged salad case, near salty snacks or in the beverage aisle."

Display SlimCados side-by-side the Hass variety, recommends Brook's Ostlund. "SlimCados expand avocado category sales. A consumer will buy a SlimCado not instead of another avocado, but in addition to it, because each variety has different usages."

"Two sizes of avocados, both large and small — and with a distinct price point — leads to the best overall sales performance," contends DeLyser.

Hallows adds, "Clear and attractive signage will bring more people over to the display. Recipes and usage tips will encourage sales at the point-of-purchase as well."

Maggie Bezart, marketing director for the



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Washington, DC-based Chilean Avocado Importers Association (CAIA) notes, "Use of merchandising materials to educate customers about avocados is most effective in underdeveloped markets."

8. TEACH EXPANDED USAGES THROUGH CROSS-MERCHANDISING

Many customers don't realize avocados can be used for more than making guacamole, says Kings Super Markets' Kneeland. "We've advertised them in our ad circular as 'nature's mayonnaise,' as a condiment for sandwiches."

This year, the CAIA will continue to demo and promote the use of avocados as a healthful bread spread. Bezart points out, "This can increase sales of avocados, as well as bakery products." CAIA suggests demonstrating a spread made simply by mashing ripe avocados with a little lemon juice and salt. Suggested usages include toast, tortillas, sandwiches or bruschetta with the addition of sun-dried tomatoes, tapenade or a fresh basil leaf on top.

Jacqueline Bohmer, the Coral Gables, FL-based marketing director for the Mexican Hass Avocado Importers Association (MHAIA), says, "New and light avocado users consistently say they would purchase more avocados if they knew how to select them and judge ripeness. Medium and light users say they would purchase more avocados if alternate uses are promoted."

Kneeland appealed to both of these customer segments during the week between Christmas and New Years. "We demo-ed avocados in-store. First, we showed customers how to select ripe avocados, then how to slice them. Finally, we served cut slices with salad dressing and provided suggestions for a variety of ways customers could incorporate avocados into their holiday and party dishes. Throughout the year, we'll also cross-merchandise avocados with salads."

At PW Markets, Pohndorf says, "Depending on what recipe pads the shippers and promotional organizations send, we'll do cross-merchandising around this with avocados and the related ingredients."

"Of course, adds Kneeland, "for Super Bowl, Cinco de Mayo and other holidays, we capitalize on the guacamole theme and cross-merchandise avocados with limes, tomatoes, onions and chips all in one location."

The CAC reports, displaying avocados next to tomatoes can result in an increase in avocado volume of up to 12 percent.

As for out-of-the box suggestions, Mission's Hallows says, "There is nothing better than seafood cocktail with chunks of



avocados and celery mixed in. A secondary display in the seafood and deli area is always a winner."

CAIA's Bezart advises, "Capitalize on the breakfast omelet tie-in and merchandise avocados near the eggs."

9. TOUT GOOD NUTRITION

Nutrition is front and center in many consumer minds. Bohmer says, "Virtually all users say they would buy more avocados if they were fully aware of their nutritional benefits. For example, avocados deliver nearly 20 vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients."

Avocados are also an especially good source of heart-healthy monounsaturated fatty acids. A two-tablespoon serving of mashed avocado contains 50 calories and less than 5 grams of fat — nearly all of it in the heart-healthy, monounsaturated form — compared to more than 100 calories and nearly 10 grams of fat for the same serving size of mayonnaise. "Therefore," says HAB's Obregon, "tout the good fats story and health benefits of the Hass avocados in all communications with consumers."

The CAIA has created an innovative program that provides Registered Dietitians and consumer affairs directors at retail chains nationwide with information about Hass avocados for use in newspaper and magazine columns, in-store classes and demonstrations and consumer education/community work. Information includes nutrition facts, usage tips, ripening suggestions and a variety of recipes utilizing avocados and other fresh produce.

10. PROMOTE EVERYDAY AND FOR HOLIDAYS

Promote avocados on everyday and holiday occasions. In 2008, APEAM contracted with the Perishables Group to gain insights on Best Practices for avocado promotions. Highlights of the findings for developed avo-

cado markets include: promote avocados 30 to 40 times per-year to provide optimal category dollars and volume; run promotional discounts from 11 to 30 percent to optimize dollars and volume; occasionally feature multiple avocado items in the same promotion including bulk and packaged avocados; and whenever possible, combine circular promotions with in-store price reductions. In underdeveloped markets, promote avocados eight to 15 times annually with a promotional discount of greater than 20 percent.

Beyond this, Bezart maintains, "Buy-one-get-one and multiple buys, such as 3-for-\$5, 5-for-\$5 and 10-for-\$10, depending on the FOB market, are effective at increasing sales and consumption of avocados."

In addition, Obregon reports, "Dollars generated on larger size [40s and larger] promotions are clearly now exceeding dollars generated on 48s and smaller promotions."

According to the CAC, promoting avocados increases the sales of field tomatoes by 10 percent, cilantro by 6 percent and limes by 6 percent. When avocados and limes are both promoted, the volume of limes increases by 17 percent. Promoting both avocados and jalapeno peppers increases jalapeno volume by 27 percent.

"Beyond Super Bowl, Cinco de Mayo and New Years, there are second-tier holidays, such as Easter, Fourth of July, Halloween and Thanksgiving that are ripe for avocado promotions," expresses McDaniel Fruit's McDaniel.

One thing that sometimes gets lost in the planning process, according to Hallows, "is that people are most likely going to buy avocados for those periods anyway, so unless you want to use them as your feature draw, there is no reason you can't make some money on those holidays and give the consumer a good value, but not sell so low that it hurts your margins. Instead, give them the deep deals during periods when they are less likely to buy."

