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Challenging Recipes Put Produce  
Departments And Staff To The Test

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**THIS MONTH'S WINNER**



**Paul Koenck Jr.**  
**Produce Manager**  
**Kaufman's Supervalu**  
**Oregon, IL**

Paul Koenck has spent his career in the produce business. "I have been in the business for 43 years," he says. "I started in high school and stuck with it."

Koenck is currently the produce manager for Kaufman's Supervalu, where he orders, merchandises and prices all the fresh produce for the store. "We are in charge of the whole department," he says. "It's just me and one other person, if you can believe it. But it keeps us on our toes, that's for sure!" Koenck's store is independently owned, but supplied by Supervalu, as well as whole-

saler, Indianapolis Produce.

Prior to joining the Supervalu team, where he has been for three years, Koenck owned his own grocery store for 21 years. Koenck credits much of his success to his wife, Terri. "I enjoy the business overall," he says. "It changes a lot, and you never know what you are going to get from day to day. Plus, I like interacting with people, and meeting our customers."

Koenck has been reading **PRODUCE BUSINESS** for some time. "I read it also when I had my own business. I like to learn about the trends, and keep up to date. It's a great way to find out what other stores are doing without having to travel too far."

**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.

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**QUESTIONS FOR THE MARCH ISSUE**

- 1) Name four varieties of valued-added vegetables marketed by Apio. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What is the contact number for Brooks Tropicals? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) What kind of merchandising support does Clifford Produce provide? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) What two social media sites does Domex Superfresh Growers use? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) In what state is Sunshine Sweet Corn grown in the Spring? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) What award did Monterey Mushrooms win in 2011? \_\_\_\_\_

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# THE ROAD AHEAD: HOW TRANSPORTATION LEGISLATION WILL AFFECT THE PRODUCE INDUSTRY

By Julie Manes  
Director of Government Relations  
United Fresh Produce Association

The past several months have been busy ones in the area of federal transportation policy, and the coming months show promise for more activity. Of course, transportation policy is critical to the produce industry. Without the ability to efficiently and safely transport our commodities in a timely manner, much of the rest of growers', processors' and retailers' efforts would be wasted.

The current wave of transportation policies affecting the industry came to prominence last year with a couple of key Obama Administration announcements on regulatory policy, as the administration continues the ongoing work of implementing legislation passed by Congress. Early last year, the Obama Administration announced that it had reached an agreement with the Mexican government on the fundamentals of a program to restart the cross-border trucking program begun under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). For many years after the passage of the legislative proposal, its implementation was held up due to specious objections raised by opponents about safety issues associated with Mexican trucks, though much of the opposition's concern was the belief that such a program would have a harmful effect on U.S. jobs.

As a result, the Mexican government imposed over \$2 billion in tariffs on U.S. goods, including fruit and vegetables. American businesses from a wide variety of sectors that were impacted by the tariffs joined together to press for the continuation of the cross-border program. This pressure, combined with the comprehensive safety requirements in the agreement between the Obama Administration and the Calderon government of Mexico, overcame opponents' objections, and cross-border trucking was resumed in the Fall of 2011.

Also, early last year, the Administration announced that it was updating regulatory

policy on the hours-of-service (HOS), which regulate the working hours of commercial truckers. Initial concerns were raised by a variety of industries dependent on commercial trucking, including the produce industry, that the proposed changes to the HOS rules would be detrimental to efficiency without any indication they would significantly enhance safety. While the final rule, issued just before the first of the year, did make some acknowledgement of those concerns by maintaining the current 11 hours of daily driving time, there remain concerns about the restart provisions, pertaining to how long drivers must be off the road before they can drive again. Legal challenges to the final rule, which takes full effect in 2013, are possible.

Congress is also busy debating transportation policy. In addition to passing a Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization, Congress has begun work on comprehensive legislation to reauthorize surface transportation programs, including those impacting highways and infrastructure, which are so important for those in the produce industry to stay in business. In the first week in February, three committees within the House of Representatives voted on legislation to reauthorize highway programs on a long-term basis for the first time in nearly seven years. In that time, highway programs have been kept going through a series of short-term extensions of the current authority, and ongoing legislative battles over issues such as how to fund surface transportation programs has prevented meaningful legislative action. A long-term reauthorization, requiring a serious re-examination of current programs and how the nation's evolving transportation and infrastructure needs can be met, is badly needed.

The first week of February, three committees in the House of Representatives with jurisdiction over portions of surface transportation legislation passed various sections

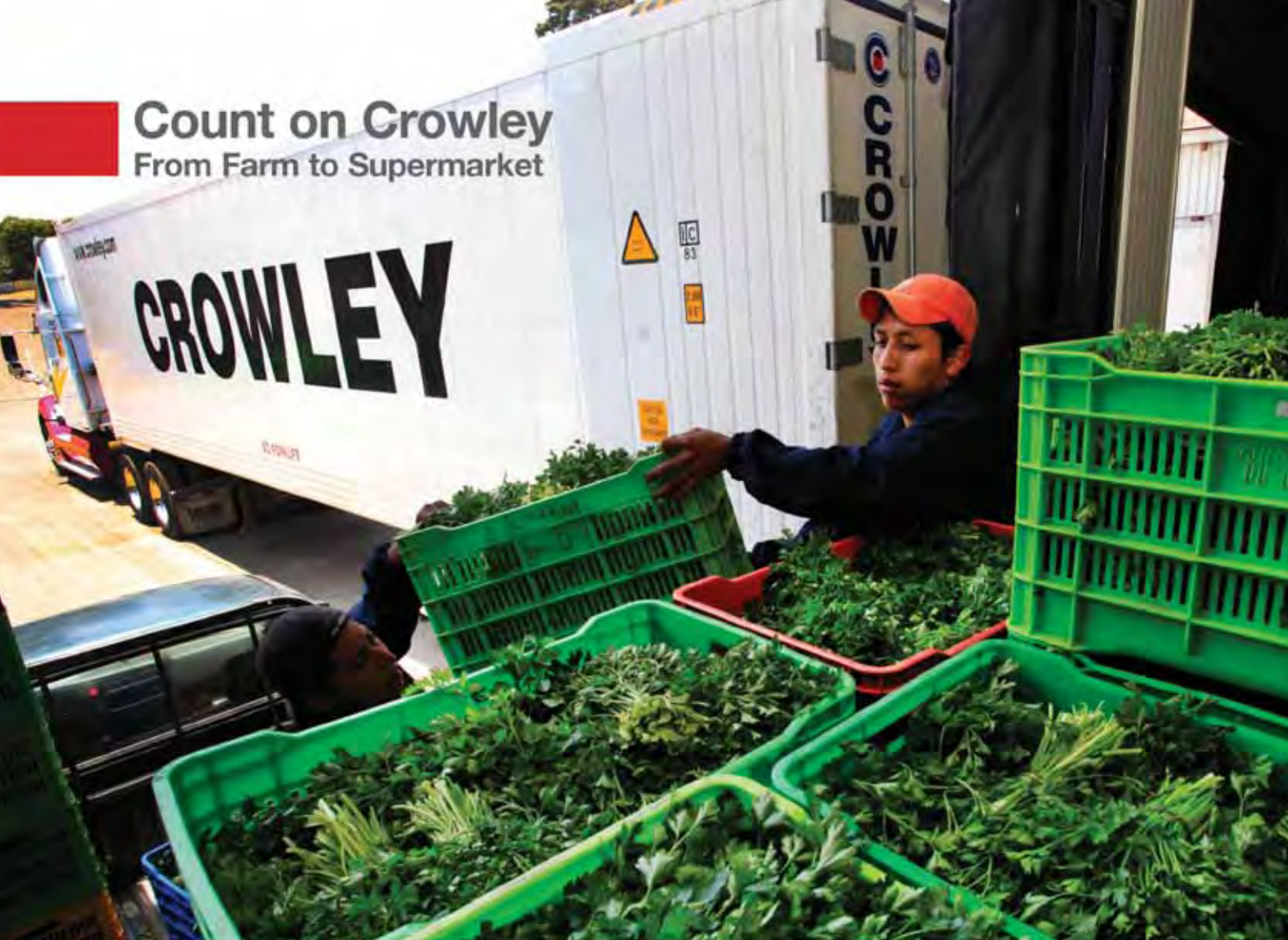
of the legislation. The Ways and Means Committee passed the financing portion of the legislation; the Natural Resources Committee passed the proposals regarding energy and the Transportation and Infrastructure passed the majority of the policy initiatives in the legislation. The bill, costing \$260 billion and lasting for five years, now goes in its entirety to the full House of Representatives for consideration in mid-February.

While the progress of the Transportation Reauthorization legislation is a good thing, a significant transportation priority for the produce industry suffered a setback early in the process. When the legislation was initially taken up by the House Transportation Committee, it contained legislation allowing states to opt to increase the allowable truck weight up to 97,000 pounds with the addition of a sixth axle. Numerous studies done by various state, federal and international organizations demonstrate that increased truck weights can improve efficiency, productivity and environmental performance without sacrificing safety. In addition, the language originally included in the bill allows for states to opt-in — it is not a federal mandate — and requires that the safety performance of heavier trucks be monitored by the Department of Transportation.

However, those who opposed the language, namely those representing alternate modes of transportation, made enough noise about supposed safety concerns that a substitute proposal calling only for a study of the already much-studied increased truck weight proposal, was accepted in place of the opt-in for states proposal. Now those supporting increased truck weights must now look to the full House and the Senate for opportunities. While the fate of the overall transportation legislation is far from clear, it is most certainly a high profile priority of the House Republican leadership. However, it remains unclear what lies on the road ahead.



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# OBSTACLES TO WHOLESALING

By James Prevor  
President & Editor-in-Chief



**T**he world is filled with business books that detail how companies succeed. Yet most are of limited utility, because the very same companies that succeed typically go on to fail. Although in some cases, it is because success changes the company radically and the executives decide to abandon the methods that led to success. In even more cases, it is that the world has changed around the business, yet the

executives keep doing the same old thing.

Such had been the case for hundreds of independent wholesalers. As a result, many no longer exist. The transformation of wholesaling has been glacial, so all have had fair warning. As soon as President Eisenhower unveiled plans for the Interstate Highway System in 1956, the writing was on the wall. All of a sudden, the need to buy a full rail car of product and have a location on a rail siding would disappear, and that would dramatically expand the number of buyers who could buy direct.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, this author's father, then a New York produce wholesaler, started opening supermarkets as he saw the writing on the wall with longstanding supermarket customers buying more and more direct, cutting out the wholesaler.

When Wal-Mart launched its first Supercenter in 1988, it set off a wave of consolidation as other retailers bought up regional supermarket chains. All of a sudden, there was no Vons, Stop & Shop or Dominick's, as independent entities to sell. New York, with its enormous volume and diverse market, was mostly exempt, but many other parts of the country saw wholesalers with a much more limited customer base.

While wholesaling as an industry has been in trouble, individual wholesalers often began to do well in part because they consolidated the business as they became full line houses and took over the business of those who sold out or closed.

New obstacles have emerged now making it difficult for traditional wholesalers to thrive. One big change is that most major shippers now grow to program-sale schedules. They may turn to the street when they have an oversupply, but they used to have an oversupply every day — that is no longer true. Food safety and traceability issues have also led buyers to prefer steady-supply relationships. Although wholesalers can provide this — indeed many of those looking to provide this steady supply will sometimes fill in and buy on the street — it is not clear that wholesalers have a competitive edge in this area.

So does this mean that most wholesalers are done for? Not at all. Most produce wholesalers are small businesses. Large, high volume players in major cities can have annual sales well below \$100 million annually; \$50 million is very respectable, and many don't have \$10 million in sales.

What this means is that the success of these companies does not depend on macroeconomic factors or the strategic direction of the industry. It depends on the intelligence, initiative and industry of the owners of these companies and, often, of the intensity of the desire of the next generation to be there and to pass on the business to their children. If the thought is to stand on a dock waiting for customers to come and buy commodities, that isn't a strategy likely to see much growth.

**If the thought is to stand on a dock waiting for customers to come and buy commodities, that isn't a strategy likely to see much growth.**

Many wholesalers have had the idea of getting into forward distribution, often because they find themselves with excess capacity and, done strategically, that can be a winner. Done randomly, though, it just converts the best shippers into a fee-based business. That can be problematic as the minute there is a fee on the P&L, all one wants to do is reduce it.

Where are the big opportunities for wholesalers? There are many. The trend to ethnic independent retailing is opening a large window for those willing to adapt. Niche items, such as specialty and organic, can make a wholesaler an everyday customer for those who wouldn't normally buy. Buying a farm would even make sense, as it would let the wholesaler redefine itself as "direct" and then piggyback every other item on the order.

We would say the main strategic goal for a wholesaler is to identify must-have items difficult to procure on a national basis and then use those items to piggyback other sales. The two most obvious: Processing, especially fresh-cut fruit and custom programs, and locally grown programs. Nobody has been able to make fresh-cut fruit work as a national shipping item, so if a local distributor can become a leading local processor and packer able to do what customers need, often in small batches, it will wind up with the customer base and distribution network to do a lot more business. Same goes with local. These efforts are mostly a pain for big buyers. But if a wholesaler consolidates 100 sweet corn growers and can make volume programs, it will find the door open to customers it never would have had.

There are loads of profitable and successful wholesalers all across the country. They are the survivors because the owners adapted to a changing world. If the next generation wants to continue this legacy of family business leadership, its obligation will be to adapt once again.

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# Produce Department Maintains Appeal Across Polarized Consumers

BY THE NIELSEN PERISHABLES GROUP

Multiple changes in consumer shopping behaviors occurred as a result of the economic turmoil of the past four years. Generally speaking, consumers initially put a heavy emphasis on deep discounts, and retailers obliged by offering attention-grabbing deals to pull consumers into their stores. More recently, some consumers remain focused on low prices, while others focus on the price/benefit ratio; this has created a polarization of consumers and their purchase decisions.

produce department growth. Dollar and volume sales of many value-added fruits and vegetables are rising, despite their higher price points compared to traditional offerings.

Packaged salad, widely considered the founding convenience produce item, declined when the financial crisis hit in 2008 and during most of the next two years. In the latest 52 weeks ending Dec. 31, 2011, however, packaged salad volume sales increased slightly, despite a 2.2 percent increase in retail price. Moreover, the percentage of volume sold on promotion declined nearly 3 percent, indicating consumers were willing to pay full price.

Packaged salads' future looks bright, as young consumers drive the category. An April 2011 consumer survey from Nielsen Perishables Group revealed that 63 percent of consumers ages 24 or younger reported purchasing packaged salad at least monthly; this was the highest rate of any age group. Even for organic packaged salads, 60 percent of this consumer group purchased monthly or more often, illustrating the demographic's willingness to pay for fresh foods that align with their priorities.

## Unique Flavors Are Bankable

There are consistently more and more items competing for space on produce department shelves. The goal that's often associated with product innovation is to "be the next Honeycrisp," and it's no wonder; despite its 60 percent price premium compared to the more traditional Red Delicious apple, the number of U.S. households purchasing Honeycrisp apples grew 2.5 percent in the past year, while its volume velocity increased 16.1 percent. During the same period, Red Delicious apples suffered a 4.9 percent decline in household penetration and 16.4 percent decline in volume velocity, according to FreshFacts Shopper

Insights powered by Spire.

A similar story played out in the pepper category. Thanks to the growing popularity of unique pepper varieties, specialty peppers increased volume 8.6 percent, while traditional green peppers increased a more modest 2.4 percent.

## Continued Success Of Organics

While organic produce posts an 80 percent price premium over conventional on average, consumers remain loyal to organics. Sales of organics in the produce department increased 10 percent in the latest 52 weeks, outpacing conventional produce's 3.8 percent growth.

Tomatoes are exemplifying the larger trend toward organics' success. During the past year, organic tomatoes posted dollar and volume growth of 9.3 percent and 7 percent, respectively, despite being twice the price. Conventional tomatoes declined 0.5 percent in volume and increased dollars 2 percent (indicating the dollar growth was driven by price increases).

Natural (i.e., items with claims such as "naturally grown") produce also posted near 10 percent growth, proving that consumers will still pay more for products with "natural" claims.

The produce department stands to benefit as additional consumers emerge from the recessionary mindset this year, but it's essential to consider both ends of the polarized consumer when mapping assortment and pricing strategies. Offering items that appeal to the value-minded consumer (i.e. items with higher price points) will help grow overall purchase size in the department, but communicating low-priced, bargain options can help maintain loyalty and bring additional consumers to the department.

*About the data: Sales data provided by Nielsen Perishables Group FreshFacts, representing 63 percent of national supermarket ACV share.*



CHART COURTESY OF NIELSEN PERISHABLES GROUP

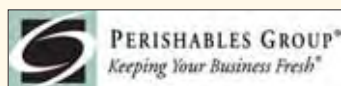
The produce department has the advantage of appealing to consumers on both ends of the spectrum through bargain products, such as bulk potatoes, and higher-priced items, such as niche varieties and value-added options. The produce department's advantage is apparent in the fact that the department has grown sales four of the past five years, despite its higher price points compared to canned or frozen alternatives.

On one end of the polarization, consumers feel the continued pressure of economic turmoil. These price-focused consumers are taking advantage of more money-saving options than ever, including coupons, group discount deals, bargain items and shopping club or dollar retail channels.

On the other end of the polarization, consumers no longer feel the pressure of the recession and base their purchases on value rather than price. These consumers are drawn to produce items that appeal to a variety of consumer values including convenience, unique flavors and organics.

## The Convenience Factor

Value-added produce continues to drive



The Nielsen Perishables Group consults with clients in the fresh food space. Based in Chicago, the Nielsen Perishables Group specializes in consumer research, advanced analytics, marketing communications, category development, supply chain management and activity-based costing. For more information, visit [www.perishablesgroup.com](http://www.perishablesgroup.com).



# Generalize Or Specialize? That Is The Question

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

**W**hat does it mean for consumers to be price-sensitive? How does one appeal to such a consumer? It is a bit of a quandary. For some consumers, a low price per pound on a package at a warehouse club is enormously appealing. Other consumers might shy away from the actual cash outlay required even though they might ultimately use that volume. For others still, they can't use the quantity, so the best value when defined as the best price per pound is actually not the best value for them, since they would just waste the excess produce.

Motivations matter as well. A great deal offered by Whole Foods might appeal to a consumer, but if the concern is appearing "showy" before friends, the consumer might not even walk into Whole Foods, and instead, wind up paying more to get the same item at a supermarket with a less pricey reputation. Other people, perhaps desperately seeking value, would die before they let their friends know that the lunch they are eating came from the Wal-Mart deli.

It is also true that the lines of who buys what are kind of blurry. As the Perishables Group points out, the produce department at retail offers a range of different items from low-cost basics, such as potatoes, to exotic specialties, organic options, value-added options, special varieties, etc. Yet the customers for each are not easily predictable. Plenty of multi-millionaires are meat-and-potato folks, and people who are struggling can often cut back in ways that lead to high-end produce purchases.

For example, a two-income family where one spouse gets laid off may economize dramatically. That economizing, though, could take the form of no longer eating out. If they used to go out with friends and now they visit each other's homes, they may buy some pretty pricey raspberries to entertain, though it is still economizing compared to going to the steak house.

Another family may economize by doing things such as postponing the purchase of a new car or canceling a vacation. These

moves both free up income and create frustration, a perfect combination to allow the purchase of a small indulgence such as a preferred apple variety.

Some items that seem pricey are actually cheap if viewed from the right perspective. A stir-fry package, for example, may be a high price per pound, but if you make one stir fry meal for two people, it is probably cheaper than buying all those ingredients and throwing half of it out.

Also as the Perishables Group notes, generational perceptions alter what one perceives as an extravagance. There are young people in America who have never seen their parents make a salad from a head of lettuce; supposedly "convenience" items are staples to these people.

Psychographics and life stage make a difference as well. Starving PhD candidates may buy pricey organic product because it fits into their ethos, and more than a few moms give up things for themselves to make sure their baby's food is organic. Whole Foods didn't always search out the most affluent communities for store locations; it searched out high educational attainment.

What this all means is that while it is interesting to know what consumers in general are doing, it is much more important to know what the particular consumers at your store or, for a producer, the particular consumers at the stores he is selling to, are thinking and doing. That is not easily predicted solely based on income.

The Perishables Group's suggestion that retailers need diversity to appeal to "both ends of the polarized consumer" is obviously true if what one wants to do is offer a broad-based assortment to attract a diverse community. The more interesting question, though, is whether that really makes much sense any more as a business strategy. Maybe the thing to do is specialize. Wal-Mart's efforts to move upscale brought little but pain.

Maybe the future is Aldi, Trader Joes, Whole Foods, Costco, dollar stores, a back-to-basics Wal-Mart, HEB Central Market, Balducci's, etc. Maybe it is stores that don't

**While it is interesting to know what consumers in general are doing, it is much more important to know what the particular consumers at your store or, for a producer, the particular consumers at the stores he is selling to, are thinking and doing.**

try to be everything to everybody, but that delight particular types of consumers. Inherently, this means they also disappoint those customers for whom they are not suited, which adds the final complication. At any given moment, there is some product and promotional mix that will maximize profits. Yet switching back and forth between these strategies, even if possible, might still depress profits over time.

The problem is multifaceted. Part of it is that the consumers see the product intended for other consumer types and may feel alienated. Part of it is that there is limited space, so putting in items to appeal to a different demographic or psychographic can lead to a reduction of assortment aimed at the primary shopper. Part of it is that people have prejudices and preferences. So if the plan to attract diverse shoppers works — say the store attracts a whole new Latino population — one can easily wind up alienating the original consumer base.

Great data, such as that the Perishables Group has been kind enough to share with us, is, in fact, only the beginning of the process by which we learn how to best serve consumers.



**CPMA BOOTH REVIEW**

**BOOTH #635  
AMERIFRESH INC.  
Scottsdale, AZ**

Amerifresh is one of the only source-based produce marketers covering all major agricultural regions. Our SnoBoy brand was trademarked in 1925. Since then, it has been synonymous with high quality produce and satisfaction.



**BOOTH #358  
CF FRESH  
Sedro-Wooley, WA**

CF Fresh is the largest marketer of certified organic apples and pears in North America. Organic apples, pears, onions, potatoes and more are available year-round in our Viva Tierra brand.



**BOOTH #453  
DRC - FRUIT AND  
VEGETABLE DISPUTE  
RESOLUTION CORP.**

**Ottawa, Ontario, Canada**  
Since 2000, the DRC has helped the produce industry resolve over \$35 million in disputes. Membership in the DRC has become synonymous with fair and ethical trading. The DRC is the help desk for the North American produce industry.



**BOOTH #809  
IDAHO POTATO  
COMMISSION**

**Eagle, ID**  
The Idaho Potato Commission is the marketing arm for the entire Idaho potato industry. Started 75 years ago, the organization has created the well-known "Grown in Idaho" seal, which symbolizes quality known around the world.



**BOOTH #203  
PRODUCE PRO SOFTWARE  
Woodridge, IL**

Produce Pro is an integrated software solution for wholesale food distributors, terminal markets, processors and importers. Produce Pro prides itself on being on the cutting edge of traceability, and provides its customers with the tools to meet the demands of their customers.



**BOOTH #123  
CALIFORNIA STRAWBERRY  
COMMISSION**

**Watsonville, CA**  
Strawberries top the berry category, the fastest growing category worldwide. Naturally packed with nutrients, strawberries are a healthy choice anytime. Available year-round, California produces 88 percent of U.S. strawberries.



**BOOTH #404  
COLUMBIA MARKETING  
INTERNATIONAL  
Wenatchee, WA**

As one of Washington State's largest apple, pear and cherry shippers, CMI strives to deliver the finest products through improved growing, harvesting and shipping procedures. You can count on CMI for exceptional service and selection of conventional and organic apples, pears and cherries.



**BOOTH #356  
DULCINEA FARMS LLC  
Ladera Ranch, CA**

At Dulcinea, our commitment is to deliver only the highest quality, best tasting fruit. We are passionate about providing the freshest produce and flavor consumers love year-round.



**BOOTH #916  
PAKSENSE INC.**

**Boise, ID**  
XpressPDF temperature monitoring labels feature a USB connection point that can be plugged directly into a computer. The label eliminates readers and software and automatically generates a PDF of historical temperature data when connected.



**BOOTH #852  
SANTA CRUZ  
BERRY FARMING CO. LLC  
Watsonville, CA**

Santa Cruz Berry Farming grows and ships high quality organic and conventional strawberries from throughout the state of California. Our goal is to produce the highest quality, safest, most flavorful strawberries possible.

**BOOTH #416  
CALIFORNIA TOMATO FARMERS  
Fresno, CA**

California Tomato Farmers are multi-generational family farmers who are at the forefront of food safety, sustainability and quality. Learn what "The Fresh Standard" delivers to you and your customers.



**BOOTH #535  
DEL MONTE FRESH  
PRODUCE CO.**

**St. Leonard, Quebec, Canada**  
Del Monte Fresh Produce offers wholesalers and retailers an array of innovative solutions that address the evolving lifestyle needs of today's consumers.



**BOOTH #843  
FIRSTFRUITS MARKETING  
OF WA**

**Yakima, WA**  
Our growers have a strong passion for producing high quality fruit and working toward a greater purpose. We grow apples and the best varieties, but it's our philosophy that sets us apart.



**BOOTH #735  
PEAK OF THE MARKET  
Winnipeg, Manitoba,  
Canada**

Peak of the Market has grown quality produce in Manitoba for 69 years and supplies over 120 different varieties of Manitoba-grown vegetables.



**BOOTH #736  
SEALD SWEET  
INTERNATIONAL**

**Vero Beach, FL**  
Seald Sweet, founded in 1909 as a Florida citrus cooperative, is a member of the UNIVEG group and a leading U.S. marketer and shipper of citrus and other fresh produce worldwide.



**BOOTH #829  
CAVENDISH PRODUCE**

**Charlottetown, PEI, Canada**  
Cavendish Produce is the Fresh Potato Specialist offering an assortment of value-added and mainstream potato products. We are your one-stop supplier of top quality potatoes.



**BOOTH #205  
DOMEX SUPERFRESH  
GROWERS**

**Yakima, WA**  
Domex Superfresh Growers is a leading grower and shipper of apples, pears and cherries from the Pacific Northwest. Learn how our difference makes all the difference.



**BOOTH #416  
FLORIDA TOMATO  
COMMITTEE  
Maitland, FL**

Nothing is more important than your continued trust and confidence. Florida tomato growers are committed to ensuring the best quality, wholesomeness and safety of every fresh Florida tomato we ship.



**BOOTH #608  
PRODUCE BUSINESS**

**Boca Raton, FL**  
PRODUCE BUSINESS is the No. 1 publication reaching produce buyers around the world. Covering marketing, merchandising, management and procurement issues that affect sales of produce and floral items, PRODUCE BUSINESS uniquely "initiates industry improvement."



**BOOTH #818  
SILVER CREEK SOFTWARE  
Boise, ID**

Makers of Visual Produce accounting/financial management software for produce wholesalers, distributors, packers, brokers, fresh-cut processors and growers. With traceability, contract pricing, lot control, route accounting, online ordering, EDI, landed cost and much more.





**CPMA BOOTH REVIEW**

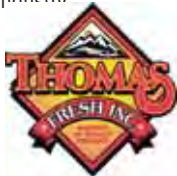
**BOOTH #628**  
**TANIMURA & ANTLE**  
Salinas, CA

The Tanimura & Antle Artisan Lettuce & Artisan Romaine are exclusive select seed varieties that have been carefully chosen for premium flavor, quality and variety. Grown on USA family farms, we harvest at the peak of freshness using sustainable growing practices.



**BOOTH #257**  
**THOMAS FRESH INC.**  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Thomas Fresh is a produce grower/packer/wholesaler made up of passionate staff members dedicated to making a difference in the produce industry.



**BOOTH #659**  
**WINDSET FARMS**  
Delta, British Columbia, Canada

Windset Farms grows fresh, beautiful produce using state-of-art technology, responsible growing practices and a gentle hand. Year-round, we pack and ship countless pounds of premium-quality produce throughout North America, making new "Friends in Freshness" everyday.



**PRODUCE & FLORAL WATCH TRANSITIONS**

**GOLINHARRIS**  
LOS ANGELES, CA

Gary Caloroso has joined GolinHarris as executive director, a new position at the agency. Caloroso will be based in Los Angeles and will lead and manage several client accounts in the practice's growing food and beverage arena. He is the most senior agriculture and commodities expert in the region. Prior to rejoining GolinHarris, Caloroso served most recently as vice president at Augustine Ideas, a marketing communications agency specializing in commodity boards/trade associations, produce companies and supermarket chains. Caloroso also held positions with Sahlman Williams Public Relations and Marketing and Porter Novelli.



**PURE HOT HOUSE FOODS**  
LEAMINGTON, ONTARIO, CANADA

Pure Hot House Foods welcomes Bob Donckers as the company's new chief operations officer. Donckers' produce experience spans more than 20 years in the business. His first job was with Safeway as a produce clerk. Following that, he held multiple roles throughout Costco Wholesale, eventually ending up as a produce buyer. He recently served as vice president for Mastronardi Produce, where he oversaw food safety and procurement.



**ANNOUNCEMENTS**



*expect the world from us*

**OPPENHEIMER TO MARKET BLUE MOUNTAIN GROWERS PRODUCT**

Oppenheimer Group of Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada, has announced an exclusive new grower partnership with Blue Mountain Growers Inc. of Milton-Freewater, OR. Oppenheimer will market apples, cherries, plums and Italian prunes in the coming season. The partnership with Blue Mountain adds to Oppenheimer's Pacific Northwest offerings, which also include Enza Jazz, Pacific Rose and Envy apples grown throughout Eastern Washington, and Orchard View Farms cherries from Dalles, OR.

**HERITAGE RESERVE NAVAL ORANGES AVAILABLE THROUGH APRIL**

Lindsay, CA-based LoBue Citrus announced that Heritage Reserve Navel Oranges — a limited-run navel program, which began shipping at the end of February — will be available through April. Last year, select retailers that carried Heritage Reserve enjoyed a significant boost in the Navel category. Heritage Reserve Navel Oranges are taste-tested daily, graded tightly for optimal flavor, and packed to order.



**VAL VERDE VEGETABLE EXPANDS VARIETY TRIALS**

Val Verde Vegetable Co. is helping cauliflower make a comeback and introducing other new products, including green onions. Changes in varieties and increased transportation costs created an opportunity for Texas to re-enter the cauliflower market and work to assume a larger share of commercial volume. The same can be said for products like romaine and green onions. Harvest of cauliflower and pencil-size green onions are now underway. Currently, the McAllen, TX-based company is the only grower in South Texas growing green onions.

**MANN PACKING EXPANDS PROCESSING FACILITY**

Mann Packing Co. Inc., a supplier of washed and ready-to-eat vegetables, is expanding its main processing facility in Salinas, CA, by 18,000 square feet to accommodate volume growth. Using the latest green technology in construction, this is the fifth expansion to the facility in as many years.

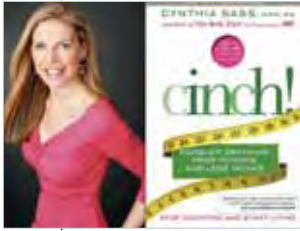


ANNOUNCEMENTS

**CHILEAN AVOCADO IMPORTERS ASSOCIATION PARTNERS WITH CYNTHIA SASS, RD**

The Chilean Avocado Importers Association (CAIA) has kicked off American Heart Month with a Book-A-Day Give-away on Facebook. The featured book is *Cinch! Conquer Cravings, Drop Pounds and Lose Inches*, written by registered dietitian, Cynthia Sass. A *New York Times* bestseller,

Sass's book outlines simple eating plans for weight loss that includes nutrient-dense foods, like Chilean Hass avocados. Sass is the nutrition consultant to the Tampa Bay Devilrays, and is also the nutritionist behind and co-author of the *New York Times* best-seller *Flat Belly Diet!* Her "Weight Loss Coach!" column appears monthly in *Shape* magazine and she appears regularly on "The Today Show," "Good Morning America," and "The Early Show."



**CMI ANNOUNCES THE ARRIVAL OF THE 2012 KANZI APPLE CROP**

Consumers can begin to look for U.S.-grown Kanzi apples at their local retailers. Favorable growing conditions have produced a high quality 2012 crop, which is being packed now by Wenatchee, WA-based CMI. The Kanzi apple is full flavored with a sweet-tart balance, an excellent aroma and a very intense flavor.

**HOUWELING'S TOMATOES CONNECTING WITH CONSUMERS**

Houweling's Tomatoes, Camarillo, CA, is connecting with consumers through social media. The goal of the social media campaign is to increase awareness and communicate the benefits of Houweling's greenhouse-grown tomatoes. Front-and-center on Houweling's website will be a bi-weekly message from the CEO, Casey Houweling. All online content will feature the new Houweling's Tomatoes 'Craftsman's Care' positioning and 'Mastery Under Glass' slogan, created to help elevate Houweling's from low-tech shade and plastic growers to technologically advanced greenhouse growers.



**SILVER VASE NURSERY MAKES LILA MYSTIQUE AVAILABLE YEAR-ROUND**

Homestead, FL-based Silver Vase will now be offering Lila Mystique to retailers year-round. Exclusive technology infuses Lila Mystique's flowers from the inside transforming them to a lovely spectrum of lilac. Buds on the current stem will open to beautiful and softly fading light purple flowers



because they were closed at the time of treatment. As the circle of life continues and the healthy orchid grows, a new stem will bring beautiful white flowers. Lila Mystique thrives in low to medium light and comes in a 5-inch pot.



**DEL MONTE FRESH PRODUCE SUPPORTS NBA/ WNBA FIT**

Del Monte Fresh Produce, Coral Gables, FL, was a proud supporter of the NBA/WNBA FIT week. This past January, Coach Erik Spoelstra of the Miami Heat met with more than 50 children from the YMCA of Greater Miami as part of the NBA FIT Live Healthy Week, which highlights the importance of living an active, healthy lifestyle through grassroots programs and events, special on-court apparel, in-arena health screenings, and online programming. Children and their families were given "Del Monte Fresh Fit" gift bags stocked with fresh fruit, a jump rope, stickers, a sports bottle, a fruit and vegetable activity book and other items. After the Meet & Greet, the children enjoyed the New Orleans Hornets vs. Miami Heat game courtesy of the Spo's Shooters program, a community education ticket initiative that allows South Florida's less fortunate student-athletes to attend Heat games and meet their favorite players and coaches.

**DOLE AND FELICITY HUFFMAN HAVE SALAD'TUDE**

Monterey, CA-based Dole Fresh Vegetables has announced its new Salad'tude marketing campaign will feature Emmy-winning actress Felicity Huffman. Salad'tude has been designed to instill a new salad attitude and take packaged salads and salad creation to an inspired new level. Dole's Salad'tude includes a partnership with the hunger-relief organization, Feeding America, and is part of a larger mission by Dole to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables to improve the nutritional health of Americans.



**CHERYL BURKE BOOGIES WITH DOLE SALAD LOVERS**

Monterey, CA-based Dole Salads promotion winners cut a rug with professional dancer and choreographer Cheryl Burke from ABC's hit show "Dancing with the Stars." Burke partnered with Dole in 2011 to help motivate salad and fitness lovers to jazz up their routines in the kitchen, in their workouts and on the dance floor. She also helped Dole create several new fitness-themed salad recipes, including "Cheryl's Sweet and Savory Salad with Halibut," made with the All-Natural Dole Spinach Cherry Almond Bleu Kit. Dole's "Find Your Inspiration" was one of the largest salad-specific marketing campaigns. Pictured from right to left are Soha Molina, the Dole Salads sweepstakes winner, Cheryl Burke, and Tammy Coville, Dole Salads sweepstakes winner.

NEW PRODUCT

**GO GREEK WITH BELLA SUN LUCI**

Chico, CA-based Mooney Farms is introducing its newest variety of Bella Sun Luci Sun Dried Tomatoes: Julienne Cut with Greek Oregano, Basil & Garlic. Packed in convenient, resealable, zip-lock bags to lock in flavor and freshness, they are fat- and salt-free. The bite-sized pieces are packed with Lycopene, a powerful antioxidant associated with a reduced risk of certain health conditions. Once per ounce, sun dried tomatoes have 12 times the amount of Lycopene than a raw tomato!



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





# Wal-Mart, Food Deserts and East Harlem: Trying to Have It Both Ways

FROM JIM PREVOR'S PERISHABLE PUNDIT 01.04.2012

**A** hat tip to Tim York, President of Markon Cooperative, for passing on this piece from the *New York Daily News*: "Wal-Mart in Harlem would put other food stores out of business," report predicts:

*A Wal-Mart opening in Harlem could put many of the smaller stores selling fresh food in the neighborhood out of business, according to a report by Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer.*

*Stringer's office surveyed the area around 125th St. and Lenox Ave. and predicted that 30 to 41 supermarkets, green grocers and bodegas that sell fresh produce would go out of business within a year if a Wal-Mart opened there. That's 25 percent of area food businesses.*

*Another 18 to 25 stores could shutter in the second year.*

*Wal-Mart officials have said they are interested in opening several stores in the city but refused to publicly discuss what sites they might choose. The researchers decided to zero in on the W. 125th St. site because it is large enough for a Wal-Mart, in a low-income neighborhood, and would not require zoning changes.*

*"I'm all for low prices, but there are ways to do that that don't include killing local businesses...and making it harder and harder for communities to find fresh food," Stringer said.*

*Wal-Mart has touted its ability to bring fresh food to so-called "food deserts" — even gaining plaudits from First Lady Michelle Obama — but Stringer's report predicts the big box chain opening would actually cause a net loss in the square footage dedicated to fresh food.*

*The predictions are based on a study by Loyola University that found that after Wal-Mart opened in Chicago, 25 percent of competing businesses in a one-mile radius went out of business within a year, and 40 percent closed within two years.*

*Wal-Mart backers have slammed that study because it didn't account for new businesses that opened. Hugh O'Neill, president of economic development consulting firm Appleseed, said there's "no empirical evidence to suggest their arrival means doomsday for local retail."*

*Wal-Mart spokesman Steve Restivo, agreed: "The truth is that anyone who has been to the west side of Chicago knows the positive economic impact we've had there, just like anyone who walks the streets of Harlem knows residents need more affordable options when it comes to healthy, nutritious food."*

*Wal-Mart backers note that a Target with a grocery section that opened last year prompted no such scrutiny from elected officials — with Stringer even showing up to cut the ribbon on*

*the development. A Stringer spokesman said there's no comparison, since Wal-Mart's status as the world's biggest retailer means its impact is unique.*

*Wal-Mart has been in talks with developer Related Companies to open its first city store in East New York, but execs are also eyeing other unidentified sites around the city.*

The whole idea of food deserts as an important cause of low produce consumption or obesity has never made much sense to us. Yes, of course, there are rural areas where there are few stores, and this may well lead to more canned and frozen consumption than if there was a great corner market where people could pick up fresh foods daily. But this is the nature of rural living, imposes the most modest of hardships and, by definition, affects only sparsely populated rural communities.

In urban areas, there may be regions with few conventional supermarkets, but with the intense competition in retailing, if there are no supermarkets in an area with the population to support one, it is either caused by A) Local zoning and political restrictions; B) High costs imposed by a failure of the police to control crime or prevent graft and corruption; C) Lack of spending power to support a store; or D) Cultural patterns that cause people to prefer alternative shopping venues. Any of these things can lead to a lack of stores. We've written about the importance of crime fighting in dealing with this issue before.

The other possibility is that the whole issue is mostly nonsense used by advocates and politicians to give themselves money and power. They define a problem and then give out money to build stores, etc. In other words, they use the taxpayers' money to win friends and influence people.

What this article really shows is the phoniness behind all these food desert claims. Here is East Harlem, the prototypical urban food desert... you can be sure that all the politicians here would be plaintively explaining the urgent need for federal funds to deal with this urgent food desert problem. Yet, suddenly, the supposedly conservative, anti-union Wal-Mart wants to open a store and the exact same politicians who would decry East Harlem's status as a food desert now suddenly claim that Wal-Mart will drive all these stores selling fresh produce out of business:

*...30 to 41 supermarkets, green grocers, and bodegas that sell fresh produce would go out of business within a year if a Wal-Mart opened there. That's 25% of area food businesses.*

*Another 18 to 25 stores could shutter in the second year.*

Well which is it? Is East Harlem a horrid food desert with people unable to buy fresh produce or are there dozens and dozens of stores selling fresh produce? These advocates and politicians can't have it both ways.

**Is East Harlem a horrid food desert with people unable to buy fresh produce or are there dozens and dozens of stores selling fresh produce?**

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#### SOUTHERN EXPOSURE 2012

To promote the consumption of fresh fruits & vegetables in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky and Virginia through good fellowship, cooperation and mutual interest among its members.

**Conference venue:** Tampa Convention Center, Tampa, FL  
**Conference Management:** Southeast Produce Council, Inc., East Ellijay, GA

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

**Email:** [info@seproducecouncil.com](mailto:info@seproducecouncil.com)

**Website:** [www.seproducecouncil.com](http://www.seproducecouncil.com)

### March 4-6, 2012

#### INT'L RESTAURANT & FOODSERVICE SHOW OF NEW YORK

The International Restaurant and Foodservice Show of New York is the only comprehensive industry event devoted to the restaurant, foodservice and hospitality market.

**Conference venue:** Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, New York, NY

**Conference Management:** Reed Exhibitions, Norwalk, CT

**Phone:** 203-840-5556 • **Fax:** 303-840-9556

**Email:** [tradeshows@newhope.com](mailto:tradeshows@newhope.com)

**Website:** [www.expowest.com](http://www.expowest.com)

### March 8 - 11, 2012

#### NATURAL PRODUCTS EXPO WEST 2012

"Where doing business just comes naturally."

**Conference venue:** Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, CA

**Conference Management:** New Hope Natural Media, Boulder, CO

**Phone:** 303-998-9216 • **Fax:** 303-939-9559

**Email:** [inquiry@internationalrestaurantny.com](mailto:inquiry@internationalrestaurantny.com)

**Website:** [www.internationalrestaurantny.com](http://www.internationalrestaurantny.com)

### March 14 - 16, 2012

#### WORLD FLORAL EXPO 2012

"World Floral Expo 2012 Back in the Big Apple."

**Conference venue:** Jacob K Javits Convention Center, New York, NY

**Conference Management:** HPP Exhibitions, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

**Phone:** +31(20) 662-2482 • **Fax:** +31(20) 675-2326

**Email:** [jasper@hhp.nl](mailto:jasper@hhp.nl)

**Website:** [www.worldfloralexpo.com](http://www.worldfloralexpo.com)

### March 21 - 23, 2012

#### AMERICA TRADES PRODUCE CONFERENCE 2012

FPAA hosts the 2012 America Trades Produce Conference in Southern Arizona, which is co-sponsored by the Texas Produce Association.

**Conference venue:** Rio Rico Resort & Tubac Golf Resort, Rio Rico, AZ

**Conference Management:** Fresh Produce Association of the America, Nogales, AZ

**Phone:** 520-287-2707 • **Fax:** 520-287-2948

**Email:** [info@freshfrommexico.com](mailto:info@freshfrommexico.com)

**Website:** [www.freshfrommexico.com](http://www.freshfrommexico.com)

### March 29 - 31, 2012

#### PBH ANNUAL MEETING 2012

2012 Annual Meeting

**Conference venue:** Monterey Plaza Resort & Spa, Monterey, CA

**Conference Management:** Produce for Better Health Foundation, Hockessin, DE

**Phone:** 302-235-2329 • **Fax:** 302-235-5555

**Email:** [fruitsandveggiesmatters.org](mailto:fruitsandveggiesmatters.org)

**Website:** [www.pbhfoundation.org](http://www.pbhfoundation.org)

### APRIL 11 - 13, 2012

#### CPMA 2012

Annual convention & trade show provides a unique

opportunity for industry leaders to connect with peers and enhance business opportunities in Canada, while also offering an exceptional combination of education and networking opportunities.

**Conference venue:** Stampede Park, BMO Centre, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

**Conference Management:** Canadian Produce Marketing Association, Ottawa, Ontario Canada

**Phone:** 613-226-4187 • **Fax:** 613-226-2984

**Email:** [info@cpma.ca](mailto:info@cpma.ca)

**Website:** [www.cpma.ca](http://www.cpma.ca)

### April 19, 2012

#### NORTHERN CA EXPO 2012

Since 1965, the Fresh Produce & Floral Council has been providing unique networking and business growth opportunities for professionals in the produce and floral industries in California. Our members include growers, shippers, wholesalers, brokers, distributors and retailers of produce and/or floral items.

**Conference venue:** Alameda Fairgrounds, Pleasanton, CA

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

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

**Email:** [info@fpfc.org](mailto:info@fpfc.org)

**Website:** [www.fpfc.org](http://www.fpfc.org)

### April 25, 2012

#### NEW ENGLAND PRODUCE & FLORAL EXPO 2012

**Conference venue:** Gillette Stadium, Foxboro, MA

**Conference Management:** New England Produce Council, Burlington, MA

**Phone:** 781-273-0444 • **Fax:** 781-273-4154

**Email:** [nepc2@rcn.com](mailto:nepc2@rcn.com)

**Website:** [www.newenglandproduce.com](http://www.newenglandproduce.com)

### MAY 1 - 3, 2012

#### UNITED FRESH 2012

The United Fresh Marketplace features marketers and merchandisers of fresh produce for retail, foodservice and wholesale levels of trade.

**Conference venue:** Dallas Convention Center, Dallas, TX

**Conference Management:** United Fresh Produce Association, Washington, D.C.

**Phone:** 202 303-3424

**Email:** [united@unitedfresh.org](mailto:united@unitedfresh.org)

**Website:** [www.unitedfresh.org](http://www.unitedfresh.org)

### May 1 - 3, 2012

#### US FOOD EXPORT SHOWCASE:

#### WHERE BUYERS COME TO LEARN MORE

**Conference venue:** Dallas Convention Center, Dallas, TX

**Conference Management:** CMG Expo, Fairfax, VA

**Phone:** 703-934-4700 • **Fax:** 703-934-4899

**Email:** [usfs@naylor.com](mailto:usfs@naylor.com)

**Website:** [www.nasdatradeshow.org](http://www.nasdatradeshow.org)

### May 1 - 3, 2012

#### FMI SHOW

**Conference venue:** Dallas Convention Center, Dallas, TX  
**Conference Management:** Food Marketing Institute, Arlington, VA

**Phone:** 202-452-8444 • **Fax:** 202-429-4519

**Email:** [fmi@fmi.org](mailto:fmi@fmi.org)

**Website:** [www.fmi.org](http://www.fmi.org)

### May 5 - 8, 2012

#### NRA SHOW

The International Foodservice Marketplace

**Conference venue:** McCormick Place, Chicago, IL

**Conference Management:** National Restaurant Association, Chicago, IL

**Phone:** 312-853-2537 • **Fax:** 312-853-2548

**Email:** [kskibbe@restaurant.org](mailto:kskibbe@restaurant.org)

**Website:** [www.restaurant.org/show](http://www.restaurant.org/show)

To submit events to our Forward Thinking calendar, please email [info@producebusiness.com](mailto:info@producebusiness.com)





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# KINGS FOOD MARKETS Relaunches Brand With Produce And Floral Taking Lead Roles

Kings' Bedminster, NJ, store is first part of larger chain rollout.

BY MIRA SLOTT



As competition intensifies, Judy Spires, President/CEO of the Parsippany, NJ-based chain of 30 stores including the Kings and Balducci banners, discusses Kings' strategy behind rebranding and repositioning to differentiate and build the chain's niche in a cut-throat retail environment. "We are not your ordinary supermarket; we're experiencing a relaunch of our new brand," says Spires. "We started the strategy two years ago, looking at our strengths and ways to further differentiate from our competition."

According to Spires, Kings is known for its quality products. "Our percentage of food business is more than double the industry standard; all fresh sales are well above industry standards," she says.

## Prototyping Rollout

"The Bedminster store is our live laboratory," says Spires. "We're using it as somewhat of a prototype to experiment with concepts that we plan to roll out to all our stores."

The Livingston, NJ, store is slated next this summer, says Kaitlin Bitting, senior account executive for Kings' public relations. "Kings is testing what works and what doesn't. We want to see what people gravitate to and expand concepts from there," she explains.

Spires explains the transformational process: "We expanded this store to meet consumers' ever-changing needs. For example, to accommodate the convenience trend, we have in-house-prepared hot-to-go foods, a café with WiFi and a cappuccino/espresso coffee





**"I LOVE TO CROSS-MERCHANDISE wherever inspiration strikes. I always say, cheese sells the apples and apples sell the cheese."**

— Paul Kneeland

bar. These are not just ordinary foods thawed and heated up," she says. "High-end chefs are preparing gourmet dishes from exclusive recipes and innovative taste profiles with the finest quality ingredients, and the food really tastes good."

### Produce's Pivotal Role

Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral, discusses the important role fresh produce plays in the overall rebranding concept. "We've got a well-thought-out, strategic layout," he states. "A brand-new fresh-cut fruit and juice bar welcomes customers in with excitement and

**United Fresh 2012**  
**THE PRODUCE SHOW**  
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convenience right up front.

"Kay Thein, produce specialist, creates eye-catching fresh-cut fruit arrangements and is great with training people," adds Kneeland. "Fifty percent of our fresh-cut offerings are prepared here. A new, high-tech pineapple-coring machine is like nothing I've ever seen in my career. In one hour, you can core 100 pineapples. During big holiday promotions like Easter, it comes in handy."

A flexible iced produce display provides a spontaneous mechanism to highlight event-related items. But at a moment's notice, the display can be changed to capitalize on unusual weather by repositioning appropriate produce items or promoting last minute opportunistic buys.

"In addition to convenience, the second area we're focusing on is organic," says Kneeland. "We brought in different merchandising equipment with angled bins to flow down to customers. We're playing up organic. At Kings, organic produce accounts for some 15 percent of total produce sales, which is significantly higher than industry averages," he says, adding that "local" produce also gains attention when available.

Kneeland is a big fan of cross-merchandising and he's mastered the technique throughout the produce department. "I love to cross-merchandise wherever inspiration strikes," he adds. "I always say, cheese sells the apples and apples sell the cheese," he continues, pointing to displays filled with an unlikely mix of both fruits and vegetables and complementary cheeses that could round out a complete meal for a harried shopper, who already has her protein in hand.

A robust specialty produce display completes the picture, says Michael Felicione, produce supervisor. Continuing the rare-finds theme, customers in the produce department taste a paring of Korean pears and a unique award-winning Stilton blue cheese.

Segueing from the produce department, another area intriguing customers is the new open climate-controlled floral department. Explains Donna Mastellone, director of floral sales and merchandising, "Because it is climate-controlled, we don't need refrigerated spaces, so a myriad varieties can be displayed in the open."

"Masterful floral designers here do beautiful custom design work," explains Kneeland. "We try to create color vignettes and stories for our customers," says Mastellone, a theme and mantra trumpeted throughout the store.

**pb**







# THE 25TH ANNUAL Mystery Shopper Report

## Challenging Recipes Put Produce Departments And Staff To The Test

As people continue to cook and eat more frequently at home, they are becoming more comfortable with once unfamiliar ingredients. Cooking shows, found on the Food Network, its sister channel, the Cooking Channel, as well as other numerous outlets, along with the prevalence of food magazines and the rising number of celebrity chefs, are all motivating home cooks to experiment and spread their wings with unique, and often hard-to-find ingredients.

With this in mind, we gave our “undercover shoppers” two recipes with somewhat “professional” ingredients, including golden beets, celeriac, kohlrabi, chervil, fennel and Blood oranges and Cara Cara Navels. We sent them out to a variety of retailers across the country looking for these unique items. If television shows and magazines are encouraging everyday cooks to reach for the stars with their recipes, they must know where to source these products and what to do with them once they have brought them home.

By Meredith Auerbach, Jennifer Leslie Kramer, Jodean Robbins,  
Barbara Robison, Lisa White

**H**ere 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 25th Annual Mystery Shopper Report. We gathered a handful of our contributing and staff editors and sent them to various stores around the country in early February. They were all armed with the same two produce-heavy recipes from epicurious.com: Blood Orange, Beet and Fennel Salad and

Celery Root, Kohlrabi and Apple Puree. 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 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: Direct, But Lacking Enthusiasm

My first stop was to a nationally owned chain located in a middle- to upper-income neighborhood. On a busy Tuesday morning, I entered the bright, large produce department with the Celery Root, Kohlrabi, Apple Puree recipe in hand.

Two employees were working the department, restocking and reorganizing displays. As a man walked briskly with signs in hand to a cart of Clementines, I followed him. "Excuse me," I said. "I need some help with a recipe."

"Sure," he stated, glancing at my paper. "What does it call for?"

"The first item is celery root," I answered, "but I don't know what that is. Is it part of the celery stalk?"

"It's a bulb," he answered. "It's brownish and round. But we don't have those. It kind of looks like jicama. Do you know what jicama is?"

"No," I admitted. He glanced quickly around the department and I couldn't help get the feeling that he was little nervous, although knowledgeable.

"It's a long brown tuber used in Mexican cooking," he replied.

"Do they taste the same?" I asked.

"I don't know," he remarked. "But we don't have any jicama either. What else do you need?"

"Kohlrabi," I said.

Shaking his head, he said, "We don't have that either. It looks like a beet with long stems. It's mostly used in Asian cooking. What else?"

About that time another employee came bustling around the corner, rudely interrupting our conversation and yelled, "Hey Tony, where'd you put those signs?"

"Right here," he yelled back, motioning to the top of the Clementine cart. Turning back to me he asked, "Do you need anything else?"

I pointed out the apples saying, "I don't care for Golden Delicious. Is there another kind I can use?"

He responded, "We just got these great apples called Piñatas. They're sweet and are on the end cap over there."

This query finally stimulated him to move from his spot and he guided me to the apples, all the while giving me a rundown of which apples were tart, which were good for baking, the fact that Red Delicious is on its way out because it's too mealy. "Where are these from?" I asked taking a Piñata in my hand. "Are they local?"

"I'm not sure," he replied and began to examine the display sign and the PLU sticker. "We just got these in."

His coworker joined him in analyzing the display and signage, but to no avail. Although the boxes and signs were labeled Stemilt, they could not offer me any information as to where the apples came from. In general, while he provided me with the direct answers I needed, I didn't feel much enthusiasm from him, nor did the interaction make me want to explore new produce items.

### STORE 2: Happy To Help

My second stop was to a large chain owned by a multinational and located in an upper income neighborhood. I entered a large, colorful department on a slow mid-week afternoon. I spotted a young man re-stocking displays and approached him with my Blood Orange, Beet and Fennel Salad recipe.

"I need some help with this recipe," I said. "A friend sent it but I don't know what most of these are."

"Let me see," he replied.

I pointed to the beets. "I didn't know you could buy fresh beets," I told him. "And, what are golden beets?"

"The fresh beets are over there," he indicated. "But I've never heard of golden ones. I don't know what they are, but we don't have them."

"I also need Blood oranges," I grimaced. "What are those?"

"They're oranges that are red inside," he confidently answered, leading me to the bagged citrus area. "We only have these in bags."

"Oh," I said. "That's a lot of oranges. I only need three."

"I might be able to break one out for you, but I'm not sure," he replied.

At that time, an assistant manager appeared and began working a display near the citrus area. The young man turned and asked, "Can we break these bags apart if she only needs three?"

"No, sorry," the assistant manager said.

The younger man asked, "Have you heard of golden beets? She needs golden beets for the recipe."

"I've heard of them, but we don't have them," the assistant manager replied apologetically. "We can only order what is on our order

## MYSTERY SHOPPER RECIPE

### BLOOD ORANGE, BEET AND FENNEL SALAD

#### INGREDIENTS:

- 2 medium red beets, tops trimmed
- 2 medium golden beets, tops trimmed
- 3 Blood oranges
- 1 medium Navel orange (preferably Cara Cara)
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice
- ½ small fennel bulb, very thinly sliced crosswise on a mandoline
- ¼ red onion, very thinly sliced on a mandoline (about 1/3 cup)
- Extra virgin olive, pumpkin seed, or walnut oil (for drizzling)
- Coarse sea salt, such as Fleur de Sel or Maldon sea salt
- Freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ cup loosely packed fresh cilantro and/or chervil leaves

#### INGREDIENTS:

Preheat oven to 400° F.

Wash beets, leaving some water on skins. Wrap individually in foil; place on a rimmed baking sheet and roast until beets are tender when pierced with a knife, about 1 hour. Let cool.

Meanwhile, using a sharp knife, cut all peel and white pith from all oranges; discard. Working over a medium bowl, cut between membranes of two Blood oranges to release segments into bowl; squeeze juice from membranes into bowl and discard membranes. Slice remaining Blood orange and Cara Cara orange crosswise into thin rounds. Place sliced oranges in bowl with the segments. Add lemon juice and lime juice.

Peel cooled beets. Slice two beets crosswise into thin rounds. Cut remaining two beets into wedges.

Strain citrus juices; reserve.

Layer beets and oranges on plates, dividing evenly. Arrange fennel and onion over beets. Spoon reserved citrus juices over, then drizzle salad generously with oil. Season to taste with coarse sea salt and pepper.

Let salad stand for 5 minutes to allow flavors to meld. Garnish salad with cilantro leaves.





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sheets and that's not on there."

"What can I do with the Blood oranges I don't use?" I pushed. "Do they taste the same as regular oranges?"

"Yes they do," replied the assistant manager. "They're good."

As the younger man quietly returned to his work, the assistant manager asked, "What else do you need?"

"Fennel?" I queried.

"Sure," he stated and motioned to an area about 25 feet away. "It's right over there above the beets."

"I can't see that far without my glasses," I answered.

"Let me take you over there," he replied and led me to the small display.

"It's this anise right here," he pointed out. "Anise and fennel are the same thing just different names. Anything else?"

"Yes," I said. "Either cilantro or chervil. Are those herbs?"

"Yes," he said and began moving to the herb display. "We have cilantro in loose bunches or in these small packages. We don't have any chervil, but you're better off with cilantro anyway. It has a nice taste."

I thanked him and turned to the cilantro, grateful for his friendly attitude, but uninspired to really try the recipe. As he turned to go, he said, "I'll be around here, so if you need anything else just look for me."

### STORE 3: Plenty Of Information With A Great Attitude

My last stop was on a weekday afternoon to a local chain priding itself on fresh products. The small department was vibrant and held a wide selection of items. As I entered I noticed two men working displays on the refrigerated case. I walked over and asked for help with the Blood Orange, Beet and Fennel Salad recipe.

They both turned to me with a smile and the first employee indicated, "We have beets right here."

"Thanks," I replied. "This also says golden beets. What are they?"

The younger of the two now jumped in, "Goldens are actually white and they're seasonal. We don't have any right now. Do you need fennel? I thought I saw fennel on your paper. It's right here next to the beets."

"Yes," I said. "What is that? How does it taste?"

"It's like licorice," he answered jovially. "The seeds are used in cooking and making sausage. It's anise. What else do you need?"

"Let's see," I said. "It has Blood oranges and a Navel orange called Cara Cara — whatever

**"WE JUST GOT THESE GREAT APPLES CALLED PIÑATAS.** They're sweet and are on the end cap over there." This query finally stimulated him to move from his spot and he guided me to the apples, all the while giving me a rundown of which apples were tart, which were good for baking, the fact that Red Delicious is on its way out because it's too mealy.



those are."

"The Blood oranges are right over here," my expert guide replied, motioning to follow him. "It's really sweet, but don't be surprised when you cut it open because it will look red, like blood."

Both employees laughed, and he

continued, "That's where the name comes from. The Cara Caras are here. They're a type of Navel. Other Navel oranges are over there."

"What's the difference," I asked. "Do I really need the Cara Cara?"

"The Caras are red inside compared to other navels," he said, grabbing one from the



display. "I can cut one open for you if you want to see and taste it."

"Thanks, that would be great," I accepted.

He disappeared and reappeared in a few minutes with a clamshell containing a sliced Cara on one side and a sliced regular Navel on the other. He urged me to taste both while describing how the Navels have a "navel" and it comes from two oranges growing together.

"How do I know which are the best to select?" I asked. "By the skin?"

"The best way to select any citrus item is to pick the heavier ones," he countered. "They will have more juice."

He continued to efficiently guide me through the other items I needed and when I queried him about a possible substitute for the golden beets, he whipped out his iPhone to check online for substitute recommendations. His enthusiasm and knowledge encouraged me as a consumer to ask more and explore the produce department even further. I didn't want to leave.

## SOUTHEAST REPORT

### STORE 1: Impressive Produce Knowledge

Early on a Tuesday morning, I walked into the bright welcoming store that is part of a large, national chain focused on organics and health food. The produce department is located toward the front of the store and was clean and inviting. I had to pry myself away from the gorgeous and abundant floral arrangements, bouquets and cut flowers, reminding myself of the task at hand.

Digging the recipe out of my purse, I headed directly to a large display of citrus. It was well signed, just like the rest of the department, noting the country of origin, as well as whether the item was organic or conventional. In this case, the sign read "Organic California Navels." Since I didn't see any signs noting Cara Caras or Blood oranges, I picked up a few and approached the nearest produce employee. He was young-looking, perhaps a student at the nearby college, and immediately took note of my questioning stance. "Do you need help with something?" he asked me.

"Yes, I have a recipe here that calls for Blood oranges and Cara Caras, but I only see California Navels over there. Will those work in place of both?" I asked.

He walked back with me to the display, explaining, "Cara Caras are a type of Navel orange grown in California, among other places. So these are fine for that part of the recipe. But we don't have Bloods. I see this is for a salad," he said, as he glanced over my shoulder at my recipe, "so you probably wanted

the Bloods for color. But Caras Caras will work nicely for both. They are sweet and juicy, and pink inside."

I spied lemons and limes nearby, so I took the opportunity to ask another question. "My recipe calls for a tablespoon each of lime and lemon juice," I said. "Do I need a few of each?"

"Oh no," he exclaimed. "A tablespoon isn't that much. One of each will certainly be enough, especially as these are very heavy." I looked at him inquisitively. He tossed me a lemon. "If you look at the size of

the fruit, compared to how much it weighs, plus the fact that it gives a little bit when you squeeze it gently, you can tell it will be juicy," he explained.

"Wow. That's good to know," I said, quite impressed with his knowledge. He didn't miss a beat, and asked me what was next on my list. When I told him I needed cilantro or chervil, he looked at me strangely, asking if I was sure. I showed him the recipe.

"Hmm...this is a bit odd. We don't have chervil, but I would never tell you to use

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cilantro instead. Chervil is kind of a cross between parsley and anise. It's mild, but definitely doesn't taste like cilantro," he stated. "I would use a nice flat leaf parsley. I don't think you want cilantro with all the other delicate flavors in this salad. It would just overpower everything."

I agreed, and thanked him. "While I have you here," I added, "I also need red and golden beets. Honestly, I've never eaten a beet before so I'm not sure what they really look like, or if I'll like them!"

He smiled kindly, and led me over to the beets. "We only have red ones right now, with tops," he said, grabbing a bunch of them. "The golden ones are a bit milder, which is the kind I would suggest you try since you have never had them before. But if you are roasting them, they mellow out a bit. Just be sure to wear gloves when you are peeling them, and line your cutting board with plastic wrap. Otherwise, everything in your kitchen, including your hands, will be red for days!" We both laughed together, and I couldn't help but think this young man was destined for great things. He was very kind and helpful, well mannered, and really seemed to enjoy his job. It was a

pleasure shopping here, and I wouldn't hesitate with other recipes in the future. The only drawback was the cost. Prices were definitely higher at this chain than I expected, but the great staff, spotless store and impressive displays made up for the difference.

### STORE 2: Spotty Knowledge, But "A" For Effort

That same afternoon, I moved on to the next store, a large chain with units that can be found throughout the Southeast. With my recipe in hand, I entered the store, passing by an enormous Super Bowl display. I must say, party or not, I would be tempted to buy from that well stocked display. Avocados, tomatoes, chips, beer — all the essentials were there, towering above me with balloons and large football-themed cardboard cutouts.

Once I made my way past the Super Bowl insanity, I found myself immediately in the produce department, which is toward the front of the store. There was a large sweet-smelling display of peaches, along with a tower of Navel oranges. I glanced around the department, looking for celeriac, the first ingredient for my Celery Root, Kohlrabi and Apple Puree. I

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didn't see it anywhere, so I approached the lone produce employee on the floor. He was busy stocking packaged salads, but as he saw me approaching, immediately stopped what he was doing and smiled at me. "Can I help you with something, ma'am?"

"Actually, yes. I have this recipe here that calls for celeriac," I said, lifting the recipe to show him. "I looked around, but don't see any. Truth is, I am not exactly sure what I am looking for, as I have never used it before."

"Let me see here," he said, walking over to the potatoes. "You're right. We must be out of stock. You could use a combination of potatoes and celery stalk instead," he suggested. "The potatoes will give you the texture and consistency you need for the puree and the celery will provide the flavor. It will be milder in flavor than the recipe intends, but it's about as close as you can get."

I was impressed with his knowledge, so decided to ask about the kohlrabi. "Kohlrabi?" he squinted at me, looking confused. "I'm not too sure what that is, honestly. Let me see if I can find my produce manager. She'll know for sure," he added, as he crossed the department and disappeared into the back. He came back in just a few minutes with an older woman by his side, who confirmed there was no kohlrabi in the store.

"Is there anything else I can use instead?" I inquired.

"Not really," she said. "Kohlrabi is... kohlrabi," and she turned around and quickly walked away.

The produce fellow looked at me apologetically, clearly embarrassed at his boss' unhelpful and curt attitude. "Can I help you with anything else?" When I told him I needed fennel, he walked me back to the potatoes, which were backed up against the onions, and sure enough, the fennel bulbs as well. He picked out a good one, and as he handed it to me, I scrunched my face up. "What's wrong? Not big enough?"

"Oh no, it's just that I don't really know what to do with it," I admitted. He laughed, telling me he had never cooked with it either. I was about to tell not to worry about it, when he pulled out his iPhone, where we both proceeded to learn the details about preparing fennel.

The last thing I asked about was chervil. "I don't know about chervil. Let's take a look," he said, walking me over to the herbs. "Basil, cilantro, dill, parsley," he said, ticking them off as he scanned the shelf. "Nope, no chervil. I'm sure you could use whatever herb you wanted in its place. What looks good to you? Maybe

some parsley? That goes good in anything!"

I took the parsley from him and made my way to the checkout. Even though this produce associate didn't know much about the items in his department, he went out of his way to try and help me, which is always appreciated. However, his boss definitely needs to learn a thing or two about customer service.

## MIDWEST REPORT

### STORE 1: The Citrus Specialist

I visited a large Midwestern supermarket chain during the lunch hour on a week day. Situated between the deli and bakery departments, the produce section had only a couple of shoppers milling around. A decent selection of fruits and vegetables was attractively displayed and looked fresh and appealing. Organic items were merchandised separately from conventional products. There was a great deal of cross-merchandising going on, with salad dressings, salad toppers and dips for both vegetables and fruit.

Although there were no produce representatives in the department when I arrived, I saw a woman from the bakery. "Can you assist me?" I asked.

She smiled and responded, "What are you looking for?"

I answered, "Blood oranges." She looked confused, then said she would find someone from the produce department to speak with me.

A gentleman came out within a couple of minutes and was very friendly. "I'm trying out a new salad recipe. Can you direct me to the Blood oranges?" I asked.

"No problem, they are right over here," he said, then proceeded to inform me how Blood oranges are red inside and had differing colors on the outside.

"How do you determine their ripeness?" I asked.

He wasn't sure, but said, "The color on the outside is this deep red, unlike other types of oranges."

Then I asked if the store had Cara Cara oranges. "Or can I just substitute regular Navel oranges instead?" I asked. He proceeded to take me over to the Cara Cara oranges, describing how, unlike the Blood oranges, these were pink inside, similar to a grapefruit. "Yet, the outside looks just like the navels."

"Does your store carry both red and golden beets?" I asked.

He looked puzzled, then said, "I've never heard of golden beets, but we have the red ones." He brought me over to the display, where the beets were bundled into threes.

"Will these taste the same as goldens? Do

## MYSTERY SHOPPER RECIPE

### CELERY ROOT, KOHLRABI AND APPLE PUREE

#### INGREDIENTS:

- 2 pounds celery root (celeriac), peeled, cut into ¾-inch cubes
- Kosher salt
- 1 ½ pounds kohlrabi, peeled, cut into ½-inch cubes
- 1 pound russet potatoes, peeled, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 Granny Smith apple (½-lb.), peeled, cored, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Fresh chervil sprigs

#### PREPARATION:

Add celery root to a large pot of boiling salted water. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until tender, 11-13 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer celery root to a large bowl.

Return water to a boil; repeat with kohlrabi, then potatoes, cooking each separately until tender, 14-16 minutes for kohlrabi and 10-12 minutes for potatoes; add to bowl with celery root.

Meanwhile, bring apple and 2 tablespoons of water to a boil in a small saucepan. Cover and cook over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until apple falls apart, 6-8 minutes, adding water by tablespoonfuls if dry.

Working in batches, pass celery root, kohlrabi, potatoes, and apple through a potato ricer or food mill into a large bowl. Pass mixture through again if a smoother texture is desired.

Stir in butter. Season with salt and pepper.

you think I can substitute them?" I asked.

He nodded his head yes, and said, "I don't see why not. I'm sure they will taste similar."

Then he looked at my recipe to see what else I needed. I said I had already grabbed the fennel. "Is this a good one to choose?" I asked, holding it up.

"As long as there is no bruising on the outside, it should be good," he said. "Have you ever tried fennel?" I said I had not. "It smells like black licorice," he said, holding the fennel up to my nose for me to see for myself. He was right!



HE CONTINUED TO EFFICIENTLY GUIDE ME THROUGH the other items I needed and when I queried him about a possible substitute for the golden beets, he whipped out his iPhone to check online for substitute recommendations. His enthusiasm and knowledge encouraged me as a consumer to ask more and explore the produce department even further. I didn't want to leave.

## STORE 2: Research Works!

I visited a smaller, upscale chain in a Chicago suburb in the early afternoon on a weekday, and was surprised to see a decent amount of shoppers in the produce department. There were three produce personnel on the floor, and the wet bars were fully stocked with a variety of traditional and organic produce that looked well-ripened and fresh.

I approached two gentlemen staff members who were standing together by the wet rack. "Can you direct me to the celery root?" I asked.

One of the men led me over to a section where he thought it would be. "It should be around here somewhere," he said, and began reading the signs to find it.

"Is this it?" I asked, holding one up. He said it was. The other staff member, who appeared to be more senior, then came over to help assist me. "How can I tell if the celery root is good?" I asked.

The more senior staff member took over, saying, "Make sure the outside is firm and there are no soft spots. I see your recipe has you skinning it and chopping it up, so the outside appearance isn't as much of an issue." He then looked at my recipe to see how much I needed and weighed it for me.

"Can you help me find the kohlrabi?" I asked.

He looked at me quizzically. "I've never heard of that before. How do you spell it?" I showed him the word on the recipe sheet and he asked me to wait a moment while he went in the back. At this point, the other produce staff member said his goodbyes. After a couple of minutes she returned with *The Food Lover's Companion* resource guide in hand. "How do you spell that word again?" he asked, looking it up. He determined that kohlrabi is a type of turnip, so we went over to where the turnips were. "This is all we have," he said.

I looked skeptical and asked, "Do you think I can substitute it for the kohlrabi?" He said he didn't think it would be a problem, since both were from the same family.

I then headed over by the apples. "What is the difference between organic and conventional Granny Smith apples?" I asked.

He smiled and patiently replied, "Organic fruit is more environmentally friendly. And today organic Granny Smiths are only 10 cents more than the regular type. Usually they are quite a bit more." So I smiled and grabbed an organic apple from the abundant display.

"I just need one more ingredient. Have you ever heard of chervil?" I asked.

He shook his head and again consulted *The Food Lover's Companion*. "It's a type of parsley," he said, leading me over to the wet bar. "We have regular and Italian-style parsley, but no chervil."

I looked at both, then asked, "Do they taste different?" He sampled a piece from each and shook his head no. "Well, since I only need it as a garnish, I think I'll pass on the parsley today. Thanks so much for all your help!" I said.

## WESTERN REPORT

### STORE 1: Welcoming And Helpful

I stopped at an upscale market, located in the middle of several affluent suburban areas. The market was busy, exuding a feeling of energy and welcome. The produce department was filled with beautiful displays, especially of all the citrus varieties available. Locally or regionally grown items were emphasized. Well-marked organic items were displayed among regular items, rather than in a separate organic section. All items were clearly and easily identified.

Two people were working the department. I approached one. "I'm trying a new recipe. It calls for fresh red and yellow beets. Is there much difference between them?"

The young man looked up and smiled. "No, not really. The flavor and texture are about the same."

"How do I prepare them?" I asked.

"It depends on how you plan to use them," he replied. You can boil or steam them, or juice them raw."

"I'm putting them in a salad," I said.

"I'd suggest steaming. Don't peel them. Just slip off the skins after they're cooked," he offered.

"I noticed a big display of Cara Cara oranges as I entered the store. My recipe calls for them and Blood oranges. Is there much difference?"

He gave me a big smile. "The Blood orange is deep red and tarter in flavor. It's harder to peel. The Cara Cara is pink, sweeter and peels easily."

"The recipe also calls for fennel slices. Can I use it raw or do I need to cook it?"

"For salads or with dips you slice it raw."

The second man was working with herbs and packaged salads. I approached him and asked, "A recipe I'm trying calls for cilantro or chervil. Which would be best?"

He look up, stopped his work, and said, "It really depends on what you're using it for. Cilantro is used more for burritos and Mexican dishes."

"This is for a salad with beets, fennel and citrus."

"I'd definitely use chervil. Here's a small package of it." He handed me a container of chervil and a small plastic bag to put it in.

I found the store inviting, especially the produce department, and the clerks were very friendly and helpful.

### STORE 2: Not Too Helpful Or Enthusiastic

I visited a good-sized store of a national supermarket chain, located in the middle of an ethnically diverse suburban area. The store was neat and clean, with a well lit, busy produce department. The produce was attractively displayed.

One person was working in the department and looked up when I approached him. "Do you carry celeriac or celery root?" I asked.

He hesitated, then called to another man on the floor, "Do we have celery root?" The man told him where it was. "Oh yes, that's right." He took me to the celery root location.

"How do you prepare it?" I asked.



**HE DISAPPEARED AND REAPPEARED IN A FEW MINUTES** with a clamshell containing a sliced Cara on one side and a sliced regular Navel on the other. He urged me to taste both while describing how the Navels have a “navel” and it comes from two oranges growing together.

He picked up a celery root, pointed to directions on an attached tag. “It tells you right here.” With that he handed me a small plastic bag to hold the produce and returned to his work.

I went back to the man and asked, “Do you carry kohlrabi?”

“Nope, we don’t have that,” he said.

“What can I substitute for it in a recipe?” He didn’t know.

Then I said, “I don’t want to be a pest, but can I substitute yellow Dutch potatoes for the russets in a recipe?”

“Sure, no problem,” he responded.

The person in the produce department was friendly and answered my questions. However he didn’t supply any extra information. He also did not seem too familiar with some items in question. Additional training about less familiar produce items could help build total produce sales.

### **STORE 3: Pleasant And Knowledgeable**

The third market I shopped in was a newer store of a Southwestern supermarket chain. It carried all general food items, but had big displays of health food products. It was good-sized, bright, with large bin displays in the produce and other departments. An example was a bin of fresh Brussels sprouts placed in a layer in a flatbed arrangement, surrounded by bagged carrots on all sides. It was eye-catching and appealing.

Two men were working the department. I asked one. “Do you have celery root?” He took me to the display, showing me the product. “How do you prepare it?”

“You cut off the leaves, peel it and either slice it raw or steam it,” he replied. There was no tag with directions attached to the product.

“Does it taste like celery?” I asked.

“I have to admit I’ve never tried it, so I don’t really know,” he answered.

Then I asked, “Do you carry kohlrabi?”

“No we don’t carry that,” he responded

“What can I substitute for it?” I pressed.

“I’m sorry, I honestly don’t know.”

“My recipe calls for Granny Smith apples. Can I use another apple?”

“I’d suggest a Delicious apple,” he said.

I asked the man about substituting Dutch yellow potatoes for russets. He said, “I could help you, but you should talk to the potato expert,” pointing to the young man working in the potato/onion area.

I walked over and asked him about the substitution. “Absolutely,” he assured me. He walked away and came back with a bag of baby Dutch yellow potatoes. Smiling, he said, “These are a good size for you to use. They should work well if you don’t want to use russets.”

The two young men were very pleasant and wanted to be helpful. Their department looked



## I ASKED HOW TO PICK OUT GOOD SWEET BLOOD ORANGES

with bright red inside color, asking if the color on the peel was an indication of the inside. He said, "In my experience, it does indicate color somewhat." He grabbed his knife, picked up one with red color on the outside and one that was straight orange with no blush and cut both open. He was right and he went on to ask if I wanted to taste them to compare the taste. He even went to the back to get a damp paper towel so I could wipe the juice off my hands.

inviting, but I felt a little more training about some of the items would build even more customer rapport.

### NORTHWEST REPORT

#### STORE 1: Happy To Offer Samples

Seeking out less common ingredients is always a great way to start a conversation with a produce associate in an upscale store of a Seattle area chain. This group, with smaller than average stores, is all about service and selection.

On a Thursday afternoon at the tail end of an activity-halting snowstorm, the store was packed with people trying to restock before the weekend. Three associates were working the department, two stocking displays and one acting as a concierge. As young as he was, he was my target.

I challenged him on the citrus called for in the salad recipe, looking to find both Blood oranges and Cara Cara oranges. I asked how to pick out good sweet Blood oranges with bright red inside color, asking if the color on the peel was an indication of the inside. He said, "In my experience, it does indicate color somewhat." He grabbed his knife, picked up one with red color on the outside and one that was straight orange with no blush and cut both open. He was right and he went on to ask if I wanted to taste them to compare the taste. He even went to the back to get a damp paper towel so I could wipe the juice off my hands. He went on his way to speak with another customer. This company is not noted for low prices so I was delighted to find both types of oranges on sale for \$1.49 a pound.

After a few minutes looking around, I could locate the celery root, but not the kohlrabi. I went back to my guide to ask. He said he knew a little bit about kohlrabi but he could look it up if I was able to wait a couple minutes. He was back in a flash

telling me they did not stock it at this time of year, but he could get it in by the next day. I replied that I'd check another store but would call back if I couldn't find it. He recommended I check a close-by competitive store with a larger department. I then said that my recipe also called for celery root but it sure was expensive at \$3.99 a pound. He laughed and said, "Are you sure you want to do this recipe? I'm pretty sure kohlrabi will be at least as high. Maybe one of our deli chefs could help you choose a different recipe. They're all culinary school graduates." I told him it was probably a good idea, but I'd need to come back later. This kid is well on his way to becoming a store director!

#### STORE 2: Lack Of Service, Despite High Prices

What a disappointment! On a Sunday afternoon, I toured the lush, well-stocked produce department of a national natural foods store. Lots of customers were carefully selecting high-priced produce, often choosing one or two pieces at a time and placing them carefully in their carts.

There was only one associate on the floor and he was busily stocking greens. I asked if he could help me, waited a few seconds for him to turn around, then asked again. He finally looked over his shoulder and said, "What are you looking for?" It was surprising to me, and off-putting, as were his collection of tattoos and piercings.

I asked about kohlrabi and he said, "It's out of season; that's a summer vegetable."

I said, "Really? I'm doing a puree with celery root and apple. What does it taste like? What else could I use instead?" His response was a very abrupt, "I don't have any idea," as he returned to stacking greens.

I left without a single purchase, torn as to whether I should ask to speak with someone else or offer a report of the conversation to

management. These are experiences that totally color the perception of the store.

#### STORE 3: A Fun And Caring Staff

This store looks like a warehouse format but has well-known, upscale specialty departments with the biggest selection in town. It is a favorite of ethnic cooks because of what they stock. You can find six to eight different varieties of mushrooms, items such as fresh turmeric and half the large produce department is devoted to organic produce. There's a cook's kiosk where chefs prepare dishes using less common ingredients from across store departments.

Again I asked about kohlrabi, to complete my polling about the seasonality of this vegetable. Expecting to be told it was currently not in-store, the produce associate said, "Follow me!" and he led me straight to the display of beautifully fresh green kohlrabi. When asked about its flavor, he carefully peeled a side and gave me a slice. He said, "You can use it either cooked or raw. Lots of our Asian customers use it in salads."

I looked at the price of \$4.99 a pound, thinking about the high priced celery root and decided I could buy a steak! I asked about substitutes. My guide thought for a minute and then said, "Well, to me it tastes like crisp fresh spring air, so maybe parsnips or beets? Let's go check with the chefs." We strolled over to the chef's kiosk, picking up two other produce associates who were also throwing suggestions into the ring — turnips, green cabbage, potato or even celery. Pretty soon there were four staff, two other customers and me, all debating what would work.

Finally, the lead chef said, "Green cabbage, definitely! Just be sure to cook it enough to pull out any bitterness." What a fun way to shop. I felt very confident that this staff cared about my cooking success, knew their products and always had a great time at work.

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Retailers promote locally grown produce as frequently as they can.

# Southeastern Retailers Adapt To Changing Population Base And Tastes

The Southeast produce industry is seeing changing produce purchases. **BY BARBARA ROBISON**

**T**oday, due to demographic and economic changes, the Southeastern area of the United States is seeing a blend of traditional produce usage with other new produce purchases. According to the Southeast Produce Council (SEPC), in East Ellijay, GA, the Southeast is made up of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia. The area encompasses a variety of traditional cuisines and is being introduced to new ones as the ethnic populations grow and people move from other geographic areas.

“Every area of the country has its own unique preferences, and the Southeast is particularly diverse,” says Dan Bates, director of merchandising at W. Newell & Co. LLC, a Champaign, IL-based specialty produce company that is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Eden Prairie, MN, Supervalu. “Florida and the Southern states of Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama and Louisiana have extreme differences due to population diversity and migration shifts. In parts of the Southeast, such as Alabama and Louisiana, boiled peanuts are big sellers, while in most areas of the country

you would be hard-pressed to find any. Other items like yams, greens, potatoes and onions are category mainstays that outperform most other areas of the country. Florida has a large Hispanic/Cuban population, which drives a highly ethnic product mix. Yet northern Florida and southern Georgia have more of a population mix, and prefer produce similar to many other middle-class demographics across the heart of the country.”

Maria Brous, director of media and community relations for Lakeland, FL-based Publix Super Markets Inc., acknowledges, “During warm months of the year, customers tend to eat lighter, with more salads and fresh fruits. In the Southeast, this trend continues during the winter, except for a few weeks of cooler weather. ‘Southern cooking’ also promotes produce such as greens, yellow squash, okra and sweet potatoes, which outperform other areas in the department.”

## Ethnic Population Changes Alter Produce Sales

The Southeast has had ethnic populations for many years, especially Cuban, African American and Mexican. Successful inde-

pendent retailers have been servicing these populations for a long time. Now, many of the specialty produce items used in the ethnic cuisines are becoming more mainstream, available in the major supermarkets. However, Dick Spezzano, president of Dick Spezzano Consulting Services, in Monrovia, CA, remarks the Hispanic influence in the Southeast is not as notable as in other places in the country. “I don’t see the expansion of the Hispanic ethnic markets in the Southeast in the same way that they have expanded in Southern California,” he says. “In the Southwest, some of the Hispanic markets have as many as 30 and 40 stores. It takes a complete mindset to be successful. You need a small management group that understands the culture and the language.”

Nonetheless, there has been a marked increase in the Asian and Latino populations in the Southeast, and their cultures and dietary habits play an important role in produce purchases. “We’ve seen a growth in tropicals, especially limes and mangos,” says Ronnie Cohen, vice president of sales at Vision Import Group LLC, headquartered in River Edge, NJ. “Most retailers are on top of



**“In parts of the Southeast, such as Alabama and Louisiana, boiled peanuts are big sellers, while in most areas of the country you would be hard-pressed to find any. Other items like yams, greens, potatoes and onions are category mainstays that outperform most other areas of the country.”**

— Dan Bates, W. Newell & Co. LLC.

this trend. The National Mango Board is doing an excellent job of educating the public and retailers about the product,” he adds.

The Orlando, FL-based National Mango Board (NMB) uses regional divisions that are



Greens play a major role in Southern cuisine.

divided a little differently than the Southeast Produce Council, but for the East South Central and South Atlantic sub-regions, there appear to be large sales opportunities. The growth trends are positive, but these regions lag behind the rest of the country in mango sales. Nationally, current purchasers, or those who purchased mangos in the past six months, have increased from 53 percent in 2007 to 45 percent in 2011. There could be excellent potential sales in the Southeast. “We offer POS materials with messages, such as cutting, selection, ripening, nutrition and recipes. We work with nutritionists, influential parenting publications, celebrity chefs and

national magazines to help consumers think about mangos when grocery shopping,” explains Megan McKenna, director of marketing.

Latino shoppers value fresh produce. However, this seems to be not so much an ethnic trend, but a local market trend, observed one regional produce sales and marketing agency representative. There is also a growth in the Asian population in the Southeast, according to Cohen. “It’s helping increase sales of our limes, mangos, and the pineapple coming from Mexico and Costa Rica,” he adds.

“The Korean population continues to grow, and we have seen this firsthand in

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Metro Atlanta,” reports Andrew Scott, sales and procurement manager for General Produce Inc., a produce wholesale supplier located at the Atlanta State Farmer’s Market in Forest Park, GA. “Koreans are making their produce mark on the retail landscape. They buy a lot of conventional produce along with the specialty items. They are occupying large retail stores, mainly in Atlanta’s northeast side. The Hispanic population is also growing in Atlanta, and there are a growing number of Hispanic wholesalers found on the Atlanta

State Farmer’s Market.”

“We have been shipping Korean pears to the Southeast and find this season has been expanded due to a gap between the Korean pear season and the arrival of the Chilean pears,” reports Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa’s/World Variety Produce Inc., in Vernon, CA.

There are a number of niche or specialty produce items specific to certain Southeastern communities that retailers must provide to attract and retain customers. However, the

differences between areas within the Southeastern region are not as great as one might imagine. The Top 20 produce items in Florida aren’t that different than in Metro Atlanta, according to Brous of Publix.

“The Southeast still seems to be a market of basics. “Items like salad mixes and the new trendier apple varieties seem to lag behind other areas of the country in growth,” contends says Bates Newell. “As the new generation of Baby Boomers and older folks migrate south, this is slowly changing.”