Promoting Dried Fruits And Nuts As Sports Snacks

Sporting events offer retailers a unique opportunity to promote produce as snacks via dried fruits and nuts.

BY JACQUELINE ROSS LIEBERMAN

Sporting events are often associated with snacking on “junk” food, such as chips and sour cream-based dips, cheese-filled pretzels, pigs in blankets and the like. But with healthy eating on the minds of many, “Today’s consumers are more interested in enjoying foods that are nutritious,” says Betsy Owens, executive director of the Nashville, NC-based Virginia-Carolinas Peanuts Promotions. According to Owens, dried fruits and nuts are a great alternative to fattening snack foods because they are fun, tasty and highly nutritious.

According to Linda Cain, vice president of marketing and retail sales for Valley Fig Growers, a Fresno, CA-based grower-owned cooperative, dried figs have traditionally been promoted during winter and spring holidays, including Christmas and Easter. Today, retailers can take advantage of new opportunities and benefit from “the renewed interest people have in a balanced and healthy diet,” she says. Indeed, figs are highly nutritious, Cain informs us, as well as flavorful. They can be paired with other items or eaten straight out of the bag.

Marc Seguin, director of marketing for Paramount Farms, in Los Angeles, CA, emphasizes that sporting events are ideal times to promote snacking with dried fruits and nuts. “The biggest one, of course, for us, is the Super Bowl. It’s the single highest sales week for pistachios year-round. As a result, we have made Super Bowl a significant piece of our marketing activities,” says Seguin. “This Super Bowl season for pistachios will be the best year that we’ve had. We ran a lot of TV ads. We shipped around 18,000 Super Bowl displays — that’s double anything we’ve done before.”

But the promotions do not have to end



Photo courtesy of Paramount Farms

Paramount Farms made Super Bowl a significant piece of its marketing campaign.

with the demise of football season. “Super Bowl will then run into other sporting events,” explains Seguin. Depending on the region, upcoming events may include March Madness college basketball games, NASCAR racing, hockey and even high school sporting events. And this year, of course, there are the Winter Olympics.

As we head into spring, baseball season arrives and peanuts — a classic baseball treat — are a shoe-in for consumption. “The thin-shelled peanuts are perfect for outdoor events,” adds Owens.

Don’t count out participatory sports, either. Charitable walks and runs, local team events, such as pond hockey and even Little League games, are a chance to promote dried fruits and nuts not only to viewers, but also to the athletes themselves.

“If you’ve got your kids in hockey, for instance, dried fruits really make sense,” says Andrew Stillman, president of Amport

Foods, located in Minneapolis, MN. “These are good munchies, instead of eating junk food,” he asserts. “They’re a good source of energy, too.”

Because the popularity of certain sports varies across the country, it helps to tailor a store’s promotions to local enthusiasm. To help retailers customize their promotions, “We find sporting events that are particularly important to the retailer,” says Seguin. “We do a lot of regional sporting stuff.” Often, this means helping consumers “make a Super Bowl-type of party on a smaller scale for sporting events around the year,” he adds. “If you’re in a college town with a big college team, incorporate the team’s name and mascot on the signage.”

GRAB ATTENTION WITH DISPLAYS

Dried fruits and nuts for snacking are most often impulse purchases. “The best

thing I can see a produce department doing, as more and more produce departments begin incorporating trail mixes and other alternative healthy snacks, is a good display," advises Stillman. "Often times, I think consumers need to be reminded." Especially if that shopper is Mom, he adds. "Frequently, the female of the family shops for the food and might not be as tuned into the sporting events as Dad would be."

For that same reason, "You want your display to have some appeal to the female shopper as well as the male," notes Virginia-Carolinas Peanut Promotions' Owens.

Most importantly, make the display a prominent one. "Put items that people really want to have front-and-center in the store," suggests Seguin of Paramount Farms. "That reminds consumers when they come in to pick up what they want for that event."

In the produce department, "You need to have a display out in front of produce where people are going to bump into it," says Seguin. "What the produce department traditionally has not done well is to capture people's minds in terms of snacking. You need to get something out in front to stop their carts. You can't have them hunt for it," continues Seguin. "If they have to do that, they're going to head off to the chip aisle. You need to make people aware that the produce department is the place to get your healthy snack food."

Owens adds, "If retailers can draw attention to the fact that they have in-shell peanuts in the produce department, it will increase sales dramatically."

In addition, it helps to think big. Create displays using larger bags, such as Amport Foods' 28-oz. to 2-lb. bags of trail mix, suggests Stillman. "It's more of a party-size

bag and a bigger ring for the grocery store," he explains.

Maria Brous, director of media and community relations for Lakeland, FL-based Publix Super Markets Inc., reports, "At Publix, we operate our dried fruits and nuts as snacks for sporting events by incorporating them into displays, such as tailgating necessities. Or perhaps, with baseball season right around the corner, we create an infield display with the peanut bags. In addition, we offer select items on sale, including our BOGO." For the Super Bowl this year, many Publix stores had tailgating displays and incorporated the nuts into the décor.

Often, regional sporting events have a corporate sponsor already offering display material. Dried fruits and nuts can be incorporated into these displays. "If we go to a retailer and they have a relationship built in with the Diet Coke Race, we can create another element that can add a lot for everyone," says Seguin.

There are plenty of merchandising materials available to retailers, such as those given out by Virginia-Carolinas Peanut Promotions. Among the items available from the organization are football-themed materials, in kits containing banners, pricing signs and posters. Twice a year, the organization holds a retail display contest.