### Trending Produce Items

Produce items trending in the Southeast are greens (including collards, turnips, mustards and kale), okra, green beans, black-eyed peas, artisan lettuce and Eastern-grown arugula. Some newer items are increasing in demand, as well. “Specialty variety citrus sales are growing. Consumers are not buying Navel oranges as much, but are now buying Cara Clementines,” states Gary Myracle, executive director of produce field procurement for Associated Wholesale Grocers Inc., in Kansas City, KS.

“We are shipping supplies of Mandarins to the Southeast,” reports Schueller. “In March, we begin the season for the popular Pixie tangerine out of California’s Ojai Valley. It will be available in the Southeast through May into June.”

“Items like variety apples have not received the same traction in the Southeast as other areas,” reveals Bates. “While it is true that the basic Red Delicious apple is still far and away the best seller in the category, we are starting to see trends indicating this is beginning to change. In addition, the berry category has exploded in recent years and the potato category is showing a shift away from the basic Russet variety to the more trendy Butter Golds.” Meanwhile, Melissa’s is seeing an increased interest in the Dutch yellow and fingerling potatoes in Southeast markets.

### Economy And Convenience Affect Produce Buying

The poor economy is affecting produce purchases, as it is in other regions. “A change in the way consumers buy has been a shift from bulk to bagged and packaged product,” notes Myracle. “It appears that consumers want to know exactly what they are paying for items before they reach the register. They can’t always do this with product sold by the pound or sold in multiples. This may be a direct result of the economy.”

Scott of General Produce notes, “Produce



## SOUTHEAST PRODUCE COUNCIL HELPS INDUSTRY

The Southeast Produce Council brings buyers and sellers together to promote the consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. Membership is made up of both retailers and suppliers. The Council conducts customized training based on each member's needs. It brings the training to the Southeastern state in which the member operates and includes training of store associates, merchandising staff and warehouse quality control staff. The Council also has an Educational Road Show, which provides information on current trends and issues, such as food safety. It is held in various cities each year. In addition to participating in conferences and expositions, the Council has a STEP.UPP program, for training upcoming produce professionals. This is an enriched learning experience for high potential retail and foodservice produce professionals. **pb**

is not considered a necessity for most people, which has had an impact on consumption of fresh produce in these poorer economic times. With money tight in many households, produce is not at the top of the shopping list," he recognizes. "The downturn we have seen in recent years has definitely affected produce purchases and the types of produce customers are selecting in the Southeast."

The increased purchases of more packaged products could also be a matter of convenience. Southeast produce customers are time-squeezed, just as those in other areas of the country. Packaged salads, fresh-cut vegetables and other items provide convenience with freshness. Economic pressures have caused many shoppers to return to basics, but the sale of value-added produce items continue to grow, according to a regional produce sales agency representative.

"Not new, but seemingly growing, is the 'business' of the family and the lack of a traditional family meal," notes Publix's Brous. "Many traditional, fresh produce items require preparation and cooking time. Families on the go may not have time to prepare a meal. Or if there is prep, it is very simple. The challenge for the retailer is to provide and merchandise fresh produce that provides

meal solutions for time-starved customers."

Major retailers throughout the Southeast are trying to help their customers do a better job of preparing healthier, time efficient, economical meals by providing recipes on their web sites and in the marketplace. Many of the recipes combine local protein, such as fish or game, with a variety of fresh produce items. Recipe suggestions can range from a number of catfish recipes, to sweet potato empanadas and squash nut sweet bread. Often, the produce used in the featured recipes will run in store

advertising, to further assist the customer.

## Locally Grown Produce Popular In Southeast

The allure of local and regional produce continues to grow, as it does throughout the country. "With so much produce available in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee and other Southeastern states it is an excellent opportunity to provide great quality product fresh from regional farms and not incur the expense of bringing it across the country,"

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# “With so much produce available in Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Tennessee and other southeastern states it is an excellent opportunity to provide great quality product fresh from regional farms and not incur the expense of bringing it across the country.”

— Billy Bobbitt, Associated Wholesale Grocers

declares Billy Bobbitt, director of produce at Associated Wholesale Grocers’ Memphis, TN, office.

“Many southern dishes combine the different flavors and textures of commodities grown in the Southeast,” notes Scott of General Produce. “Retail chains and independent restaurants are promoting southern-grown veggies. Greens are especially popular in homes and on restaurant menus.”

“Locally grown has always been big in the Southeast, but as the homegrown trend has swept the nation, Southeastern retailers are finally taking more credit for what they have been doing for a long time,” states Bates of Newell. “Food and cooking holds a prominent place in society and culture in states like Louisiana and Mississippi, and local products

have always had a lot of attraction in this area.”

Some markets are featuring individual growers who are supplying them with produce. Prominent signage and even in-store visits are part of some programs. For example, J.H. Harvey Co. LLC, based in Salisbury, SC, introduces a Georgia sweet corn grower on its website and mentions other locally grown produce items it offers during the year, encouraging viewers to support their local farmers. Food Lion LLC, a supermarket chain headquartered in Salisbury, NC, highlights on its web site the fact that it buys locally grown produce. The company even lists the names of growers and the specific produce items they can provide for each state in which Food Lion operates.

“Purchases of locally or regionally grown products are very big here in the Southeast,” recognizes says Terry Vorhees, executive director of the SEPC. “Every retailer has its own way of determining what is considered locally or regionally grown in a particular area. We also see a steady growth of organics in the region. The growth depends on the individual retailers, and purchases do seem to increase in the more affluent areas.”

## Retail Moves Are Significant

What occurs among retailers in a region can change the dynamics of the marketplace, including the produce operations. “One recent major retail move in the Southeast that may have an impact is Publix’s expansion into states north of Florida. The market continues to be well run, is employee-owned and a dominant factor in Florida. Its move into adjoining states will be interesting to watch.

An additional retail move in the Southeast is the merger of BI-LO and Winn-Dixie. “It is unusual to see a smaller market merge with a larger one,” states Spezzano of Spezzano Consulting Services. “The merger will create an organization of approximately 690 stores in eight states.”

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Wholesale markets continue to be busy, despite the lagging economy.

# Wholesalers Focus On Efficiencies And Better Service In Tough Times

Continuing to go above and beyond in servicing their retail customers, wholesalers find ways to stay salient in a challenging economy. **BY BOB JOHNSON**

**W**hen the writing was on the wall in 2008 that tough times were approaching, produce wholesalers prepared to weather the tough times to help their customers keep going. Few people, if anyone, in the wholesale produce business liberalized their credit terms; if anything, as they saw their receivables rise they became more vigilant about collections to reduce their exposure to the tough economy.

But wholesalers have reached new territory in finding ways to make their own operations more efficient, and many of them have developed a new perspective on the services they can offer to help their retailer customers.

## Service To Suit The Times

Some wholesalers have found it worth their while during the past three years to help their customers by taking an active role in the retail merchandising effort. "You have to think outside the box in terms of customer service, because the traditional approach will not work," says Mike Maxwell, president of Procacci Brothers Sales Corp., in Philadelphia,

PA. "We work with our customers in writing ads. We work with them in assessing markets to decide what to put in the ads. We give them retail support with our merchandisers out in the stores."

Procacci Brothers sources produce from around the country, and around the world, and offers retail customers assistance with merchandising and the option of private label packaging. "We try putting them on ad with items two and three weeks out; you're not just making today's sales. You become an intricate part of their business on an ongoing basis. It's working, but it's more difficult," Maxwell says.

Strube Celery & Vegetable Co, headquartered in Chicago, IL, is going the extra mile to stay current on what its retailer customers need. "Every Tuesday or Wednesday I go out and find out how they're doing and what we can do for them," says senior executive vice president T.J. Fleming.

One step Strube is taking to assist retailers is giving them advance notice of items that will be available in volume at promotable prices. "We've offered more opportunities to get promotable items," Fleming shares. "We

provide ads, and we offer items a week before they will go on ad."

Another area where wholesalers have tried to help is by anticipating changes in the mix of products their retail customers want and need.

According to Lori Taylor, marketing manager for Indianapolis Fruit Co. Inc., located in Indianapolis, IN, "We are certainly offering more value products for our customers. We still have the premium items — we are still offering those — but everyone wants a deal. They want good price and good quality. We are trying to offer the same quality at a better price."

For most wholesalers, the economy has not changed their basic principles of customer service. "Regardless of the state of the economy, we always offer our customers the best in quality and service," asserts Julian Sarraino, buyer and sales manager at Fresh Taste Produce Limited Canada, in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

The first principle of produce wholesaler customer service is being available to handle the unexpected emergencies that go hand-in-hand with the produce business. "Keeping your customers healthy and satisfied has nothing to do with the economy," says Alan Siger, presi-

dent of Pittsburgh, PA-based Consumer Produce Co. Inc. of Pittsburgh. "Times are tough so you do what you can, but good business practices and good service work all the time, regardless of the economy. We look at it not as a commodity business, but as a service business," he continues. "With perishable products, there are many crises. The truck didn't arrive on time, or there is a hailstorm somewhere. They count on us to put the fires out for them."

Even in tough times, price is not the key to survival in the wholesale produce business. Ron Carkoski, president and CEO of Four Seasons Produce Inc., headquartered in Ephrata, PA, knows, "You can never hang your business on price. If you rely on service and quality, you will do fine. I can't honestly say it's made it more difficult to keep our customers. People are offering pricing and other enhancements, but that is no different than any other time." Four Seasons Produce offers a range of merchandising and retail training services to complement its full line of produce.

For quality wholesalers the challenge of the past few years has been met largely by continuing their traditions of emphasizing service above all else. "We've done nothing that's very different

than we've always done," says Strube's Fleming. "We've always been a service-based company."

### Shifting Trends

In the wholesale produce business, a difficult economy does not mean reduced volume, it means a shift in which items customers will want and where they will want to buy. "In food, it's different. People are going to cut corners, and they are cutting corners by not going to restaurants as much," Taylor of Indianapolis Fruit explains. "They are cooking at home more, and we sell to grocery stores and supermarkets. We are setting sales records."

Many wholesalers have found the poor economy has mainly meant a difference in their mix of customers, with restaurants struggling and supermarkets picking up the slack. "We do a lot of wholesaling to service companies that sell to restaurants, and that business fell off," admits Randy Lineberger, vice president of General Produce Inc., in Forest Park, GA. "We also sell to produce retailers, and that business increased. We sell to schools, too, but that business hasn't changed. So it's been a wash."

The shift from foodservice to retail has been a constant trend for wholesalers over the past three years. Brendan Comito, chief operating

officer of Norwalk, IA-based Capital City Fruit Co. Inc., points out, "A couple of years ago foodservice declined, but retail picked up because more people were eating at home. Whether times are good or bad, we always focus on the customers."

### Taking Care of Their Own Business

The first step in the tough economy for most produce wholesalers, as for most businesses, has been to look at what they must do to make their own operations fit enough to survive. As such, many wholesalers have found ways to tighten their belts and make their own operations more efficient. According to Lineberger, "The challenges have been different. You have to watch your money, watch every expense. We have been cautious — been tightening our belt — and we're not suffering in our business."

"I'm taking steps to keep myself going," says Matthew D'Arrigo, vice president of D'Arrigo Bros. Co. of New York Inc., based in the Bronx, NY. "We are taking care of our own operation by responding to the markets. We are always looking for the short supplied items, the items that are hard to find. We don't have any regular customers on contract. We are at the terminal

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— Mike Maxwell, Procacci Brothers Sales Corp.

market competing with all the other wholesalers. We are never guaranteed a sale at any time. You don't see the high markets you used to see.”

One area D'Arrigo sees most wholesalers looking to become more efficient is in the cost of moving produce. “All of the fat is removed from everybody's distribution system; it's gotten bare-bones and efficient,” D'Arrigo says.

A key to distribution efficiency is making sure that every truck, every pallet, is full to

capacity. “We are looking at route profitability,” notes Taylor of Indianapolis Fruit. “We have to make sure when our trucks are rolling, they are at capacity. We try to make sure we have full pallets, rather than partial pallets. We are looking at ways to expand our distribution without spending too much by using partnerships with other distributors.”

Efficiency in transportation takes active participation by the sales department, according to Taylor, as well as good logistical planning. Indianapolis Fruit has also found ways to save in the cost of communicating with its customers. “We are taking advantage of printing less by using more digital communication with our customers,” she shares.

The past three years have been, for most wholesalers, a good time to be cautious, to go with the tried-and-true. “It's not an environment where taking a lot of risk is desirable,” acknowledges Steven Piazza, president of Community-Suffolk Inc., located in Everett, MA. There's not enough upside to take a risk on unfamiliar products. The next year or so will definitely be a challenge.”

For Community Suffolk, focusing on familiar produce items has been the key to weathering the troubled economy. “We've

stuck to our roots in terms of emphasizing the items we do most,” Piazza continues. “We do all vegetables because of the higher volume. We have been trying to bring down the cost, and we can pass that along to our customers.”

Some wholesalers have even found it worth their while to move away from the parts of their business that, on close examination, are not profitable. Four Seasons Carkoski reveals, “We have developed a strong metrics program to evaluate our own operation, which allowed us to cut our costs, and we have chosen not to pursue customers who would not be profitable.”

He believes it is a wise practice to take a close look at the least profitable parts of an operation to make sure it is not dragging down the entire enterprise. “The top 20 percent of your customers will provide most of your profits,” explains Carkoski. “It is important not to let the bottom 20 percent of your customers drag you down. We have chosen to stop serving three distinct areas that have proven to us not to be profitable. We found those customers other sources who could serve them better.”

And part of survival for wholesalers is continuing good business practices that apply

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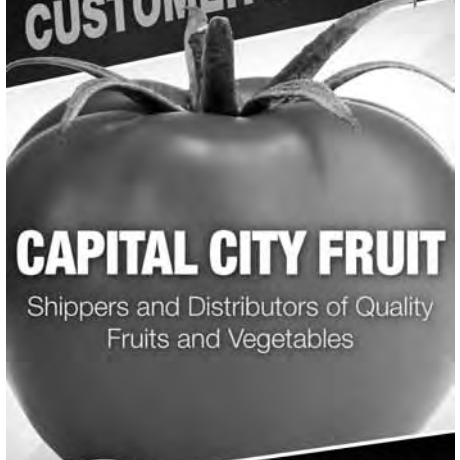
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no matter what the economic times bring. "We try to watch our expenses and our overtime costs," Strube's Fleming says. "But we've always done that."

### The High Cost Of Getting Paid

Produce wholesalers in most of the country have had greater difficulty getting paid during the economic downturn. "It's been positively challenging in the past 18 months to keep customers, and to keep customers who pay their bills," says Piazza of Community Suffolk.

A consequence of slower payment has been increases in receivables, which require wholesalers to increase their own debts with their banks. "The accounts receivable have gone up five, six or seven days higher than they used to be, so I have to borrow more," reveals Piazza. "We haven't changed our credit terms. We did have to cut some people off, but most of them have had their credit reinstated."

Wholesalers, in general, have not responded to this aspect of the crisis by easing up their terms of credit. John Vena, president of John Vena Inc., in Philadelphia, PA, asserts, "We tend to be very conservative and we try to keep our customers within our credit terms. There are cases in which it becomes more difficult to receive payment every week. No one has it easy now; it requires us to be very diligent about our collections."

Some customers have simply been let go because they could not find a way to stay current, or to devise a plan to get current. "We have lost some customers, but in most cases, they were customers that always seemed to struggle to pay on time, and we backed away from them before we were in over our heads," Vena says.

In some cases, the tough times have encouraged wholesalers to be even more vigilant in looking for signs that they could have trouble getting paid. "We have tied up the credit tighter; that happens pretty quickly," remarks D'Arrigo of D'Arrigo Bros. "You see people get a little slow and you have a heart-to-heart with them and decide if you want to keep carrying them."

The credit issue has left wholesalers looking to pick up new accounts to replace the ones that could not make timely payment. "We're pretty tough with our credit policies," admits Siger of Consumer Produce. "If someone doesn't pay, they are no longer buying from us. Our accounts are about the same. We picked up new ones and lost some to attrition."

There can, however, be some financial wiggle room for customers who at least have a sensible plan. "You come across customers who have difficulty making payments, and you

work with them to come up with a solution," Procacci's Maxwell says.

Working with some of the customers on a plan to become current again has become a regular part of the wholesale produce business. "We are as tight on our credit as we have been, and the vast majority of our customers have been very good," acknowledges Four Seasons' Carkoski. "When you're dealing with hundreds of customers, somebody's always going to have something going on."

Some wholesalers have done well recently,

after an initial period of adjustment to the new economic situation. According to Carkoski, "We had two very good years recently. There was a decrease in revenue and profitability for a couple of years, but we took the needed steps."

And there is even reason to believe that the worst of the economic slump is behind us and we are headed toward a slow, but steady recovery. Comito notes, "I speak to bankers, box company executives and others, and they think the worst is over." **pb**



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University of Missouri offers students vegan pie (left), while cranberries take center stage in a variety of dishes annually at UMass Amherst.

# Produce On Campus

A first-hand commentary on university produce.

BY BRENDAN KNEELAND, BOSTON COLLEGE, ARTS & SCIENCES HONORS '12

**F**or most people my age, on-campus dining is a bit of a joke — the “airline food” of college. Because campus food can be so terrible, most students will choose to eat out or order in, resulting in the dreaded “freshman fifteen,” or, in my case, the freshman forty. On the other hand, some schools have decided to sacrifice healthy options for taste — the food tastes better, but only because it has been pumped with countless unknowable preservatives and chemicals. Taste comes from butter, bacon and fatty additives, and in many cases, campus dining centers will give the people what they want rather than what they need. Ultimately, the choice many campuses seem to make is one between nutrition and taste, and ne’er the two shall meet. Either way, everyone gets fat.

I’ve spent more than my fair share of time at the dining halls as a college student, and I can say that much of the experience is one of constant trial and error. When I arrived as a freshman with no one telling me when and what to eat, I decided I would eat everything. For the most part, the food I have consumed has been eaten out of sheer convenience — I am always late for something, whether it is a class or a meeting or a group project, and I need something fast and easy.

## A Focus On Healthy Options

From my experience as a student at Boston College, I’ve seen the university try to adapt to the pace and lifestyle of its students, and the result has been a constant reconfiguration of produce displays and healthy options within formerly less healthy meal options. French fries can now be replaced with fruit as a lunch special. Produce displays are larger and more prominent. Fruits and vegetables are now more portable for students on the go. A farmer’s market with local produce is held on campus weekly. I think that much of this can be attributed to a highly responsive dining service run by the university — the school does not use an outside company to make its food — and also to the fact that students are encouraged to give feedback about their dining experience.

In the past few years, there has been a huge trend toward locally grown, organic produce. Universities want to encourage their influential students — the soon-to-be leaders of this country — to support local growers and make wise choices that are friendly to their bodies and to their environment. Putting a little extra thought into healthy options will inform students’ decisions in other aspects of life, and encourages a self-perpetuating, self-sustaining system of healthy American students.

While the progress I have seen in my four years has been encouraging, the same cannot necessarily be said for the vast majority of universities in this country. Most universities still make the choice between taste and nutrition — whether this is a decision based on cost or carelessness or lack of resources is unknown to me — but the reality is that many colleges have not adapted for students who are hungry for healthier options.

## Setting A Good Example

There are some universities, however, that seem to be making strides towards healthy alternatives and that golden middle ground where taste and nutrition are not mutually exclusive. Institutions like the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, for instance, have made great strides in feeding its students using innovative programs to introduce students to their produce items. UMass Amherst has won the PRODUCE BUSINESS Marketing Excellence Award for many years, and continues to create new ways to incorporate produce into its students’ daily routines. Under the leadership of executive chef Ken Toong, UMass Amherst Dining has grown from serving 8,600 students on a meal plan 12 years ago to serving over 16,000 today. According to Toong, “The





PHOTO COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI

mission is to put students first. Students eat with us several times a day...A good dining program can build a good community.”

UMass builds this community mainly through constant communication with its students. The university remains ahead of the curve in social media, with over 11,000 fans on its Facebook page — the highest of any college dining service page in the country. Students are surveyed throughout the year to evaluate dining services; 73 percent of students surveyed say they want more fruit and vegetable options. “The more they want, the more we give them,” says Toong. Beyond surveys, students are also invited behind the scenes, meeting with local growers and actually participating in some of the farming for produce items. There are even four acres of student farms, where students can gain the knowledge they need to maintain healthy eating habits individually and sustainable methods for farming in the community.

UMass has also developed a relationship with local growers over the years, encouraging them to change their crops from tobacco to produce instead. Locally grown produce is highly encouraged in the university’s dining services, and despite sometimes brutal winters, the college has managed to use — on average — 27 percent local produce year-round. Of course, that figure spikes in more favorable conditions, but there is always a strong effort to maintain and grow the relationship between the university and local farms. While organic

is nice, the emphasis is definitely on fresh local ingredients first, organic as well if it makes sense financially.

The local focus also extends to the chefs themselves, who are brought in to create dishes from local farmers’ ingredients. For instance, Ocean Spray farmers have visited to develop new items. Students are involved as well, with displays set up to educate them about cranberries, and five-minute educational sessions from representatives of the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association. The same is done with other fruits and vegetables as well. UMass Amherst hosted “Avocado Days” from December 5-16 this past semester, with dishes like Turkey Avocado Paninis, Shrimp in Avocado Cream Sauce, Flank Steak with Avocado Salsa and Grilled Salmon with Avocado Dip.

But UMass is not content to rest on its laurels. “The awards are always nice, but we are not satisfied,” says Toong. “We can always do better. Students say, ‘The food is good,’ and we ask, ‘What do you mean by good?’ We offer more than just apples, bananas and oranges. There are blackberries, melons, new items year-round.” The university offers “A Taste of the World” each June, an event in which chefs come from across the nation to develop new menu items with new ingredients, and 100-200 new recipes can be tasted.

### Communication Counts

The most important aspect I have seen at

my school, and the most common thread I see in the top dining programs, is simply this: communication. Campus dining is and must be there for the customers. “If they weren’t here, we wouldn’t exist,” says Julaine Kiehn, director of campus dining at the University of Missouri. An open dialogue is key to the success of any program, and Missouri, in particular, has developed several different ways of growing the conversation. Their dining services incorporate customer expectation surveys even before students arrive to campus, with follow-ups at the end of each year asking if dining services have lived up to the expectations of the students. There is a constant element of accountability and a continuous conversation that takes place in the form of informal discussion groups, residential hall meetings, focus groups for new menu items and student mystery shoppers.

The communication thread is especially important as universities introduce new initiatives and menu items. For instance, Missouri makes use of Bradford Farm, an experimental farm that constantly introduces new items to the student population and encourages sustainability. The university is currently working with Bradford Farm to create fertilizer from the school’s pulp (food waste) and, eventually, use extra fryer oil to power their food trucks. Missouri also offers “Taste of Missouri” events, with a menu focused on local products, and rotates out of the ordinary fruits and vegetables into the menu for students looking for something new.

Universities often run into difficulties in implementing fresh, local produce options year-round. Because of their location, many universities in the Midwest and Northeast have an especially difficult time providing local produce during the harsh winter months. At that point, colleges will rely on shipments of fresh fruits and vegetables until the winter weather eases.

### Geography Makes A Difference

Other schools, like the University of Southern California, certainly enjoy more favorable conditions for local farmers in the winter, but that does not mean they take fresh foodservice lightly by any means. Executive Chef Eric Ernest notes that in southern California, there has always been a culture of fresh, local, organic cuisines among restaurateurs. “We didn’t have to convert anyone into believing in local, organic, sustainable cuisines,” he says. “It’s definitely already a big part of the culture here.”

USC’s location certainly gives the univer-

sity a unique opportunity to be more in line with organic foodservice year-round, and that fact is reflected by their dining menu options. Half of any plate is vegetables, with the local produce made to order right in front of the students and staff who order it. In a part of the country filled with high-quality restaurants and gastropubs, Ernest knows that students are already attuned to high-quality, organic foods, and expect fresh produce on their plates. As a result, customers will often have the option of creating their own plate, with the ingredients tailor-made to their order. Students can also choose pre-made, chilled items that include local organic produce. The marquee of USC dining is Seeds Marketplace, an on-campus market that features local, organic foods for the student and local population. Seeds feels like a high-end café, with items that are affordable for college kids. The menu includes salads from a simple Caesar to one with roasted baby beets, pears and gorgonzola, with vegetarian options in the rest of the menu as well.

### Creativity Sustains Student Interest

One of the most important aspects of keeping students interested in produce is introducing them to new items and displays. One

popular way of doing that is through an offering of international fare. In addition to its “Taste of Missouri,” the university also has menu items and themes from the Caribbean. USC has international theme nights, using local ingredients to create international dishes. So while the international theme keeps students interested, the component parts of the meals continue to support local organic growers. American universities pull from all corners of the world, so it comes as no surprise that dining menus should do the same.

“International students often miss Mom’s cooking,” recognizes Greg Gefroh, Executive Chef at the University of North Dakota. UND employs a unique program that allows international students to actually help develop the menu. International students are invited to meet with chefs, and will often have their parents send them a recipe. The chefs will recreate it and then add it to the menu. For example, a group of South Korean interns is on rotation at the dining center and they have developed a menu of Korean dishes such as Mom’s Beef Bulgogi. “It really makes my job so much easier...they have a great rapport with the cooks, they have input on the menu, and they feel valued as well,” says Gefroh.

North Dakota’s goal is simple, according to Gefroh: “To feed students the freshest possible, most quality products we can give them.” Transparency is key at North Dakota, with a three-star rating system imposed by dining on their own food, rating the nutritional value of their dishes. Some plates receive one star — generally a convenience meal with lower nutritional value — while others receive three — those that feature fresh produce. UND’s menu items are often cook-to-order, so customers can watch as cooks sauté their vegetables right before their eyes. The UND menu is now featuring fresh salsa and hummus recipes at all three dining centers.

Students of American universities are more aware than ever about nutritional information and their own dietary needs. The most successful university dining services seem to be the ones that not only remain ahead of the curve and innovate their own menus, but also are receptive to the needs, desires and creative inputs of their students. Constant communication is key; a top-down delivery of food to uninformed masses of kids is not sustainable. It is up to universities and students alike to set the trends in local, sustainable, healthy produce options together. **pb**

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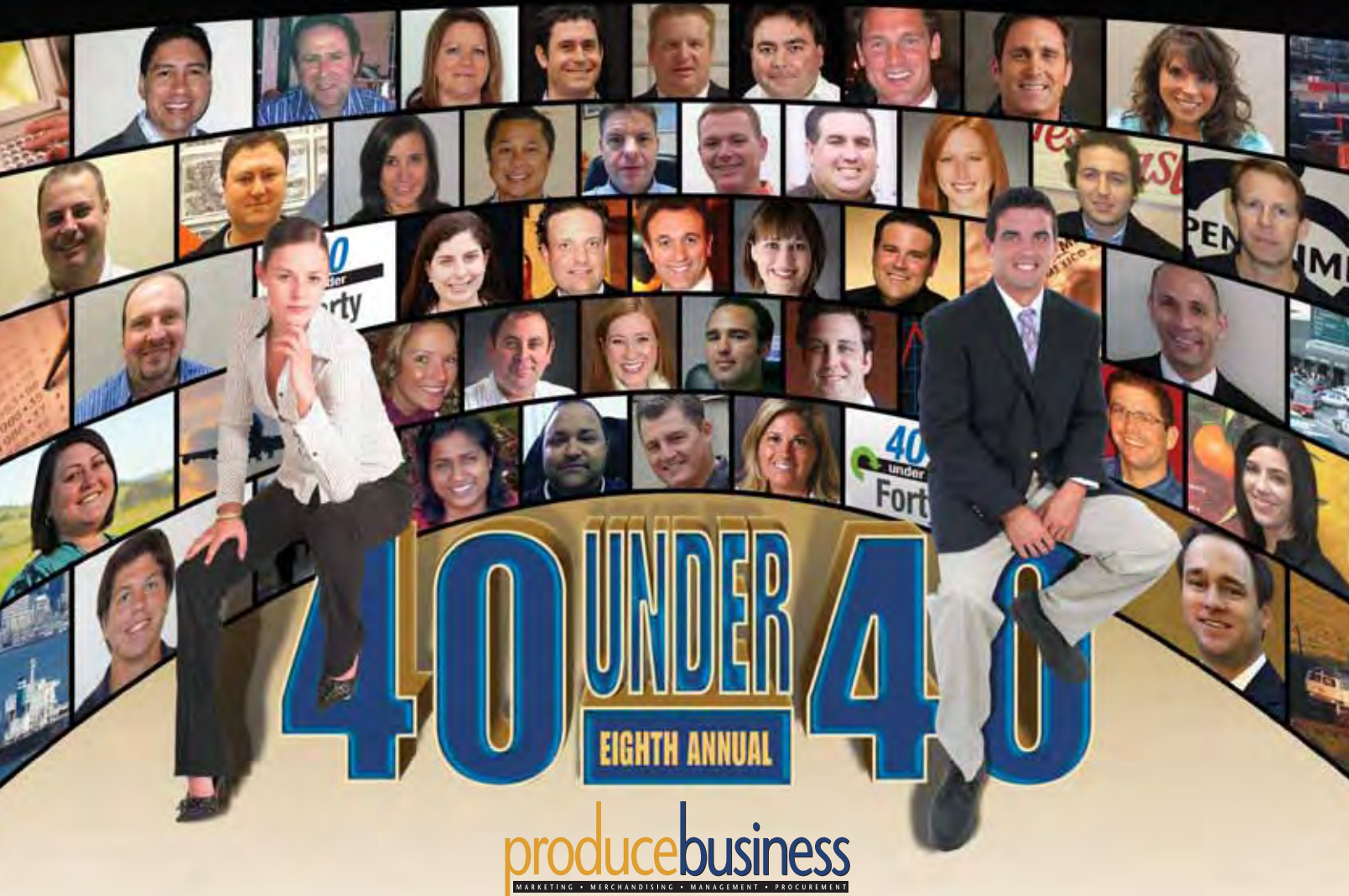
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# Greenhouse Produce Is Breeding Ground For Innovation (Part II of II)

With nearly a year-round supply, greenhouse-grown produce is coming on strong in supermarkets around the country. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**

**F**ield-grown vegetables are at the whim of Mother Nature. Disastrous freezes and devastating heat waves can cut yields, create shortages and curtail quality. The answer for some growers, especially those who produce tomatoes, peppers and cucumbers, is to cultivate these crops indoors. As a result, the greenhouse vegetable industry has found a ready retail customer for its products.

Raul Gallegos, director of produce and floral for Bristol Farms, a 13-store chain based in Carson, CA, explains, “The benefit of greenhouse production is that it’s consistent and available year-round. That’s important, especially in the winter.” The challenge is to market greenhouse produce at a premium the industry needs to survive and thrive.

## Trends In Greenhouse Growth And Production

According to Jim DiMenna, president of Jem-D International Partners LP, in Leamington, Ontario, Canada, the greenhouse category’s core items are experiencing growth across North America. “This has especially been

true given the weather-related issues in various growing regions over the past two winters.”

“What’s more, demand for greenhouse produce has grown exponentially each year as consumers ascertain that they are purchasing a premium product,” adds Aaron Quon, greenhouse category director for The Oppenheimer Group, in Vancouver, BC, Canada.

Flavor is one attribute that gives greenhouse-grown produce its premium. Douglas Kling, chief sales and marketing officer for Village Farms L.P., in Eatontown, NJ, says, “Seed companies have started to genetically develop varieties with an emphasis on taste for the greenhouse industry, rather than varieties that can produce good yields when grown in a field. Taste is really what has helped our industry grow.”

“While greenhouse-grown vegetable production represents less than five percent of total vegetable production, greenhouse tomatoes have grown to represent nearly half of the tomato category,” points out Fried De Schouwer, president of Vero Beach, FL-based Greenhouse Produce Company LLC.

Mike Aiton, director of marketing for

Prime Time International, in Coachella, CA, agrees. “As an industry, greenhouse production has grown tremendously, to a point where it represents a significant share of the tomato and colored pepper category, and to a lesser extent, cucumbers.”

“Beyond the basics,” DiMenna shares, “we’ve been approached by many retailers to add specialty varieties to our product offering. This has led to the introduction of our Artisan Series line of specialty tomato varieties. I think this is driven by the continued economic conditions playing a role in fewer families dining out, but instead wishing to recreate the restaurant experience at home.”

There’s also a growing trend for snack-sized greenhouse produce, according to Mark Cassius, vice president of sales for Wilcox, AZ-based Eurofresh Farms, “specifically baby peppers, cucumbers and eggplant.”

“Nonetheless, demand is strongest on the basic items — beefsteak, TOVs, peppers, seedless cucumbers and mini cucumbers,” says Ken Green, executive vice president of sales and marketing for Westmoreland Sales, in Leamington, Ontario, Canada.

*Editor’s Note: Part I of this series ran in our February issue and discussed the variety of options available in protected agriculture technology, its growing popularity and marketing controversies.*



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— David Goldberg, *The Fruit Bowl*

**TOMATOES:** Greenhouse-grown tomatoes represent 46 percent of tomato category volume and 52 percent of dollars at retail, according to Perishables Group data for the 52 weeks ending September 20, 2011, provided by Village Farms. In addition, greenhouse tomatoes showed an increase of 5.2 percent in volume during the same time frame, while field-grown tomato volume decreased by 4.9 percent.

Village Farms’ Kling says, “There are indications that in the next three to five years, greenhouse-grown tomatoes will outpace sales of field-grown at retail. This is due to consistent availability, quality, food safety and ecological issues. For example, tomatoes grown in greenhouses require 86 percent less water than those grown in a field.”

According to Joe Sbrocchi, vice president of sales and marketing for Mastronardi Produce Ltd., in Kingsville, Ontario, Canada, “The mainstays of the greenhouse tomato category are the TOV, beefsteak and cocktail tomato.”

Dionysios Christou, vice president of marketing for Del Monte Fresh Produce North America Inc., in Coral Gables, FL, agrees and adds, “We’ve recently increased our volume of TOVs, beefsteaks, cherries on the vine and Romas on the vine.”

While TOVs are the volume leader in the greenhouse tomato category, their volume grew only 7.4 percent in the 52 weeks ending September 20, 2011, according to Perishables Group data, compared to 10 percent for greenhouse-grown grape tomatoes, 11 percent for cocktail and 16 percent for cherry tomatoes.”

Greenhouse-grown grape tomatoes are a new item for Westmoreland Sales, says Green. “We started growing grapes because it is a



strong selling item for field-grown, and we were receiving requests from retailers,” he explains.

Christou notes, “We’re seeing an increase in consumer demand for a broader selection of specialty tomatoes to be available year-round.”

The Fruit Bowl, a single produce store located on St. Thomas, in the U.S. Virgin Islands, carries over a dozen varieties of greenhouse-grown tomatoes. General manager, David Goldberg, details, “We carry the tear drop, grape, Roma, cherry, Campari, Zima and brown-skinned Kumato. Kumato sales are especially strong. We were introduced to them at a food show five years ago and since then, they’ve been a big item for us.”

The brown-skinned Kumato is grown and marketed by Mastronardi Produce. Mastronardi’s Sbrocchi says, “We’ll test in excess of a hundred tomato varieties a year and develop the ones that generally have a ‘wow’ flavor and fulfill a specific usage occasion by the consumer. In addition to the Kumato, we’ve introduced the seriously sweet Zima, an orange-colored grape tomato that is packed in a snack-ready clamshell and the One Sweet, a bite-sized cherry tomato, over the past few years.” The company’s newest addition is the Delano, a high-flavor TOV.

Innovation and varietal development is also flourishing among a number of other greenhouse growers. For example, Kevin Batt, director of sales at BC Hot House Foods Inc., in Langley, British Columbia, Canada, discloses, “We are introducing the Blusher Pink Cherry Tomato to retailers after a season of testing this unique item. This ‘calyx on’ cherry tomato has mellow acidity and high Brix to accompany its special pink color.”

Last fall, Jem-D Farms launched its new Artisan Series with three items: the Rosado Trio, a pink beefsteak; Scarlet Pearls, sweet grape tomatoes; and its Chef’s Collection featuring a variety pack of bite-sized tomatoes offering Sakura Honey, Yellow Pear, Sun Gold, Tomato Berry and the Black Cherry varieties.

Village Farms also introduced its new Mini San Marzano plum tomatoes last fall. These are grown from an Heirloom-type plum variety that originated in Italy.

**PEPPERS:** According to Jem-D’s DiMenna, “Red, orange and yellow bell peppers have really hit the mainstream, so much so that we increased our production.”

“Yet, the industry picked its peppers early and green last spring when a devastating freeze wiped out much of the field-grown green pepper production in Mexico and drove prices as high as \$30 per box,” recounts Prime Time International’s Aiton.

Greenhouse-grown peppers represent 21 percent of volume and 30 percent of pepper category dollar sales for the 52 weeks ending September 20, 2011, according to Perishables Group data.

Tri-color packs of red, orange and yellow peppers are staple sellers at The Fruit Bowl. Goldberg details, “We also carry and have done well with the sweet mini peppers and the sweet long red peppers called Ancient Sweets [marketed by Mastronardi Produce].”

Like tomatoes, varietal development is in

full swing in the pepper category. BC Hothouse’s Batt says, “We have introduced our Sweet Baby Bell Peppers and greenhouse-grown Hot Chili peppers.”

**CUCUMBERS.** Seedless long English cucumbers are hot sellers at The Fruit Bowl, and Goldberg adds, “We have several European, South African and Australian crews off the island yachts and that’s all they want.”

Greenhouse-grown cucumbers represented only 18 percent of cucumber category volume for the 52 weeks ending September 20, 2011,

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according to Perishables Group data. However, while long English cucumber volume grew only 6.2 percent during this time, baby cucumbers increased 23 percent, or four times, over its larger counterpart.

Eurofresh Farm's Cassius notes, "We're seeing huge growth in snacking mini cucumbers."

**ORGANICS:** Organic is a direction that Bristol Farms is headed in terms of its produce offerings, according to Gallegos.

"In recent years," says Oppenheimer's Quon, "we have seen a steady increase in

demand for organic greenhouse produce as it offers consumers an organic alternative, while maintaining the same high quality and appearance that customers are used to getting from conventional greenhouse produce."

Quon continues, "The latest items that are coming online for Oppenheimer include protected green bells, a large greenhouse organics program entailing production from both Mexico and Canada, and Fair Trade Certified organic and conventional bell peppers from Divemex. Divemex became

certified in early 2011, and delivered modest volumes to key retailers. This season, we are expecting a larger crop."

### Supply, Demand And Promotional Opportunities

The advantage of greenhouse-grown produce is consistency in volume, quality, looks and flavor. Greenhouse Produce's De Schouwer notes, "We are able to estimate weekly numbers straight across a season without too much risk of Mother Nature creating issues as this is a protected environment."

There is some seasonality to supply. This is based on where greenhouses are located and the amount of daylight hours those areas get throughout the year. For example, Prime Time's Aiton details, "There are lulls in production in November and December out of Canada, and it's a time when Mexico hasn't come into full production. Combine this with the demand during the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays and prices can be high at this time."

"However, late spring and early fall are showing signs of increased production as multiple growing areas collide with ample production," adds BC Hot House's Batt.

Typically, when there is an oversupply of any item, many programs can be implemented to increase demand, so it will meet the available supply. Del Monte's Christou points out, "For instance, increased promotions, diversifying product portfolios, cross-merchandising and other marketing initiatives may be used to ensure supply and demand is in equilibrium."

Summer is a time that greenhouse produce comes up against competition from field-grown products. Oppenheimer's Quon explains, "For greenhouse-grown tomatoes specifically, we compete with Heirloom varieties for a few weeks in the summer. While the flavor of many greenhouse tomatoes can go toe-to-toe with Heirlooms, typically the price is higher and retailers tend to get behind the Heirlooms during their limited window."

When it comes to pricing, Sandra Aguilar, marketing manager for Ciruli Bros. LLC, in Rio Rico, AZ, explains, "Because we have more consistent supplies with protected agriculture products, we have more opportunities to offer our customers long term contracts."

As for promotion, Quon recommends, "advertising and promoting greenhouse-grown produce through in-store specials, ads within flyers, end cap displays, signage in front of the stores as well as educational signage in front of the produce describing the taste, health benefits and serving ideas."

pb

# In Memoriam

## Joseph "Jay" Robert Piazza Jr.

March 24, 1960 - January 21, 2012



Jay was one of a kind.

He was certainly a great brother but was also a great teacher. He loved the Market, and the way he performed was something to watch and absorb, especially the way he sold product. No matter what it was, you could be sure the task at hand was done properly and to perfection. He took pride in everything he did whether it was working in the warehouse or selling to his customers. Jay was part of the Community-Suffolk Family.

Jay was an avid photographer and many of his photos made the front page of the paper in his town. When not working for Community or taking pictures for a local photographer, he loved his motorcycle and the beach. Some of his photos looked like they belonged on the cover of National Geographic.

As the oldest brother of four, he will surely be missed...  
Steven, Tommy, and Jackie Piazza





# 11<sup>th</sup> Annual MASTERS OF MERCHANDISING SUPPLEMENT

11<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MASTERS OF MERCHANDISING SUPPLEMENT



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# 11<sup>th</sup> Annual MASTERS OF MERCHANDISING SUPPLEMENT

Every once in a while, the opportunity presents itself to do well while also doing good. Such is the case with this, our eleventh 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.

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 growers 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 industry initiatives. 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 promotions 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 merchandising in a different way. When did you last really consider how to best sell bananas — 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

*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.*

loads."

Merchandising is everyone's problem, and in the produce industry, "The Times, They Are A-Changin.'" Retailers today are in a position to

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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 2012 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 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



## DOMEX SUPERFRESH GROWERS

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During the past decade, apple varieties have blossomed. With the success of new “club” varieties in the market and changing consumer attitudes toward the entire apple category, retailers are approaching apple sales with renewed vigor. Now more than ever, savvy apple merchandising will generate huge year round return on investment.

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Nothing attracts attention and generates sales like a large apple display. The display should be well signed with variety name and flavor info and placed at the front of the department in your primary selling location. During the peak of the season (September – December), a secondary display either in the department or around the store can generate 27% in additional sales.

**Color Breaks:** With the large number of bi-color apples available in today’s market, color breaks are more important than ever. Using citrus or pears to create effective breaks can also generate impulse purchases between categories.

### PACKAGING OPTIONS

There are more options than ever when it comes to displaying fruit. Clamshells, poly bags, mesh bags, display-ready boxes and high-graphic bins are among the tools you can use to increase your apple category performance.

**Increase Sales with Bins:** Superfresh Growers® has developed a high-impact-graphic sleeve-bin display that will drive impulse sales and generate incremental sales at the same time. Pair this display with our earth-friendly paper tote bags and you have the perfect opportunity to sell apples anywhere in the store. These displays are especially helpful for cross-promotions. These bins are also handy for creating bulk or bag waterfall apple displays.

**Bags:** Create a separate section for your bag program to deliver incremental volume and sales. Poly bags like the 2-pound Superfresh Kids™ bags are ideal for smaller fruit and appeal to families and seniors who may not be able to eat

a typical large apple from the bulk display. Retailers featuring 2-pound bagged apple promotions can realize a 74.3% volume increase (“true lift”) and generate a 42.6% incremental volume lift!

### PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Mixing the ad items and types of ads maximizes impact: Frequency of advertising has a strong impact on the effectiveness of promotion plans. Because apples are so popular, there’s a temptation to advertise the same items at the same price many times during the season. However, experience shows that this can have a negative effect on the promotion goals.

Best single item ads will be the top two selling apple varieties for a retailer. When running combination ads, there should be a balance between what drives a retailer’s business today, and what they will want to drive incremental performance over time. Combinations of mainline varieties; Gala, Fuji, Red Delicious, Golden Delicious, Granny Smith, and premium varieties — Honeycrisp, Braeburn, Jazz, Cameo, etc. — are an effective mix of items to advertise. Advertising mainline varieties will use the strength of the retailers’ core items, while the premium varieties will help increase awareness of new segments and reach out to those consumers who have already discovered these items. The result is an expanded customer base for the category and the best mix of sales and profits.

**Ad Frequency:** Starting September 1, it is recommended you feature apples at a minimum every two weeks. Maximum sales result from retailers that run 8 ads every quarter.

**Apple-Rama:** Almost any combination of apple varieties can be featured in your full-blown apple variety ads. It is recommended to run a major apple ad in early November as all varieties of new crop apples are available for promotion.

**Health Promos:** After the Holidays, consumers are looking for healthy foods to help them reach their weight-loss goals. This is the ideal time for a major ad and display push of your “healthy” apple category. Superfresh Growers has created a 100 Calorie Snack ironman stand poster to help educate consumers. The poster features a QR code that consumers scan with their Smartphones to read more about healthy apples on the Superfresh Growers website.

**Holiday-Specific Ads:** Christmas, Hanukkah, New Year’s, Valentine’s Day and St. Patrick’s Day are the traditional holidays for apples, but don’t forget to include apples in your ads around other Holidays as well as major sporting events too.

**Timing:** Continue to feature apples year-round. Superfresh Growers Category Management team has conducted research revealing that stores lose sales and margin when they decrease shelf space for apples when stone



fruit arrives. The average margin loss over a four-month period is 20.5%! Other studies have shown that when you position apples adjacent to stone fruit, the average increase in gross profit is \$595 per store per week.

### DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

Culling several times a day along with proper rotation are critical to building consumer interest in apples. Bruised apples or disorganized displays lower consumer confidence in the product and they will turn to other sources for good apples.

**Temperature:** Store cartons under constant refrigeration down to 32° F with relative humidity of 90% for maximum shelf life and eating quality.

**Rotate:** Ensure oldest product is staged to move to shelf display first.

### QUICK TIPS

1. Keep the apple category up front and show your customers a quality image
2. Displaying all apples together is key to creating the ultimate category destination
3. Make sure your apple category space is in line with your goals. Remember that a strong apple category generates 10% of the total produce dollar sales from about 10% of the department display space.



### OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Secondary displays are a great way to increase space for minimal cost. Consider auxiliary locations outside of the produce department, i.e. bakery, meat isle or lobby displays.
- Cross promote apples with caramel dips and wraps and peanut butter

to drive impulse purchases.

- Display QR codes on POS materials that will lead consumers who scan them with their smartphones to sites with flavor descriptions and recipe ideas even when you aren’t there.



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## ARTICHOKES



## OCEAN MIST FARMS

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### 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 2012 CROP

March through mid-May is peak season for the classic Green Globe variety artichoke only grown in the Castroville, California region. 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.

### UPC STICKERS

Ocean Mist Farms developed a UPC 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.

### MERCHANDISING ARTICHOKES

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.
- Trays or bowls with ice or water work well as merchandising tools to keep stems hydrated.
- 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.

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.

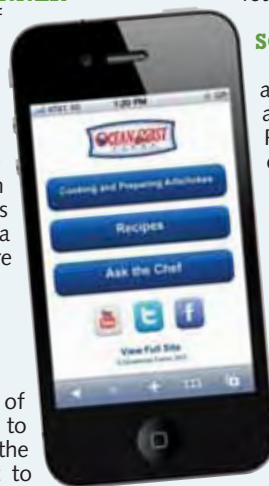
### NUTRITION STORY A WINNER

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. This knowledge will have a significant impact on future purchases.

### USE DIGITAL TOOLS TO SUPPORT SPRING PROMOTIONS

With less than half of shoppers making the decision to buy at the store, it increases the importance of reaching out to



### SOCIAL MEDIA

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.

- [facebook.com/californiaartichokes](http://facebook.com/californiaartichokes)
- [twitter.com/artichokerecipe](http://twitter.com/artichokerecipe)

### ARTICHOKE CLUB

This Ocean Mist Farms exclusive club now has over 33,000 artichoke club members. These club members are provided what they are looking for when it comes to artichokes: Recipe ideas, how-to-videos and where to find artichokes on sale.



### DEBUT OF MICROWAVABLE ARTICHOKES

- Ocean Mist Farms will be debuting the first-of-its-kind "Season & Steam" microwavable artichoke bag. The Season & Steam bag features two, fresh Globe artichokes that are cleaned, trimmed and ready to cook. The innovative packaging gives users the option to open the bag, pre-season the artichokes to their

preference reseal the package and steam by microwave all within the same bag. The ability to pre-season the artichokes (prior to cooking) is an exclusive convenience attribute to the produce department. For more information about the new item, visit

[www.microwavableartichokes.com](http://www.microwavableartichokes.com)



# LOVE



Ocean Mist began its love affair with artichokes over 80 years ago when it pioneered the commercial cultivation of artichokes and developed a line of exceptional, richly flavored varieties that today supply over 80% of the nation's demand year-round.

Today, more and more vegetable lovers are falling for the unique flavor, antioxidant boost and shared experience of enjoying the alluring artichoke.

Artichokes are just one of the objects of our passion. For more information on any of our 30 commodities, visit [oceanmist.com](http://oceanmist.com)



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## ASPARAGUS



## PERUVIAN ASPARAGUS IMPORTERS ASSOCIATION

Phone: 817-793-3133  
Contact: Priscilla Lleras  
Email: prestige@1scom.net



Asparagus represents increasing potential for high ring sales in the produce department. More and more consumers are looking for healthy and convenient foods, and fresh asparagus presents an easy-to-prepare and highly nutritious solution. According to USDA-ERS statistics, per capita consumption of fresh asparagus has grown and remained consistent over the past decade.

Asparagus from Peru, a principal supplier, allows retailers to complement other seasonal sources and offer quality product year-round. Retailers can count on consistent, quality Peruvian asparagus to build sales and provide ample displays of product throughout the year. To assist retailers in managing the category, the Peruvian Asparagus Importers Association (PAIA) has developed a Category Management Plan Outline for Fresh Peruvian Asparagus, available from any PAIA member or the association office at prestige@1scom.net.

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS — GO BIG!

The year-round availability of asparagus supports programs designed to build the category not only during peak holiday periods but throughout the year. Focus on the following key areas to boost sales:

• **Vibrant Colors:** A variety of colors are available from Peru. Use of multiple colors makes for attractive display alternatives. Fresh asparagus is readily available in green, white and purple. Showcase unique colors, like purple or white, by adding these products to displays where fresh green asparagus is featured to create interesting and impactful displays.

• **Visibility:** Size sells!!! Strategically display the category to ensure consumers see it. Many successful retailers display asparagus at the front of the produce department and utilize island displays and corner caps to guarantee consumers see it. Making sure displays are especially visible and well-positioned in the produce department will gain sales. Advantageously cross-merchandising asparagus with other grocery items will build asparagus sales and add additional ring for the department.

• **Variety:** Fresh asparagus now comes in a wide variety of sizes and packaging to enhance display practices and meet consumers' needs. 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, packaged green and/or white asparagus, packaged asparagus tips, white and purple asparagus) will increase sales and add profits to the produce department.

### PROMOTION AND SIGNAGE

Fresh asparagus is a great item to promote for entertaining and holidays, especially during Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Retailers should also capitalize on the opportunity to promote asparagus during the summer for picnics or barbecues.

### OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Use an in-store demo to show consumers how to incorporate asparagus into a new recipe or meal idea.
- MIX and MATCH colors.
- Promote value-added and packaged fresh product as an easy convenient side dish.
- Put asparagus front and center in the department to encourage impulse sales.

Promoting multiple colors of Peruvian asparagus together may encourage consumers to try a new color. Retailers can also use alternative pricing methods, such as by the bunch instead of the pound, to showcase the value of the product. Value-added and packaged fresh product can be used as part of a meal solutions offering. In-store demo programs increase consumer awareness of asparagus as an easy and economical dinner component.

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

- tasty party item
- easy to barbecue
- microwaveable
- quick and healthy snack

**Promote Nutrition:** Health-related promotion is a definite method of gaining sales. Asparagus contains a host of health benefits:

- Asparagus is low in calories
- Naturally fat- and cholesterol-free
- Good source of potassium, Vitamin A, Vitamin C
- Rich in rutin and folacin, which has been proven important in the duplication of cells for growth and repair of the body

Promotions designed to highlight nutritional benefits will lead to loyal purchasers. Combine asparagus with other Superfoods in an in-store promotion outlining the health attributes of these products. Health aspects appeal to a wide segment of the market including active life-stylists, young adults, growing families and seniors.

**Cross Merchandising Opportunities:** Fresh asparagus has numerous cross-merchandising opportunities including salad, oils and dressings, with deli or seafood items, and wines. During the summer, placing a display next to barbecue-style meats and fish is a great way to promote picnic items. Value packaged or tray-packed fresh asparagus can also be cross-merchandised with packaged salad. Fresh and packaged asparagus can be cross-merchandised with other departments to provide a meal solution for customers, for example in the meat department with steaks or in the deli with roasted chicken.

### 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 to increase the category through value-added options — including microwaveable and ready-to-eat designed for both retail and foodservice. These value-added programs provide the consumer with convenience and value.

### CARE AND HANDLING

Asparagus should be bright-looking with closed, firm tips. The butt-end of fresh asparagus should be cleanly cut and sufficiently hydrated. Display under refrigeration or with the butt-end in water or touching a wet pad. Be sure to monitor the condition of water in display trays and change frequently. In the backroom, keep asparagus cold (34-36 degrees F) and moist (damp room) prior to display. Fresh asparagus is not ethylene-sensitive but is susceptible to absorbing very strong odors.

### FIVE WAYS TO GROW YOUR PERUVIAN ASPARAGUS CATEGORY:

1. Don't be afraid to go big and promote the product!
2. Promote multiple uses and provide recipe information from grilling to soups.
3. Promote alternative colors, especially for home chefs and entertaining.
4. Build promotion around nutrition and health. Asparagus offers excellent advantages in this area.
5. Cross-merchandise with proteins and provide a meal idea.







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Don Hessel & Cory Stahl  
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asparagus@progressiveproduce.com







## AVOCADO - LIGHTSKIN



## BROOKS TROPICALS

18400 SW 256th Street  
Homestead, FL 33090  
Phone: 800-327-4833  
Fax: 305-246-5827

Web: [www.brookstropicals.com](http://www.brookstropicals.com)  
Email: [www.brookstropicals.com/nutrition](http://www.brookstropicals.com/nutrition)

### 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 dish, these green-skinned avocados make bagged lunches hard to beat.
- SlimCado bowls — cut in half and filled with your favorite seafood salad.
- 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, these Florida avocado are 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 guacamole, hamburgers and the 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.

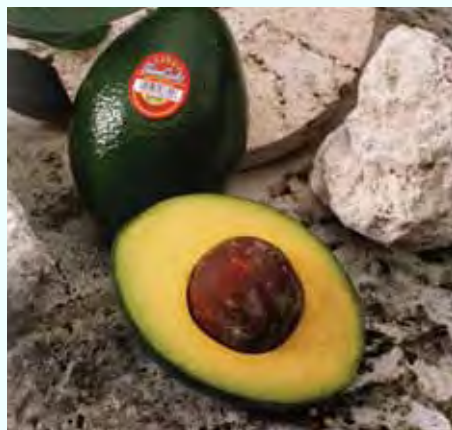
Garnish in-store cooked food demonstrations

with a piece of SlimCado. The food's heat will slightly melt the SlimCado for an added treat.

### 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.



### 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 dish.

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.*

### QUICK TIPS

1. Your customer may expect the SlimCado to turn black — like other avocados — as they ripen. SlimCados stay green. If you can give it a squeeze and it gives a little, it's ready to eat.

2. Keep SlimCados cool but not cold. To ripen, keep them at room temperatures.

3. To ripen faster, put in a paper bag. To ripen even faster, put in a paper bag with an apple or a banana.

4. For additional nutritional information and recipes: [www.brookstropicals.com/SlimCado](http://www.brookstropicals.com/SlimCado).

### OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

• Think big at the beginning of the season. Big displays, big signs alert the SlimCado aficionado that their favorite avocado is back in season. As the season progresses, create small multiple displays to cross-merchandise with bagged salads and guacamole ingredients.

• Promotional volumes are available in mid-July for the SlimCado 12-

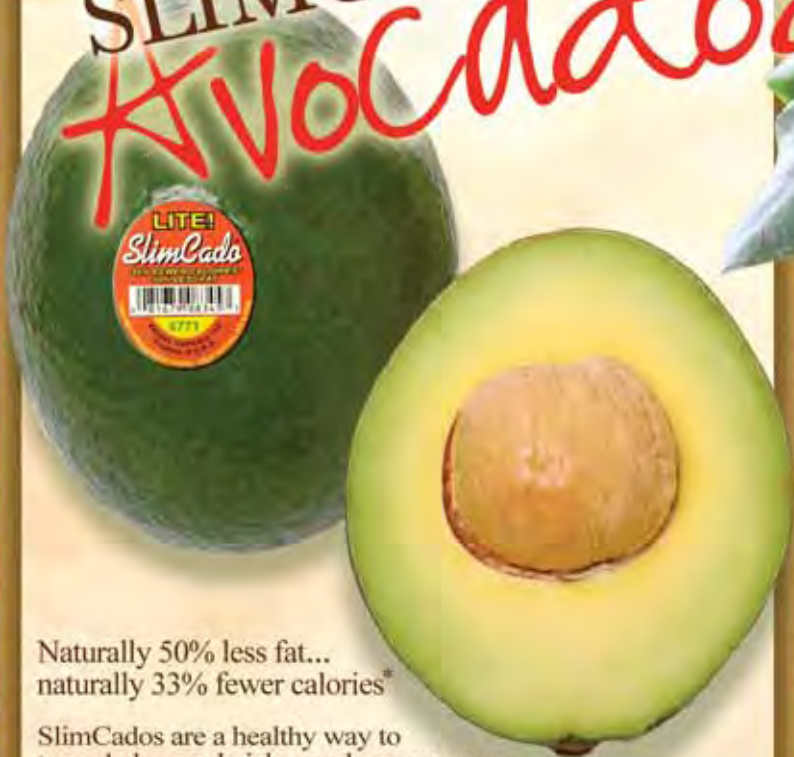
count, just in time for a healthy addition to barbecue menus. In August, it's the 10-count that reaches promotional volumes.

• The tailgate parties of fall always welcome avocado salads, guacamole or a Florida version of the Caprese salad with SlimCado slices partnering with mozzarella and tomatoes.



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AVOCADO FIELDS  
TO YOUR STORES

SLIMCADO®  
*Avocados*



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naturally 33% fewer calories\*

SlimCados are a healthy way to  
top salads, sandwiches and creamy soups.  
SlimCados are the green-skinned avocados with sell-thru,  
coming by that reputation with a lot of hard work:

- In-house research and development
- Hydro-cooled straight from the field
- Food safety-audited facilities
- State-of-the-art packing house
- Quality control team
- Continuous Cold Chain® from our  
fields to your stores



when food safety counts

All that hard work delivers quality — SlimCado  
avocados with great taste and proven shelf life.  
Call today to get SlimCado avocados coming your way.

\*compared to the leading California avocado



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## AVOCADOS



### CALIFORNIA AVOCADOS – CONSISTENTLY RELIABLE QUALITY AND MARKETING SUPPORT

Quality and marketing support are key reasons to merchandise California Avocados. Of retailers surveyed in 2011:

- 79%\* said California Avocados are Consistently Higher Quality (the highest score in the survey)
- 71%\* said the California Avocado Commission (CAC) Marketing Support is the second most important reason they merchandise avocados from California

\*Among retailers that merchandise California Avocados

### CONSUMERS PREFER CALIFORNIA AVOCADOS

Consumers with a preference select California Avocados by 9 to 1 over other avocados.

Source: Cooper Roberts Research, 2011 Avocado Tracking Study

### CONSUMER MARKETING AND PROMOTION CREATE DEMAND

CAC's award-winning marketing program provides retail support and resources to drive sales. Radio and outdoor billboard advertising (in select markets), print ads in national culinary and lifestyle publications, online communication on popular consumer websites featuring recipes and nutritional information, a dedicated mobile website, and exceptional social media outreach with over 80,000 Facebook fans create demand for California Avocados.



Hand Grown in California Avocado Grower stories and graphics, in-store Point-of-Sale and more are available at [CaliforniaAvocado.com](http://CaliforniaAvocado.com).



### AMERICAN SUMMER HOLIDAYS = CALIFORNIA AVOCADO SALES OPPORTUNITIES

Traditional Summer Holidays (Memorial Day, Flag Day, Father's Day, the 4th of July, and Labor Day) are the perfect time to promote America's favorite avocado – California Avocados.

Tap into the explosive opportunities of the quintessential, American holiday: **4th of July**. Avocado dollar sales increased 31% and volume has increased 17% between 2008 and 2011 during the 4th of July celebrations.

Each of these holiday occasions drive retail sales: Memorial Day, Father's Day, the 4th of July, and Labor Day.

### AVOCADO NUTRITION INFORMATION AND RESEARCH

California Avocados are part of the MyPlate consumer educational program to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables.

They are a natural:

- Avocados are naturally sodium- and cholesterol-free
- 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

California Avocado nutrition information and recipes are readily available online at [CaliforniaAvocado.com/healthy-living](http://CaliforniaAvocado.com/healthy-living).

## CALIFORNIA AVOCADOS

12 Mauchly, Suite L  
Irvine, CA 92618-6305  
Phone: 949-341-1955  
Fax: 949-341-1970  
Web: [CaliforniaAvocado.com/Retail](http://CaliforniaAvocado.com/Retail)  
Email: [dcruz@avocado.org](mailto:dcruz@avocado.org)

### MERCHANDISE CALIFORNIA AVOCADOS TO BOOST SALES

#### Recommended Display Ideas

1. Locate your primary display of California Avocados in a prominent and permanent location.

- Display ripe and breaking fruit to increase sales volume
- A two-size strategy (selling both large and small size avocados) can increase category volume and sales by nearly 100%

2. Merchandise California Avocados next to tomatoes and onions for a colorful display and increased sales.

- When displayed with tomatoes, sales of California Avocados can increase up to 12%

3. Position a second or third display of avocados in a featured location to lift shopper awareness and sales.

- Bagged California Avocados may be used as an excellent secondary display
- Bags may generate sales up to 53 more units per store, per week, than stores without bags

### INSIST ON CALIFORNIA AVOCADOS

Visit [CaliforniaAvocado.com/Retail](http://CaliforniaAvocado.com/Retail) or contact your CAC Retail Marketing Director for more information and to order your *Hand Grown in California* materials.

### QUICK TIP

Call the California Avocado Commission for all of your avocado retail support: rolling crop forecasts, ripening information, consumer and merchandising research, *Hand Grown in California* Grower stories, recipes, promotional opportunities, retail sales data and information resources.



# California Avocados

## Consistently Reliable

Retailers surveyed\* said **Quality** and **Marketing Support** are the key reasons they merchandise California Avocados.

\*2011 Retail Survey

Call **(800) 344-4333** or visit **CaliforniaAvocado.com/Retail** to order in-store POS



INSIST ON CALIFORNIA  
AVOCADOS

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## BANANAS



## DOLE

One Dole Avenue  
Westlake Village, CA 91362  
Phone: 818-874-4000  
Fax: 818-874-6501  
Web: www.dole.com/bananas

### BANANAS ARE WELL POSITIONED TO PROMOTE IN A DIFFICULT ECONOMY.

We have stated for the past two years that “consumers are faced with very difficult choices as economic conditions worsen.” Still, 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 remain 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 2010 and 2011 for the total United States.

Total US Retail Conventionally Grown Fresh Fruit Sales % Change 2010 - 2011			
Product	\$ Sales	Lbs Sold	Retail Price
Apples	1.0%	-3.9%	5.2%
Avocados	5.2%	-18.3%	28.8%
<b>Bananas</b>	<b>2.9%</b>	<b>-2.7%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>
Berries	5.1%	0.8%	4.3%
Cherries	6.2%	2.5%	3.6%
Grapes	-2.7%	-9.0%	6.9%
Melons	-2.9%	-6.7%	4.1%
Oranges	-4.0%	-5.4%	1.4%
Peaches	1.7%	-4.7%	6.7%
Pineapple	0.8%	0.8%	-1.6%
Total	1.5%	-4.1%	5.8%

Source: FreshLook Marketing; YTD ending December 4, 2011 vs Prior Year

A continued dreary economy in 2011 brought higher retail fresh fruit prices. Consumers spent more but purchased less conventionally grown fresh fruit compared to 2010 according to FreshLook Marketing data. Banana sales volume decreased less than most of the other major fruit categories despite a higher than average price increase.

Only the berry and cherry categories grew in dollar sales and volume compared to the prior year among the major fruit categories. 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 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.

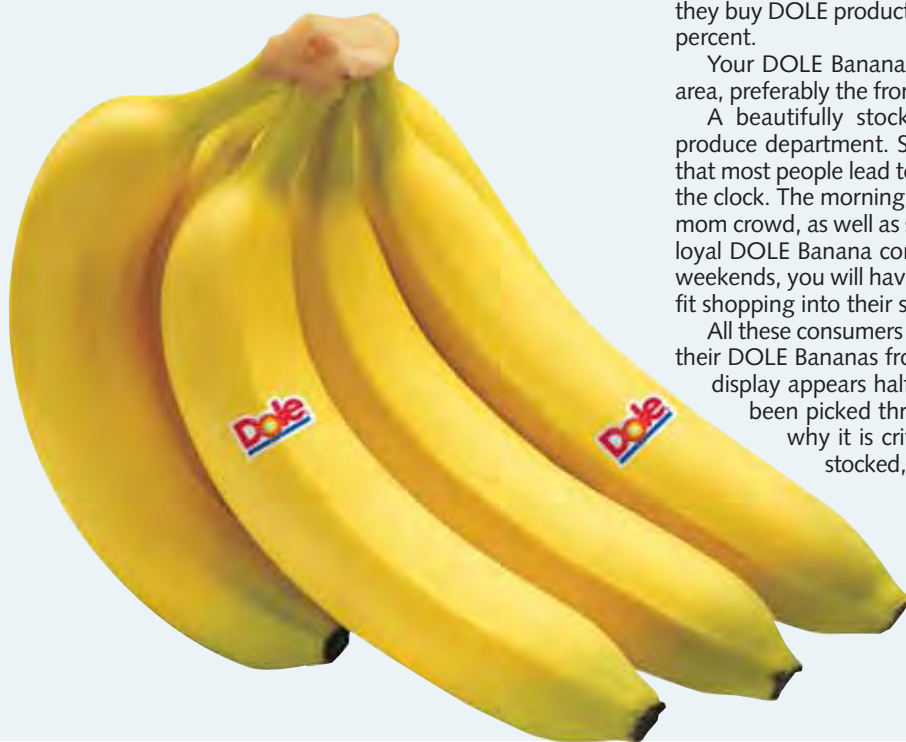
### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

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-six percent of respondents surveyed said they buy DOLE products. The next brand mentioned received only 16 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.







### DOLE CHALLENGES AMERICANS TO "GO BANANAS" EVERY DAY IN 2012

Launched on New Year's Day, **366 Ways to Go Bananas in 2012™** offers a unique — and often unheard-of — way to enjoy a banana every day of the year. Banana fans can follow DOLE® Bananas on Twitter (@DOLEBananas; the 366-specific Twitter hashtag is #Go366) and Facebook (<http://www.facebook.com/dolebananas>) to receive daily or weekly banana-friendly suggestions, respectively.

#### A SAMPLING OF THE 366 WAYS TO GO BANANAS IN 2012

- **DAY 5 (JAN. 5)**  
Polish your leather shoes with a banana peel.
- **DAY 8 (JAN. 8)**  
Celebrate Elvis Presley's birthday by eating his favorite sandwich, peanut butter and banana.
- **DAY 52 (FEB. 21)**  
Order the Bananas Foster at Brennan's in New Orleans. (The French Quarter restaurant created the famous flaming dessert in the 1950s.)  
[http://www.brennansneworleans.com/r\\_bananasfoster.html](http://www.brennansneworleans.com/r_bananasfoster.html)
- **DAY 78 (MAR 18)**  
Treat your post-St. Patrick's Day hangover with a banana, nature's Vitamin B6-rich hangover cure.
- **DAY 154 (JUNE 2)**  
Celebrate National Trails Day by taking a banana with you on a hike. It's nature's perfect nutrient-dense portable pick-me-up.  
<http://www.americanhiking.org/national-trails-day/>
- **DAY 238 (AUG. 25)**  
Observe National Banana Split Day. The famous dessert celebrates its 108th birthday in 2012.
- **DAY 271 (SEPT. 27)**  
Go to Pie n' Burger in Pasadena, Calif., and order the Banana Creme Pie, which the *New York Times* says is the best in the U.S.  
[www.nytimes.com/2007/01/14/magazine/14food.t.html?\\_r=1&ref=magazine&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/01/14/magazine/14food.t.html?_r=1&ref=magazine&oref=slogin)
- **DAY 285 (OCT. 11)**  
Trade in the nicotine gum or patch for a banana to help stop smoking.  
<http://www.banana.com/medicinal.html>
- **DAY 357 (DEC. 22)**  
Arrange a basket of bananas, apples, pears, pineapples and other fruit to make a quick, easy and healthy last-minute Christmas gift.

Dole's Go Bananas Every Day initiative will be supported by a 12-month-long multimedia marketing effort encompassing a campaign-specific microsite, traditional and digital advertising, sticker program, public relations, social media, blogger and other third-party partnerships. Dole will visit select cities throughout the year to meet with food bloggers, registered dietitians, retailers, the media and other influencers to discuss the health, versatility, affordability and convenience benefits of America's most popular fruit.

Dole will also work with retailers across the country to develop in-store promotions, point-of-sale materials, sampling events and other programs, and will use its dedicated social media platforms, followed by a collective audience of more than 600,000 banana lovers, to get the word out.

**Your Dole representative can provide materials and help you design promotions to introduce consumers to this great idea!**



### DO YOU YONANA?

Yonanas is the banana "ice cream" maker. This ingeniously designed kitchen appliance transforms, in minutes, sugar spotted (or "cheetah spotted" as the Yonanas people like to say) bananas into a delicious and healthy treat that looks and tastes like soft ice cream and can be enjoyed anytime. Consumers peel and freeze the "cheetah" spotted bananas for 24 hours. Then whenever they wish, consumers process the frozen banana through the machine to make a rich, creamy, and seemingly indulgent treat that is made entirely of fruit! The Yonanas machine is simple to use and easy to clean as well.

A Dole survey in November 2011 revealed the single factor that prevents more than 80% of consumers from buying more bananas than the typical four to six bananas is bananas spoil too quickly. Yonanas not only provides consumers a use for those "cheetah" spotted bananas that are so often discarded, Yonanas drives consumers to purchase more bananas and no longer worry about waste from banana spoilage.

Contact your Dole representative to learn how the Yonanas machine can be sold in your store.







**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.





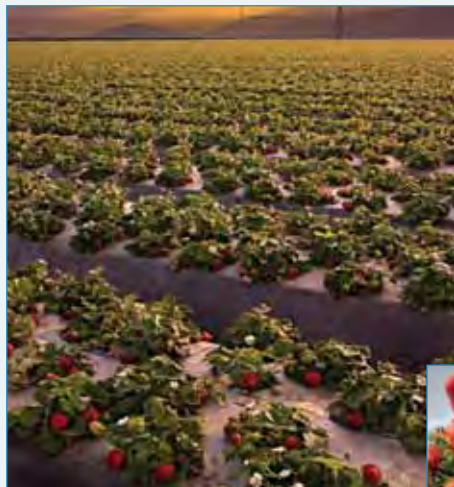


## BERRIES, CONVENTIONAL



## WELL•PICT BERRIES

PO Box 973  
Watsonville, CA 95077  
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Web: [www.wellpict.com](http://www.wellpict.com)  
Email: [info@wellpict.com](mailto:info@wellpict.com)



the supply from Well•Pict's Watsonville fields, effectively lengthening the harvest and ensuring increased supplies through the late fall and early winter. Well•Pict offers 12-month availability for both conventional and organic strawberries, as well as conventional raspberries.

### PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Well•Pict strawberries are available year-round, so promote availability for the fall and winter holidays when consumers might not know fresh strawberries are available. Cross-promote with champagne for New Year's Eve! Create special displays for spring and summer holidays

through at the store level by up to 3%.\*

### BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

Strawberries do not continue to ripen after picking, so Well•Pict berries are immediately cooled after picking to a temperature of 32° F and shipped within two hours. It is critical to maintain the cold chain from field to consumer for the freshest, highest quality berries.

Refrigerate berries as soon as possible when received and keep in undisturbed, temperature-stable areas of the cooler.

Display berries soon, preferably in refrigerated displays, to maintain freshness. If it's necessary to display without refrigeration, display them prominently in the front of the produce department for quick sales.

### CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

As families are thinking more about healthy eating, strawberries are a perfect choice for nutrition and good taste. Display with products such as green salad or fruit salad ingredients to get consumers thinking of healthy meal ideas. Also display with dessert items commonly associated with strawberries, like whipped cream, shortcake, dipping chocolate, etc. Again, strawberries are often an impulse buy, and these kinds of complementary items help to jog consumers' memories of delicious strawberry dishes and special events. Develop display promotions for holidays throughout the year, including all the winter holidays that consumers may not associate with strawberries.

*\*Source: California Strawberry Commission*

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Strawberries are often an impulse buy, so keep that in mind when setting up berry displays. Keep fresh, beautiful berries prominently displayed in the front of the produce department to catch the eye of consumers. Well•Pict's strawberry packaging and labeling is attractive and eye-catching, and each clamshell is designed to maximize visibility of the product.



### POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Well•Pict offers a variety of POP materials on request to retailers, including posters, signage, display cards, and recipe booklets. We also work with retailers to provide customized POP programs for both general marketing and specific promotions. Plus, we offer recipe booklets with healthy, kid-friendly recipes that parents and kids can have fun making together.

### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

All of Well•Pict's berries are our own proprietary varieties, bred for superior attributes such as flavor, color, shape, aroma, and shelf life. They are also developed to take advantage of the individual climates of the areas where Well•Pict's berries are grown.

Well•Pict's growing areas are located along the Central and Southern California coast, as well as Baja California and Florida. By planting specific varieties in the areas for which they are best suited, Well•Pict is able to maximize production, and the staggered harvest times provide year-round availability for Well•Pict strawberries. In 2011, Well•Pict expanded the growing areas for two of their newest varieties: the #3352 and #4053, both grown in California's Oxnard district. The timing of their harvest supplements

like Valentine's Day, Easter and Mother's Day. Promote berries (and their resealable packaging) as a healthy choice for barbecues, picnics, and other family outings. Remember that holidays like Memorial Day, Labor Day, and Independence Day can have great promotional possibilities, as well!

### RIPENESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Strawberries are fully ripe at the time they are picked and do not continue to ripen after picking. They should have bright red color, natural shine and fresh looking green caps.

### DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

Strawberry displays should be stocked early in the day, in refrigeration whenever possible. Always maintain the cold chain for the freshest berries. The product should be rotated frequently.

Waterfall displays and other prominent displays should be placed in the front of the produce department, particularly during peak seasons of spring and summer. Remember, if the displays are out front, they will sell!

Merchandise strawberries in consistent locations throughout the year. Many retailers are using refrigerated display units. Research shows that the use of properly positioned and sized refrigerated displays can improve unit sell-

### QUICK TIPS

1. Make sure your berries' green tops are firmly attached.
2. Put them directly into your refrigerator as soon as you get home.
3. Remember to only rinse your berries just before eating!



### OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

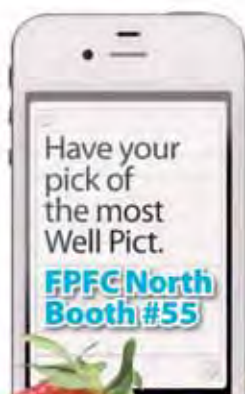
• Display strawberries with 'non-traditional' foods that consumers might not think of in connection with strawberries, such as ingredients for salsa, barbecue sauce, and other savory dishes that can be enhanced by strawberries. Promote them for the "foodie" aspect of trying new, non-traditional types of flavor combinations. Check [www.wellpict.com](http://www.wellpict.com) for some terrific recipe ideas. Also, feature Well•Pict's kid-friendly recipe booklet and display with traditional "kid" food items like peanut butter and jelly. Promote as a "family fun" activity.





# See **Snap** Post (Repeat)

Bred for superior size, aroma, and color, Well Pict strawberries always please. And now, you can show us how attractive the sweet berry taste of Well Pict berries are to you and your customers. Use your smartphone to snap photos of our beautiful strawberries anywhere you see, use, or sell them. Then share your photos with us on our facebook page. You could win fun prizes. Plus your photo could be selected for our next ad.



**Show us your best *Well Pictures*.  
Visit [facebook.com/wellpictberries](http://facebook.com/wellpictberries) to post your photos,  
or e-mail them to us at [julie@wellpict.com](mailto:julie@wellpict.com).**



[www.wellpict.com](http://www.wellpict.com)  
USA 831-722-3871



#wellpictberries





## CARROTS

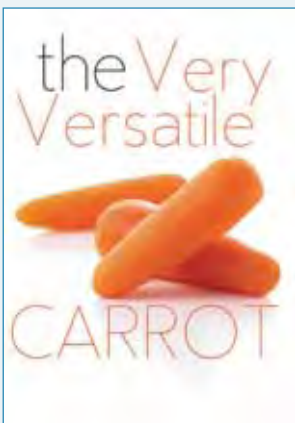


A family of *Growing* companies.™

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Carrots are one of the most convenient, value added vegetables in the produce category. They offer solutions for a multitude of occasions. The merchandising opportunities are endless as their color, heartiness, and variety of premium cuts provide much opportunity to cross-promote with other items and enhance overall sales. Some key display points are:

- The bright orange color provides vivid color breaks throughout the produce displays.
- Carrot displays should include a wide array of occasion-based solutions, both conventional and organic, that offer both value and convenience to the consumer to include: Baby Carrots – cooking and snacking, Microwaveable Petite Carrots – cooking and snacking, Carrot Chips – cooking and snacking, Carrot Sticks – snacking, Shred Carrots – cooking and salad applications, Multipack Carrots – snacking, Carrots with Dip – snacking, Fresh Carrots – cooking and juicing.
- The Premium Carrots (Petites, Shred, Chips, Multipacks, and Dippers) drive greater sales when displayed in the highest traffic area of the produce department adjacent to the pre-packaged salad set. Baby Carrots often complement the salad and pre-cut vegetable category when placed adjacent to these items in the refrigerated display. Fresh Carrots perform best when placed next to the cooking vegetables on the wet rack.
- Build large secondary displays to drive incremental sales when baby carrots are on feature.
- Our full line of foodservice packs offers the perfect solution to supply your salad bars with baby carrots, carrot chips, and carrot shred.
- 25-pound bulk juice carrots, otherwise known as “horse” carrots, provide the ideal carrot for juicing and sweet horse treats alike.



- All Natural
  - Convenient Snack
    - Nutrient Rich
    - Value Added
- Shelf talkers and headers are a good way to grab the shoppers' attention. Grimmway Farms will customize carrot POS materials to fit your merchandising strategy.



### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

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

### PROMOTIONAL / ADVERTISING IDEAS

Know your consumers and your markets. Work with your carrot supplier to develop a comprehensive promotional strategy to grow

## GRIMMWAY FARMS

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Bakersfield, CA 93380  
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Web: www.grimmway.com

carrot consumption. Seasonal promotions, shared demonstrations with dressings, and effective signage all support successful promotions.

### 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.

The whitening of carrots is caused from the air within drying the outer cells, otherwise known as oxidation, of the peeled carrots. Soak the peeled carrots in ice water to bring the freshness and brilliance back to the carrot.

Proper handling of the cold chain throughout the distribution channel is crucial to extending the shelf life of processed carrots.

### CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Cross merchandising and promotions of carrots with fresh dips, dressings, and pre-cut salads will enhance not only your carrot sales, but provide strong results in delivering incremental dollars to your produce department.

Carrot side-dish and ingredient recipes in the meat department that offer complete meal solutions will help drive incremental sales.

### QUICK TIPS

1. Offer a complete selection of value-added Grimmway carrot products
2. Promote the healthful attributes of carrots
3. Highlight carrots through seasonal promotions and secondary displays
4. Key in on value and diversity of occasion usage of carrots

### OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Cross promotional suggestions with the center store baking ingredients.
- Offer single serve carrot bags as a side choice on your deli menu
- Live carrot cooking demonstrations in your stores.
- Cross promote shredded carrots with wraps through QR code recipes.



# the Very Versatile Carrot



## Babies

The "Good For You" snack  
✓ Great for lunches  
✓ High in Vitamin A



## Whole

The "Do It Yourself" carrot  
✓ Use in stews & soups  
✓ Adds color to meals

## Shredded

The "Salad Maker"  
✓ Great as a salad topper  
✓ Try added to a sandwich



## Chips, Sticks & Coins

The "Entertainers"  
✓ Snack 'em or Dip 'em  
✓ Great for holidays & parties



## Microwavable Petites

The "Side Dish Kings"  
✓ Cooks in minutes  
✓ Perfect anytime of day



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## CELERY



## DUDA FARM FRESH FOODS, INC.

PO Box 620257  
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Web: dudafresh.com  
Email: sales@duda.com

### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Duda Farm Fresh Foods has successfully been growing celery for eighty-five years. Since 1926 when we sold our first cash crop, we have been devoted to improving our product quality and investing in innovation as it relates to celery production. With five generations of family members leading us along the way, today we're proud to say that our company generates 1,000 to 1,200 lines of celery per year focusing on characteristics such as flavor, nutrition, texture and appearance.

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Research on celery destination shows consumers are looking for convenience in their shopping trips. Merchandising can help provide



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.



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 buy-one-get-one-free (BOGO) promotions are the most effective 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



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

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.

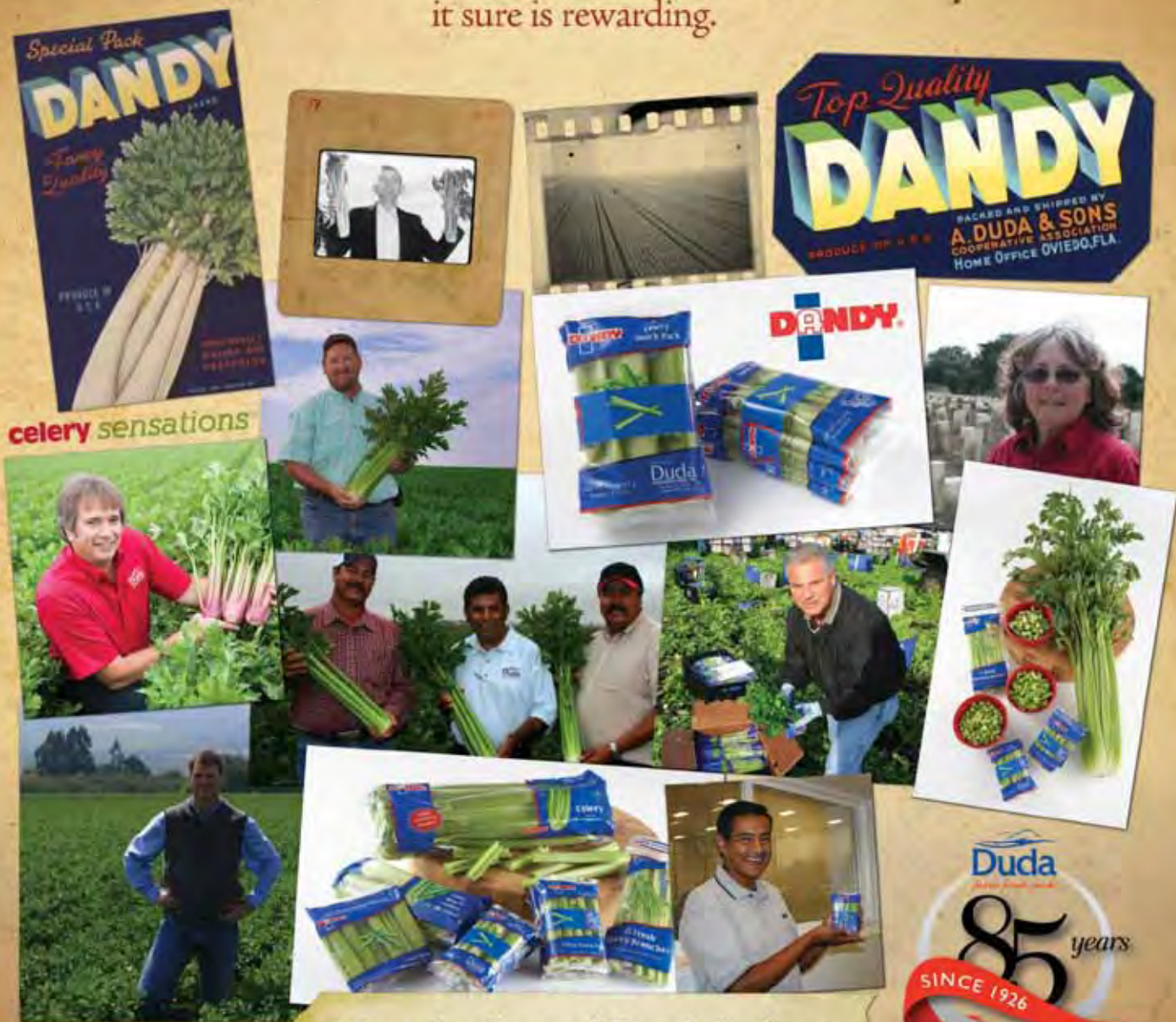
### OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Shoppers of celery are cookers 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 the cooker as well.
- The snackers category would enjoy seeing celery next to the fresh dips and salad dressings.



# BEING THE BEST ISN'T ALWAYS EASY...

but with 85 years of hard work and devotion,  
it sure is rewarding.



Meet the faces of Dandy® celery.

Since 1926, when Andrew Duda harvested and sold his first cash crop, the team at Duda Farm Fresh Foods has been devoted to growing and delivering the highest quality, best tasting celery possible. Over the years, we've developed our own proprietary varieties and by doing so, have established a proven quality control process that is unmatched in the industry. As a result, Dandy® celery is now the leading brand amongst consumers.

PHONE 561-804-1490

FAX 561-804-1491

www.DudaFresh.com

SCAN TO VIEW OUR CELERY VIDEO

**Duda**  
farm fresh foods



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Dandy Fresh Fruits and Vegetables



@Dandy\_Fresh



dudafreshproduce





## CHERRIES



Northwest Cherries are mainly an impulse item, which makes merchandising very important. Even though the Northwest Cherry season lasts only about eight weeks, these cherries can actually outsell other produce items that are available year-round. Cherry consumption continues to increase, and retailers can take advantage of their growing popularity by properly displaying, handling and promoting this highly profitable item.