"Retailers have done some amazing displays," says Seguin. For its part, Paramount Farms offers displays, balloons, foam fingers and other signage for retailers' use. "We have 130 merchandisers out in produce departments across the country," he adds.

Sunsweet Growers Inc., in Yuba City, CA, offers several "healthy snacking" shipper display options to drive impulse sales throughout the store and increase overall

"At Publix, we operate our dried fruits and nuts as snacks for sporting events by incorporating them into displays, such as tailgating necessities."

**— Maria Brous
Publix Super Markets Inc.**

basket ring, according to Jeff McLemore, dried fruit product manager. These include display shippers for Ones Dried Plums, PlumSweet (Dark Chocolate covered Plum Bites), Philippine Mango, Philippine Pineapple, Antioxidant Blend and Cherries.

ADD MORE RING

Dried fruits and nuts offer plenty of cross-merchandising opportunities for sports snacking. For example, "Peanuts go well with beverages," says Owens.

According to Cain of Valley Fig Growers, figs pair well with cheese as well as chocolate. "It's one of those very versatile types of produce items," she contends. "Within the produce department, they certainly pair very well with nuts." Valley Fig Growers makes it easy for consumers to find new ways to serve figs. "We have tons of recipes on our Web site, which is listed on all of our packages."

Paramount's Seguin recommends cross-merchandising healthy snacks together in one display. "You can put all of your snack nuts together up front so they are easy to find," he says. "Dried fruits can be part of this 'snacking center' in produce," which should be part of a dedicated space in the produce department year-round, whether or not the store is promoting them for a special event. "Produce departments are getting an entirely different consumption opportunity — not just lunch or dinner, but snacking," he continues. Once a consumer is used to thinking of the produce department for snacks, it will be easier to get them there for sporting events, as well.

Stillman agrees, adding, "Many chains are realizing they need to put a dried fruits, nuts, trail mix section in their produce departments," he says.

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Photo courtesy of Amport Foods

Amport's larger bags give the impression of 'party-size' and provide a bigger ring for the store.

TRANSITION



FLORALIFE Walterboro, SC

Alan Tanouye joins the organization as general manager of North American operations. In joining the global management team, Tanouye will support the company's market development activities and customer relationships in the North American mass market and grocery store businesses for postharvest flower care and handling.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS



INTERNATIONAL FLORICULTURE EXPO

Diversified Business Communications, Portland, ME, will host the International Floriculture Expo at the Miami Beach Convention Center, June 22-25, in Miami Beach, FL. Formerly The Super Floral Show, this event, designed for mass market buyers, will feature floral and foliage products, educational sessions, equipment and giftware.

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NEW YORK PRODUCE SHOW AND CONFERENCE

Eastern Produce Council, Short Hills, NJ, and PRODUCE BUSINESS magazine, Boca Raton, FL, will host The New York Produce Show and Conference, November 9-11, 2010, in New York City. Held at the Hilton New York, in Midtown Manhattan, the show will feature a cocktail reception, a keynote breakfast, retail tours and approximately 212 exhibit booths. Companies offering products for floral departments are eligible to purchase booth space.

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NEW PRODUCTS



PIG-TURE PERFECT

Schubert Nursery Inc., Salinas, CA, introduces a Topiary Pig as the newest item in its topiary line. Measuring approximately 9 inches H x 14 inches L, the hand-made moss and wire frame features Shamrock Ivy and is packed four to a case. An ideal centerpiece and floral department draw, the topiary pig arrives with a care instructions tag featuring a Web site address for additional consumer information.

Reader Service No. 339

NEW PRODUCTS



FOR MOTHER'S DAY AND BEYOND

Blossom Bucket Inc., North Lawrence, OH, introduces the I Love MOM block with flowers — a perfect gift for Mother's Day and throughout the year. Handcrafted in designer Suzi Skoglund's classic block style, the collectible measures 2.5 inches H x 2 inches L. The relaxed price point makes this figurine ideal as a floral product upgrade.

Reader Service No. 340



IT'S IN THE BAG

Peggy Green Inc., St. Petersburg, FL, is promoting its planting mixture called Really Great Stuff for your Plants. The patented formula made from all-natural, organically complexed minerals, enhances plant health with no chemicals. Available in two formulas — for flowers and ornamentals and for herbs, fruits and vegetables, the formula is for all potted plants, urban gardens, raised beds and earth-type boxes.

Reader Service No. 341



READY TO GO

Silver Vase Inc., Homestead, FL, introduces HUGS & KISSES — a packaged eco-friendly Phalaenopsis Orchid delicately trained in a round or heart shaped form. The handled package encourages grab-and-go purchases and reduces the consumer intimidation factor, especially with easy-to-follow care instructions provided on the box. The gift of love in a box is ideal for Mother's Day or any occasion.

Reader Service No. 342



LET IT SHINE

PP Plastic Products, Virginia Beach, VA, introduces eco-friendly Soft Glow Illuminated Planters for indoor or outdoor spaces. They are 100 percent recyclable and lighted using energy efficient bulbs. The illuminated pots are available in seven different solid colors and five different designs. The double-walled design allows for the soft light to glow from the top to the bottom.

Reader Service No. 343

Floral Care And Handling

Q & A With George Staby

After 12 years as a university professor and another 28 years as a researcher and consultant, Dr. George Staby offers his unwavering views on top post-harvest factors affecting floral crop quality and profits.

BY E. SHAUNN ALDERMAN

You may have been one of his students at Ohio State University or you may have attended one of his seminars at Ohio Florists' Short Course or the Super Floral Show. You may have heard him speak in Colombia, Ecuador or Holland or you may have read his telling words here in *PRODUCE BUSINESS*. In this final interview before his official retirement, George Staby discusses floral care and handling practices.