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

A large, high quality display is the base of profitable cherry sales. Display cherries in your high traffic area. Allow ample shelf space in that high-traffic area and steadily rotate your supplies during the course of the day.

Remember, a display doesn't have to be mounded to look BIG! Use false-bottom boxes to avoid crushing fruit (especially the delicate Rainiers)! You can also display bulk Northwest cherries in the shipping cases.

Caution should be used in filling displays. Avoid dumping new cherries on top of old cherries as they sell down or you'll end up with spoiled cherries at the bottom of the display or box. As well, don't dump sold-down cherries over new boxes. Older cherries may not look as good as they should, and customers may pass by the entire display. Cherries should never be displayed where sunlight can shine on them. As temperatures warm, fruit becomes limp and stems quickly brown and shrivel.

Offering a mix of cherry varieties in the display, including different packaging options, will give consumers additional choices and spur extra sales. Pack types include slider bags, clamshells and FlowFresh wrapped trays. Disney Garden Cherries are a great product to market for kids and include the "Check it Out" seal of approval to let concerned parents know the health benefits of each product. These convenient packs are easy to handle and display, extend shelf life and reduce shrink.

Maintaining an ample supply of cherries is critical for a successful cherry season. A successful cherry plan should include securing supplies from early June into early August. Order adequate supplies to avoid out-of-stock situations. Pre-booking will help ensure adequate supply and strong promotions.

### CARE AND HANDLING

Handle cherries with utmost care to avoid bruising. Displays should be checked frequently to remove bruised fruit and rotate product. Good quality, good looking cherries will practically sell themselves!

For best results, cherries must be kept cool. Refrigerated displays maintain fruit quality. The



cooler they are, the longer they'll last. Cherries lose more quality in one hour at 68°F (20°C) than in 24 hours at 32°F (0°C). Optimum storage conditions are 32° Fahrenheit (0°C) and 90% to 95% humidity. Under these conditions, fresh cherries will keep for several days.

Cherries should be kept in the retail cold room until they're ready to be displayed. When possible, refrigerate display supplies overnight. If a refrigerated display is not an option, make sure you properly rotate your supplies and put cherries back into the cold room in the evening. It's also important to keep cherries dry. Cherries absorb water and will soften if sprinkled.

Retailers can further customer satisfaction and repeat sales by training baggers to place cherries at the top of the grocery bag to prevent bruising. Satisfied customers will return to buy again and again!

### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY

Northwest cherries are available from early June to mid-August and include the Sonata, Sweetheart, Rainier, Lapins, and Bing varieties.

### PROMOTION

Retailers can capitalize on the excitement of one of the few seasonal products left in the department. The limited availability of cherries allows a fantastic opportunity for retailers to promote a "get it before it's gone" product.

Promoting the health aspects of cherries will increase the fruit's appeal to several health conscious consumer segments including the elderly and parents.

Stores can also take advantage of new cherry sleeves which include POS information on new and interesting uses for cherries in cooking, baking and serving.

## CHELAN FRESH MARKETING

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### QUICK TIPS

1. Display in a prime location to increase impulse buys.
2. Display bulk cherries with prepackaged containers or bags.
3. Display throughout the store (with ice cream or freezer bags).
4. Promote freezing . . . offer 12- or 20-pound boxes.
5. Offer in-store sampling, especially with Rainiers.
6. Pre-book to ensure adequate supply and strong promotions.

### OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

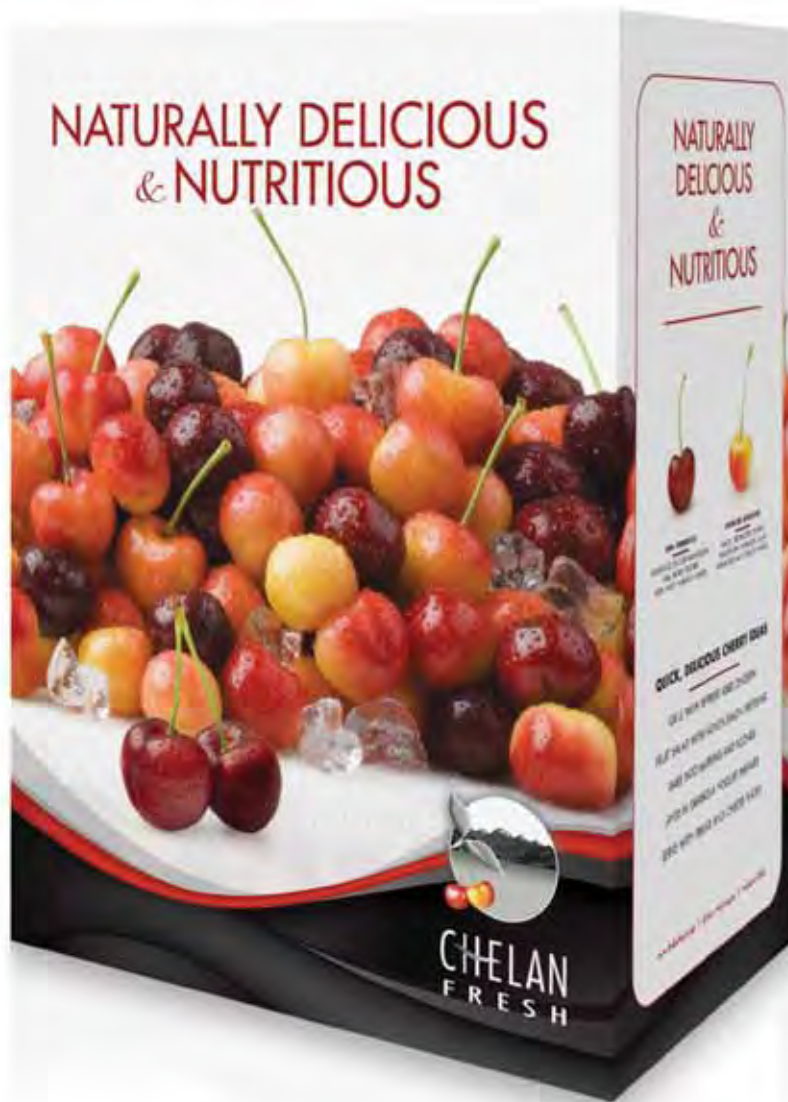
- Use Chelan Fresh's promotional packaging highlighting the healthy benefits of cherries and incorporating posters and POS cards.
- Promote Disney Garden Cherries to children and parents looking for

a healthy snack.

- Capitalize on cherries' limited season to create exciting "get it now" promotions.



# PROVEN PROGRAMS. PREMIUM FRUIT.



Chelan Fresh doesn't just grow the world's best cherries, we know how to sell them. Chelan Fresh offers our customers more programs, more fruit, and more profit.

**BROWSE OUR PRODUCE & PROGRAMS**

[www.chelanfresh.com](http://www.chelanfresh.com) CALL 509-682-4252



**CHELAN  
FRESH**  
MARKETING



## CITRUS



## BOOTH RANCHES LLC

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Web: www.boothranches.com  
Email: info@boothranchesllc.com

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

A large display of oranges is always an attention getter when the consumer enters the produce department. It's hard to miss the bright orange color, and catching the consumers' eye means catching their purchase. Comparatively speaking, oranges are always a real value, and therefore are always a good mover especially in slower economic times. Consumers appreciate the value.

Don't forget about a second display with bags. Some consumers prefer to pick each piece individually, but others enjoy the convenience of bagged oranges. Also, bags always lead to a nice ring at the register and less sales per carton than with the bulk fruit.

### POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Booth Ranches offers several Point of Purchase options to help stimulate movement at retail. Booth offers a dynamic high graphic bin that is a real attention getter and a great way to build a secondary display outside of the produce department. No room for a full bin? No problem! Booth also offers a smaller pop-up display half bin that will hold two boxes of fruit with the same distinctive graphics as our full bin, but easily set up in a smaller area. The pop up is also great for waterfall displays. Another option is our high graphic black carton which is great for building displays on existing shelving or to use freestanding.

### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Oranges from California are available almost year round. Booth Ranches Navel's are in the market from November through June, and Valencia's are available from April through September. They can be promoted in winter and summer.

In the winter, there's nothing that beats a delicious Booth Ranches California Navel. While there are also Navel's from the Southern Hemisphere in summer months, a sweet and juicy California Valencia is a great, lower priced alternative customers will appreciate.

### PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Because of the generally competitive price, oranges make a great promotional item any time of year. They are especially attractive for promotion in mid-winter, when a slice of sunshine is a welcome change for consumers in many areas. Their value, however, suggests that an ad is a profitable idea any time of year, including during summer when Valencia's are in season. They offer great value!

Promotions should include large displays, and perhaps even a second display elsewhere in the store. Place a Booth Ranches high graphic bin at the entrance to the store for a display that really generates sales.

### RIPENESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Oranges are ripe and ready to eat as soon as your customer picks them up. Unlike some other produce items, there's no need to wait for ripening, and Booth Ranches oranges are specially selected for their premium flavor. The only oranges we pack and sell are ones we grow ourselves, giving us incredible control and consistency.

### BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

Like all produce, oranges will display better and last longer if the temperature is properly maintained. They are a relatively hearty piece of fruit, so they can be easily displayed on a dry table but should be refrigerated whenever possible.

### CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

There are lots of opportunities to cross-merchandise oranges with other items. A display of oranges with electric or manual juicers will drive the sales of both. How about a display in the beer aisle near the Blue Moon? A small display of oranges near the leaf items can suggest a citrus salad. In the meat or seafood department, fresh orange juice can be suggested as part of a fantastic glaze.



## QUICK TIPS

1. At busy times of the day, oranges can move pretty fast so make sure displays are well filled and fresh.
2. Promote value of oranges.
3. Offer bagged as well as bulk.

### OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Set up secondary displays in high traffic areas like near front registers or in the dairy department to encourage extra impulse sales!



# Quality has an old family name.



## Experience the Booth Ranches legacy.

A descendent of one of California's oldest families, Otis Booth, Jr. started Booth Ranches in 1957 with 40 acres in the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas in Central California. Today, Booth Ranches is still family owned and operated, farming 8,300 acres from Orange Cove to Maricopa. Our customers have known Booth Ranches as a consistent supplier of premium California oranges. We take great pride in delivering only the best from our family to yours.

Call 559.626.7653 or email [info@boothranchesllc.com](mailto:info@boothranchesllc.com) to learn more.



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## DRIED FRUIT



## SUN DRIED MARKETING INC.

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Web: greengiantfresh.com

Email: john@sundriedmarketing.com



Dried fruit is a foundational category for any produce department and continues to increase in popularity and profits as more consumers focus on healthy eating and snacking.

Raisins come from seedless green grapes that are dried in the warm California sun.

The sun drying process gives raisins their characteristic deep color, texture and sweet taste. Raisins are a healthy, natural and ready-to-eat snack for moms and kids on the go.

### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY

Raisins are available year round.

Raisins come in a variety of resealable bags, canisters and boxes to suit all snacking and baking needs. Green Giant® Fresh raisins are sold in:

- mini-boxes
- a six-ounce pack of small boxes
- bulk packs in a 12-ounce zip bag
- a 15-ounce box, and
- a 24-ounce canister

Like many other Green Giant Fresh products, each package of raisins displays the



Box Tops for Education® coupon, allowing moms and others in the community to help raise money for their local schools.

### CARE AND HANDLING

- Store unopened raisins at room temperature. Refrigerate any opened containers.
- Raisins require no special preparation.

### PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Promote raisins as a colorful addition to slaws and lettuce salads. Raisins also make a great back to school tie-ins, holiday baking, summer time promotions and additions to fruit and vegetable trays. Highlight products featuring the Box Tops for Education coupon and use signage to remind the customer that their purchase helps them raise money for their local schools. Cross-merchandise near other fresh fruit like grapes, bananas and berries for a healthy fruit salad.

Cross-merchandise with yogurt, peanut butter and celery — kids enjoy making their own snacks!

### QUICK TIPS

1. Promote mini snack boxes and the larger 6-pack boxes as fun treats for lunchboxes and school snacks.

2. Advertise as a healthy, delicious and convenient snack for adults trying to stay in shape!

3. Advertise Green Giant Fresh's mobile marketing campaign, which offers shoppers the ability to scan a QR code using their smart phone. The scan instantly provides shoppers real time information about the grower, product, farm and healthy recipes we offer.

### OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

• Promote a fun and healthy Fruit Kabob by pairing (and selling) green grapes, pineapple chunks, berries, sliced star fruit and raisins. Kids and adults alike will have a great time assembling their own fruit kabob and then eating it.



# Green Giant® *Fresh*

## Sweet Taste!



## Sweet Deal for Schools!

Sun Dried Marketing and Green Giant® Fresh are proud to announce the release of our Green Giant® Fresh Raisins available in resealable bags, canisters, and boxes. The most exciting of all is Green Giant® Fresh Raisins are packaged with Box Tops for Education®.

Help kids earn cash for their schools!



24oz Canister



6-1.5oz Boxes



12oz Bag



15oz Box



14-0.5oz Boxes

Box Tops for Education, Green Giant, the Green Giant character, and related words and designs are trademarks of General Mills—used under license. ©2012 General Mills

Sun Dried Marketing, Inc. | Fresno, California | 559.824.8474 | [www.greengiantfresh.com](http://www.greengiantfresh.com)





## FRESH-CUT FRUIT

## DEL MONTE FRESH PRODUCE

241 Sevilla Avenue  
Coral Gables, FL 33134  
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Email: contact-US-Executive-Office@freshdelmonte.com



As a leader in the fresh-cut category, Del Monte Fresh Produce has developed numerous merchandising techniques that have effectively expanded the category and increased fresh-cut sales. Consumers continue to seek convenient, fresh, and healthy snacks that can be consumed “on-the-go” or can save them prep time.

Retailers should merchandise fresh-cut items by utilizing POS signage, creative in-store placement, and cross-merchandising. It's also important to use category management tools to identify the optimal product mix based on the social demographic profiles of their customers.

### DISPLAY TIPS

- New items should be featured at eye level to ensure the items have maximum visibility.
- Grab-and-Go (or single serve) items make the most impact if placed near check-out areas. Avoid displaying products on ice, instead, have a small cooler in the check-out area so the consumer can see the items are fresh.
- Vertical color breaks are also a great way



to merchandise products so that they are more appealing to the eye. For instance, a vertical line of fresh-cut pineapples, followed by watermelons, etc., can make the color of your fruit and vegetable display stand out and draw consumers to your products.

- Cross-merchandising is also extremely important. Place vegetables near the meat department or fruits near cereals to remind consumers of the various usages of fruits and vegetables.

to your fresh-cut area and encourage purchase. When selecting words for your signs, ensure you use words such as fresh, convenient, cut daily, healthy, etc., because consumers are interested in these attributes. Phrases such as “Enjoy Now” or “Ready-to-eat” are great call-to-action phrases that entice consumers to purchase the items.

### PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

- Coupons are a great way to encourage trial and motivate future purchases.
- Cross-merchandising promotions can increase sales for two SKUs in the grocery store. For instance, buy one Del Monte Fresh-cut item and get 50% off a specific yogurt brand.
- Innovative packaging, i.e., QR codes, on packaging or promotional material on fresh-cut items position a grocery store as relevant and innovative. With increasing popularity in social and digital media, consumers are now seeking for their grocery stores to be up-to-date with these technologies.

### POS SIGNAGE

In the fresh-cut area, POS signage has to be strategic. Make sure you create danglers that stand out in your coolers (don't use signs that blend in with your fruit and vegetable colors), place posters near store entrances, and add banners on your coolers. Adding this signage can draw consumers



### CASE AND HANDLING

- Maintain/clean refrigerated display case on a regular basis.
- Display fresh-cut at 35° F (1.7° C) to help ensure maximum quality and shelf life.
- Avoid placing fresh-cut in temperatures above 40° F, as it greatly reduces shelf life and could lead to food safety related problems.
- Display packages uniformly, maximum two layers high to help maximize airflow.
- FIFO — Always display product by date, first-in, first-out.







**(the mark of a really healthy produce department)**

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

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



**EAT HEALTHY. LIVE HEALTHY.®**

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## FRESH-CUT VEGETABLE SOLUTIONS



### APIO, INC.

PO Box 727  
Guadalupe, CA 93434  
Phone: 800-454-1355  
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Web: www.apioinc.com  
Email: info@apioinc.com

### LEVERAGE FRESH-CUT LEADERSHIP

Share in the fresh-cut success of Apio, Inc. The recognized industry supplier of value-added fresh-cut vegetables and the retail category's growth leader, Apio offers a complete selection of Eat Smart® brand fresh-cut vegetables in a variety of shapes and sizes. Nationally, Apio's Eat Smart® bagged cut vegetables are the fastest sellers in their category.

This year, the brand not only contributed \$760 per million of total store sales, exceeding the closest competitor by \$343, it also contributed an average of \$318 per week in each store where distributed, exceeding the closest competitor by \$101 per store per week.\* Plus, our patented flip-tray design has helped make Apio the #1 selling party tray in the U.S., with 23.9% market share.\*

### QUALITY ASSURANCE — FROM FIELD TO FORK

From our post-harvest physiologists and on-premises microbiological lab to our annual third-party food safety and quality audits, complete HACCP program, vendor approval program, GAP and GMP/Food Safety Training Programs, to being a California Leafy Greens Agreement signatory, Apio's team has implemented an extensive quality assurance and food safety program designed to minimize food safety risks and ensure top-of-our-field quality—from field to fork.

### UNIQUE BREATHEWAY® TECHNOLOGY EXTENDS FRESHNESS...AND SALES

To maintain optimum produce atmosphere throughout distribution, Apio utilizes proprietary BreatheWay® modified atmosphere technology. Unlike other packaging solutions, only BreatheWay® technology's patented temperature switch feature adjusts membrane permeability to compensate for mild fluctuations in the cold chain, extending shelf-life naturally by providing ideal package atmosphere. By using BreatheWay® technology, Apio helps you reduce shrink, increase sales and deliver a better eating experience to customers.

### DISPLAY STRATEGIES THAT WORK

Creating a prominent fresh-cut vegetable section within the produce department is key to driving sales in the category. Integrating value-added products into seasonal refrigerated displays encourages consumers to impulse purchase while on routine shopping trips or



### RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

To ensure a consistent cold chain that maintains optimum product quality, fresh-cut vegetables should be received from adequately refrigerated trucks and transferred immediately into storage rooms ideally cooled to 34° to 36° F. Shelves should be well stocked and products culled with attention to code date.

### CREATIVE CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Promote fresh-cut vegetables with center-of-plate items like poultry or fish to help shoppers quickly identify—and purchase—healthy meal solutions. Pair a few key ingredients, such as a bag of Eat Smart® fresh-cut vegetables with whole grains, lean meat and spices to provide customers with a variety of creative ideas.

Eat Smart® Party Trays also make a wonderful complement to deli, meat and snack displays during holidays. And large cross-promotional displays featuring barbeque themes, tailgate parties, summer picnics or sporting events will entice shoppers to pick up all their supplies for entertaining from one central location. Innovative merchandising with refrigerated dips and dressings or slaws and salad toppers can also increase your opportunities to draw in a fresh new world of fresh-cut customers.

\*Source: Perishables Group FreshFacts® powered by Nielsen, 52 weeks ending 11/19/11

when "quick trip" shopping for basics.

Use 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 and tray offerings.

### ADVERTISE AND PROMOTE TO FURTHER GROW SALES

How can you get more out of peak holiday periods and special events? Simply display Eat Smart® Party Trays near the front of the produce section and watch incremental sales rise. In 2011, Eat Smart® bagged vegetables promotional efficiency was 26 points higher than our closest competitor and also contributed 117% more incremental volume from promotions nationally.\*

To maximize those impulse "special occasion" sales, promote larger format Eat Smart® Party Trays. We have great new crowd-pleaser vegetable party tray formats that include fresh grapes and apples or beef and cheese. Year-round, advertise smaller format trays as healthful snack alternatives to chips and other junk food. Make the most of today's increasing consumer demand for vegetable salads by promoting Apio's new, on-trend Broccoli Salad Kit, Asian Salad Kit and Chipotle Salad Kit.

### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE: WHAT'S NEW

Over 60 Eat Smart® fresh-cut bags, trays and salads—including popular dips, dressings and ingredients—are available every day. New items of interest include the perfect-for-large-gatherings 64oz Celebration Trays, filled with even more of our best-selling vegetables and popular Thick & Creamy Ranch dip, and Fresh Gathering Trays, which combine fresh vegetables and fresh fruit along with two dips (Creamy Ranch for the vegetables and Sweet Caramel for the fruit) in one easy-to-use tray.



### EAT SMART® SHOPPING SPREE SWEEPSTAKES!

Apio has teamed with Visa to create the Eat Smart® Produce Shopping Spree Visa Gift Card Sweepstakes. The promotion will be featured on 12 oz. bags of Eat Smart® Broccoli Florets beginning March 5, 2012 and will continue for 6 weeks. 18 winners will receive Visa

Gift Cards for shopping sprees to their favorite markets. A total of 3 \$500 Visa Gift Cards and 15 \$225 Visa Gift Cards will be given away. Customers can visit [www.eatsmartsweepstakes.com](http://www.eatsmartsweepstakes.com) for further details on how to enter.







# The Brand that works for you.

Consumers look for the quality of the Eat Smart brand. Offering a wide variety of bagged fresh-cut options as well as an extensive line of vegetable trays to fit all your needs- Eat Smart brings more to the category.

*"In 2011, Eat Smart brand contributed 349 units per million of total store sales, where distributed, exceeding our closest competitor by 144 units."*

(Source: Perishables Group FreshFacts® powered by Nielsen, 52 weeks ending 11/19/11)





## GARLIC



## MAURICE A AUERBACH, INC.

117 SeaView Drive  
Secaucus, NJ 07094  
Phone: 201-807-9292  
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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? Use garlic instead of salted butter anytime. The product family runs the gamut from staple to specialty items — red garlic, elephant garlic, peeled, packaged, braided and certified organic.

The category 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 be used to adorn holiday wreaths and other holiday decorations. Many items are sold in both bulk and consumer package sizes.

### DISPLAY IDEAS

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 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. 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.

### OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Do a bakery demo in which roasted garlic is served with sliced French baguettes. The mild flavor will make it a favorite with many consumers and you can emphasize the health aspect — no fat or butter!
- Educate customers about the taste benefits of rubbing the outside of their Easter lamb with cracked garlic prior to roasting.

### 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 sales directly relate to consumer use of recipes requiring garlic, so always have a recipe next to the garlic display. Also remember that a festive arrangement of garlic braids functions as great signage to bring attention to the garlic display.

### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY

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. Therefore, 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 and serve it whole as a butter substitute. If the Super Bowl or another sporting event is coming up, promotions can focus on the use of fresh garlic to make salsa with a kick.

Salad dressing is another great garlic application. 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

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.

### QUICK TIPS

1. Display and promote a full range of garlic items
2. Use jarred and fresh garlic, red, white, elephant and conventional garlic and garlic braids to make the section intriguing to consumers
3. Focus on increasing usage — the key to increasing sales long term

• Provide recipes encouraging customers 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!

• Hold 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."



# Ready... Set... Go!



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## FRESH-CUT GREEN BEANS



## MANN PACKING COMPANY

PO Box 690  
Salinas, CA 93902  
Phone: 831-422-7405  
Fax: 831-422-5171  
Web: [www.veggiesmadeeasy.com](http://www.veggiesmadeeasy.com)  
Email: [lorrikoster@mannpacking.com](mailto:lorrikoster@mannpacking.com)

Green beans are the top selling fresh-cut vegetable item in the United States with a 6 percent annual growth rate.\* Retailers can complete their fresh-cut vegetable category by stocking Mann's fresh-cut green beans, now available in 12-ounce and 32-ounce bag options — with Steam-In Bag™ technology.

The main fresh-cut green bean eating occasion is dinner, which means green beans fit the overall Mann value-added strategy of providing high-quality convenient foods — emphasizing cooking vegetables. Leverage this opportunity to gain fresh sales from center store as canned and frozen green beans continue to be an option. Opportunities also exist to drive consumption at other meal occasions such as breakfast and lunch by providing recipes and other usage ideas at the shelf level. Green beans—they aren't just for dinner!

Seasonal opportunities should be capitalized on as well with strong recipe and cross-marketing promotions. After the holiday lift on sales, green beans are primarily consumed during warm weather months — which provides an opportunity to tie into in-store seasonal BBQ programs and promotions.

### REACHING THE TARGET

Adult females are the primary shoppers for fresh-cut vegetable items. Most green beans are still boiled on the stove; however microwaving is growing in importance. Take advantage of educational opportunities to explain the benefits of using Steam-In Bag™ products.

To capitalize on the health benefits vegetables provide, they are best eaten fresh.



The next best option to preserve flavor and nutritional value is “steaming.” Microwave “steaming” delivers the best results due to speed and heating at a lower level. It also utilizes less moisture to cook the products. Both heat and water will break down the health benefits of the product over time. These simple messages can be used by retailers to educate consumers and drive sales.

\*Perishable Group FreshFacts® Powered by Nielsen 11/19/11

### PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Steam vegetable items are ideal for “build-a-meal” type of advertising vehicles. Partner them with rotisserie chicken or other ready-to-eat protein products, a packaged salad and a loaf of bread. Another idea is to incorporate them into any weekly meal planner tools offered to consumers.

### CARE AND HANDLING

Merchandise washed and ready-to-eat vegetable items in the value-added produce case next to other fresh-cut vegetables, packaged salads and refrigerated dips/dressings. Proper temperature control is paramount to the success of these items.



### QUICK TIPS

1. Maintain proper temperature of product for optimum freshness and consumer satisfaction.
2. Educate consumers on nutritional benefits of steamed vegetables.
3. Promote during non-peak consumption periods to garner year-round sales.

### OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Put together dinner-solution displays of steam-in-bag green beans with a featured protein.
- Include value-added green beans in weekly meal planner tools.
- Demo steam-in-bag beans in the department using a microwave to highlight ease of preparation and taste to consumers.
- Create “build a casserole” displays during peak holidays with like ingredients such as dried, fried onions, sliced almonds and soups.



# We Look Good in Green.

Your sales will look good too!

Incorporate Mann's Sunny Shores® Green Beans into your fresh-cut vegetable set!

## Why Green Beans from Mann?

- Quality
- Superior Sourcing Model
- Best In Class Category Management
- Year-Round Promotions
- Vendor Efficiencies
- Shelf Uniformity
- Popular Sizes

Because green is good!



Salinas, California 93901 | [www.veggiesmadeeasy.com](http://www.veggiesmadeeasy.com) | 800.884.6266





## GREENHOUSE VEGETABLES



## CLIFFORD PRODUCE SALES

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Fax: 519-326-5332  
Contact: Anthony Totta  
Web: www.cliffordproduce.com

The greenhouse vegetable category is increasing steadily in popularity with consumers. The wide variety of products and their consistent quality have made the greenhouse category successful in the retail environment. Retailers can increase greenhouse item sales even more by following these suggested merchandising tips.

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Lobby displays move product! Displays must be fresh, fully stocked and offer a value price. Consumers are also looking for variety and selection. Easy to use Superseller display units provide a unique opportunity to build entry way displays and increase sales of greenhouse items. Attract customers to the wide variety and quality of greenhouse products by displaying often overlooked items front and center.

These free standing displays utilize just two cases of product but attract customer interest with their high graphic design. Utilize the Superseller Merchandiser displays, available from Clifford, to help introduce new items without the need to do a full category reset. Retail partners can use the Superseller displays off refrigeration to sell product while it's fresh. Stores will experience less shrink and deliver an excellent flavor profile and more desirable eating experience to the consumer. These displays equip the retailer for presenting beautiful greenhouse grown fresh vegetables without having to use an enormous amount of inventory.

Using the variety of colors in different greenhouse products is an excellent way to build an eye-catching display. Not only do these items offer colorful presentation but have compatibility in most food preparation. Most greenhouse items blend together in salads or on the grill. Build displays showcasing various greenhouse products together to encourage consumers to buy more than one product. Including recipe pads or "recipons" gives the consumer added value and ideas for meal preparation.

### POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

A variety of useful Point-of-Sale (POS) material is available to interested retailers from the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers Association (OGVG), who can be contacted via their website: [www.ontariogreenhouse.com](http://www.ontariogreenhouse.com).

Beautifully colored cardboard Eco Trays are a great addition to any store display. They feature full color graphics and handy recipes on the bottom and are 100% recyclable. Overwrapped, these trays offer a tamper-proof option for every category.

Offer integrated meal solutions ideas for the consumer by using Clifford's eco friendly attractive packaging. Product can be offered with

a coupon or linked back to a full bank of recipes on Clifford's website [www.cliffordproduce.com](http://www.cliffordproduce.com)

### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Retailers should be sure to maintain the following basic greenhouse items year-round:

- Beef tomatoes in larger sizes
- Cluster on the vine tomatoes
- Grape, Roma tomatoes
- Sweet red bell peppers
- Sweet yellow bell peppers
- Sweet green bell peppers
- Seedless cucumbers
- Mini cucumbers

Adding additional displays of the following will boost incremental sales:

- Bagged baby cucumbers
- Eco trays (flow wrapped value added trays) which include beef tomatoes, eggplant, cherry on the vine tomatoes, stop light or multi variety sweet bell peppers.
- Tear drop tomatoes in red, yellow
- Super Cherry tomatoes in red, yellow, and brown
- Mystic peppers

### PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Tie in products with meal solutions. Clifford provides a flavorful variety of items for building a salad bowl as well as to use in grilling. Clifford's Fusion Packs are full of plump colorful small tomatoes and make a wonderful addition to any salad or kabob.

Create a fresh destination by tying greenhouse products into fresh lettuces and fresh tomatoes, providing a fresh salad option "par excellence" for consumers. For example, sweet bell peppers have thick sweet crunchy walls and add flavor and texture to any salad bowl.

Promote greenhouse veggies as easy snack options by communicating a "just slice and eat" message. Crisp baby cucumbers are a great and convenient snack item. Provide snack-ready packages to parents and children as an easy healthy snack for during or after school. Clifford's resealable, breathable bags offer convenience for stores and customers.

Demos of baby greenhouse vegetables will encourage impulse buys.

Cross-merchandise greenhouse vegetables in the seafood or meat departments to offer a meal-solution side to whatever protein the customer is buying.

Make sure to provide customers with beautiful and informative POS materials from the OGVG.



### CARE AND HANDLING BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

The number one rule of thumb in care and handling is to NEVER CHILL THE PRODUCT. When cucumbers drop below 52 degrees, peppers below 45 degree, and tomatoes below 60 degrees, it negatively affects the texture and flavor. Tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers are better off without refrigeration than being chilled.

Over half of consumers report that flavor is the number one reason they choose to buy fresh tomatoes. An additional 40% choose tomatoes for their nutrition and health benefits.

### QUICK TIPS

1. Showcase product front and center using Superseller display

2. Cross merchandise peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers with lettuce as a salad bowl.

3. Ensure quality — Do not chill products!

### OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

• Use Superseller displays to allow for front-and-center focus to the consumer and to create a "Flavor Fresh Destination." Off-refrigeration displays optimize quality, integrity, and shelf life, and taste will be enhanced over chilled product.

• Promote flavorful greenhouse items as a snack product for children and health conscious consumers.



# SUPERSELLER

## *Merchandisers*

- Introduce new items without the need to do a full category reset
- Boost sales on items that don't have high visibility
- Educate the consumer on the use and nutritional value
- Demo items or cross merchandise any place in the store



Supplying Merchandising Support to **Boost Your Sales.**



For more information on how Clifford Produce can help boost your sales, scan QR code with your mobile phone.

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**Clifford**  
PRODUCE



## HYDROPONICALLY GROWN LIVING BUTTER LETTUCE



## HOLLANDIA PRODUCE, LLC

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Carpenteria, CA 93014  
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Fax: 805-684-9363  
Web: [www.livegourmet.com](http://www.livegourmet.com)  
Email: [info@livegourmet.com](mailto:info@livegourmet.com)

*Live Gourmet*

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 and significantly reduced shrink while generating higher dollar rings that create 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.

Live Gourmet Living 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.

### 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

### PACKAGING DEVELOPMENTS

Our new source reduced and freight saving Live Gourmet Squirrel clamshell package and accompanying harness style master carton allows for a 20% increase in units per pallets. The new Squirrel clamshell is elegantly redesigned and supremely functional and has won a 2011 PMA Impact Award for excellence in packaging. The Squirrel meets and exceeds merchandising, physical protection, food safety, sustainability and transportation packaging criteria for the 21st Century. Additionally it 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. The clamshell's interlocking feature aids in ease of maintaining a presentable, attractive display on your produce section shelf. Just place and replenish the 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.



### 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.

### QUICK TIPS

1. The prime location for our Live Gourmet butter lettuce is directly next to iceberg lettuce in the leafy green section of your produce display.

2. 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.





# Now Even Better!

Because Our **New** Clamshell  
is a Freight-Saving **Squircle!**



12 Count



6 Count



**By incorporating the best features of a square and a circle (Squircle), we've created the ultimate package for our Live Gourmet Living Lettuce!**

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







## KIWIFRUIT



**ZESPRI®**  
2751 Hennepin Ave. #303  
Minneapolis, MN 55408  
Web: www.zespri.com  
Email: info@zesprikiwi.com

ZESPRI® is the brand name for all kiwifruit grown in New Zealand. No ordinary kiwifruit can compare. Year after year, ZESPRI® Kiwifruit consistently outperforms the competition with superior taste and quality, a premium customer experience, and greater sales and profits for you. ZESPRI® sells quickly, reducing shrink and increasing your profit. Retailers love ZESPRI® because consumers love it!

ZESPRI® International is owned by more than 2,800 growers and sells more than 100 million trays of conventionally and organically grown GREEN and GOLD kiwifruit each year. ZESPRI® is the largest global marketer of kiwifruit, and New Zealand kiwifruit has helped adults and children alike nourish and flourish with great taste and abundant nutrition for over 100 years.

ZESPRI® harvests at a brix level that ensures the kiwifruit will mature appropriately, with a consistently sweet, succulent flavor. This also ensures that customers will return again and again for the best-tasting kiwifruit around. All season long, ZESPRI® helps you sell and keep selling, with consumer programs, customized promotions, marketing materials and support that are second to none. ZESPRI's appealing POS material has QR Codes and website address, making it easy for both consumers and staff.

The unique 'ZESPRI® System' ensures consistency in size, appearance and taste. This world class orchard-to-retail system delivers delicious fruit while a commitment to sustainability includes using environmentally considerate methods to grow, cultivate, store and ship the fruit — all reasons why ZESPRI® is consistently better than the competition!

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY AND PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

Beauty sells! Increase sales up to 60% by displaying your ZESPRI Kiwifruit prominently in the front of the department using ZESPRI's point of sale material or an eye-catching ZESPRI® display shipper. Displaying ZESPRI Kiwifruit cut in half allows customers to see their beautiful inner colors and textures, and is a great way to increase sales. Multiple displays also help increase sales. A top West Coast Retailer increased their ZESPRI® display space and increased sales by 34% versus the industry standard of 14%.

### CAPTURE IMPULSE SALES

We know that 80% of produce purchases are impulse sales. You can capitalize on and capture impulse sales by placing secondary displays throughout the store.

Displaying ZESPRI Kiwifruit at the front end in eye catching display bins will also stimulate impulse purchases.

### PROMOTE AS A NUTRITIONAL POWERHOUSE

**"Nutrient Density in Every Scoop"**

Both GREEN and GOLD kiwifruit are nutritional powerhouses! Loaded with

vitamins and minerals, this scientifically recognized SuperFood, promoting good

health and fighting disease, provides a nutrient-dense option that easily outranks other foods and fits into most nutrition plans. Additionally, kiwifruit's powerful nutrition doesn't come with a heavy caloric cost. In fact, a two-piece serving of kiwifruit has twice the vitamin C of an orange, as much potassium as a banana and as much fiber as a bowl of many whole grain cereals (4 grams of fiber per serving for GREEN and 2 grams of fiber per serving for GOLD) — and all for less than 100 calories!

Kiwifruit is also a low-fat source of vitamin E, which is rare among fruits. Most other sources of vitamin E are not low-fat choices. In addition, kiwifruit, specifically GOLD, is a natural, unfortified source of foliate.

### FORMULA FOR SALES SUCCESS WITH CROSS-MERCHANDISING AND CREATIVE PROMOTIONS

Try flavorful formulas for sales success with creative ZESPRI Kiwifruit promotions and displays, along with cross-merchandising suggestions:

#### JUNE

Kick off summer with nutritious and fun Traffic Light Smoothies and Kids Cones; fun family fruit recipes that are deliciously rewarding, easy projects for the whole family to make. Use ZESPRI's POS, recipe cards and impact ad formats to create prominent displays right in the front of the produce department that include all items needed to create these great recipes!

#### JULY

Celebrate Independence Day with a delicious fruit tart! This easy, nutritious recipe is a regular for Fourth of July celebrations and can aid in building bold cross-merchandising displays with seasonal berries, highlighting ZESPRI Kiwifruit. Displaying ZESPRI Kiwifruit in the deli case next to the fruit salad is also a great option for cross-promotion. (See photo above right)

#### AUGUST

The dog days of summer are celebrated with outdoor gatherings and picnics. Use ZESPRI Kiwifruit as a picnic highlight by adding them to your fruit kabobs and as meat tenderizers. Building picnic displays, including tablecloth, grill, charcoal and other picnic items, offers consumers fun, nutritious options for consuming the fruit they need on a daily basis. You can also display ZESPRI Kiwifruit in the meat case to educate consumers on the magical meat tenderizing qualities of kiwifruit.

#### SEPTEMBER

Highlighting ZESPRI® is a great way to head back into the school year! Kiwifruit is a nutritious snack for kid's lunches or after school snack. Educate consumers about cut + scoop and the nutritional benefits by using ZESPRI's POS. Add ZESPRI Kiwifruit to your back to school displays, offering parents easy, great tasting, and nutritional options for packed lunches or for snacks on the go.

### LOOK AT PACKAGING OPTIONS

ZESPRI offers different packaging options for retailers. Whether it is a clamshell, bag, bulk or environmentally sensitive packaging, ZESPRI® can provide informative, visually appealing packaging for any of your needs.



### QUICK TIPS

1. A ready to eat ZESPRI Kiwifruit should give to slight pressure.

2. ZESPRI Kiwifruit will last up to 14 days in the refrigerator and 7 days on the counter.

3. When selecting several kiwifruits, select according to when you plan to consume them, as firmer kiwifruit may take a few days to ripen. If you need to speed the process, place your kiwifruit into a paper bag with an apple or banana.

4. Promote the nutritional value of ZESPRI Kiwifruit with ZESPRI's 10 Reasons to Eat Brochure

5. Promote the ease of cut and scoop. Consumers can cut and scoop with a fork and knife from home or use Plan B, one of ZESPRI's spifes.

6. Use ZESPRI's shelf-ready boxes to display your kiwifruit. These boxes offer brand recognition and ease of merchandising, ensuring the freshest kiwifruit offering to your consumers.

7. Do not display your ZESPRI Kiwifruit next to ethylene releasing fruits and vegetables (bananas, apples, avocados, onions, etc.)

8. Display and encourage use of ZESPRI's POS material with QR Codes and websites for consumers and staff. They can use these tools for recipes, handling, learn about THE ZESPRI® Difference, Get To Know Our Growers, our commitment to sustainability, and much more!







# LOOK NO FURTHER

THE QUEST FOR SUPERIOR NUTRITION & TASTE ENDS HERE.

Take a good look at a ZESPRI® Kiwifruit and you'll quickly notice something that sets it apart from all other kiwifruit, it's our label. That little ZESPRI sticker represents our commitment to bringing you a sweeter, tastier kiwifruit at every level. And it all starts with our experienced New Zealand growers that are literally the best in their field. So look no further. We have the superior nutrition and taste your consumers have been searching for.







## LIGHTING



## BAERO NORTH AMERICA, INC.

10432 Baur Boulevard  
St. Louis, MO 63132  
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### THE POWER OF COLOR

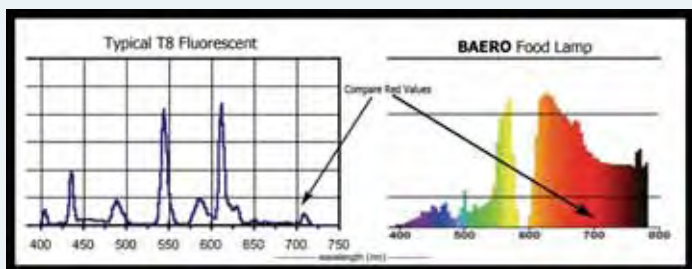
To shoppers, color means quality and freshness. As a result, maximizing the power of color in fresh food displays, such as tomatoes or peppers, will translate directly into sales. But even with the most diligent purchasing of produce, a subpar lighting system can leave your department sorely lacking in product presentation.

There are many lighting choices available to supermarket owners today but when it comes to lighting that maximizes colors, especially the attention-grabbing reds, and creates visual appeal, there are actually few quality choices.

### A LITTLE SCIENCE GOES A LONG WAY

Metal halide, T8 Fluorescent, LED, T5 Fluorescent, ceramic metal halide and even high pressure sodium are all choices that are made every day for produce lighting across North America. However, if market owners and designers would apply one small bit of science to their decision-making, they could immediately improve their product presentation.

A color spectrum chart is created for every single light source and details the exact amount of color each respective light source will provide those apples, tomatoes and peppers. By a simple comparison of the color spectrum charts of the lighting design choices being contemplated, a grocery store owner can see which choice is best for product presentation and thus produce sales. Simply put, the more of the spectrum that is in the red (right side past 600) the more pop the produce will have.



While fluorescents of any dimension are a common choice, mostly as a result of a relatively low initial cost, they are actually a poor choice for fresh food presentation. An effective choice in the aisles with boxed product, fluorescent falls far short in the fresh market side of the store. Unless you purchase the very expensive color corrected versions, fluorescent technology has very little to offer in the way of color pop including that vital red.

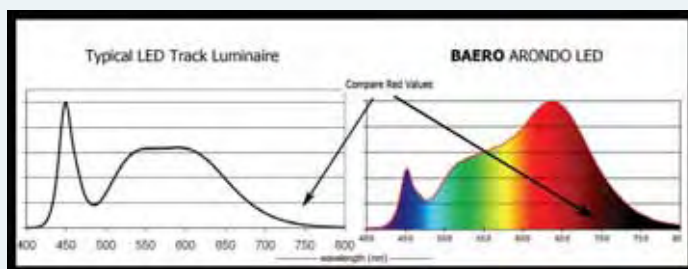
On the opposite end of the spectrum, pun intended, are the compact versions of the high pressure sodium lights, such as our BAERO Food Lamp (BFL) which was engineered specifically for its red value and superior presentation of produce as well as other fresh foods where color is critical to sales. Even with all the great advancements in lighting technology in the last couple years, we still firmly believe that the BFL is untouched by the other light sources in creating the absolute premium display of produce.

### LED- NOT ALL CREATED EQUAL

If you are building or remodeling a supermarket right now, you are most probably deciding whether to utilize LED lighting or not. Or you have made that decision and simply figuring out which LED fixture manufacturer to use. If the longevity of LED outweighs the advantages of other light sources for your store, make sure to pick the right LED. As with the overall lighting choices listed above, there are actually few quality choices for LED luminaires when it comes to our topic, produce sales. The simple reason for this is that not all LED fixtures are created equal. And this takes us back to the color spectrum chart.