PB: There seems to be a continual blame game about certain topics between floral suppliers and retailers. What should retailers not request from bouquet suppliers?

GS: Retailers should not request ice, gel and/or water picks for incoming dry pack shipments. Having one or two ice packs in shipping boxes and placing cut flowers in some sort of a water delivery device does not compensate for poor temperature management and is often a waste of time and money, and can give both senders and receivers false securities.

PB: Retailers watching the bottom line must be persistent in their fight against shrink. What is the importance of immediately removing plant sleeves when product arrives in the stores?

GS: Leaving any type of plant sleeve — plastic, fiber or paper — on plants after arrival can only decrease plant quality due to increased ethylene production, low light levels, less air circulation and increased chances for grey mold (*Botrytis*) development.

PB: At what temperature should most cut flowers, such as roses, chrysanthemums, alstroemeria and carnations, be upon store arrival?

GS: They should be between 32° and 36° F. Tropicals, such as anthuriums and gin-



The roses on the left are in a container with the correct amount of flower food in the water. If containers are dirty or if too little flower food is used, bacterial growth will cause cloudy vase water resulting in reduced flower life.

ger, should be between 55° and 65° F. When possible, measure the flowers per se. If flower temperatures are outside of these ranges, they should be rejected, or at least monitored closely for possible subsequent damage. In addition, measure and record incoming growing media temperatures of potted plants and make similar accept/reject decisions using appropriate temperature thresholds.

PB: With focus on quality and keeping consumers coming back for more, what should retailers require related to temperature management?

GS: Retailers should require time/temperature indicators with all shipments, including pots and cuts. Time/temperature indicators that have been proven effective for floral crops or data loggers should be required in all potted plant and cut flower shipments in order to document cold chain issues. Namely, there are no excuses for not monitoring tem-

peratures during distribution and for not taking action when the data becomes available.

PB: You are known for your strong stance on cleanliness. Since keeping it clean can save retailers money and prevent product loss what is your advice?

GS: Maintaining clean buckets, vases and all solutions in which cut flowers are placed is critical. Always clean buckets after every use and never put fresh flowers into already used solutions or, for that matter, in plain water. If you are not willing to drink out of a bucket, it is too dirty for flowers.

PB: Retailers dealing with labor cuts have certain tasks that must be met no matter if the floral department is understaffed. What is the bottom line recommendation for handling incoming potted plants?

GS: Irrigate all incoming potted plants with water containing an adjuvant (a wetting agent). No matter the moisture level of the growing media, irrigate all plants using

water containing an adjuvant such as Aqua-Gro or Soax at manufacturers' rates listed on the label.

PB: The fungal disease Botrytis, commonly called grey mold, can cause real problems and cost retailers money. How can retailers reduce the significant damages often inflicted on flowers and plants by grey mold?

GS: In order to control Botrytis or any disease, one first has to know if the damages were caused by this pathogen. Unfortunately, about half of the time, this disease is misdiagnosed. Namely, people say it is Botrytis when, in fact, another problem is present. Therefore, the first step that should be taken at grower or retail level is to determine if the symptoms seen were caused by Botrytis or something else. There is a Botrytis test kit on the market specifically designed for this purpose. It works similarly to a home pregnancy test. (See www.pocketdiagnostic.com to learn more about this test kit.)

PB: Many retailers know not to merchandise most floral products next to apples, but as a prevention step, what should retailers require related to ethylene?

GS: Retailers should require anti-ethylene protective treatments before shipping. Namely, they should demand that ethylene-sensitive flowers and plants be properly treated with appropriate anti-ethylene products (STS/AVB or MCP/EthylBloc) prior to shipping to minimize post-harvest losses and improve shelf-life. STS should only be used with cut flowers, but MCP can be used with cut flowers, potted and bedding plants. Receivers should check to determine if these treatments were applied properly using the Florel test (see sidebar article at right).

PB: Related to shelf-life and loss prevention, what else should retailers require?

GS: Retailers should require full-strength cut flower food in wet packs and they should use the same at store level. Other than for dry-shipped cut flowers, retailers must store, display and sell flowers in full-strength flower food solutions that are prepared correctly according to label directions. This includes wet packed flowers. Do not use hydration or half-strength flower food solutions in wet packs for best results.

PB: The economy has some retailers pinching pennies at unprecedented rates. Should retailers provide consumers with floral food packets as a take-away?

GS: Providing flower food packets is a must. All bouquets, arrangements, bud vases, and loose flowers sold to consumers must include at least one 10-gram flower

Florel Test: Determining The Quality Of Ethylene-Sensitive Flowers And Plants

Ethylene is a gas often referred to as the "death hormone" because it can reduce the life of flowers and plants. Sources of ethylene gas include engine exhaust, cigarette smoke, fruits and flowers among many other sources. Symptoms of ethylene-induced damages include premature flower death (carnation, kalanchoe, baby's breath), flower fall (baby's breath, geranium, delphinium, waxflower), leaf fall (Ficus, holly), fruit fall (holly), leaf twisting (poinsettia) and leaf discoloration (dracaena, lily).

Florel is a liquid form of ethylene gas. The purpose of this test is to determine if ethylene-sensitive cut flowers and plants were properly treated with MCP (EthylBloc) or cut flowers with STS (AVB) prior to delivery to retailers. If flowers and plants were properly treated, then they will not be harmed by ethylene (Florel), resulting in more profits and repeat sales. A list of ethylene-sensitive flowers and plants is presented in the Chain of Life Network website (www.chainoflifenet.org) under the Floral Crops Specific section.

To run this simple and inexpensive test (five cents per test for Florel):

1) Use an Internet search engine, such as Google, and locate a place where you can buy Florel. As of mid-February, 2010, Amazon.com was selling it for \$19.49 per pint including shipping, which is enough to last for about 450 tests.

2) Add one milliliter (about 30 drops) of Florel to 100 milliliters (about 3.5 ounces) of water in a plastic spray container, similar to those used for misting plants.

3) Divide the flowers or plants to be tested into two equal groups, one that will be sprayed with Florel and the other that will not be sprayed. For cut flowers, split



The flowers on the left were not treated with MCP and all flowers were subsequently sprayed with Florel.

one bunch in half and place into separate vases containing flower food solution, while for potted or bedding plants, use at least six plants, three that will be sprayed and three plants that will not be sprayed.

4) Spray half of the cut flowers, potted, or bedding plants with the freshly made Florel solution, covering all of the flowers and leaves. Do not spray the other half of the cut flowers or plants. Discard any remaining solution.

5) For the next 24 hours, keep the sprayed and non-sprayed flowers or plants in separate areas, both at room temperature.

6) If the sprayed flowers or plants begin to die in one to three days, while the others are okay, they were not treated properly with either MCP or STS. Tell your suppliers of this finding and have the situation corrected for future shipments.

7) If after three days both the sprayed and non-sprayed flowers/plants look equally good, then they were treated properly with MCP or STS. Tell your suppliers that they did a good job! This result also could mean that the flowers and/or plants are ethylene-insensitive. In either case, the results are good!

pb

food packet along with the proper directions for their use by consumers. This is especially true for arrangements made in floral foam.

PB: Why is it important for retailers to know and show consumers the proper names of flowers?

GS: Retailers should purchase and market every floral crop by cultivar/variety

name. If one does not know the proper name of a floral crop, how can one determine if it should or should not be purchased again? Consumers know that all red carnations are not the same so why should all red carnations be considered the same? Mass-market flower buyers and consumers know more apple cultivar/variety names than gerbera or carnation cultivar names.

pb

George Staby, Ph.D. is the founder of Chain of Life Network and co-founder and president of Perishables Research Organization, both based in Pioneer, CA. He can be reached at george.staby@volcano.net or www.chainoflifenet.org.



Reality Check

There are those who appear to be riveted with their focus on a past era, a time when there were no computers, no internet, no cell phones, no GPS, no gas guzzlers, only antenna TV reception and polyester suits, to mention only a few of a long laundry list.

A quarter- to a half-century earlier, however, we did have retail produce staffs with a relatively broad knowledge of the industry, many of whom, with great passion, often remained in this career channel throughout their working years.

Just as other segments of business innovated and career development evolved, retail produce departments improved, too. A continual flow of smarter, more personable associates capable of coping with developing supply chain efficiencies, consumer market analysis, and both tactical and strategic improvement of progressive marketing techniques began showing up in the produce department.

Contrast today's responsibility for 500 SKUs versus little more than a 100; look at comparisons of location, space and capital devoted to fresh fruit and vegetable departments; review the improvement in advertising presentation, the increase in produce share of total supermarket sales; observe the importance today's consumers place on produce as the reason for supermarket choice to understand the broad role retailers have invested in the growth of produce marketing.

Granted, all of these changes have been uneven, and follow-through varies among supermarket organizations. Even the advent and growth of the Wal-Mart supercenter was not without drawbacks. Although its approximately first 15 years of produce operation were a monument to supply chain development and low pricing, the in-store presentation was, at best, mediocre, and only recently began upgrades to make the department more appealing to consumers. However, this became the catalyst, in large part, propelling the competitive advancement of a majority of retail supermarket produce operations.

Successful team sport coaches and players put together championship seasons not because of one or two individuals, but because of everyone's contribution. Everyone involved must have a commitment for all the elements of the game, which is why a championship ring, for most, is more important than an individual achievement.

The challenge to be addressed by the supply side is how to develop programs retailers will recognize as having the sizzle to draw consumer attention. There is a difference between short-term results and long-term development. This is where the supply side needs to marry passion with business mindset and responsibilities.

It's been approximately two decades since Sun World began marketing seedless watermelon, initially facing limited market penetration. Fortunately, Sun World's David Marguleas was willing to offer substantial promotional discounts if Hannaford would change its watermelon pricing structure, reducing both seeded and seedless to the same price points and promoting seedless. At a time when barcode labeling was unavailable, checkout confusion was eliminated and the sales program worked, beginning a major industry development all because both seller and retailer cooperated to devise a marketing program defying historical methodology.

Around the same time, Driscoll's began the initial marketing of strawberries in clear plastic trays, which would eventually transform an industry reluctant to change. Initially attempting to make money from the innovation, they were willing to temporarily reduce profitability in order to encourage retailers to obtain a track record of reduced berry handling costs and increased sales due to the ease of having berries on display during more store open hours. Along the way, both Driscoll's and retailers worked together solving handling problems and increasing consumer acceptance.

Innovators in the electronics industry have long recognized the sooner new item retailers can be reduced to attractive price points for expanded consumer purchasing, the quicker fixed costs could be recouped and profits enhanced. By contrast, the pre-cut lettuce industry took an extended time period before promotional programs were finally developed to create growing consumer interest and consistent expanding market penetration.

While some were questioning the expansion of locally grown programs, many retailers improved procurement programs making locally grown watchwords among consumers to the benefit of area growers.