When it comes to the color spectrum aspect of LED lighting, there are even fewer of those appropriate choices if you want that color pop to catch a shopper's eye. As most LED fixture manufacturers struggle simply to provide an adequate amount of light, the quality and color of that light is sacrificed. However, with a little extra research, LED fixtures designed for fresh food displays can be found. And that extra bit of effort will result in a more pleasing shopping experience for your customer.

At BAERO, we worked long and hard on creating just such an LED option for supermarket owners. While others rushed to the market in order to have any type of LED track fixture on the market, we took our time making sure our LED option was the right fit for grocers wanting to show off produce, meat, seafood, floral and other perishables at their best. Not only have we achieved an LED luminaire with that all-important red spectrum but simultaneously we have engineered the most powerful track-based LED fixture available in North America today.



### EDUCATE YOURSELF

The more facts you have the better choice you will make for your supermarket. We encourage everyone to take time to educate themselves about all the lighting choices that are available today. As you do so, it will become even clearer that not all LEDs, as well as other light sources, are created equal when it comes to your produce department or any other part of your store. And what might work for produce might not be the best choice for frozen food so take care to avoid cookie cutter type lighting designs. What might be a simple choice on the front end could cost sales in the long run.

And while the facts and charts tell quite a story, ultimately a side by side demonstration in your store of the top two or three lighting choices is imperative for an accurate decision. If your lighting company isn't up for such a comparison, there's probably a good reason why.



# BAERO



*Fresh Market Illumination*

*Supermarket lighting is what we do.  
All day, every day. All over the world.*



We are pleased to announce the introduction of  
our new **ARONDO LED**,  
the most powerful track based LED luminaire in North America today.  
The ARONDO LED was designed specifically  
for supermarkets and fresh food displays.

**BAERO** North America, Inc.

[www.baerousa.com](http://www.baerousa.com)

314-692-2270

[www.facebook.com/BAERONorthAmerica](https://www.facebook.com/BAERONorthAmerica)



Sustaining  
Member





## MANGOS

# CIRULI BROTHERS

## CIRULI BROTHERS, LLC

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Tubac, AZ 85646  
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Web: [www.cirulibrothers.com](http://www.cirulibrothers.com)  
[www.champagnemango.com](http://www.champagnemango.com)  
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Growing popularity of mangos with the average U.S. consumer means increasing profit potential for retailers that are savvy enough to merchandise and promote this delicious fruit.

### DISPLAY IDEAS

Make sure your customers see them! Displays are more effective when mangos are featured in prominent areas with lots of shelf space. On display, mangos should also be grouped according to variety and ripeness. Ripe mangos can be displayed with "Ready to eat" signage that features cutting instructions or recipe ideas. On the other hand, offering a selection of mango varieties allows retailers to promote features such as taste, color and nutrition.

Retailers can vary their displays during the year to highlight special promotions and varieties. March, for instance, is a great time for retailers to welcome the spring by featuring yellow mangos, which are starting to come into season. Big displays featuring multiple varieties are another great way to showcase the fruit, particularly during the summer months, when mango availability is most abundant.

Be consistent. The key to selling more mangos is providing consistent supplies, quality and taste for the consumer. This is best achieved by pairing with a good mango supplier and having open communication about your needs and customer feedback. Produce managers can help by following proper storage and handling instructions and by making frequent inspections of their displays.

### EDUCATE TO SELL

Promote health by playing up a mango's nutrition content. Mangos aren't just lip-smacking delicious; they're also very good for you. Consumers want to eat healthy, and it just so happens that mangos are fat-free, a good source of fiber, and an excellent source of Vitamins A and C.

Point of Sale (POS) materials are a great way to showcase the fruit and increase category sales. Include photos, nutrition panels, cutting instructions and selection tips when promoting the fruit. Remember, roughly one in three people in the US has ever tried the fruit, so education is a major component of mango merchandising.

In-store tasting also helps drive sales, so retailers should carry some ripe fruit. Because most consumers have never tried a mango, it's

important to show them what mangos look like, how they feel, and what they taste like when they are ready to eat.

The more consumers know, the more they'll buy. Retailers can take advantage of a variety of resources available online and through supplier companies like Ciruli Brothers to provide information and education to their customers.

### VARIETY & AVAILABILITY

Mangos are available year-round in the U.S. They are primarily supplied by Mexico in the spring and summer months, and by Ecuador, Peru and Brazil during the fall and winter. The most popular varieties are:

**Ataulfo** (Feb-Aug): Slightly smaller and kidney-shaped, Ataulfos turn from green to a rich golden yellow when ripe. The flavor is intensely sweet and velvety due to minimal fibers. These mangos also have a very thin seed, which means more fruit to enjoy. Only the finest Ataulfo is marketed under the Champagne® mango label.

**Haden** (Mar-Jul): Hadens are larger, rounder and oval in shape, with firm texture due to slightly more fibers. The rose and green colored patches on their skin turn red with yellow overtones when fully ripe. Hadens are favored for their sweet smell and rich, sweet flavor.

**Tommy Atkins** (Feb-Jul): Perhaps the most widely available variety in the U.S., Tommy Atkins mangos are medium to large in size with an oblong shape. Their skin is vibrant with deep green and rich red overtones, and their flesh is sweet yet firmer due to a more fibrous texture.

**Kent** (May-Sep): Rounder and somewhat bigger, Kents develop smooth, green skin with a slight red blush when ripe. The flavor is very sweet and the texture is soft and juicy with some fibers.

**Keitt** (Jul-Oct): This large, oval mango has predominantly green skin that sometimes shows a slight rosy blush. Keitts are sweet, juicy and fragrant with texture that is firm yet smooth with mild fibers.

### RIPENING RECOMMENDATIONS

The best way to judge ripeness is to give



mangos a gentle squeeze. If the mango is rock hard, then it's green. Conversely, the softer the mango, the riper it is. Color is not a good ripeness indicator because not all varieties change color as they mature.

Want to speed up the ripening process? Mangos emit ethylene gas. To accelerate a mango's maturity, retailers can educate consumers to leave the fruit in a sealed paper or plastic bag at room temperature for a few days. The ethylene will help the fruit mature faster.

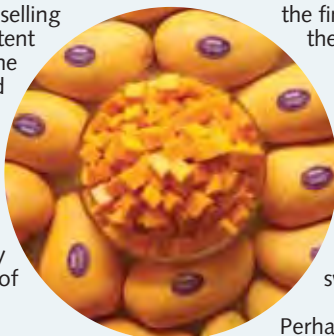
### DISPLAY CARE & HANDLING

Mangos are a tropical item and should be displayed at room temperature. In cold storage, the fruit should be kept at 55 degrees but never below 50 as it can cause chilling injury. This causes mangos to turn dark inside, though on the outside the fruit may look perfectly fine. Other important facts produce staff should know when handling mangos are:

- Mangos do not require misting and should not be displayed near ethylene-sensitive products.
- Displays should be checked frequently to remove shriveled, damaged or overripe fruit.
- Color is not a good indicator of ripeness because not all varieties change color.
- Color is not a good indicator of quality because a mango's color can vary depending on the variety.

### QUICK TIPS

1. Maintain consistency in your supplies, quality and flavor.
2. Don't underestimate the power of POS Signage: Educate your consumers on how to select, ripen and cut a mango.
3. Go for BIG end displays for visibility and traffic, but don't stack too high to prevent the fruit from bruising.



### OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

• Vary displays by using different types of pack promotions (e.g., mangos in clamshells, by the box, or by the each). Offering consumers a different look can help retailers identify what their customers' preferences are.





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

**CIRULI  
BROTHERS**  
Champagne®  
mango

WWW.CHAMPAGNEMANGO.COM WWW.CIRULIBROTHERS.COM



## MUSHROOMS



## MONTEREY MUSHROOMS

260 Westgate Drive  
Watsonville, CA 95076  
Phone: 831-763-5300  
Fax: 831-763-0700  
Web: www.montereymushrooms.com

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

Increase up to 40% by grouping all varieties together, providing proper space allocation and positioning mushrooms next to the salad section. Demographics are important in determining space allocation.

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

### SECONDARY DISPLAYS

Exceptional versatility of fresh mushrooms makes secondary displays effective in bringing meal solutions to the consumer. On-going secondary displays in the salad and the meat cases will generate 12% growth in category sales. Seasonal displays can feature eggs, potatoes, rice, pasta, tortillas, cheese, onions and other cooking vegetables. Flexitarian, natural, and diet solutions are effective with mushrooms.

### POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Attention through use of section signage, recipe cards, shelf talkers (on usage, selection, care & handling) will drive sales. Mushroom consumption grows when consumers become more educated on the flexibility, nutrition, and weight management benefits. Most stores carry 15-25 varieties/package types; so consumer education about 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. 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.

### 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 6-8 times per quarter to maximize overall sales. Discounts should generally be between 15-30%. Two-for-\$X, or multiple pricing, tends to be the most effective method of promoting mushrooms. 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 6 to 8 days; therefore it is critical that backroom inventory be kept to a minimum. 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 degrees. 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.

### RECEIVING, STORAGE AND HANDLING TIPS

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



### QUICK TIPS

1. Keep mushrooms refrigerated and dry.
2. 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.
3. Utilize multi-item advertising highlighting all category segments.
4. Merchandise based on department sales and consumer demographics. Use sampling, educational info and recipes to emphasize versatility, nutrition, and weight management. Definitely add a second display of sliced mushroom packages in the salad section. Cross merchandise with complementary items.
5. Promote larger pack sizes and exotics. Use promotions to build consumer awareness of specialty varieties and trade them up.

### OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Promote and merchandise Monterey's Grill-A-Bella® mushrooms in the high profile biodegradable tray. Provides 100% daily requirement of Vitamin D per serving for consumer health benefits.
- Sell bulk Portabellas by the each versus pound — sales increase up to 300%.
- Merchandise Monterey's Sliced Mushrooms with 100% Vitamin D in

the new biodegradable package. The earth-friendly package highlights versatile usage ideas and recipes and nutritional benefits.

- Pictures of recipes on-pack, like Monterey's Bag products and new labels, or in the produce section, get the consumer thinking immediately, "What's for dinner?" Serving suggestions and healthy recipes are on every package.



PRODUCE  
MARKETING  
ASSOCIATION

**2011**  
**IMPACT**  
**AWARD**

EXCELLENCE  
IN PACKAGING

# THINK GREEN AND EVERYONE WINS.

We've been working hard to develop new, innovative, sustainable packaging to deliver the best flavor and natural nutrition, with respect for the environment.

Our efforts have been rewarding.





## ONIONS

## IDAHO-EASTERN OREGON ONION COMMITTEE

PO Box 909  
Parma, ID 83660  
Phone: 208-722-5111  
Fax: 208-722-6582  
Web: [www.BIGONIONS.com](http://www.BIGONIONS.com)



### 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. "Buy All-American Winners, Spanish Sweet Onions... homegrown in Idaho and Eastern Oregon."

In addition, Good signage that distinguishes the different varieties and versatility of onions AND onions grown in the USA will go a long way in increasing sales.

### 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-E. Oregon Onion QR Code that, when scanned, launches consumers to the Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Website ([www.BIGONIONS.com](http://www.BIGONIONS.com)) for sizing and onion variety information. 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 August with onion availability lasting from August through March.

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

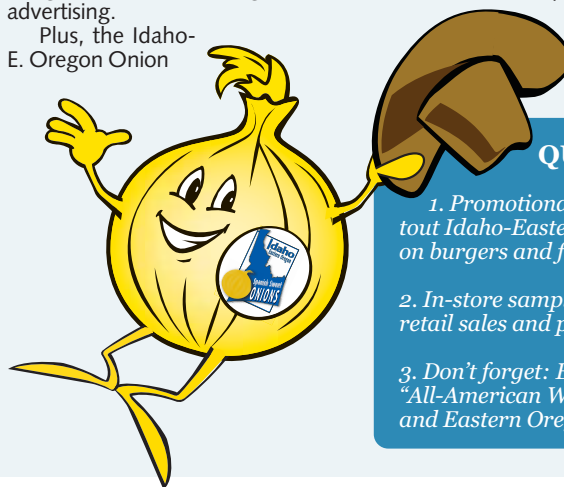
### PROMOTIONAL/ ADVERTISING IDEAS

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 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 and attractive label available 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

Pre-cut 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.

### QUICK TIPS

1. Promotional materials and recipe cards should tout Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onions as great raw, on burgers and for cooking.
2. In-store sampling and co-op advertising drive retail sales and product awareness.
3. Don't forget: Encourage your customers to buy "All-American Winners", homegrown in Idaho and Eastern Oregon.



# All-American Winners

## Homegrown in Idaho and Eastern Oregon

(the onions and the kids)



Idaho-E. Oregon Onion Committee  
208-722-5111





## CARIBBEAN RED PAPAYAS



## BROOKS TROPICALS

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Homestead, FL 33090  
Phone: 800-327-4833  
Fax: 305-246-5827

Web: [www.brookstropicals.com](http://www.brookstropicals.com)  
Email: [www.brookstropicals.com/nutrition](http://www.brookstropicals.com/nutrition)

### 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.

### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Brooks Tropicals is the exclusive grower of Caribbean Red papayas. Brooks grows, packs and ships these papayas year-round with food safety audited fields, harvesting crews and facilities in Belize, Central America.

### 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.

### QUICK TIPS

*1. Amongst fruit, papaya is a nutritional powerhouse with a myriad of vitamins, minerals, fiber and phytonutrients. But papayas take nutrition two steps further than most fruits:*

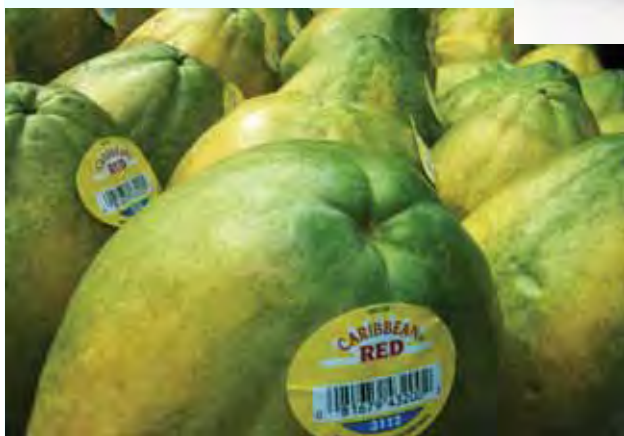
*1. Papayas have a digestive enzyme called papain that aids in protein digestion and has a mild, soothing effect on the stomach*

*2. Caribbean Red papayas — as indicated by their vibrant red color — have carotenoids — such as lycopene — that act as antioxidants in the body. Antioxidants reduce inflammation and are considered cancer-fighting agents. Recent studies show that a high intake of lycopene-rich foods, such as Caribbean Red papayas, can reduce the risk of several types of cancers, most notably prostate cancer. For more nutritional information email [maryo@brookstropicals.com](mailto:maryo@brookstropicals.com) or go to our website at [www.brookstropicals.com/getyourredon](http://www.brookstropicals.com/getyourredon)*

*When is a papaya ready to eat? Your customer may assume the fruit has to be all yellow. Not so, a Caribbean Red papaya is ready to eat between 50 and 100% yellow as long as the fruit gives with a little squeeze*

*There's an easy way to cut up a Caribbean Red Papaya; To find out how, go to [www.brookstropicals.com/CRchop-BW.pdf](http://www.brookstropicals.com/CRchop-BW.pdf)*

*Caribbean Red and the Brooks Tropicals logo are registered trademarks of Brooks Tropicals, LLC.*



### OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

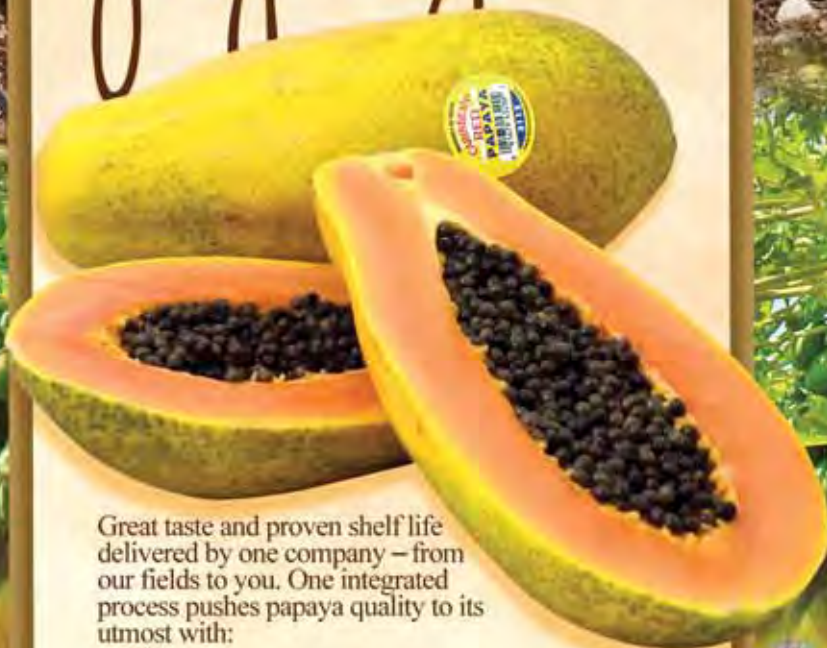
- We've known for some time that Caribbean Red Papayas are nutrient-dense and help digestion. Your customers may not know of recent studies that show this fruit's ability to reduce the risk of several types of cancer. Reproducible materials for in-store materials available, email [maryo@brookstropicals.com](mailto:maryo@brookstropicals.com)
- For your breakfast or lunch-to-go crowd, cut a Caribbean Red Papaya in half, fill with berries or lime slices and add a spoon.
- The best way to display Caribbean Red Papayas is stacked on its side with its ends out. This makes it easy for your customer to select the desired color and size.



FROM **OUR** PAPAYA FIELDS  
TO **YOUR** STORES

**CARIBBEAN RED®**

Papayas



Great taste and proven shelf life delivered by one company – from our fields to you. One integrated process pushes papaya quality to its utmost with:

- Ongoing research and development
- Food safety-audited fields, harvesting crews, packing and shipping facilities
- State-of-the-art packing house
- Papaya ripening rooms
- Quality control team
- Continuous Cold Chain® from our fields to your stores

**Primus Labs™**  
when food safety counts

Call Brooks Tropicals today to get Caribbean Red papayas coming your way.



**BROOKS TROPICALS®**  
GROWER • PACKER • SHIPPER



800.327.4833 • Fax: 305.246.5827  
[www.brookstropicals.com](http://www.brookstropicals.com)

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## PLANTAINS



## TURBANA

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Coral Gables, FL 33134  
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Fax: 305-443-8908  
Web: www.turbana.com  
Email: info@turbana.com

Now that Plantains have become a strong category among both Hispanic and non-Hispanic consumers, it's time to discover its different varieties.

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

While consumers have shown growing interest in experimenting with new and exciting products, plantains have remained a great tool to attract ethnic consumers to stores.

### IMPORTANCE OF THE HISPANIC CONSUMER

Catering to the Hispanic consumer is a great opportunity for retailers because they tend to spend more on groceries and other products than non-Hispanic consumers. This includes premium items such as produce and fresh fruit. As Latinos form an ever larger part of the American population, they will represent an increasingly large part of grocers' profits. The 2010 Census stated 16.3% of the U.S. population was Hispanic, making it the largest minority group and that number has only continued to grow. It is predicted that by 2020, Hispanics will account for 40% of the U.S. population.

### VARIETIES

Among the traditional plantains, Turbana produces the Harton variety because it provides the best market flexibility. They have an appearance very similar to a traditional banana and have the common potato-like flavor of a plantain. They are the only traditional plantain variety that can be consumed and sold in both its green and ripe stages. Providing both color options to consumers can double plantain sales.

In addition to the commonly known Harton variety, Turbana also produces Hawaiian Plantains & Burros.

Burros are about six to eight inches long and up to two inches thick with very little curvature and a square appearance. The fruit has a tangy lemon-banana flavor and is a dual-purpose variety of plantain that can be enjoyed when

fully ripened like a fruit. Burros also go by various names among different cultures.

Hawaiian plantains are short and plump in appearance and have a sweet potato-like flavor. They can grow to six inches in length and two and a half inches in diameter.

All three varieties have a unique flavor and are best when cooked and treated like a vegetable. They can all be consumed in both their green and yellow stages.

### WHAT'S NEXT?

Raising awareness to the other two plantain varieties and involving the American consumer:

Many shoppers who consume plantains are of ethnic origin. Hispanic consumers tend to include plantains in most of their meals and utilize different varieties at all stages of ripeness.

American shoppers are becoming increasingly interested in trying new foods, especially ethnic produce that looks appealing. Displays that include suggestions or instructions on consumption and preparation of ethnic products motivate American consumers to purchase products they haven't tried before.

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

To appeal to shoppers, it is important to:

- Keep the display full and well maintained.
- Display all three varieties together as a category.
- Differentiate the products by showing the names of each variety and providing a short description for each of them.
- Display both green and ripe plantains.

### PRICING

It's been proven that sales of Harton plantains increase when they are sold by the dollar instead of by the pound (i.e., 4/\$1).

Because Burros and Hawaiians come in clusters, it is recommended to sell them by the pound.

### POINT-OF-PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

It is important to include bilingual signage and

POS materials at the point-of-purchase to differentiate each variety of the plantain category and provide nutritional information. Providing the signage in both languages allows Hispanic consumers to feel at home as well as provides a platform for American consumers to become more comfortable with buying the product.

Turbana offers its customers advertising material with recommendations on ripening and storage as well as an array of recipes. Please visit [www.turbana.com](http://www.turbana.com) for recipe ideas.

### 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 are the only plantain variety that can be both consumed as a fruit or cooked as a vegetable; however, only at its ripest stages can it be consumed as a fruit. 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*.

Because of their larger diameter, Hawaiians are most commonly used to make excellent *tostones*. They can also be baked either ripe or green.

Plantains should be offered in both their green and yellow stages of ripeness due to their versatility.

### DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

Store Harton plantains at room temperature between 47° and 50° F away from freezers and loading dock doors. Burros and Hawaiians should be stored at 58° F.

Use cardboard boxes to transport fruit to the display area to minimize handling.

Plantains should be displayed on padded shelves to avoid scarring and/or bruising.



BURRO



HARTON



HAWAIIAN

## PROMOTIONAL IDEAS & CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

- Sampling plantains at different stages of ripeness is a great way to teach consumers the many different ways to cook them and display their versatility.
- Plantains are most commonly consumed with black beans and rice among Hispanic populations, so putting these items around the

display makes good business sense.

- Displaying Turbana plantain chips near the fresh plantains can encourage consumers to sample the flavor of plantains without having to cook.





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.



plantain goodness inside.

[www.turbana.com](http://www.turbana.com) | 800-turbana



## POTATOES



UNITED STATES

Potato  
BOARD

## UNITED STATES POTATO BOARD

7555 E. Hampden Ave., Ste 412  
Denver, CO 80231  
Phone: 303-873-2312  
Fax: 303-369-7718  
Web: www.uspotatoes.com  
www.potatogoodness.com  
Email: ktriu@uspotatoes.com

The United States Potato Board (USPB) is the nation's potato marketing and research organization. Established in 1971, the USPB represents more than 1,600 potato growers across the country in carrying out our mission of increasing demand for potatoes & potato products, improving the competitive position of potatoes and presenting a favorable image of potatoes to the public. Today, as the largest vegetable commodity board, the USPB is proud to be recognized as an innovator in the produce industry.

In the United States, over half of the potatoes grown and harvested for fresh consumption are sold through the retail channel. The USPB has been working directly with food retailers for over a decade to build their potato category through a focus on identifying category trends, adopting proven best practices and gaining a deep understanding of the potato shopper. By taking full advantage of USPB marketing resources, retailers can ensure potatoes continue to maintain their dominance and leadership position in the produce department while delivering robust sales and profits.

### LANDMARK POTATO SHOPPER STUDY

A good example of the insight that the USPB generates is the landmark study of potato shoppers conducted in 2011. The USPB and their research agency, Sterling Rice Group of Boulder, Colorado, fielded research to understand how, when, and where the core consumer shops for potatoes, identify the shopping trip types when potatoes are most likely included and assess & prioritize the factors that influence potato purchase decisions (before and during the shopping experience) in the retailer's produce section and beyond. The research encompassed an online quantitative study of 1,900 primary food shoppers ages 20-69, as well as more comprehensive ethnographic research with a smaller group of participants.

The study found that 91% of fresh potato purchases are planned, representing a significant increase from research the USPB had conducted just one year earlier. The study also found that the potato shopper is more prepared than other shoppers, indexing higher for reading circulars, clipping coupons, making a shopping list and planning out their meals in advance. Yet once in

the store, these same potato shoppers are more engaged in the act of shopping, wandering the aisles for ideas and seeking inspirations for new and different meals. Taken together, this suggests that retailers should be focusing more on ways to increase consumption and get potatoes on the shopping list rather than trying to chase impulse sales in the store.

### HIGH VALUE OF POTATO SHOPPERS

Another key finding of the study was that shopping carts containing fresh potatoes had nearly twice as many items than shopping carts without potatoes, averaging 33 items vs. only 17. The potato carts contained a wider variety of items purchased, and included more higher-priced categories such as meats, packaged foods, frozen foods and deli products. Fresh potato purchasers reported spending more time preparing for a trip, traveling up and down each aisle of the grocery store every time they shop and buying more items than planned on. Potato shoppers also reported averaging 6 additional shopping trips during the year, and described spending over \$1500 more on groceries than shoppers not purchasing potatoes.

Perhaps most exciting of all, the study determined that when shoppers are buying potatoes, they are spending an additional 10 minutes in the store versus trips without a potato purchase (average of 47 min. vs. 37)! This finding not only reinforces the importance for a retailer to attract fresh potato shoppers, but points out the incredible opportunity to cross-sell other products with potatoes because of the additional time spent in the store.

### MISSING OPPORTUNITIES AT THE POTATO TABLE

So what happens when this motivated, inspiration-seeking shopper arrives at the potato table? The USPB study explored this by asking respondents to evaluate their experience at the potato table relative to other categories in the produce department. Potato shoppers agreed that displays were typically well-organized and easy to shop, and that the potatoes they found generally looked fresh and appealing.

However, these same shoppers gave potato sections low scores for being informative, motivating a purchase, or providing new usage ideas! So at the critical moment of truth — when a shopper who is more likely to get her meal ideas while shopping and routinely purchases more than she planned is standing in front of the potato table — inspiration takes a back seat to organization, and the display does little to encourage the incremental consumption that in turn will drive increased potato purchases.

### POTATO STUDY IMPLICATIONS: 5 KEY OPPORTUNITIES FOR RETAILERS

**OPPORTUNITY #1:** Give shoppers suggestions and new ideas for serving potatoes more often.

With more than 9 out of 10 potato purchases being planned, it is more important to increase consumption than chase impulse sales, as getting potatoes on the list more often gets them in the shopping cart more often.

**OPPORTUNITY #2:** Attract potato shoppers to increase sales around the store.

The potato shopper is a tremendous asset for a retailer, ringing up twice the sales as non-potato purchasers and spending an incredible 10 extra minutes shopping in the store with meals on their mind. Retailers can capitalize on this by showcasing potatoes' compatibility with foods throughout the store and suggesting potato pairings that drive additional purchases during those 10 bonus minutes.

**OPPORTUNITY #3:** Feature potatoes regularly and highlight their value.

When preparing for the shopping trip, potato shoppers are organized, seek value and are strongly influenced by their family. Potato shoppers want to please their families while feeling smart about their food purchases, so retailers should reinforce the value of potatoes while reminding shoppers of how much their family enjoys them.

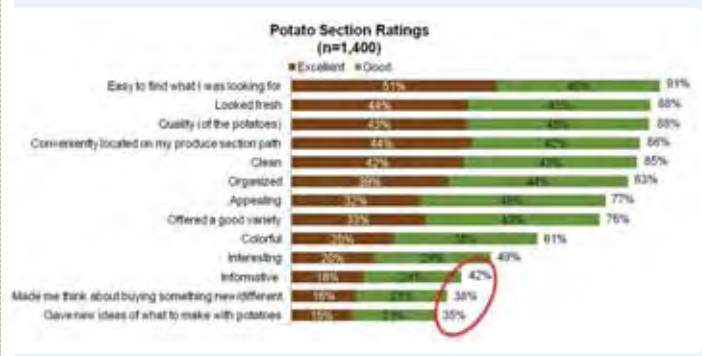
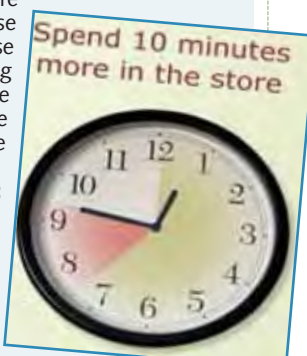
**OPPORTUNITY #4:** Use potatoes as a pillar of any meal solution program.

While in the store, potato shoppers are engaged and actively seeking meal ideas, enjoying the shopping occasion as they look for a new idea to bring back home. Retailers can benefit by providing potato inspirations throughout the store that encourage greater consumption which in turn leads to more frequent purchases.

**OPPORTUNITY #5:** Make the potato table an in-store destination.

Shoppers find the potato table to be organized but not inspiring. Yet potatoes have greater upside potential than any other vegetable, as potato shoppers are open to serving potatoes more often but crave new ideas. The implication for retailers is to move beyond organization to inspiration, reengineering the potato table into a hub for dispensing information on nutritional benefits and the differing qualities of potato types, while providing shoppers with recipes, preparation tips and serving suggestions.

Potatoes have the potential to be a profit powerhouse — just give the potato category the extra attention it deserves, and shoppers will reward the retailer with bigger baskets and added sales!





# consumer advertising

Our new "Many Sides of Potatoes" campaign leverages insights from our research and highlights key opportunities (nutrition, versatility, taste and convenience) to increase potato usage. The concept is also being used in PR, foodservice and retail programs to ensure a unified focus on increasing potato consumption.

public relations

consumer research

retail programs

POTATOES  
**GOODNESS  
UNEARTHED**

with Great Taste | Naturally Full Flavor | Full of vitamins and minerals

foodservice marketing

## By integrating our efforts, we're thriving.

At the U.S. Potato Board we're cultivating success like never before. Consumption is up, negative attitudes are down, and our customers and consumers are hungry for more. What's at the root of it? A fully integrated marketing model that leverages the strengths of multiple initiatives to achieve results no individual program could ever achieve alone.

Learn more about the United States Potato Board approach to domestic marketing. Contact Kathleen Triou: [ktriou@uspotatoes.com](mailto:ktriou@uspotatoes.com)

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UNITED STATES

Potato  
BOARD

Maximizing Return on Grower Investment



## SALAD DRESSING

# Marie's®

**MARIE'S®**

40 Pointe Drive

Brea, CA 92821

Phone: 972-569-6813

Web: www.maries.com

Email: mmiddleton@venturafoods.com

Refrigerated produce dressings offer additional opportunity to add incremental profit to the produce department. Based on average retail prices across the country, a typical retailer profit is approximately \$1.50 per unit. Combine this high dollar margin with ease of handling and minimal shrink and you have a product that will help you improve your overall produce department margins.

Effective promotion is less about straight discounting and more about merchandising the product directly adjacent to or in partnership with fresh produce. Help the consumer recognize the easy ways to transform your produce into an extraordinary meal!

### WHY MERCHANDISE PRODUCE WITH DRESSING?

The best promotions enable consumers to easily create a great tasting meal or side dish. That means getting consumers to pick up a jar or bottle of Marie's with every produce purchase. Refrigerated Produce Dressing presents 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.

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

- Use point-of-sale to create a strong linkage that not only delivers consumer benefit, but also assists in driving increased sales and profits.
- Attaching a coupon or recipe will assist the consumer in figuring out how to transform a commodity into a meal, but also helps create a link between fresh produce and the fresh, homemade dressings.
- Cross merchandise fresh produce with produce dressing to increase the sales of both:
  - Coleslaw Dressing with cabbage
  - Chunky Blue Cheese with celery



- Creamy Ranch with baby carrots
- Blue Cheese Vinaigrette with asparagus

### 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 Produce Dressing. Our proprietary recipes feature both traditional and innovative uses for a wide range of produce items.

### VARIETY AND INNOVATION

The Refrigerated Produce Dressing category delivers delicious homemade flavor, fresh taste and product variety. With our category-leading Chunky Blue Cheese Dressing, popular vinaigrettes and innovative Yogurt Dressing, Marie's is committed to the growth of

Refrigerated Produce Dressing. Looking forward, Marie's will continue to deliver new products that enable consumers to turn produce into extraordinary meals.

### TASTE AND NUTRITION

Refrigerated Produce Dressing presents a healthier, more wholesome dressing alternative for consumers — attributes which can be promoted and are particularly applicable to the produce department.

The Marie's line of Refrigerated Salad Dressing is 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 consumers.



### QUICK TIPS

1. Merchandise next to refrigerated fresh vegetables for an increased produce ring.
2. Cross-merchandise with slower moving products for double the benefit.
3. Use POS throughout the department to remind customers to check out the dressings.

### OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

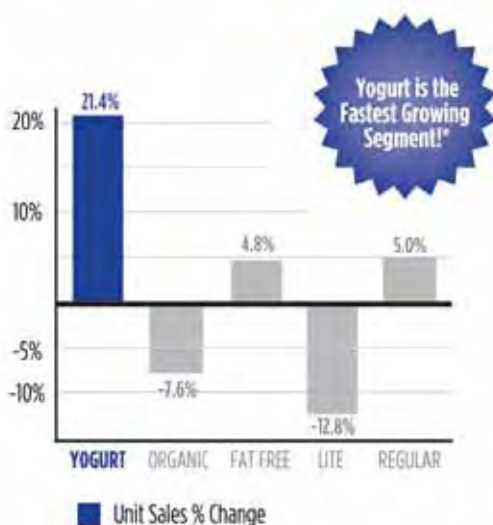
- Yogurt Dressing is driving Refrigerated Produce Dressing category growth. Marie's Yogurt Dressing is naturally low in fat and calories, helping you reach health conscious consumers. They are premium-positioned items that trade consumers up, driving additional profits to your bottom line. Make sure to merchandise Yogurt Dressing with produce as you would any dressing.



# Marie's® can make you more appealing – to your shoppers!

Marie's Yogurt Dressing delivers fresh homemade taste with half the fat & calories of regular dressing. Yogurt Dressing's great taste and "health & wellness" appeal meets the needs of all your shoppers.

Are you meeting all your shoppers' needs?



*\*These numbers omit Shelf Stable dressings that appear in Refrigerated*



Marie's®

Makes the ordinary... EXTRAORDINARY!™

maries.com

Source: Information Resources Inc., InfoScan® Data (52 weeks ending 2/5/12)

For more information on Marie's products, contact your Marie's representative. © 2012 Ventura Foods, LLC



## STONE FRUIT



## TRINITY FRUIT SALES

7571 N. Remington Avenue Suite 104  
Fresno, CA 93711  
Phone: 559-433-3777  
Fax: 559-433-3790  
Web: [www.trinityfruit.com](http://www.trinityfruit.com)  
Email: [sales@trinityfruit.com](mailto:sales@trinityfruit.com)

### 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 consumers 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

1. 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)

2. 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

3. 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.





CALIFORNIA  
*grower packer shipper*

Trinity Fruit Sales is a year round grower, packer & shipper of fresh fruits. Our focus has and continues to be growing the most flavorful fresh fruits available. It all starts with our exclusive relationships with world-renowned plant breeders. From the fields to the state of the art solar powered packing facilities - Trinity Fruit Sales is fully committed to bringing you and your customers a great eating experience.

## Offering Full Lines Of:

WHITE & YELLOW PEACHES | WHITE AND YELLOW NECTARINES

FLAT WHITE & YELLOW PEACHES | APRICOTS | BLACK & RED PLUMS

PLUOTS | TABLE GRAPES | APPLES | KIWI | APPLE PEARS | CITRUS | PEARS

CHERRIES | ASPARAGUS | PERSIMMONS | POMEGRANATES | RAISINS

## Our Brands:



Fresno, CA | (559) 433-3777 | [www.trinityfruit.com](http://www.trinityfruit.com)

David E. White | John Hein | Vance Uchiyama | Dennis Surabian Jr. | Oscar Ramirez | Maria Alaniz





## SWEET ONIONS



## KEYSTONE FRUIT MARKETING

11 N. Carlisle St., Suite 102  
Greencastle, PA 17225  
Phone: 717-597-2112  
Fax: 717-597-4096  
Web: www.keystonefruit.com



Sweet onions present an opportunity for incremental produce sales if merchandised. The health and flavor benefits are an easy sell for consumers looking to cook tasteful food without salt and cholesterol. Sweet Onions also offer ample opportunity for promotion and cross-merchandising with a variety of products in and out of the department.

Onions are the most consumed produce item in the world. Average annual onion per capita consumption in the United States is 21 pounds — a tremendous opportunity for consistent sales.

### 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!

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.



### FLAVOR AND NUTRITION DIFFERENTIATION

Product differentiation gives consumers reasons to buy with confidence. Emphasizing the quality, flavor, and nutrition 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.

### AVAILABILITY: YEAR ROUND OPPORTUNITY

Being able to ensure a consistent sweet onion flavor profile is an important element for repeat and consistent sales. Retailers can now ensure their consumers an enjoyable eating experience every time! Certified Sweet® onions are available 365 days a year.

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

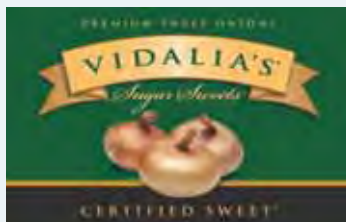
### OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Schedule a chef demo to show consumers new ways to use healthy onions to infuse flavor into recipes.
- Develop a "Recipe Kit" promotion which cross-merchandises all the ingredients, including sweet onions, to make an easy meal.



## SWEET ONIONS

*Keystone*  
Life should be this sweet.



sweet onions all year long. Forming a win-win relationship between vendors and retailers provides long-term, sustainable and uninterrupted supply. Use regional freshness as an educational vehicle to educate consumers on uniqueness of recognized sweet onion growing districts.

As consumers increase interest in buying local and knowing the grower, stores can capitalize on the fantastic regional information available for the various sweet onion regions. Creating brand awareness translates to consumer loyalty and repeat sales.

Certified Sweet® onions include:

- Sugar Sweets® available spring and summer
- Walla Walla River® available summer and fall
- Mayan Sweets® available fall, winter and early spring

### PROMOTION

Thirty percent of consumers say they would buy and eat more fruits and vegetables if they knew how to use them, so go ahead and help them... Stores can take advantage of various websites such as Keystone's Kitchen Website, the Vidalia® Onion Association's site, and the Walla Walla® Sweet Onion Committee site to provide additional information and resources for customers and

to seek out new and creative promotional ideas.

Demo's add excitement as well as an educational component. A good demo can

not only spur sales that day but build consistent sales on a regular basis.

Emphasize Certified Sweet® onion's nutritional benefits and variety of uses. Promote as ingredient for holiday or party entertaining, including Superbowl, Cinco de Mayo, and summer barbecues.

### QUICK TIPS

1. Sell "A Healthy Way to Add Flavor!" Onions are highly recommended for those trying to prevent cardiovascular disease, cancer and infections. Also, sweet onions are fat- and cholesterol-free, and contain very little sodium.
2. Ensure your sweet onions are SWEET! Get them from a reliable, certified source.
3. Educate Store Personnel: Ensure store-level personnel are aware of how to store and handle the product, the difference in sweet onions versus other varieties, and usage ideas. They are the front line in helping to promote the product and provide information to customers.

### 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! Sweet onions are an excellent ingredient added to any dish. Especially in guacamole, as part of salads, on hamburgers, in Kabobs, or with steaks.





## SEASONAL DISPLAYS WITH RECIPES AND CROSS PROMO

### Fall Snacking

Pair tomatoes, mini carrots, peppers, and broccoli with balsamic vinegar, or salad dressing to create interesting ideas for snacking, entertaining, as appetizers, Thanksgiving dinner, a Super Bowl party, healthy lower calorie dips, high energy snacks to drive more consumer traffic.

### Winter Soups

Create display around tomatoes with items for hearty winter vegetable soup with recipe card. Feature complementary vegetables for soup such as sweet peppers, potatoes, and then pair display with herbs, stock, and grains. Cross promote recipe card in stock and packaged grain aisle, driving traffic to produce section for soup ingredients.

### Spring Greens

Feature tomatoes displayed with spring greens for healthy salad idea. Cross promote in salad dressing aisle with recipe card for spring salad idea.

### Summer Grilling

Feature tomatoes such as grape, cherry, or any mini tomato variety as focal point of summer grilling display with peppers and onions. Make sure display of skewers are handy along with marinade options. Offer recipe card with grilling tips and marinade ideas. Mirror display at meat counter.



**ARIE VAN DER GIESSEN** is Regional Facility Manager for Village Farms' newest greenhouse in Monahans, Texas. Sprouting from three generations of growers, Arie was born in the Westland region of Holland also known as the 'Glass City' and has 30 years experience

as a world class greenhouse grower. His first memories as a child are happy ones; growing tomatoes and lettuce under his Dad's watchful eye in their family greenhouse. Arie is thrilled to be heading up Village Farms Monahans, "the greatest greenhouse in the world" as he calls it. This is because, as he says, working in a controlled enclosed environment where climate is continuously regulated it does not matter what the conditions are outside of the greenhouse, "this is better for the people working in the greenhouse and in the end better for the plants".

## TOMATOES



Authentic Mini San Marzano is a Village Farms exclusive

### POINT OF PURCHASE SIGNAGE

#### Focus on 'Taste Profile' of Tomato –

With so many different sizes, shapes, colors, and varieties of tomatoes available to consumers, it can be overwhelming. POS should focus not only on variety name, growing method, and country of origin, but should include a flavor descriptor to help with purchasing decision. Adding signage to include 'sweet', 'savory', 'juicy' or other taste adjectives will help consumer zero in on their choice more quickly.

#### Focus on Health Benefit of Tomato –

So we know tomatoes are high in lycopene, vitamins A & K, but what exactly does that mean? Signage should be 'outcome' focused – 'Heart Healthy', 'Cholesterol Reducing', 'Improves Vision', and 'Reduces Hypertension'. Tomatoes are the overall health elixir.



## VILLAGE FARMS

7 Christopher Way  
Eatontown, NJ 07724  
Phone: 877-777-7718  
Fax: 732-676-3031  
Web: www.villagefarms.com  
Email: sales@villagefarms.com

FOLLOW US ON:

### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY

**Hydroponic Greenhouse Grown: Year Round availability, Consistent Quality, Higher level of Food Safety**

Not all tomatoes are created equal!

Hydroponic Greenhouse grown varieties have the benefit of being available 365 days a year. Hydroponic greenhouse grown varieties are vine ripened in a controlled climate achieving a more flavorful and consistent quality tomato. Hydroponic greenhouse grown varieties do not use soil and are grown in an enclosed environment mitigating the risk of contaminants achieving a higher level of food safety.

### 2011 RETAIL SALES DATA

**Tomatoes rank 3rd in overall Produce Category contributions for Dollars and Volume**

Total tomato category dollars in 2011 were up 3.4% compared to 2010. Of this amount more than half (53%) of consumer purchase dollars were for Greenhouse Grown tomato varieties, up 4.4% from the previous year.

Movement is the tomato category for 2011 was highest for Greenhouse Grown tomato varieties (46%), with volume up 5.7% from the previous year.