Retail produce staff may not have the same level of passion for any one single commodity, instead utilizing marketing flare for the entire category. They recognize their future, and the companies' future, depend on how well they manage their responsibilities for sales, profit, customer satisfaction, variety, inventory levels, operational efficiencies, training and *esprit de corps* of all associates involved with the produce operation, frequently requiring interaction with and understanding of the objectives of the entire corporate organization. These are just some of the attributes enabling overall growth in a business world undergoing dramatic changes.

Retail produce has and will continue to be imperfect, missing an occasional beat. However, the reality is retail produce department staffs and corporate management utilize a macro instead of micro perspective to continuously develop and implement more effective consumer marketing.

**Contrast
today's
responsibility
for 500 SKUs
versus little
more than
a 100.**



2009 MARKETING EXCELLENCE AWARD WINNERS

- California Giant Berry Farms
- California Table Grape Commission
- Chilean Avocado Importers Association
- Chiquita/Fresh Express
- Coast Produce Co. Inc.
- Eurofresh Farms
- Giumarra Bros. Fruit Co. Inc.
- Idaho Potato Commission
- National Mango Board
- New York Apple Association
- Network For A Healthy California
- Ontario Apple Growers
- Produce For Kids
- Riveridge Produce Marketing Inc.
- Sambrailo Packaging
- Tanimura & Antle Inc.
- University of Massachusetts

TURN YOUR MARKETING INTO AN **AWARDING** EXPERIENCE

Right now, and on through June 4, 2010, we're taking entries for the **22nd Annual Marketing Excellence Awards Program**, presented by **PRODUCE BUSINESS**. The awards recognize excellence in marketing in each of five categories: retailers, restaurants, wholesalers, shippers and commodity organizations. Print, broadcast and other media are eligible to win.

To participate, send us the following:

1. Your name, company, address and phone.

2. Type of business.

3. Names and dates of promotion (must have taken place between June 1, 2009 and June 1, 2010).

4. Promotion objectives.

5. Description of promotion.

6. Promotion results (sales or traffic increases, media attention). What made this program a success?

7. All support materials used in the promotion – such as POP, ads, posters, TV commercials.

High-resolution photos to illustrate the promotion are encouraged. (Please do not send any produce)

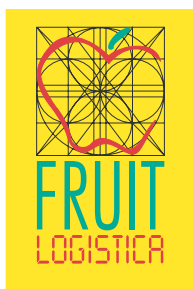
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P.O. Box 810425 • Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425

Deadline for entries is June 4, 2010

For additional information, call: 561-994-1118, Ext. 101



2010 Fruit Logistica Innovation Award Winners

For the past five years, the FLIA (Fruit Logistica Innovation Award) has recognized outstanding products or services that have had a notable impact on the fruit and vegetable industry at Fruit Logistica, the annual leading international trade fair for fresh produce marketing. The 2010 convention took place in Berlin, Germany from February 3-5, 2010, where more than 50,000 trade visitors from 120 countries were able to vote on the nine finalists, listed alphabetically below, that had been selected by a panel of experts.

ART: ARILS REMOVAL TOOL, First Place Winner *Mehadrink Tnuport Export, Israel*



The Arils Removal Tool comprises a bowl to catch the seeds, a grid and a flexible silicone dome. After removing the crown, the pomegranate is cut in half, placed on the grid and covered with the silicone dome. A tablespoon or a similar object can then be used to strike the pomegranate through the dome so that the seeds simply drop into the bowl beneath.

BELLAVERDE SWEET STEM BROCCOLI *Monsanto Vegetable Seeds, Netherlands*



Bellaverde Sweet Stem Broccoli is a new, sweeter variety of broccoli with a long, thin stem that can be cooked, steamed or eaten raw as an appetizer or in salads. After the first broccoli head has been removed, new young shoots grow in the sun and are hand harvested after just ten days. This is the secret to their delicate, sweet taste, their attractive green color and their special texture.

CARROT FETTUCCINI *Aureli Mario & La Linea Verde S.p.A. (licensor), Italy*



Carrot Fettuccini is a convenience product made from small strips of carrot. They can be eaten raw, as a snack, in a salad, or boiled for a few minutes and seasoned with olive oil or other spices. The base for Carrot Fettuccini is specially selected carrot varieties that are particularly suitable for the production of convenience products.

DYNAMIC SHIPPER *Polymer Logistics, Netherlands*



The Dynamic Shipper is a polypropylene foldable box on wheels with an adjustable elevating floor. The weight of the produce and the elastic supports will do the rest, making sure that the top layer of produce stays at more or less the same level.

EASYPACK BLACK & TRANSPARENT *NGP Plastic SA, Greece*



Easypack Black & Transparent offers the possibility of having a different color for the lid and the base in one, single-piece clamshell pack, satisfying the trend toward multi-color packs for effective presentation of fresh produce, while at the same time avoiding the disadvantages of separate lids and bases.

POMMONDE POTATO TASTE CONCEPT, Second Place Winner *HZPC Holland BV, Netherlands*



The Pommonde potato taste concept offers consumers an innovative practical guide when buying potatoes in the store. The Pommonde concept uses different logos and color codes to clearly identify each separate type of potato, including Fine (creamy and refined), Lite (light and mild), Bite (firm and tasty) and Ripe (floury and dry).

QS 300, Third Place Winner *Unitec S.p.A., Italy*



The QS 300 is a portable instrument for monitoring and measuring the internal quality of a wide range of fruit and vegetables including pip- and stone fruit, citrus, kiwis and tomatoes, without damaging the produce itself. The unit can be used to measure the sugar content in Brix, the consistency of the fruit pulp and the level of acidity by simply placing the instrument's sensor on the surface of the fruit.

WONDERFUL PISTACHIOS SALT & PEPPER *Paramount Farms Europe, Belgium*



A new mixture of a variety of pepper gives the otherwise typically salted pistachio a completely new warm and spicy taste. With this new flavor, Paramount Farms aims to attract new customers to the category and provide a wider choice of products.

XSENSE PERISHABLES QUALITY MONITORING SYSTEM



StePac LA Ltd., Israel

The Xsense Perishables Quality Monitoring System enables the continuous monitoring of the temperature and relative humidity of perishable fresh produce shipments on an individual pallet basis via the Internet and mobile phone system in real time. A GPS transmitter embedded in the system also allows the accurate tracking of shipping movements.

- 1) Please go to www.PRODUCEBUSINESS.com and click on The Electronic Rapid Response Card and enter the Reader Service numbers that correspond to the ad and the information showcase.
- 2) Contact the advertiser directly via the Web site, e-mail, phone or fax listed in the ad.

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Maurice A. Auerbach, Inc.	76-77	50	201-807-9292	201-807-9596
Ayco Farms, Inc.	50-51	74	954-788-6800	954-788-5600
Babe Farms, Inc.	42	42	800-648-6772	805-922-3950
Baero North America, Inc.	86-87	82	314-692-2270	314-991-2640
Blue Book Services	5	36	630-668-3500	630-668-0303
Boncheff Greenhouses	42	78	416-233-6922	416-236-3903
Brooks Tropicals	54-55	8	800-327-4833	305-246-5827
Brooks Tropicals	94-95	7	800-327-4833	305-246-5827
Calavo Growers, Inc.	80-81	15	800-4-CALAVO	805-921-3272
California Avocado Commission	52-53	10	800-344-4333	714-641-7024
California Pear Advisory Board	96-97	61	916-441-0432	916-446-1063
Canadian Produce				
Marketing Association	41	16	613-226-4187	613-226-2984
Capital City Fruit Co., Inc.	27	55	515-981-5111	515-981-4564
CarbAmericas	50-51	74	310-374-8286	954-786-96785
Chelan Fresh Marketing	46-47	32	509-682-4252	509-682-2651
Chestnut Hill Farms	50-51	74	305-592-6969	305-436-8969
Ciruli Brothers	88-89	9	520-281-9696	520-281-1473
Coast To Coast Produce Co.	36	43	800-433-1403	203-271-2796
Community Suffolk, Inc.	38	93	617-389-5200	617-389-6680
Crowley Maritime Corp.	125	90	800-CROWLEY	
Crystal Valley Foods	50-51	74	800-359-5631	305-592-9803
Customized Brokers	50-51	74	305-471-8989	305-471-8988
D'Arrigo Bros. Co. of New York	35	48	800-223-8080	718-960-0544
Del Monte Fresh Produce	160	75	800-950-3683	305-520-8495
Des Moines Truck Brokers, Inc.	128	77	800-247-2514	515-981-0923
DNE World Fruit Sales	72-73	5	800-327-6676	772-465-1181
Dole Fresh Fruit Company	56-59	21	818-879-6600	818-879-6628
Dole Fresh Vegetable Co.	2	68	800-333-5454	831-754-5243
dProduce Man Software	120	40	888-PRODMAN	650-712-9973
Driscoll Strawberry Associates, Inc.	60-61		831-763-5000	831-761-5988
Driscoll Strawberry Associates, Inc.	62-63	65	831-763-5000	831-761-5988
Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Inc.	68-69	53	561-978-5714	561-978-5705
East Coast Brokers & Packers, Inc.	159	86	800-557-7751	863-869-9850
Eaton & Eustis Co.	40	91	617-884-0298	617-884-2611
Family Tree Farms	133	70	866-FLAVOR-1	559-595-7795
Family Tree Farms	26	69	866-FLAVOR-1	559-595-7795
Family Tree Farms	106-107	14	866-FLAVOR-1	559-595-7795
Fresh Origins, LLC	42	80	760-822-6171	760-736-4883
Full Steam Marketing & Design	102-103	57	831-757-4164	831-757-7574
Genpro Transportation Services, Inc.	126	35	800-243-6770	973-589-1877
The Giumarra Companies	134	67	323-415-8330	213-628-4878
Global Organic Specialty Source, Inc.	30	94	877-952-1198	941-358-6551
Gourmet Specialty Imports LLC	42	83	610-345-1113	610-345-1116
Gourmet Trading Company	50-51	74	310-216-7575	310-216-7676
Grimmway Farms	66-67	13	661-845-9435	661-393-6458
Hollandia Produce	82-83	6	805-684-4146	805-684-9363
Idaho Potato Commission	21	62	208-334-2350	208-334-2274