Greenhouse Grown varieties return higher dollars per volume compared to field grown varieties. And within the overall category Greenhouse Grown varieties are seeing better growth in both dollars and volume for the overall category.

Source: Perishables Group Fresh Facts® Powered by Nielsen Q4 2011



### QUICK TIPS

1. Tomatoes on the Vine have longer shelf life because the vine and calyx provide nutrients while developing the tomatoes flavor.

2. Never refrigerate a tomato, instead store at room temperature.

## OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

• **Cause Marketing** – One of the benefits of tomatoes is high lycopene (known cancer preventative). Feature tomatoes during cancer awareness week and let customers know you will make a contribution to the local hospital or cancer care facility.

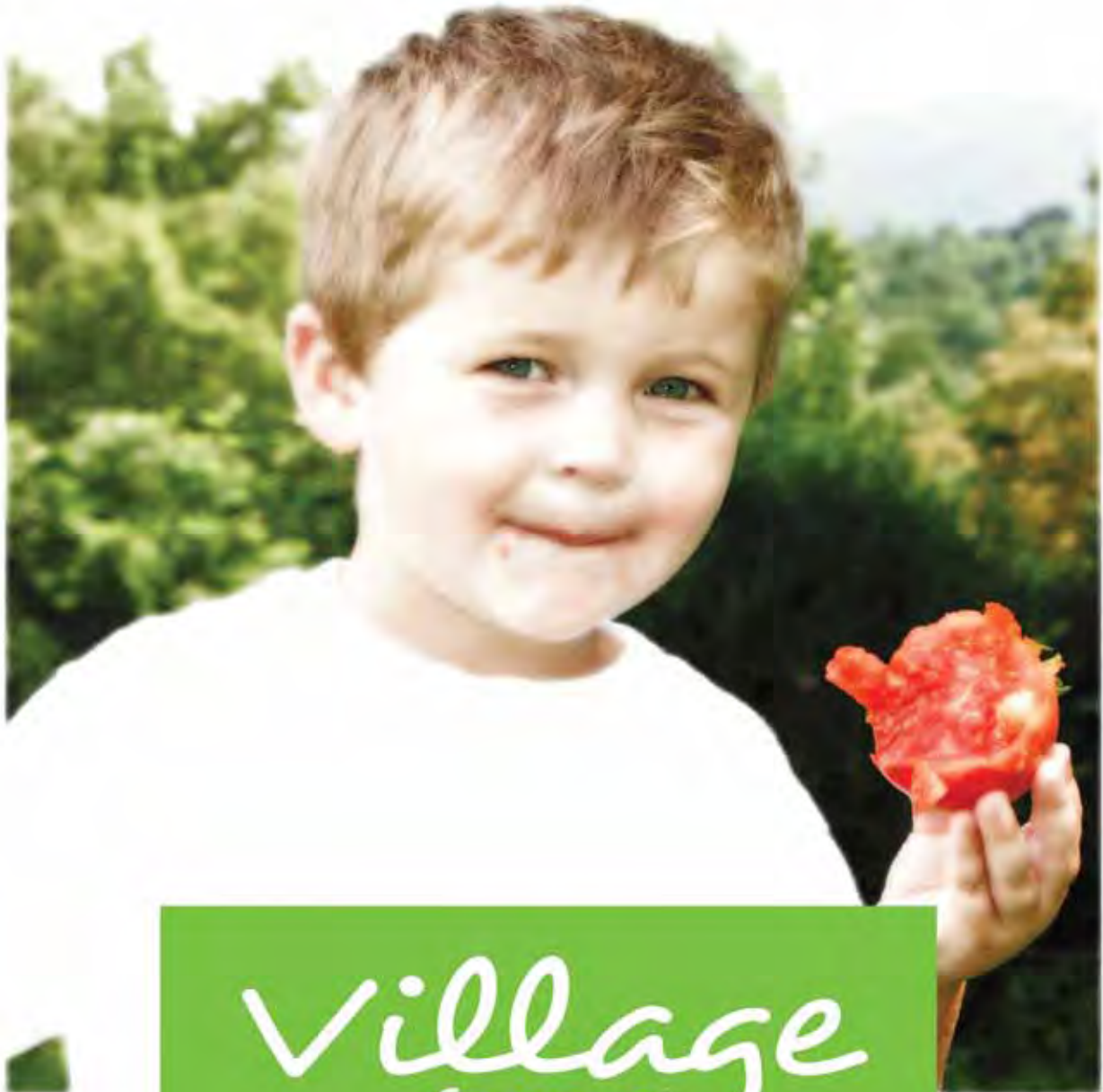
• **Healthy Snack Option** – Position display of snack packed varieties of tomatoes near check-out lines for grab-and-go healthy snack options. Your customers will thank you!

• **The 'Love Apple'** – Did you know tomatoes are known as the 'pomme d'amour' in French? Yes, 'the love apple'... promote tomatoes at Valentine's Day as a healthy alternative to candy or chocolate.



Garden Fresh Flavor

*just like you remember*

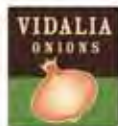


Village  
farms®

Greenhouse Grown



# Thank You!





# Eleven Years Of “Masters” Sponsorships

## MASTERS OF MERCHANDISING CATEGORIES

Apples	Hydroponcially Grown Living Lettuce
Artichokes	Hydroponic Butter Lettuce
Asian Pears, Pluots & White Flesh Fruit	Hydroponic Lettuce
Asparagus	Kiwi
Avocado	Kosher Fruit
Avocado - Lightskin	Leafy Greens
Bananas	Leaves
Bell Peppers	Lettuce
Berries - Conventional	Lighting
Berries - organic	Mangos
Beverages	Melons
Cantaloupe	Mushrooms
Carrots	Nuts
Celery	Onions
Cherries	Organic Fruit
Chestnuts	Organic Vegetables
Chili Pepper	Papaya
Citrus	Party Vegetable Trays
Collard Greens, Kale, Mustard & Turnip	Pears
Greens	Peppers
Corn	Pineapples
Cucumbers	Plantain
Dips	Potatoes
Dried Fruit	Pre-Conditioned Fruit
Dried Fruit & Nuts	Radishes
Dried Plums	Retail Merchandising
Eggplant	Salad Dressing
Figs	Salsa Chips
Fresh Cut Meal Solutions	Specialty Bananas
Fresh Cut Vegetables	Spinach
Fresh-cut fruit	Steam Veggies
Garlic	Sun Dried Tomatoes
Grapes	Sweet Onions
Green Beans	Sweet Potatoes
Green Onions	Tomatoes
Greenhouse Tomatoes	Tree Fruit
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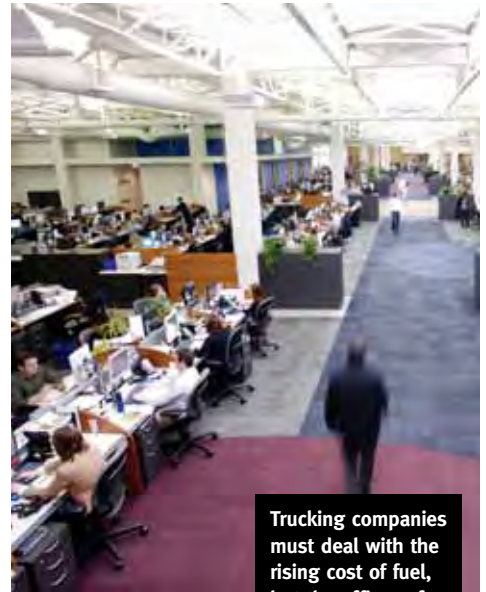
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Trucking companies must deal with the rising cost of fuel, but the offices of C.H. Robinson remain busy.

# The State Of The Trucking Industry

Experts weigh in on the long road ahead. **COMPILED BY JENNIFER LESLIE KRAMER**

Between rising fuel prices, the pressure to fill cross-country truckloads, the ongoing construction of national interstates, and an effort to remain current with technological advancements, transportation and logistics companies are faced with an ever-changing industry. Their clients continue to expect more, with better rates, while growers, shippers and retailers demand on-time delivery. *PRODUCE BUSINESS* went one-on-one with industry insiders including Bob Biesterfeld, director of sourcing transportation at C.H. Robinson Worldwide Inc., in Eden Prairie, MN; Jimmy DeMatteis, president of Des Moines Truck Brokers, in Norwalk, IA; Paul Kazan, president of Target Interstate Systems Inc., New York, NY; and Fred Plotsky, president of Cool Runnings, in Kenosha, WI; to get to the heart of the matter.

## What is the current state of trucking in North America?

**Bob Biesterfeld:** There continues to be a need for shippers to gain as much access to variable and cost-effective truckload capacity as possible, so that is still a main focus point at C.H. Robinson. In addition, it appears that due to the overall freight reductions that occurred during the recession, many shippers have turned to LTL (less-than-truckload) or consolidation-type shipments as those modes provide the type of values shippers are looking for. It doesn't make sense for product to sit on the dock for an extended period of time in hopes of eventually creating a full truckload shipment. Our conversations with shippers who have seen an increase in their partial shipments have centered on the ability to lower costs while increasing efficiency when consolidating.

**Jimmy DeMatteis:** Capacity remains tight throughout the country. Motor carriers, particularly smaller motor carriers who represent 90 percent of the trucking industry, are under constant assault from the FMCSA [Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration] with unproven programs like CSA [Compliance, Safety and Accountability Program] and the ongoing Hours of Service debate. These programs are restricting

participation in the freight pool from an already shrinking carrier base.

**Paul Kazan:** We still see carrier capacity as being short. Even with the produce business being so off since Thanksgiving the rates are still much higher than we forecasted. The rates to the carriers for backhauls are also somewhat higher than last year as well. We feel fuel prices will be stable this year at around \$4 per gallon.

**Fred Plotsky:** There has been a consistent decline in the amount of owner operators on the road. Business in general was on the rise with shipments tailing off the past two months. This puts a downward pressure on rates causing trouble for carriers.

## Can you shed light on truck shipments from Mexico going north into the United States and Canada?

**Bob Biesterfeld:** Mexico has been successful in leveraging their advantages as a country, which has resulted in an increase in near sourcing or choosing Mexico as a manufacturing source over other countries such as the U.S. or China. These advantages include proximity to the U.S., a quality and abundant low cost labor pool, and a business



culture that is easy for American and European companies to navigate. Although security and cartel violence is always a legitimate concern, truck transportation to and from the U.S. and Canada is a growth opportunity that C.H. Robinson continues to invest in.

**Jimmy DeMatteis:** We have been very successful in moving our perishable goods from Mexico into the United States. Mexican carriers entering the domestic market have and should raise concerns of safety fitness of the Mexican carriers, the majority of which is outdated equipment with overworked and underpaid drivers.

**Paul Kazan:** We are seeing a lot more demand for trucks crossing through southern Texas than Nogales. This is a trend that we have been seeing for a couple of years now. We anticipate a continued increase in this business, which is why we are looking to reopen and staff our office in Elsa, TX. Our freight shipments to the border in Texas have also increased, which makes for a great flow in equipment for us to service our customers

**Fred Plotsky:** I'm not familiar with those types of shipments.

**Do you see new technologies making it less expensive for truck transportation in the future?**

**Bob Biesterfeld:** When you look at what composes a transportation rate, many factors are included, so it's tough to say that one thing alone can make truck transportation less expensive. Costs such as fuel, insurance and overall fleet maintenance are higher than in the past. However, from an efficiency standpoint, there is no arguing that new technologies play an important part in streamlining the supply chain and help contain costs. More established technologies, such as EDI, speed data transfer and reduce human error. Newer technologies such as mobile applications allow a motor carrier to enter pick up information, check calls, and delivery information within a couple of clicks. Advancements like this allow organizations to move from tactical to strategic operations and become more profitable.

**Jimmy DeMatteis:** Technology has reduced costs and typically increased efficiencies in every segment of every industry. The biggest concern with truck technology is up-front costs. The cost of updated truck technology far exceeds the average cost of a new PC or server. We have to recognize that these motor carriers are constantly being asked to raise the bar. With every requirement comes cost. It is only natural that they will need to pass through those costs to their customers. This is on top

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**The biggest concern with truck technology is up-front costs... We have to recognize that these motor carriers are constantly being asked to raise the bar. With every requirement comes cost. It is only natural that they will need to pass through those costs to their customers. This is on top of volatile fuel prices, rising insurance, maintenance and personnel costs.**

— Jimmy DeMatteis, Des Moines Truck Brokers

of volatile fuel prices, rising insurance, maintenance and personnel costs.

**Paul Kazan:** I believe in the long run technology essentially makes the business more efficient, which always leads to cost savings. This includes new technology for both the truck and reefer engines including electrification at truck stops and terminals. The continued advances in tracing and tracking of not only the vehicle assets but also the freight will also go a long way to reducing transportation costs.

**Fred Plotsky:** I see more demand from customers requiring more technology and the rates not moving high enough to justify said technology.

**How does the current state of our interstate highways and roads affect timely delivery?**

**Bob Biesterfeld:** There is more traffic than ever on all roads, and it's crucial the roads are maintained in a timely manner so their deterioration is not a disruption to the global supply chain. Whether it's uneven pavement or bottlenecks, the conditions of our road have a material cost primarily in fuel consumption, which can be improved. However, it's equally important that shippers and logistics providers look at their supply chain as a whole in order to reduce unnecessary shipments and make it as efficient as

possible. There has been a growing interest with our customers who want to talk about network optimization, consolidation and transportation sourcing strategies to help identify business process gaps and opportunities for improvement.

**Jimmy DeMatteis:** The House of Representatives just passed their first Highway Bill in years. The bill is woefully underfunded and will generate some improvements, but not nearly enough. That being said, the thing that affects timely delivery more than anything else is shipper inefficiencies. The shipping mindset for years has been to load at their convenience and then demand exceptional service from the motor carrier. Unfortunately, the exceptional service expected by these shippers oftentimes requires the motor carrier to break the rules or be prevented from delivering their goods at a reasonable pace.

**Paul Kazan:** Most of the problems we see affecting the timeliness is not anything major. Obviously roadwork will always slow us down by hours, but not days. Most of the delays we encounter due to roadwork are in the roads East of the Mississippi.

**Plotsky:** Between winter and construction, the highway system is status quo. **pb**



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With more advanced technology, and a better traceback system, safety recalls can be completed in a moment's notice.

# What's New In Technology And Packaging?

With research, open lines of communication, and a willing and patient team, retailers welcome new technology to increase efficiencies and decrease shrink. **CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**

**W**e literally hold the world in the palm of our hands today. Smartphone technology lets us do everything from tracking our travels by GPS to receiving the latest global news and even directing our purchase decisions. Yet, the idea of ordering, tracking and tracing produce from field to in-store display, and ultimately, the customer's fork, purely via our phones or PCs is daunting. Not only does this scope of information technology beg the question of implementation cost, but it also runs counter to a long-standing customary way of doing business. Produce is still a phone call and handshake industry where personal relationships can outweigh impersonal technology.

Fred Heptinstall, president and general manager of IFCO RPC Management Services Division, headquartered in Tampa, FL, acknowledges, "Technological capabilities have been developed, but the industry has yet to embrace them. Take RFID, for example. The innovation is there, and yet the implementation isn't. Going forward, it needs to be

the retailer who will drive the use of technology back through the supply chain."

## New Technologies

According to Charles Shafae, president of dProduce Man Software, headquartered in Half Moon Bay, CA, "Three key areas where technology can lead to greater efficiency is inventory control, cold chain management and traceability."

**INVENTORY CONTROL:** "One of the biggest headaches on the supply side from the retail standpoint is in tracking when fresh produce from the requested grower isn't available or is short and fill-ins from other distributors and wholesalers or terminal markets is required to fill store shelves," says Paul Kneeland, director of produce and floral for Kings Super Markets, a 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ. "We manage this via new slots and unique item codes for the same item at the warehouse level. For example, if we normally get green peppers from a Mexican grower and the truck doesn't make it and we need to get peppers from the Hunt's Point Market instead, those will have a

different code. The biggest problem is making room for the different slots in the warehouse. Keeping these items separate at store level could be crucial if we have to assign two different Countries Of Origin Labels on the display," he explains.

On a wider scope, Kneeland would welcome the capability of a comprehensive ordering system tied into a PDA (personal digital assistant). "For example, you could walk the cooler or sales floor and enter stock levels into the PDA," he theorizes. "This information could be tied into a buying system for purchasing from the grower/shipper to complete the circle. It would be great for a number of reasons: traceability, tracking shrink and movement and an order history, especially if this is tied into computer-based ordering and a virtual inventory. This could even tie into merchandising. For example, a grower could send information via a PDA that this week the Sunkist navels have a particularly high Brix. We could immediately use this information as a marketing tool with our customers."

While this scenario isn't a reality yet, the



ability to access information anytime and anywhere is here. Shafae points out, "It used to be you'd need to have a connection to your in-house server in order to access ordering and accounting information. Now, via a 'cloud'-based platform, you can access this information 24-hours via your Smartphone or iPad. All that's required is an Internet connection. This means produce distributors, wholesalers, brokers and processors can virtually manage their business online." dProduce Man Online is an integrated customizable software program that enables tasks such as online order entry, accounts receivable/payable and generation of purchase orders.

Maria Brous, director of media and community relations for Publix Supermarkets, based in Lakeland, FL, reports Publix has implemented radio frequency receiving, "which allows us to scan by lot code," she says. "While we had a few hurdles along the way, we do expect to see an improvement in accuracy and productivity within the near future. These improvements will be based on the re-engineering of the receiving processes.

**COLD CHAIN MANAGEMENT AND HUMIDITY:** One of the biggest supply chain challenges for Jeff Fairchild, produce buyer for New Seasons Market, a 12-store Portland, OR-based chain, is quality control. "If retailers don't receive the quality they expect, they may have to throw product away and then they are left with no product on the shelves," he says. "What this necessitates are more rigorous inbound and outbound checks at the DC."

One way to prevent problems such as this is more detailed temperature tracking from grower/shipper to DC. This type of technology can prevent the over \$35 billion annual global perishable product loss due to poor in-transit temperature management. John Hennessy, vice president of sales and marketing for Jupiter, FL-based Locus Traxx, says, "Our OverSight system is portable and sends constant updates on shipment temperature via sensor tags that continually measure and wirelessly transmit readings and GPS data of the shipment. The safe temperature range can be set with high and low temperature alerts via E-mail or text notifications when temperatures go into these danger zones. The driver can be alerted in transit of the problem and produce damage or loss can be prevented," he details. The cost ranges from \$65 on domestic routes to \$100 internationally. Some retailers will selectively use this on highly perishable and profitable items such as asparagus.

Similarly, reusable temperature monitoring



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**“One of the biggest headaches on the supply side from the retail standpoint is in tracking when fresh produce from the requested grower isn’t available or is short and fill-ins from other distributors and wholesalers or terminal markets is required to fill store shelves. We manage this via new slots and unique item codes for the same item at the warehouse level.”**

— Paul Kneeland, Kings Super Markets

pallet tags manufactured by Intelleflex Corp., in Santa Clara, CA, log temperature of produce from field to packing house to DC. An operator can scan the received pallet from up to 300 feet away with wireless, handheld, or fixed RFID readers that capture this data. The company’s year-old FreshAware software then analyzes this data and calculates a Shelf-Life Index, or in other words, determines in real-time which pallets of produce have aged faster than others. This system can then print out pallet labels with an index score for prioritized routing. Kevin Payne, senior director of marketing, elaborates, “Pallets of uniformly aged produce can be built, and the operator can then make real-time decisions regarding exactly where to send it in order to prevent product loss, out-of-stocks and lost sales. For example, a pallet of produce with only a five-day shelf-life can be sent to a nearby store in order to sell everything as fresh, rather than encounter shrink.”

“In the future,” Payne continues, “this technology could be taken to the next level where a consumer could scan the barcode on a product and not only see where their produce came from, but its temperature history as well, as a way of ascertaining shelf-life rather than simply eyeballing, for example, for fuzzy berries in a clamshell. In addition, retailers could also use this technology to charge a premium for a product with six days of shelf-life rather than two.”

On a packaging front, Kurt Zuhlke, president and CEO of Bangor, PA-based Kurt Zuhlke & Associates Inc., says, “We employ the latest design technology to provide as much ventilation into the pack as possible, which allows for proper air flow and temperature control during transit and at the store.”

Clamshells with tamper-resistant features also can help retailers in several areas of the distribution center-to-retail store handling chain, especially in the area of fresh-cut produce. Herb Knutson, director of marketing

for Inline Plastics Corp., based in Shelton, CT, reports, “A major fresh-cut fruit processor is using our round and rectangular Safe-T-Fresh containers to ship their fresh-cut fruit products to retailers across the country. Shipping the product in the same containers as would be displayed at retail saves on repackaging and labor and allows the product to be placed immediately on the shelf, which increases the effective shelf-life of the product and greater possibility of sale.”

New technologies can prevent produce shrink at the DC cooler and retail wet-rack level. Matt Shawcross, vice president of business development for Miatech Inc., in Clackamas, OR, explains, “Technology has improved and decreased in price, making humidification of the produce cooler cost effective by reducing shrink and weight variance, even for produce stored just eight to 12 hours. Produce, especially such as lettuce, mushrooms and radishes, holds up longer in a humidified environment, making it less stressful to manage such inventory. The dehydration of wet-side produce is causing so many challenges for retailers,” Shawcross adds, “that some retailers have dealt with it by reducing the amount of fresh wet-side produce on display, or trying to package more of the products to reduce the dehydration.”

Another solution is an automated misting system that makes use of air/water technologies such as a combination of compressed air and reverse osmosis treated water, as well as ultra-high pressure (UHP) water systems. These create obvious advantages such as reduced shrink from dehydration as well as other benefits such as a friendlier, lighter mist that does not offend the customer; bacteria control that eliminates store labor for cleaning; and instant on/off that eliminates dripping.

**TRACEABILITY:** “True traceability to the piece- or pack-level and the ability to withdraw only that lot number of product affected by a food safety recall is of major benefit to us as an



industry, not only in terms of lost sales, but also in consumer confidence,” says Brian Coates, senior buyer and produce merchandiser for Meijer Inc., in Grand Rapids, MI. “For example, we had a 30 to 40 percent drop in cantaloupe sales as a result of the outbreak last year, and other items, like spinach, have taken years and still have not fully rebounded.”

“The technology exists for item-level traceability, however, the common element is the case,” points out Todd Baggett, CEO and director of business development for Redline Solutions. The Santa Clara, CA-based company offers produce traceability software solutions. “Item-level traceability tells us the grower and consumer, but it doesn’t track it step-by-step and identify how the product was handled through the supply chain. This is what case-level traceability can accomplish.”

Supply chain-wide adoption of electronic traceability for every case of produce by this year is a goal of the Produce Traceability Initiative (PTI). “The key is whole supply chain traceability,” says Baggett. “Currently, there isn’t traceability to the store, however, Milestone 7 of PTI calls for outbound traceability, which requires companies scan information such as GTIN and lot numbers contained in the barcodes of each case of produce and store this information. This allows for faster identification of the source of a product and minimizes a commodity-wide recall.”

Dan Vaché, vice president of supply chain management for the United Fresh Produce Association, in Washington, D.C., reveals, “Retailers such as Publix and Food Lion are among those that have taken the initiative to become PTI-compliant. The big players set the tone and, like the pied piper, the rest of the industry comes onboard.”

Publix’s Brous says, “We decided to focus on inbound traceability first, which required redesigning our receiving process. Publix has moved from a paper-based process with manual product identification to wirelessly scanning product barcodes to automatically capture product information, including lot numbers, expiration dates and even country of origin, by using Global Trade Item Numbers (GTINs),” she details.

“To manage the change process effectively,” Brous reveals “Publix organized a PTI project team that includes representatives not only from produce and distribution, but also from industrial engineering, business analysis and information systems, so that we could have a truly cross-functional team working on the project with the full support of executive management.”

pb

## CASE STUDY: IMPLEMENTING SUCCESSFUL PILOT TRACEABILITY

A forward-thinking business approach, as well as a desire to keep its member-owners competitive in the market and at the forefront of technological developments, led Associated Grocers (AG) Inc., a Baton Rouge, LA, retail cooperative to collaborate with C.H. Robinson, FoodlogiQ and LoBue Citrus in a pilot designed to increase supply chain efficiencies and move traceability from concept to reality.

Lewis R. ‘Randy’ Fletcher, AG’s vice president of logistics and supply chain management, notes, “We saw this as an opportunity not to be legislated to, but to be part of the process in implementing traceability from a business standpoint. Yes, it’s an added cost. But after the initial expenses we’ve found it’s not a significant ongoing cost. In fact, the benefit is that it gets you a good night’s sleep by knowing that you can immediately and surgically recall product if a problem arises, rather than a long and costly shotgun approach. Most importantly, it builds confidence in our customer base.”

The pilot started when AG teamed with C.H. Robinson Worldwide, Inc., an Eden Prairie, MN-based third-party logistics supplier that the grocer had worked with for more than a decade on other supply chain efficiencies. C.H. Robinson selected FoodLogiQ, a Durham, NC-headquartered traceability, food safety and sustainability software provider, to help both AG and grower, LoBue Bros. Inc., a Lindsay, CA-based citrus grower that packs citrus for C.H. Robinson under the Tropicana label.

Andrew Kennedy, FoodLogiQ president, explains, “First, we set up the printers and case labeling with LoBue, which took a few days. The pallet information took about a month to hammer out because LoBue also wanted it tied into their inventory system. This is a common request. Growers want traceability and inventory to link for immediate benefits. On our part, we have case and pallet labeling software that works with smart printers for increased operational effectiveness with lower costs in both the field and the packingshed.”

Tracing product to the field required that LoBue label each case of product with a Global Trade Identification Number

(GTIN) and each pallet with a Serial Shipping Container Code (SSCC) expanded barcode. The thought was that is FoodLogiQ’s solution worked between one grower and AG, then expansion to multiple retail operations and shippers seemed a real possibility.

AG prepared for the pilot by updating its Warehouse Management System (WMS) so that scanned label information would fill the right fields within that system. They incorporated finger- and wrist-scanning hardware into its voice system and tested to ensure the WMS would recognize both voice and scanned information.

“Implementation, says Kennedy, “took about four to five months. We were up running by May of 2011.”

Scanning every inbound case did add steps to the receiving process, yet efficiencies on outbound shipments began to emerge. For example, once both inbound and outbound product was scanned, AG knew exactly what was loaded on the truck and had proof of where every item that they shipped had gone. Thus, they could trace items at the grower, warehouse and store levels enabling faster tracebacks.”

Mike Meagher, C.H. Robinson’s director of technology solutions, explains, “The industry objective for traceback is 48 hours. This pilot showed that this time frame could be shortened from hours to minutes.”

Efficiencies such as 100 percent accurate information due to scanning GTIN label barcodes; the rework and frustration at store level that this eliminates; and proof that product was on the delivery truck so there are no short reports and no need to rework invoices as a consequence also, and unexpectedly, proved themselves in fresh meats and other categories as well as produce. “Results of this pilot will change what type of suppliers we look for,” says AG’s Fletcher. “In other words, we’ll look for suppliers with the full capability to provide GTIN labeled cases of product.”

Next up, AG and C.H. Robinson are working on data synchronization so that everyone in the supply chain has the same information about a product, the pallet ties, pictures of the product and the right attributed of the product.

pb

# Ten Ways To Sweeten Berry Sales

Ever-increasing supplies, varietal development focused on flavor and super food status make berries ripe for savvy merchandising. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**



Building a berry patch, where all varieties are located in one place, is a smart and profitable move.

**B**erry sales are sweetening the bottom line of produce departments nationwide. Consider that the berry category represented \$3.4 billion in sales for the 52 weeks ending December 4, 2011, according to FreshLook Marketing data as supplied by the Watsonville-based California Strawberry Commission (CSC). This makes berries the largest category contributor in dollar sales in the produce department.

Figured another way, the berry category represented 7.6 percent of total produce dollar sales for the 52 weeks ending November 26, 2011, according to the Nielsen Perishables Group, a West Dundee, IL-based fresh food consulting firm, up from 7.5 percent the prior year.

Jeff Fairchild, director of produce for New Seasons Market, a 12-store chain based in Portland, OR, says, “Berries are probably the No. 1 impulse item in produce. They are a top dollar generator and people gravitate to them 52 weeks a year.”

## 1. Capitalize On A Growing Supply Of Flavorful Berries

All four major berries — strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and blackberries — are available year-round, barring weather-related

supply interruptions. Yet, there are peaks and valleys in supply that make some weeks better for promotion and others where volumes are lower, but still enough to leave a void on the shelf. This rhythm of supply is reflected in berry dollar contribution by quarter ranging from a low of 15.7 percent in the fourth quarter of 2010 to a high of 33.1 percent in the second quarter of 2011, according to data from the Nielsen Perishables Group.

Fairchild explains his annual strategy: “The first of the year is big for imported Chilean blueberries. Then March to June our focus turns to California strawberries. After that, from July through September, we’ll promote all of our local Pacific Northwest berries like blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, currants and gooseberries. September to October is a transition time and then demand decreases from November to January before picking up again with blueberries,” he details.

“In general,” Fairchild continues, “our strongest sales for berries are April to August, or a strong five- to six-month time frame. The two months on either side of this are strong too, and then there are two to three months when there isn’t as much volume or velocity, but sales are still respectable.”

Cindy Jewell, director of marketing for

Watsonville, CA-based California Giant Berry Farms, says, “When looking at supply gaps, our growers look at varietal differences to consider those that may produce earlier, or in different districts to cover the shoulders of the season. We also consider new growing regions that may produce in a window that we have supply gaps. Ultimately, there are always going to be transitional times for berries, and we are focused on ensuring any adjustments we make in filling gaps that we first look at what will provide the best flavor experience for the consumer.”

“Flavor and size are two attributes breeders are focusing on in order to grow demand as well as supply,” says Jim Roberts, vice president of sales for Naturipe Farms LLC, headquartered in Estero, FL. “For example, about 50 percent of strawberry varieties are proprietary, while 100 percent of raspberries are proprietary. There is a lot of breeding research going on in blackberries, and blueberries are about 10 percent proprietary, but a bunch of new varieties will push this number to 40 to 50 percent in the next five years, and likely 100 percent in the next 10 years.”

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**“In general, our strongest sales for berries are April to August, or a strong five- to six-month time frame. The two months on either side of this are strong too, and then there are two to three months when there isn’t as much volume or velocity, but sales are still respectable.”**

— Jeff Fairchild, *New Seasons Market*

big red berries represented \$1.8 billion in sales during the 52 weeks ending December 4, 2011, according to FreshLook Marketing data as supplied by the CSC. This figure ranks strawberries as the fourth largest fruit and seventh largest produce category in terms of dollar sales. In addition, strawberries supplied more than half, or 52.5 percent, of berry category dollar sales for the 52 weeks ending November 26, 2011, according to Nielsen Perishables Group data.

What’s more, the strawberry shopper is one retailers want in-store. According to data from the CSC’s *Strawberry Consumer Purchase Trends* analysis, data ending September 3, 2011, compared to the same period ending two years prior, strawberry consumers made six more trips to the supermarket annually compared to non-buyers, and they spent 57 percent more per trip when strawberries were in their baskets.

Florida, and to a lesser extent Mexico, supplies the market with strawberries from November through early April. Ted Campbell, executive director of the Plant City-based Florida Strawberry Growers Association (FSGA), reports that acreage has increased this season. “We began harvest earlier than normal and are having more success with staging different varieties to eliminate production spikes,” he details. “Last year, the early harvest varieties were impacted by December freezes, but this year, most varieties performed on schedule.”

“As for new varieties,” Campbell says, “the newest release is named Winterstar, and it has received very good reviews in limited field trials this year. We expect to see commercial volume next season. It is an early performer, large-sized fruit, which has less acid, which gives it a sweeter taste. Beyond this, the Festival variety remains the workhorse, with almost 50 percent of the acreage, and Radiance has now secured a solid 30 percent of production.”

“Strawberry acreage in California is up 2.8 percent this year,” reports Chris Christian, vice president of trade and nutrition for the CSC. “Every area is up, and there is expanded availability during the significant shipping months of March through the end of August,

when shipments average five to six million trays per week.”

Albion is the dominant strawberry variety in California. Christian adds, “We continue to see new releases like the San Andreas, which is being planted in greater acreage.”

### 3. Go For Big Incremental Sales With Blueberries

Blueberries are bursting in sales, generating 26.7 percent category share of dollars for the 52 weeks ending November 26, 2011, according to Nielsen Perishables Group data. Mark Villata, executive director of the Folsom, CA-based North American Blueberry Council (NABC), says, “This growth is illustrated by comparison to five years ago when U.S. per-capita consumption was 7.3 ounces fresh in 2005 and 17.8 percent fresh in 2010, nearly a 150 percent increase. The health message about blueberries will continue to spur interest and keep consumption on an upward trend.”

“While blueberries are a year-round berry, the regions and seasons are much different than strawberries,” says California Giant’s Jewell. “Each blueberry region is in production for shorter time periods in different parts of the country and internationally. Winter blueberries are sourced from Argentina, then Chile until late March or early April. Florida and California

begin in March and continue through May or June, when at that time the Northwest fruit comes into season and continues until September when South America begins again. We see volume the tightest for blueberries during the shift from U.S. to South America, with light supplies in September and October based on weather.”

Some production windows, especially domestically, are short with regional overlaps that create great retail promotional opportunities.

Tim Wetherbee, sales manager for Diamond Blueberry Inc., in Hammonton, NJ, explains, “We have a two-month window from mid-June to mid-August with primarily the Duke and Blue Crop varieties. Last year, we had the window to ourselves. Some years though, North Carolina and even Georgia, with their Rabbiteye variety, are still in the game on our front end, and then Michigan and the Pacific Northwest come right in on our heels.”

Mexico is the next big blueberry destination, according to Naturipe’s Roberts. “The March/April gap in supplies is closing fast thanks to production out of Mexico. The key is to find the right variety. The Southern Highbush varieties appear to do well because they don’t require dormancy and they grow well in climates with low chill hours.”

This season, Family Tree Farms Marketing LLC, in Reedley, CA, will harvest its first commercial crop of proprietary Australian-bred Southern Highbush blueberry varieties grown in western Mexico. Don Goforth, director of marketing, says, “Like apples, we really want consumers to understand that there are different varieties of blueberries and some have better flavor. We’re planning to start slow this year with an estimated 500,000 pounds and







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in 2013 call out this enhanced flavor profile through a full marketing campaign.”

The arrival of these Mexican-grown blueberries comes in February and March, at a time when Chile is wrapping up and domestic production hasn't started.

#### 4. Offer A Fruit Patch With Raspberries And Blackberries

“New varieties are now available that eat well and present well and last longer on the shelf,” says Paul Kneeland, director of produce and floral for Kings Super Markets, a 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ. “We’ve especially seen this for raspberries and blackberries.”

Raspberries represented 12.5 percent of berry category dollar sales for the 52 weeks ending November 26, 2011, according to Nielsen Perishables Group data, while blackberries added another 7 percent of sales.

California and Mexico, and to a lesser extent Chile, are the major raspberry growing regions. Naturipe’s Roberts states, “We’re starting to see dramatic double digit growth after a period of flat sales due to new proprietary varieties that offer improved size and flavor as well as yield and shipability.”

Well-Pict Inc., in Watsonville, CA, intro-

duced a new proprietary raspberry variety in 2010. Marketing manager, Jim Grabowski, states, “As a grower, we’re always looking for the best tasting and best looking varieties.”

Blackberries destined for the North American market, says Ben Reilly, Midwest business development manager for Giumarra VBM International Berry LLC, in Vernon, CA, “are predominantly produced in Mexico, the United States, Canada and Guatemala. Giumarra works with growers in multiple regions to offer a 12-month program.”

Mexico is a strong producer of blackberries, primarily the Tupi variety, says Naturipe’s Roberts. “This is a good size, juicy, sweet berry that is helping to grow blackberry consumption. In addition, there are a half a dozen new blackberry varieties out of the University of Arkansas that should continue this trend.”

#### 5. Offer Organic

“Many retailers in North America focus on building the organic category for their customers as part of their competitive strategy, and they include berries when they do so,” says Giumarra’s Reilly.

Kings’ Kneeland agrees. “Even with the dip in the economy, the organic category for us is



still growing double digits,” he says. “We see a lot more room to grow in terms of organic berry sales.”

Organics represented 7.4 percent of berry category sales for the 52 weeks ending November 26, 2011, according to Nielsen Perishables Group data. Of this, strawberries represented 51.3 percent of organic berries, blueberries 25 percent, raspberries 18.6 percent

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# “Strawberry acreage in California is up 2.8 percent this year. Every area is up, and there is expanded availability during the significant shipping months of March through the end of August, when shipments average five to six million trays per week.”

— Chris Christian, California Strawberry Commission

and blackberries 4.8 percent.

Availability of organic strawberries is closer to 52 weeks, while organic blackberries have the biggest gaps in supply. Roberts explains, “Land availability and decreased yields put a premium on organics that can be cost-prohibitive.”

Gary Wishnatzki, president and CEO of Wish Farms, in Plant City, FL, says, “Finding ways to increase production will lower the cost of organics. Until then, organic berries will remain a niche, but a growing niche.”

## 6. Push Larger Packs

“Berries are a mature category, so the way we grow sales is to offer different size packages, especially larger packs,” details Kneeland.

“Larger packs are becoming increasingly popular with retailers and consumers,” says Giumarra’s Reilly. “Larger pack sizes improve production efficiency and ensure healthy industry movement during peak supply periods.”

“For strawberries, the 1-lb. package definitely rules,” says California Giant’s Jewell. “We also offer several larger size clamshells.”

“One-lb. clamshells of strawberries represent 78 percent of sales,” says the CSC’s Christian. “Two-pounders are under 10 percent of sales, and this figure has increased, while 4-pounders are at around 2 percent, and this percentage has declined.”

Well-Pict’s Grabowski acknowledges, “Two-pounders are something we’re trying to move more of as an industry.”

“Some retailers who find a 4-lb. clamshell of strawberries too large are opting for our new 3-pounder,” notes Roberts.

Blueberries also have several different clamshell options and those tend to be regionally specific. Jewell explains, “Early in the season when pricing is higher, blueberries are typically packed in 6-oz. containers. As the volume increases, clamshell size follows suit.”

“Some traditional retailers have started carrying 18-oz. and 2-lb. clamshells of blueberries in peak season,” says Naturipe’s Roberts. “In raspberries and blackberries, we’re packing more in 12- to 18-oz.

clamshells. These larger sizes can offer customers a better value proposition.”

Robert’s last comment was borne out by 2011 research conducted by the Perishables Group on behalf of the Chilean Fresh Fruit Association (CFFA) that looked at barriers to sales, one of which was the perception that 4.4-oz. of berries are too pricy. However, Tom Tjerandsen, the Sonoma, CA-based CFFA spokesman says, “Retailers who experimented with carrying larger packages found success and discovered the shopper is willing and able to buy these bigger packs.”

## 7. Chill Out On Handling

According to Jewell, “The two biggest handling problems with berries is breaking the cold chain and leaving product too long on unrefrigerated displays. Consumers are telling us that they are not refrigerating berries because they didn’t buy them that way.”

Giumarra’s Reilly agrees, adding, “Maintaining berry quality at store level is crucial for attractive displays and return customers. Investment in refrigerated displays and staff education is key to achieving this.”

“The challenge is trying to drive sales when customers can’t see the fruit. For this reason, we’re adding more refrigerated display units,” says New Season’s Fairchild.

“To help educate produce staff, we print ‘Always keep refrigerated to maintain freshness’ on the inside flap on each master carton and on the inside of each individual clamshell of berries to remind customers, too,” says Wish Farm’s Wishnatzki.

Frances Dillard, director of marketing for Driscoll’s, in Watsonville, CA, states, “Good cold chain management can minimize retailers’ shrink and allow them to offer customers the freshest, most flavorful berries with the longest possible shelf-life.”

## 8. Build A Berry Patch

“It’s definitely beneficial from a variety standpoint to merchandise all berries together in one display,” says Kings’ Kneeland. “You’ll get 30 to 50 percent of customers who will buy

more than strawberries. Having a ‘berry patch’ display drives impulse sales of other berries.”

Dillard agrees, adding, “All our research shows that merchandising berries together in a berry patch format will result in higher profitability from berry products. This includes organics as well as conventional berries. It makes it easier for shoppers to find what fits their different needs.”

“A retailer that has a beautiful berry display with attractive pricing that allows consumers to potentially mix and match will generate add-on sales,” contends California Giant’s Jewell.

“However, one potential disadvantage of a berry patch display could be cannibalization of one berry for another,” warns Wishnatzki. “The aim, though, is additional and incremental sales.”

“The recommended ratio of berries in the patch has traditionally been four strawberries, two blueberries and one each of raspberries and blackberries,” details Keith Mixon, president of Winter Haven, FL-based Sunnyridge Farm Inc. “However, flexibility is key. For example, if blackberries are in season, then there should be a greater amount of room in the display at that time.”

Doug Ranno, managing partner and chief operating officer of Colorful Harvest LLC, in Salinas, CA, remarks, “A mass patch display calls out ‘It’s berry season’ and encourages sales.”

“In the spring and summer,” recommends the CSC’s Christian, “expand both the main display and secondary berry displays in the bakery, dairy and check-out aisle.”

This season, Colorful Harvest is introducing an innovative way to cross-merchandise berries in the cereal aisle. Ranno details, “We call it the strawberry parking garage. It’s an alternative auxiliary display technique that hangs in the cereal aisle and holds strawberries. Research shows that secondary displays can increase berry sales by 16 to 19 percent.”

## 9. Educate Deliciously And Nutritiously

Consumers are interested in product usage along with the nutritional value of berries. Dillard states, “Retailers have partnered with us to create lifestyle programs that include everything from dedicated kiosks for nutritional information to in-store cooking demonstrations showing consumers how simple it is to make a delicious meal that includes berries.”

The FSGA has developed four one-minute looping videos for use at POS. Campbell details, “Clips feature our mascot character, Jammer, that tells everyone how to, for example, care for berries, prepare a smoothie, and he gives nutritional highlights. They are very clever

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**“We’ll often promote two varieties, such as strawberries and blueberries, and feature them in a massive display at the front of the store. When we do this, we still have our berry patch display back in produce as this is a consistent location where our consumers know they can always find berries.”**

— Paul Kneeland, Kings Super Markets LLC

and a real hit with kids, as well as adults. In addition, our printed recipe and nutritional brochures create another great opportunity when placed near the display.”

Berry packaging can be utilized to offer consumers new serving ideas and recipes for well-balanced meals that include berries. Reilly comments, “Using this valuable space directly on the product reaches and educates a greater audience and offers a potentially high graphic outlet to expand consumer knowledge about berries.”

California Giant’s Jewell agrees. “We are seeing great response to the use of QR codes on our packaging,” she says. “Consumers instantly scan the code and are directed to our mobile site that has recipes and usage ideas for our berries and other items. By accessing recipes at store level, consumers purchase their berries and other ingredients right there before leaving the store, resulting in an instant solution and larger ring at the register.”

“Point-of-sale messaging, print ads and retail magazines and newsletters are good ways retailers can communicate the nutrition message about blueberries,” suggests NABC’s Villata.

“Two new studies have shown eating strawberries can help lower blood cholesterol and lower the risk for esophageal cancer,” adds CSC’s Christian.