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Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion				
Promotion Committee	92-93	2	888-466-4667	208-722-6582
Interex Corp.	39	47	888-441-8676	
Jackson Farming Company	138	95	910-567-2202	910-567-6321
J.R. Kelly Company	42	45	888-344-4392	618-344-2297
Keystone Fruit Marketing, Inc.	108-109	39	772-316-0364	717-597-4096
Keystone Fruit Marketing, Inc.	50-51	74	717-597-2112	717-597-4096
LGS Specialty Sales, Ltd.	143	1	800-796-2349	718-542-2354
Allen Lund Company, Inc.	127	87	800-508-5863	818-883-5863
Mann Packing Company, Inc.	64-65	18	800-884-6266	831-422-5171
Mann Packing Company, Inc.	9	19	800-884-6266	831-422-5171
Marie's	105	76	972-569-6813	714-257-4019
MIXTEC Group	30	63	626-440-7077	626-440-1557
Monterey Mushrooms	90-91	11	800-333-MUSH	831-763-2300
New England Produce Council	24	71	781-273-0444	781-273-4154
New York Apple Association, Inc.	23	51	585-924-2171	585-924-1629
Nickey Gregory Company, LLC	37	98	404-366-7410	404-363-1169
North Bay Produce	50-51	74	231-946-1941	231-946-1902
Northern Plains Potato Growers Assn.	25	58	218-773-3633	218-773-6227
Ocean Mist Farms	48-49	54	831-633-2492	831-633-4363
Peri & Sons Farms	31	88	775-463-4444	775-463-4028
The Perishable Specialist, Inc.	50-51	74	305-477-9906	305-477-9975
Peruvian Asparagus Importers Association	50-51	74	610-284-0326	
Produce for Better Health Foundation	147	37	302-235-2329	302-235-5555
Produce Pro Software	120	85	630-395-0535	630-572-0390
Progressive Marketing Group	50-51	74	323-890-8100	323-890-8113
The Produce Exchange	110-111	46	925-454-8710	925-454-8711
PuraVida Farms	138	99	480-588-7012	714-686-9253
Red Blossom Farms, Inc.	17	44	805-981-1839	805-693-0032
SAGARPA - Embassy of Mexico	32-33	41	202-728-1729	202-728-1728
Sage Fruit Company	70-71	17	913-239-0060	913-239-0055
Sambraillo Packaging	136	38	831-724-7581	831-724-1403
Southern Specialties	50-51	74	954-784-6500	954-784-5800
Southern Specialties	42	81	954-784-6500	954-784-5800
Spice World, Inc.	27	60	800-433-4979	407-857-7171
State Garden, Inc./Olivia's	38	89	617-884-1816	617-884-4919
Sunlight Int'l. Sales	78-79	49	661-792-6360	661-792-6529
SunnyRidge Farm, Inc.	141	97	863-299-1894	863-299-7794
Sweet Onion Trading Company	31	96	800-699-3727	321-674-2003
Tanimura & Antle, Inc.	84-85	20	800-772-4542	831-455-3915
Team Produce International, Inc.	50-51	74	800-505-0665	305-513-9596
Trinity Fruit Sales	112-113	12	559-433-3777	559-433-3790
Turbana Banana Corp	98-99	3	800-TURBANA	305-443-8908
United States Potato Board	100-101	56	303-369-7783	303-369-7719
United Fresh Produce Association	29	34	202-303-3400	202-303-3433
Ventura Foods, LLC	105	76	972-569-6813	714-257-4019
Vidalia Onion Committee	19	84	912-537-1918	912-537-2166
VIP Marketing, Inc.	135	92	213-833-7784	213-833-7788
Well-Pict Berries	131	66	831-722-3871	831-722-6340
West Coast Tomato, Inc.	28	100	941-722-4537	941-729-6778

Blast from the Past



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modern
HANDLING METHODS

CABANA BANANA boxes are designed for maximum capacity and protection of the fruit during stacking, moving and stacking and handling. Cabana boxes, and numerous variations, are available in the handling of bananas.

you **save**
processing time and money
with **cabana** plantation-boxed bananas!



The check list tells the story: Stem fruit requires 25 or more processing steps; plantation-boxed CABANA BANANAS require only four. You save 17 costly steps with CABANA!

The result is better sized, longer shelf, stronger and more solid, and the assurance of providing your customer with their consistent quality, more reliable fruit.

CABANA BANANAS are almost ready for retail when they reach your warehouse. All you do is unload, ripen, load and deliver. The fruit is unblemished, fights through to retail, completely eliminating the stacking and loading of maximum handling.

CABANA BANANAS are the only bananas selected, processed and packed in barrels and chambers at the plantation, pre-packed in cartons of 25 lbs, and after natural ripening. They ripen easily and evenly in standard open ripening rooms in four, five six and seven-day ripening cycles.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the boxed banana. Thanks to Standard Fruit Co., later acquired by Dole Corp., and its Cabana brand plantation-boxed bananas, banana consumption doubled, rising to 27 pounds-per-person from 13.5 pounds-per-person. Bruce Paschal, a member of the original Standard Fruit Co. marketing team behind the boxed banana, asserts, "Boxed bananas is what helped us take over first place in the banana business. They really saved the industry because by putting them in boxes, we took nearly 20 steps off the handling process. You can imagine what that did to the quality." All that was needed was to unload the boxes, place them in the ripening room and then load them up again for delivery.

Prior to the boxing of bananas, they were shipped in stem form, leading to a great deal of bruising from over-handling. In fact, produce executives regularly expected a loss of margin between 13 to 21 percent. Not only did the boxes reduce handling, but they also allowed the bananas to be stacked all the way to the ceiling of shipping containers. The same was true in ripening rooms around the United States, where the bananas could easily

ripen within their boxes, which featured built-in slots allowing a small dose of ethylene into the box to begin the ripening process.

Paschal points out yet another benefit to the boxed banana. "The boxes allowed us to ship Cavendish bananas from the plantations in Central America, instead of the Gros Michel strain, which had a lot of problems and was very disease-prone, despite the fact that it was more tolerant to excessive handling," he explains. "Cavendish bananas were more prolific; they got at least twice as much production in the field and there was much less shrink. Plus, they were much sweeter. The consumer got a better banana in better shape and at a price that stayed pretty consistent."

To commemorate the 50th anniversary, Paschal has been organizing a celebratory weekend in New Orleans for the original boxed banana team members March 19-21. As of publication, more than 60 people were registered to attend. Activities scheduled throughout the weekend include Visual Memories, Humorous and Interesting Stories, a Reunion Luncheon and Dinner, a tour of downtown New Orleans' hotspots and more.

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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