Finally, don’t forget to educate produce staff. FSGA’s Campbell asserts, “The produce area needs experienced staff that can answer consumer questions about where products come from, how to store and how to prepare them.”

**10. Promote Often**

Berries are ripe for holiday and seasonal promotions. One of the big berry promotional holidays at Kings is Valentine’s Day. Kneeland details, “We feature long-stem strawberries and in 10 of our stores we’ll set up a chocolate fountain where produce staff can dip the berries on the sales floor for sale. It’s a bit of theater that customers enjoy, and the chocolate-dipped strawberries make a nice product.”

Similarly, Valentine’s Day and Mother’s Day are two big promotional holidays for berries at

New Seasons Market. Fairchild adds, “Local is big, too. Oregon berries are a huge draw for our customers. We’ll do a big local berry promotion during the second week of June. Oregon strawberries are available for only a three-week window in mid to late July, and just having them in-store is a big event. At the end of this, all the local berries will be in season and we’ll bring in raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, boysenberries, marionberries and others. We’ll have up to 12 to 14 berries at one time in everything from open pints to half-flats of strawberries so customers can sample.”

“Retailers can boost berry sales by promoting berries the week before, during and after a holiday,” suggests Christian. “Promoting this way can increase berry sales 6.5 percent in pounds and 11 percent in dollars.”

Price promotions are most effective. Giumarra’s Reilly says, “Value-focused promotions during peak supply periods appear to be the most successful strategy to move volume and increase market share.”

California Giant’s Jewell reminds, “Demographics also play a huge role in how berries are promoted best at retail. Our retail partners know which stores perform the best with BOGOS and which do best with other methods.”

Mixed berry ads, or offering more than one type of berry on promotion at one time, can also increase sales. “At Kings, we’ll often promote two varieties, such as strawberries and blueberries, and feature them in a massive display at the front of the store,” Kneeland says. “When we do this, we still have our berry patch display back in produce as this is a consistent location where our consumers know they can always find berries.”

Beyond in-store and price promotions, many grower/shippers are helping retailers to sell more berries in a variety of other ways. “For example, we are using social media, cross promotions, contests, sweepstakes and events,” says Jewell. “We are doing our best to build our company brand with the consumer and get them to look for our berries when walking into their local grocer.”

**pb**



# Nine Ways To Stir Up Avocado Sales

With plentiful supplies for the 2012 season, produce departments can make the most of this increasingly popular item with frequent promotions and varied levels of ripeness and packaging options. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**



PHOTO COURTESY OF MISSION PRODUCE

**Cross-merchandising avocados with supplies for salsa, such as tomatoes, onions and tortilla chips will increase ring.**

**C**reative marketing programs, year-round availability and a reputation as a fun party food, have elevated avocados from specialty fruit to staple status in households nationwide. Consumers' love affair with this New World native spans all regions and seasons. For example, avocados contributed 2.1 percent of total produce sales for the 52 weeks ending November 16, 2011, according to the Nielsen Perishables Group, a West Dundee, IL-based fresh food consulting firm, with a high of 3.5 percent in the West and low of 1.3 percent in the East. Similarly, avocado dollar contributions for the past year ranged from a high of 28.4 percent in the third quarter to a low of 20.3 percent in the fourth quarter.

Robert Seegmiller, produce sales director for Harmons, a 15-store chain, headquartered in West Valley City, UT, says, "Avocados are a huge part of our business. Sales in the past five years have grown at least 25 percent. We've done this through secondary displays, contests and additional advertising."

Avocado volume and consumer demand are forecast to grow. Retailers can profit from this

opportunity by adopting a variety of Best Practice merchandising methods.

## 1. Year-Round Supply And Increasing Demand

Avocados ranked as the No. 11 best performing category in sales dollar volume last year at Grocery Outlet Inc., headquartered in Berkeley, CA, according to Scot Olson, director of produce and floral. "Actually, same store sales were down 4.76 percent last year due to higher retails driven by less volume and fewer promotional opportunities," he adds. "We're known as an extreme value retailer and it really diminished sales when we weren't able to offer a value price such as 2-for-\$1. Conversely, during the first three weeks of 2012, avocados were the sixth best performing category, up 58.8 percent driven by higher supplies mainly out of Chile and Mexico."

Giovanni Cavaletto, vice president of operations for Bloomington, CA-based Index Fresh Inc., in Bloomington, CA, says, "The shortage last year was due to smaller-sized crops in all three major growing areas — California, Chile and Mexico. In general, Chile and Mexico

dominate the market in the fall and winter, Mexico and California in the spring, and California and now Peru in the summer."

Smaller quantities of avocados are imported from New Zealand during October to December. This quantity was just over 600,000 pounds in 2010. Rob Wedin, vice president of fresh sales and marketing for Calavo Growers Inc., in Santa Paula, CA, explains, "The exchange rate and demand from Australia keep New Zealand from sending significant volume to the United States. The Dominican Republic exports a similar volume as New Zealand, and while they don't have as extensive acreage, they have a geographic advantage."

"Year-round supply has opened the door for promotions throughout the year, resulting in increased consumer demand," acknowledges Jan DeLyser, vice president of merchandising for the Irvine-based California Avocado Commission (CAC). "Aggregate volume reached the billion pound mark about 5 years ago, and has consistently been in the 1.2 to 1.4 billion range."

Demand continues to grow. Cavaletto notes, "The opportunity is clear by looking at other





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- ALPUM (Association of Grape Producers), [www.aalpum.com.mx](http://www.aalpum.com.mx)
- AMHPAC (Greenhouse Producers Association), [www.amhpac.org](http://www.amhpac.org)
- National Mango Promotion Board, [www.mango.org](http://www.mango.org); [www.mangoemex.com](http://www.mangoemex.com)
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of such an opportunity is the Sonora Spring Summit 2012 for the grape industry. This two-day event, starting on April 26, provides vineyard and packing tours, networking events and informational seminars related to Mexico's spring grapes.

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countries. Per-capita consumption of avocados is nine to 10 pounds in Chile and around four pounds in the United States.”

## 2. Offer Hass And More

Four SKUs of avocados are offered at Harmons, according to Seegmiller. “We carry a large bulk and small bagged avocado in conventional and a large bulk in organic in the Hass variety,” he details. “We also carry a Florida green skin avocado. Some customers like the lower fat content of the Florida variety, so we pick up additional sales by offering it.”

Doug Meyer, vice president of sales and marketing for Alvarado, CA-based West Pak Avocado Inc., reports, “Hass continues to be king for commercial production.”

“While there are over 500 varieties of avocado, the Hass variety occupies the majority shareholder position in the avocado category due to its shipability and rich creamy flavor,” says DeLyser. “There are a few minor varieties on the West Coast, such as the Fuerte and Reed, that may offer some incremental sales opportunities at certain times of the year on a more local basis. However, critical mass can be a factor in size and scope of promotions and Hass is the most popular variety of avocado grown worldwide.”

Lamb Hass is a variety grown in California that looks and eats like a Hass. It’s prized for its size. Individual fruit range from 12 to nearly 19 ounces. Lamb Hass represents less than 5 percent of the California avocado crop. This volume is not expected to rise as acreage remains stable. No Lamb Hass are imported. Bill Tarleton, director of marketing and

# “Avocados are a huge part of our business. Sales in the past five years have grown at least 25 percent. We’ve done this through secondary displays, contests and additional advertising.”

— Robert Seegmiller, Harmons

communications for Mission Produce Inc., in Oxnard, CA, reveals, “Lamb Hass has a short window from July through September and maybe into October.”

The University of California at Riverside has developed a new avocado variety called GEM. This variety harvests later than Hass and can hang on trees in cooler locales of California well into October, thus presenting a later marketing window. “GEM is Hass-like, but it has yet to attain critical volume,” says the CAC’s DeLyser.

Florida green-skinned avocados are available from June to December, and are marketed as SlimCados by Brooks Tropicals, based in Homestead, FL. Mary Ostlund, director of marketing, says, “Consumers know avocados have the ‘good’ type of fat. They also know that even the good fat can end up on the waist. That’s where SlimCados come to the rescue. Stocking SlimCados will trigger additional sales from impulse buys.”

Eduardo Serena, marketing director for the Avocado Producers & Exporting Packers Association of Michoacán (APEAM), in Mexico, reminds, “When comparing Hass and green skin varieties, sales per point of distribution are still significantly higher for Hass according to recent data from the Nielsen Perishables Group. This is an important point to keep in mind

when considering space allocation to Hass and item distribution.”

Organic avocados represented a small slice of the total category at 2.3 percent of dollar sales during the 52 weeks ending November 26, 2011, according to Perishables Group data. This is up nearly 10 percent from 2.1 percent the year prior.

## 3. Try A Two-Size Program

“There are great opportunities for a two-size avocado program, particularly if they are at least two sizes apart from each other,” says West Pak’s Meyer. “For example, merchandise size 48s and 70s or 84s, rather than 48s and 60s. We have experienced success with some retailers who have merchandised bulk and bag displays of different sizing, or even two bulk displays of different sizing. The biggest challenge in implementing a two-size program is managing inventory and sales rates of two avocado SKUs versus one.”

But meeting this challenge head-on can add to dollar sales and profits. Tarleton emphasizes, “Two sizes mean two price points and the opportunity to sell to two different customers.”

Adjusting the price gap between small and large fruit to greater than 40-cents on or off promotion can stimulate trial among lower-volume consumers, according to October 2011-presented research by APEAM titled, *Avocado Market Performance and Opportunities*.

The optimum offering of small versus large avocados depends on region and familiarity of shoppers with the fruit. Best Practice research provided by the CAC showed that a Western retailer in a developed market increased volume 6.8 percent, dollars 7.5 percent and gross profit 10.2 percent by offering a 50-50 mix of large and small avocados. Customers in this market were believed to have more uses for avocados, and therefore shopped for specific sizes. On the other hand, a Midwestern retailer in a new demand market increased volume 10.7 percent, sales by 12.2 percent and gross profits 13.2 percent with a mix of 75 percent small and 25 percent large fruit. In this case, the popularity of small fruit was thought to be driven by price.

Price is what dictates the size of avocados offered at Grocery Outlet, a limited SKU format store that carries one bulk and one bagged



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Avocado experts recommend promoting the category up to 40 times annually in developed markets.



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avocado product. Olson explains, “We prefer sizes that will give us the best value. This is 60s and 70s that we can sell at 2-for-\$1. Our customers do like larger fruit, but because a higher price point will diminish sales, we’ll only offer large fruit when volumes are such that we can sell them at 2-for-\$3.”

#### 4. Offer A Bagged Option

According to West Pak’s Meyer, bagged avocado sales are growing. “Some retailers are learning that bags can lure a new consumer into their avocado category, while keeping cannibalism of their bulk display at a minimum,” he states.

Stores offering bagged avocados have generated up to 24.3 percent more dollars and a 6.4 percent larger category contribution than stores without bags, according to CAC Best Practice research originally conducted in 2008.

Some avocados are sold in clamshells. “However,” says Calavo’s Wedin, “the consumer bag has not been matched. It’s an easy pack, it’s inexpensive, it’s versatile in

terms of the sizes and quantity of fruit that can be bagged, and there’s a header card for consumer information.”

Mission Produce’s Tarleton shares, “We’re looking at adding a 3-inch wide, 12-inch long back strap to our bags that will run top to bottom. The strap will feature a recipe with a four-color photo. We’ll be running a coupon deal with retailers in the spring with a QR code on the bag’s strap.”

#### 5. Handle Correctly

Maintaining the cold chain is one of the most important handling procedures for avocados. Index Fresh’s Cavaletto notes, “We offer backroom educational posters for proper avocado handling. Many people don’t realize avocados are subtropical fruit and should be kept at 40 degrees and above. Colder temperatures will damage the fruit.”

There are several things that retailers can do to keep avocados in optimum condition. APEAM’s Serena recommends, “Store boxes with hard, un-ripened fruit on the bottom and

stack boxes of soft ripened fruit on top. Generally speaking, firm, preconditioned fruit can be held for about three to five days and breaking to ripe fruit can be held for two to three days. Handle preconditioned avocados with extra care as they are very perishable and bruise easily,” he warns. “Finally, prior to moving fruit onto the produce shelf, check for and remove any damaged fruit.”

#### 6. Ripe Fruit Sells

Avocado volume increased an average of 11 percent nationally in stores that implemented a ripe program, according to 2008 research commissioned by the CAC. By region, this volume figure was 14.5 percent in the Southeast, 18.9 percent in the Midwest, 22.5 percent in the West and 30 percent in the Northeast.

Opinions do vary over the benefit of offering all ripe versus a mix of ripe and breaking fruit. At Harmons, Seegmiller offers “all ripe fruit because avocados are an impulse purchase.”

“Offering all ripe fruit gives you the most bang for your buck,” says Wedin. “Shoppers know the fruit is ripe because it has a ripe sticker so they don’t have to squeeze it, which can lead to increased shrink by bruising.”

Some retailers fear a full ripe program will lead to increased shrink. However, according to information collected by the CAC, there may be an initial increase in shrink upon initiation of a ripe program. This increase is reversed once produce managers understand the nuances of proper execution, such as not ordering extra units in order to allow in-store ripening.

Yet, many retailers find it advantageous to offer a range or ripeness. Grocery Outlet’s Olson says, “Ideally we’d like to display three stages of ripeness: green, breakers and ripe. It’s tough to manage, but it’s a best-of-both-worlds approach.”

CAC’s DeLyser agrees. “Some consumers shop for today or tomorrow, while others may shop once a week and prefer avocados that are ready to eat, as well as avocados that will ripen over a few days,” she acknowledges. “Having breaking avocados in addition to ripe avocados satisfies both. Studies have shown that retailers increase sales by as much as 4-to-1 with a dedicated ripe program.”

#### 7. Display And Cross Display

Avocado consumption continues to grow and household penetration is on the rise, “yet display space has not increased at the same rate,” laments West Pak’s Meyer.

Expanding shelf space from 6.6 to 11 feet

## Avocado Outlook 2012

Avocado prices are projected to be lower due to a forecast of more plentiful supplies in 2012. Rob Wedin, vice president of fresh sales and marketing for Calavo Growers Inc., in Santa Paula, CA, says, “The United States is the primary driver in the market and supplies out of California are forecast to be up 20 percent over last year. In addition, Chile should be slightly up and Mexico significantly up this year as more certified acres become available.”

More specifically, the aggregate projection for avocado volume in the United States for 2012 by the Hass Avocado Board as of January 13, 2012, is 1.4 billion pounds, up from about 1.2 billion pounds in 2011. By country, Mexico is forecast at 680 million pounds, California at 390 million pounds, Chile at 170 million pounds and Peru at 77 million pounds, with an additional 83 million pounds from a variety of other countries.

Giovanni Cavaletto, vice president of operations for Index Fresh Inc., in Bloomington, CA, reports, “This is the second season Peru has exported its avocados to the United States, but the first full season. We may see some fruit as early as April, but the bulk will come in June and run through September — essentially the same time period as California.”

“The Peruvian fruit is a welcome addition to the market,” says Bill Tarleton, director of marketing and communications for Mission Produce Inc., in Oxnard, CA. “We typically have a demand-exceeds-supply situation especially in the summer.”

Wedin recognizes that this season will be a learning experience in terms of Peruvian fruit. “It will be interesting to see how the season plays out in terms of quality, window span and fruit sizing,” he notes.

In the future, Eduardo Serena, marketing director for the Avocado Producers & Exporting Packers Association of Michoacán (APEAM), in Mexico, acknowledges, “Peru is not expected to have much impact on the existing market and will only help fill in inventory during California’s peak season.” Yet, Peru’s plan to become the world’s largest avocado exporter in the next eight to 10 years may help drive consumption in the United States to the 2 billion pound mark within this time frame. **pb**



can potentially push avocado contribution from 1.3 to 2.3 percent of total produce sales, according to October 2011-presented APEAM-funded research.

Avocados are creatively cross-merchandised and sold in secondary displays at Harmons. Seegmiller details, “We’ll display avocados with other produce items such as lemons, limes, sweet onions and tomatoes. We’ll also build secondary displays at the entrance to our stores, especially during winter promotions with the Chilean Avocado Importers Association (CAIA).”

Similarly, at Grocery Outlet, bagged avocados are displayed on a clip strip in the grocery aisle next to chips.

“Chips make a wonderful tie-in with avocados,” adds CAIA marketing director, Maggie Bezar.

Recently, CAIA ran a promotion at Vons, a 325-store retailer based in Arcadia, CA, from October 18 to November 1, 2011, where football-themed bins stocked with avocados were displayed next to Tostitos brand chips at 293 of the chain’s locations. The bins featured QR codes that customers could scan to enter to win tickets and a trip to the 2012 Tostitos Fiesta Bowl or a \$500 Vons gift card. In addition, affixed to each bin were 50 coupons that encouraged customers to buy two Chilean Hass avocados and save \$1 on a bag of Tostitos tortilla chips. The coupon also provided a recipe for Super Quick Guacamole Dip.

CAC’s DeLyser adds, “Retailers have had success merchandising avocados next to the value-added salad case. Some retailers have put a fixture that attaches to the salad case and merchandised ripe avocados. Other cross promotional and secondary display opportunities exist with seafood, beef and beverages.”

## 8. Educate Beyond Guacamole

New and light avocado users consistently say they would purchase more avocados if they knew how to select them and judge ripeness. APEAM’s Serena reports, “Medium and light users say they would purchase more avocados if alternate uses are suggested, such as adding avocados to salads, sandwiches and soups. Retailers can educate consumers in store through POS cards that provide new usage ideas.”

Grocery Outlet’s Olson says, “TV cooking shows, as well as recipes and other POS available from the avocado commissions, have been

a great help in providing customers with new ideas for cooking with avocados.”

Indeed, organizations such as the CAC, APEAM, CAIA, Hass Avocado Board and Avocados from Mexico collectively spend some \$40 million annually to promote avocados and provide cooking suggestions. For example, CAIA has enlisted the help of celebrity chef, author and television host, Ingrid Hoffmann, who has demonstrated dishes such as Avocado and Corn Tostaditas and Farmer’s Market Roasted Vegetable Salad in Avocado Bowls.

On another educational front, DeLyser notes, “For years, one of the biggest challenges was to dispel inaccurate nutrition myths about avocados. The industry has done a great job of this, and now, many consumers actually buy avocados because they are good for you. Continuing to spread the good news about

**“Ideally we’d like to display three stages of ripeness: green, breakers and ripe. It’s tough to manage, but it’s a best-of-both-worlds approach.”**

— Scot Olson, Grocery Outlet Inc.



PHOTO COURTESY OF MISSION PRODUCE

avocado nutrition is the biggest education opportunity for the category.”

## 9. Harness The Power Of Holidays And Beyond

Twenty-seven percent of avocados were sold during a major holiday in 2010, according to data supplied by the Hass Avocado Board (HAB). Of these holidays, Super Bowl ranked first with 3.1 percent of sales.

Grocery Outlet’s Olson shares, “We partner with CAIA each January to promote avocados for Super Bowl with excellent results. This year, sales of Chilean avocados were up over 40 percent in the first two weeks of the year. That’s because of good supply, the ability to promote at a good value and a sales contest that tied into the NFL playoffs and the run up to Super Bowl. We had one store in South San Jose build a massive display with over 70 cases of avocados right inside the front of the store. It was really eye-catching. The produce manager built mock goal posts over the top of the display, added balloon footballs and other POS and cross-merchandised the avocados with items like chips, lemons and limes.”

Second to Super Bowl, Cinco de Mayo represented 2.6 percent of avocado sales in 2010, according to HAB data, with New Year’s

third at 2.3 percent of annual avocado sales. Interestingly, the Fourth of July, Memorial Day, Labor Day, St. Patrick’s Day, Father’s Day, Easter and Valentine’s Day each moved some 2 percent of annual avocado sales.

“Super Bowl and Cinco de Mayo continue as strong promotional opportunities for avocados,” recognizes CAC’s DeLyser. “However, the CAC is increasing our focus on traditional American summer holidays, particularly the Fourth of July, as must-have occasions for California avocados. For produce, the opportunity to feature avocados for summer picnics and entertaining is exponential, because when shoppers purchase for avocado recipes, they generally purchase tomatoes, onions, chilies, limes and other items that create a great produce ring.”

“However,” says Olson, “while holidays are impactful, we experience strong sales week in and week out when pricing is good and we can build big displays and promote often.”

“Best Practice research indicates that avocados should be promoted up to 40 times per year in developed markets,” reports APEAM’s Serena. “Promote avocados seven to nine times in third and fourth quarters and 10 to 11 times in first and second quarters to achieve optimal sales. Run promotion discounts from 11 to 30 percent to optimize dollars and volume,” he details. “Occasionally, feature multiple avocado items in the same promotion such as small and large size avocados at different price points. Finally, whenever possible, combine circular promotions with in-store price reductions.” **pb**



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# Thinking Snacks Outside The Box

The competition for a big sports score in the snack category reaches the pinnacle in February with the Super Bowl. So what's a producer or retailer to do post football season? **BY MEREDITH AUERBACH**



PHOTO COURTESY OF SUN-MAID GROWERS OF CALIFORNIA

Many companies provide attractive, pre-assembled shippers that can be moved directly to the store floor.

**T**he stats as noted in *The Wall Street Journal* are overwhelming: Super Bowl Sunday is the second biggest eating occasion after Thanksgiving, with estimates of well over a billion chicken wings consumed, 4.4 million pizzas ordered in and, marking top spot for produce, 143 million avocados turned into guacamole. More modestly, even carrot consumption increases 25 percent for the day.

We're now well past Super Bowl Sunday. The numbers are far smaller, but snacking tied to sports viewing and participation still constitutes major opportunities to increase sales of dried fruits and nuts in the produce department throughout the year. These events are easy to take advantage of, profitable, and as such, constitute low hanging fruit. Looking toward the future, changes in consumer tastes, commitment to better nutrition, packaging and easy availability continue to evolve, making snacking events now as important as meals.

For retailers to follow the sports calendar and see surges in nuts, vegetable trays, and dried fruits is a traditional tried-and-true success tactic. Partnerships with snack-packers cooperate on ads, reward produce managers for display contests, and bring items to the immediate attention of shoppers.

Taking the sales message to a higher level can help retailers connect more strongly with consumers, especially women, and reinforce the product tie to concepts such as team loyalty, fast energy, calorie control and anti-oxidant support. It's a wide spectrum giving full range to retailers who understand their audiences.

## Match The Product To The Times And Events

Few snacks have stronger sports association than in-shell peanuts. "Hampton Farms has enjoyed a long-standing partnership with Major League Baseball, and our 12-oz. individual team bags give local stores a way to build on team loyalty," comments Tom Nolan, vice president of sales and marketing for the Severn, NC-based peanut company. "It guarantees high visibility and sales from March through at least September. It also lets retailers provide an outstanding value in the form of a bigger bag at a lower price, compared to what's available at the stadium."

Another snack nut, in-shell pistachios, takes a different tack, but one equally well suited to consumer interests. Marc Seguin, vice president of marketing for Paramount Farms Inc., headquartered in Los Angeles CA, offers, "We grow and sell Wonderful Pistachios as the

social nut. Our target is large groups of consumers, and while we promote and sell our brand in 12 major league stadiums, we also know that a big bowl of pistachios in front of the TV or taking them to the kids' soccer games is a tactile, engaging snack experience. At the same time, what we call the 'pistachio principle' comes into play," he continues. "Nuts in the shell means people eat them more slowly and with greater awareness. The pile of empty shells is a signal of how much you've consumed, leading to more mindful snacking."

Sure enough, mindful snacking has been identified as one of the Top 10 food trends for 2012, so it is an idea that retailers can build upon. Showing accelerating growth, mixes of nuts, seeds and dried fruits are gaining greater prominence as consumers respond to messages from health professionals and the government, to what they see on Food Network and the recipes and celebrity profiles that fill print media. As Stephanie Blackwell, founder and president of Stratford, CT-based Aurora Products, comments, "Our target audience is people who want to eat healthy, and our best snack mix is Cranberry Health Mix with almonds, walnuts, pepitas and dried cranberries. One key to our success is our snack pack bag that sells in many supermarkets for \$1 for a serving of 1.35 ounces," she details. "We've found that



**“We’ve found that people active in sports want a container, such as a smaller pouch bag that can be resealed or a larger, multiple-serving resealable plastic dome. The variation in size is important.”**

— Stephanie Blackwell, Aurora Products

people active in sports want a container, such as a smaller pouch bag that can be resealed or a larger, multiple-serving resealable plastic dome. The variation in size is important.” The sales message to retailers? Make sure your shoppers know what is available.

Blackwell continues, “This category is growing, but the competition is intense. Beyond our branded sales and private label business, we continue to look at alternate channels to sell our products. Venues such as vending in schools or sales in airports help build preferences that carry over to the produce department.”

### Follow The Numbers

In the produce department, sales of dried fruits, nuts and mixes tend to rise and fall on visibility. They still are, more often than not, impulse purchases. They can also be good profit items deserving of attention as retailers seek good ad returns.

As an example, Joe Tamble, vice president of sales for Kingsburg, CA-based Sun-Maid Growers of California, encourages retailers to support dried fruit and nuts as both a sports and anytime snack. “We know from IRI that Sun-Maid raisin sales increase by 60 percent due to displays,” he reports. “Combine a feature ad with displays and sales rise by 260 percent. Over 20 percent of total dried fruit category dollars are generated from displays. You can’t beat the shelf-life of the category, and most companies provide attractive shippers already assembled and filled to help control labor input as well. For retailers, it’s an easy way to drive impulse purchase and increase market basket size.”

“Paramount Farms has seen growth of pistachio sales 20 to 30 percent in the third year of a three-year campaign,” reveals Seguin, “which involves \$15 million in TV and interactive participation with the *Angry Birds* characters and game. This is real support to drive sales and continue to shine the spotlight on pistachios.”

A decade ago, promoting dried fruits such as prunes or figs as sports or anytime snacks might have drawn a raised eyebrow, but no more. New names, innovation with added flavors, single-serve packaging and strong

nutrition stories are pushing these choices closer to center-stage. Linda Cain, vice president of marketing and retail sales for the Fresno CA-based Valley Fig Growers, notes, “Just over the past year, dried fig sales are up 8 percent, indicating better consumer awareness and acceptance. After all, for most people, introduction to figs comes via a Fig Newton in childhood. We are also able to market with the Sun-Maid label for a stronger brand presence. A 2-oz. individual pack of eight to 10 figs offers 25 percent of the Recommended Daily Intake for fiber for just 160 calories.”

If you accept the idea that good food is seldom the cheapest food, especially when it comes to snacks, growth for nuts and dried fruit is good news for growers, packers and produce departments. Tamble points out, “Many retailers have health-focused initiatives that are important to their core values. We offer Sun-Maid raisins, dried fruits and value-added products, such as yogurt raisins, as partners to explore emerging trends.”

There are some retail prices that seem to resonate with shoppers. Aurora Products’ Blackwell shares, “We’ve found best results when large containers are under \$10.”

For pistachios, Paramount’s Seguin identifies the sweet spot as “\$3.99 for eight ounces or 2-for-\$7 on promotion.”

Cain names, “A range of \$1.99 to \$3.99,” to move figs.

The repositioning of prunes, now often called dried plums, has helped Sunsweet increase its appeal, especially to younger consumers. “Our newest product, called Plum Amazins, a diced, non-sticky dried plum with fewer calories than raisins or cranberries, encourages consumers to snack on the fruit or to use them with other dried fruits or nuts to make trail mixes, yogurt toppings, cereal toppings, salad toppings, vegetable toppings, even pizza toppings,” details Jeff McLemore, marketing director of dried fruit for Sunsweet Growers, located in Yuba City, CA. “We



PHOTO ABOVE COURTESY OF SUN-MAID, PHOTO TO THE LEFT COURTESY OF HAMPTON FARMS



continue to pack prunes because that’s still a name of choice for many older consumers. Moreover, our 60-calorie snack packs and our line of Essence Prunes flavored with lemon, lime or cherry have changed the game for prunes as a take-along snack for viewing or participating in active sports.” He continues, “If retailers provide consumers a unique shopping

experience and quick, on-point help, we know sales increase. You can translate that idea with promoting products together in-store through adjacencies or signage the says ‘Great with \_\_\_\_\_!’”

On the snacking front, taste always wins. Jane Asmar, vice president of sales and marketing for Fowler CA-based National Raisin Company, notes, “We supply retailers and manufacturers with a full-line of dried fruit products in both single-serve bags, boxes and resealable pouches. The choices available to retailers and consumers are huge — raisins, dried blueberries and pomegranate chips, cranberries, dates and figs — customized blends can be unique to the company and regions.”

Nudging people away from the fried and salty tastes of traditional snacks, especially those associated with big sporting events tied to football, baseball and basketball, takes time. But the times are on the side of dried fruits and nuts to bring innovative flavors, blends and access to healthy eating with great taste. **pb**

# FREE ENTERPRISE IS THE BACKBONE OF AGRICULTURE



**A**fter observing the growth of apple sales in the early 1950s primarily due to the addition of poly bag units, New York State peach growers were anxious to see how this type of packaging might improve sales of their product. It was natural that the director of the prior apple marketing research program, Cornell University Ag Economics Professor Max

Brunk, would be in charge.

It became my good fortune for part of their few thousand-dollar investment to provide a full financial assistantship for conducting the peach research study. For decades, this has been the primary way private industry funded agricultural research through state land-grant universities. In recent years, PMA has provided several million dollars to help fund activities by the Center of Produce Safety at the University of California, Davis.

Additionally, a number of university plant breeding programs have patented new varieties with sales open to everyone, or restricted to a select geographic area, or leasing the new varieties to an organization with control over distribution of the plant. In no instances has there been an attempt to remake the product-wide supply chain, as more consumer-acceptable items are developed.

Expanding organizations recognizing their own success, and willing to take the risk, have diversified into distinctly different geographical and seasonal producing areas. A prime example is Driscoll Strawberry Growers, among the first to increase operations in Mexico and then move into Florida. This latter move served to stimulate Florida growers to work with plant breeders to develop new varieties, and as success compounded, additional large California grower/shippers began operating in the area. Now more Florida berries than ever are being sold to East Coast consumers during the winter and early spring. Several shippers' sales season has expanded as they can directly move into the early Southeast blueberry shipping season enhancing the berry category year-round, all the result of free enterprise activity.

Increasingly, major grower/shippers are aligning themselves with other producers worldwide. Instead of having a seasonal sales team, the sales contact with retailers and wholesalers continues uninterrupted throughout much of the year. The continued growth and consolidation of the 10 largest retailers, as well as expansion of dominant regional operators, makes year-round contact almost a must between buyers and sellers.

In other instances, expansion has been gradual, starting with production of only one or two items, but as growth continued until it reached an optimum level, it became apparent the business plan was ready for critical adjustment. A good example is Oregon-based Curry and Company, which has experienced dramatic growth over the past two decades as a result of a specific culture and developing partnerships with excellent producers.

Now onions and potatoes, primarily russets, are available year-round. Blueberries, formerly available from the Northwest, now have nationwide availability, and imports are handled from the Southern Hemisphere. A recent addition is a partnership with Georgia Vidalia onion grower Gerrald Farms, which also produces carrots and has led to joining with a carrot grower in North Carolina to provide approximately five months of East Coast availability.

The capability of the free enterprise agricultural industry to develop on its own has been amazing. Granted it has never been perfect and is irregular in its progress. Just look at all the progress made with only limited federal government services and without interference with the supply chain.

However, as Charles J. Sykes explains in his recently released book, *A Nation of Moochers*, this title "perfectly captures the new culture of bailouts and irrespon-

sible grasping where more Americans are relying on the efforts of others rather than their own." Specifically, more government and less self-reliance is the path to comfortable achievements and has become easier to access as big government finds the ways to encroach on all forms of activity.

One has to wonder where the federal governments' providing over three million dollars of taxpayer money to a group of eastern universities to research and develop year-round eastern-grown broccoli supply chain will lead. After all, growers working with seed companies and individual universities for several decades have been steadily expanding Eastern broccoli production within the format of the free enterprise system. This new scope, cost and encroachment is dramatically different from the apple and peach marketing research over a half century earlier, which would lead to dramatic changes from shipper to retail produce department operations.

John B. Taylor, Stanford economics professor, states, "Government policies must adhere to the principals of economic freedom on which the country was founded. These principals are that families, individuals and entrepreneurs must be free to decide what to produce, what to buy and sell and how to help others. Their decisions are based on the rule of law, with strong incentives derived from the market system and with a clearly limited role for government." Free enterprise 101. **pb**

**The capability of the free enterprise agricultural industry to develop on its own has been amazing...Just look at all the progress made with only limited federal government services and without interference with the supply chain.**

**By Dave Diver**

Dave Diver is the former vice president of produce at Hannaford, and a regular columnist for PRODUCE BUSINESS.





# INCREASINGLY COMPLEX SOURCING FOR WESTERN EUROPEAN RETAILERS



**W**hat will sourcing look like in 2020? This was the theme of the Fresh Produce Forum organized at the opening day of Fruit Logistica trade fair held in Berlin, February 8-10.

## Fresh Produce Suppliers In The Driver's Seat

Sourcing will definitely become more complex for western European food retailers.

This could lead to more direct sourcing, leaving less room for the middlemen in the value chain. Although the number of retailers sourcing directly from (offshore) growers is likely to increase, the rising complexity in sourcing will also create interesting opportunities for suppliers (importers, marketers/distributors) of fresh produce. They are in the driver's seat to unburden retailers or to help them increase the profitability of their fresh produce department by supplying a more profitable product offer.

## Sourcing To Become More Complex For Retailers

The complexity of sourcing a desired product, also called supply risk, will increase for various reasons, including shifting product flows, changing retailer requirements, retailers' need for differentiation, and increasing general business risks.

Some fruits and vegetables will become more difficult to source in western Europe due to growing demand from emerging markets and declining local production. In the last decade, growth of average annual imports of fruit has ranged from 5 to 10 percent in large import countries such as Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France. At the same time, large emerging markets, such as China and Russia, have shown double-digit annual growth rates in fruit imports. Western Europe will no longer be the target market of choice for exporting countries in the Southern Hemisphere. Emerging markets are increasingly attractive destinations for fruit exports. For South African grapes, this shift in product flows is already evident.

In part, retailers create their own sourcing difficulties, as they continually raise their requirements of suppliers. Large retail chains cannot risk bad publicity on ethical and safety issues such as child labor, food safety and maximum residue limits (MRLs). The rise of social media has accelerated this development. The *E. coli* outbreak in Germany last year has shown that food safety is still a very topical issue. As a result, food retailers need to become increasingly selective regarding suppliers.

For food retailers, fresh produce is one of the most profitable categories in the store. Gross margins have been kept at relatively high levels by increased efficiency in the value chain and the introduction of more

value-added products, such as fresh-cut fruits and vegetables, packaged products and exotics. In order to keep fresh produce items from entering a negative price spiral (as happened with bananas in the United Kingdom and Germany), food retailers need to search for more differentiation and added value. Typically, products that provide differentiation and added value (e.g., fresh-cut products, snack tomatoes for children, or a good offer on berries) are more difficult to source than the more commoditized products.

Difficult trading circumstances will also increase the risk and volatility in the value chain. A number of factors are nourishing the sense of volatility and uncertainty prevailing in most of Europe and abroad: unpredictable economic circumstances, volatile raw material prices and exchange rates, the impact of government budget cuts on the economy, credit availability and the weak financial position of many countries.

## Retailers Reconsidering Sourcing Strategies

As supply risks become more of an issue in fresh produce, food retailers are reconsidering their sourcing strategies. In order to control the complexity in the value chain, suppliers and retailers will become more interdependent and relationships will inevitably become more long term. Furthermore, direct sourcing is on the increase. In 2011, leading European food retailers such as Tesco and REWE announced new sourcing strate-

gies, which included more direct purchasing. It remains to be seen whether these large food retailers with complex sourcing structures will succeed in their mission to cut out intermediaries. Some will eventually realize that they do not want to be bothered by all the difficulties in the complicated fresh produce value chain.

## Suppliers To Focus On Providing Services Or Supplying A Differentiating Offer

The suppliers that are able to assist retailers by offering tailor-made services (storage, ripening, packaging, shipping, forecasting, etc.) and the suppliers that are able to help retailers to differentiate themselves from competitors are in a favorable position to capitalize on the development of increasing complexity. At the Fruit Logistica trade fair, various promising initiatives were shown: new concepts such as an apple exclusively targeted at teenagers; an importer offering added value by ripening mangos and avocados; a company offering a complete range of organic products year-round, packaged 100 percent-natural fruit snacks (that taste like candy); and marketer/distributors with extensive specialized knowledge and expertise in certain delicate products such as berries or mushrooms. When companies have these unique selling points, they are certain to remain indispensable links in the fresh produce value chain.

pb

**Although the number of retailers sourcing directly from (offshore) growers is likely to increase, the rising complexity in sourcing will also create interesting opportunities for suppliers (importers, marketers/distributors) of fresh produce.**

By Cindy van Rijswick

Industry Analyst Fruit, Vegetables and Floriculture, Rabobank International, Utrecht, The Netherlands





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# TURN YOUR MARKETING INTO AN **AWARDING** EXPERIENCE

Right now, and on through June 4, 2012, we're taking entries for the **24th Annual Marketing Excellence Awards Program**, presented by **PRODUCE BUSINESS**. The awards recognize excellence in marketing in each of six categories: retailers, restaurants, wholesalers, shippers, commodity organizations and allied service/product providers. Print, broadcast and other media are eligible to win.

**To participate, send us the following for each entry:**

1. Your name, company, address and phone.

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2. Type of business.

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3. Names and dates of promotion (must have taken place between June 1, 2011 and June 1, 2012).

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4. Promotion objectives.

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5. Description of promotion.

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6. Promotion results (sales or traffic increases, media attention). What made this program a success?

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7. All support materials used in the promotion – such as POP, ads, posters, TV commercials.

**High-resolution images to illustrate the promotion are encouraged. (Please do not send any produce)**

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# CAN CPG MARKETING TACTICS BE USED IN THE PRODUCE INDUSTRY?



**W**e owe it to the health of this nation to vie for share of stomach. The argument has been made before that, in terms of marketing, the produce industry really can't compete with the big CPG (consumer products goods) companies. Frito Lay, Coca-Cola, and Nabisco, to name a few, have big budgets that make it difficult for our industry to even make a dent. Just because they have big money to

spend doesn't mean that we are left behind. We can compete, we should compete and we NEED to compete.

Marketing is sometimes put on the back burner at produce companies because there are other areas that tend to take precedence. If you look at CPG companies, they tend to take a balanced approach to getting their products to consumers, and marketing plays a key role. Produce companies have embraced marketing mix principles at varying levels. The difference I propose is that we all make a concerted effort to do so on a daily basis. The prominent marketer E. Jerome McCarthy proposed a Four P classification in 1960, which has since been widely used by marketers throughout the world; Product, Price, Promotion and Place.

Let's take a look at the 4 Ps of marketing...

**PRODUCT:** Great news here! We grow and distribute the best, most nutritious products available. We contribute to the health and wellbeing of consumers. Consequently, marketing our products should be relatively easy when we focus on "fresh," and use minimal packaging to highlight the product's natural attributes. For example, the rating system NuVal, where all food products are rated on nutritional value from 1-100 is gaining in popularity, and fruits and vegetables score very well on their system. In addition, new produce products can be a driver in this area. In terms of packaging, increased marketing will improve our dialogue to consumers, reminding them at point of purchase why these products are good for their health. These messages are the calling cards of our industry.

**PRICE:** Mother Nature can have an effect here, leaving variability not found in products marketed by CPG companies. Despite the methods employed to mitigate this, the climate still greatly affects the quality of our final products. In many produce items, the wholesale and retail prices can fluctuate widely from month to month and year to year. These changes can have the tendency to make us think that price is the only determiner to volume changes. We need to have the disci-

pline to analyze changes in price to help determine the optimal pricing that ensures an adequate grower margin and an attractive price to the consumer. We deal with issues out of our control, but at the end of the day, we offer consumers the highest quality produce in the world. I strongly believe that consumers recognize your collective efforts whenever they shop. Nothing tops fresh and natural!

**PROMOTION:** So how do you communicate the value of your products? (This area includes all methods of communication.) Frequently, a promotion implies a discount — offering a reduction in retail price. A simple price reduction isn't the only way to promote a product. Produce is a significant natural source of vitamins and minerals, high in fiber, and packed with anti-oxidants; these are the calling cards of the fruits of our labor. These calling cards need to be at the forefront of our sales and marketing approach. When packaging is being developed or revised, and POS is being designed, use your calling cards. Don't forget your websites. This is a perfect venue to let consumers know more about what you have to offer. Word of mouth is also a tactic in the area of promotion. Timely examples of this are the

growth in kale and the continued strength of the entire organic industry. Embrace social media where appropriate. This is an area where you can talk directly to your consumer advocates to spur that word-of-mouth advertising. It isn't expensive and can pay big dividends to your business.

**PLACE:** The envy of many, produce is always prominently displayed in every market where it

is offered. The typical grocery store guides you through the entrance and into the fresh foods before you can view anything else. There are countless examples of CPG companies' attempts to get into "our area." It is an area that speaks to consumers. It oozes freshness and health, a huge plus to consumers. Our retail partners do an enviable job of putting our products in the best light. The produce department is frequently an area where retailers like to distinguish themselves. We can increase our presence here with great merchandising. Some good examples of this are value added fruit and vegetable sets.

In summary, produce companies are embracing the 4 Ps of marketing, but we can collectively do better. Our industry has the resilience, intelligence and drive to sell more produce to a consumer looking for healthier options. We just need to be persistent. We sometimes focus on one area of the marketing mix and let the chips fall where they may in terms of others. The opportunity is to embrace all four everyday; we have the basic building blocks of marketing great products at our fingertips. Let's get out there and do more. Everyone will benefit.

pb

**We deal with issues out of our control, but at the end of the day, we offer consumers the highest quality produce in the world. I strongly believe that consumers recognize your collective efforts whenever they shop.**

**By Phil Gruszka, Owner of Gruszka Consulting**

Phil Gruszka recently opened his own consulting firm, Gruszka Consulting, utilizing his 25-plus years of marketing and sales experience in the food and beverage industry, including three years internationally. In addition to his previous position as vice president of marketing at Grimmway Enterprises Inc. for eight years, he also has a wealth of traditional CPG marketing experience through Anheuser Bush, Ralston Purina and Sara Lee. For more information on Gruszka Consulting, please contact the firm at (661)345-5457 or gruszkaconsulting@gmail.com



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As Union Pacific celebrates its 150th anniversary this

year, it is a fitting time to honor the company’s role in connecting America to the global economy. The photo above shows a Pacific Fruit Express railcar from the 1940s. Workers are loading ice blocks of ice into the car to maintain the necessary cold chain as it transports fresh produce cross-country. The wooden refrigerated rail cars helped produce growers expand to markets beyond their immediate region by offering cold-storage shipping via rail. Today, Union Pacific’s refrigerated boxcars use the latest technology, such as global positioning satellite monitoring, to track the rail cars’ trip progress and to monitor temperature, fresh-air exchange and diagnostics. Union Pacific’s produce trains travel from the West Coast to the East Coast in five days.

The *Blast from the Past* is a regular feature of *PRODUCE BUSINESS*. We welcome submissions of your old photos, labels or advertisements along with suggested captions. Please send materials to: Editor, *PRODUCE BUSINESS*, P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425, or e-mail [info@producebusiness.com](mailto:info@producebusiness.com)





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