

# producebusiness

MARKETING • MERCHANDISING • MANAGEMENT • PROCUREMENT

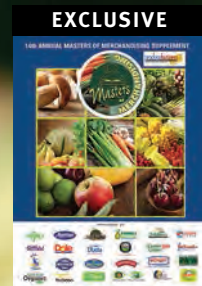
**30**  
YEARS  
INITIATING  
INDUSTRY  
IMPROVEMENT



THE 28<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MYSTERY SHOPPER REPORT

## Education Is Key

SEE HOW PRODUCE STAFFERS USE EDUCATION, OR LACK THEREOF, TO ADVISE OUR MYSTERY SHOPPERS.



EXCLUSIVE  
MASTERS OF  
MERCHANDISING



SUPPLEMENT  
FLORAL BUSINESS

INSIDE:

THE PUNDIT ANNOUNCES A NEW INDUSTRY RESOURCE  
COSENTINO'S FOOD STORE • WASTE PART II • WHOLESALE MOMENTUM  
SOUTHERN RETAIL SCENE • HYDROPONICS • TRANSPORTATION  
PACKAGING AND TECHNOLOGY • PALLETS • AVOCADOS • BERRIES  
SALAD BLENDS • KALAMAZOO CULINARY • BULK NUTS • JUICING CRAZE  
CPMA BOOTH REVIEW



# GET UP AND GROW!<sup>TM</sup> WITH DOLE<sup>®</sup> BERRIES

We can't think of anything more delicious than juicy DOLE<sup>®</sup> Berries. Delight in providing the very best berries to your consumers with Dole.



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# PerishableNews.com

Your online source bringing you fresh news and ideas for success in the Produce Department... and beyond!

The screenshot shows the PerishableNews.com website. At the top, there's a search bar and a navigation menu with links for Home, About, Archives, Sponsorship, Contact Us, and Submit / Suggest. A 'Sign Up' button is also present. Below the navigation is a 'Produce' section with a featured article titled 'Natural Delights Introduces Country's First Pitted Medjool Dates'. To the right of the article is a promotional image for 'NATURAL DELIGHTS' featuring a bowl of pitted medjool dates. Below the article is a 'Print Article' button and social media sharing options. A horizontal navigation bar below the article lists categories: Bakery, Dairy, Deli, Floral, Meat & Poultry, Produce, Seafood, and Retail & Foodservice. Below this are several promotional banners for 'Global Food Safety Services...', 'GIANT Colder is Cooler', 'Del Monte Eat Healthy. Live Healthy.', 'World Famous Farming', and 'THE NEW YORK PRODUCE SHOW AND CONFERENCE'. At the bottom, there's another article titled 'The Time Is Ripe For Fresh BC Blueberries This Season' and a 'Reader Legend' box with categories like Original Story, Sibling Story, Third-Party Story, and Public Relations. A 'Duda' banner for 'FOOD AND SERVICE ON A PLATTER' is also visible.

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PerishableNews.com is an outlet for news about all the perishable categories typically featured in a retail store:

**PRODUCE, DAIRY, DELI, BAKERY, MEAT & POULTRY, SEAFOOD, FLORAL**

Plus we cover top-level happenings in Retail and Foodservice that are of special interest to a perishable food executive at a supermarket or other retail chain and at a foodservice chain operation or foodservice distributor.

THIS MONTH'S WINNER



**AARON PAPAZIAN**  
President  
Papazian Worldwide  
Distribution, Inc.  
Salinas, CA

Aaron Papazian is the third generation descendant of produce brokers. In 1978, when he was old enough to drive, he began helping his father, Arnold, with the family brokerage company in Salinas, CA.

"My father wanted to make his own name, so he came to Salinas in 1958 [from San Francisco] and started his own business," explains Papazian. "I started working for my father as an inspector/bird dog when

I wasn't in school."

Because of his training under the tutelage of his father, Papazian knew his future was in the produce broker business. "I opted for the work experience instead of college, and I worked for my father for 20-plus years until he retired in 2000."

Papazian moves a wide variety of commodities for a mix of receiver/jobbers, wholesalers and chain store clientele. Lettuce and mixed vegetables are popular items for his business. During the spring and summer, he also focuses on stone fruits, grapes, melons and strawberries. "In the winter, I sell produce out of Nogales, AZ — so that would be your Mexican vegetables as well."

**How To Win!** To win the PRODUCE BUSINESS Quiz, the first thing you have to do is enter. The rules are simple: Read through the articles and advertisements in this issue to find the answers. Fill in the blanks corresponding to the questions below, and either cut along the dotted line or photocopy the page, and send your answers along with a business card or company letterhead to the address listed on the coupon. The winner will be chosen by drawing from the responses received before the publication of our May issue of PRODUCE BUSINESS. The winner must agree to submit a color photo to be published in that issue.

**WIN AN ITALIAN TOMATO PRESS**

Perfect for any produce enthusiast, this Italian-made tomato press peels, seeds, and strains fresh tomatoes to create a smooth puree for homemade sauces. Capturing the flavor of seasonal tomatoes without the laborious process of blanching, skinning, and coring the fruit, this efficient tool processes up to 3 quarts of raw tomatoes at a time by simply turning a crank. A suction base holds the tomato press firmly in place without damaging countertop surfaces. The durable stainless steel press is dishwasher-safe.



**QUESTIONS FOR THE MARCH ISSUE**

- 1) What is the name of the link for Red Blossom's Facebook page? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What is the phone number for Sun Pacific's Cuties? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) What fruit program is Del Monte promoting on the back cover of the magazine? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) What holiday is Dulcinea and Pacific Trellis Fruit promoting? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) What directory is the QR code linked to on the New York Apple ad? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) What are the two U.S. locations listed on the Prime Time ad? \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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# Spring is Served



*Enjoy*

Lifestyle & food ideas at  
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[f /RedBlossom.Strawberries](https://www.facebook.com/RedBlossom.Strawberries)

**CPMA BOOTH REVIEW**

**Booth #1006**  
**BLUE BOOK SERVICES, INC.**

Carol Stream, IL  
Grow sales and manage business risk — whether your sales team needs leads or your credit team needs ratings and scores, Blue Book membership gives you the business information needed to grow and protect your business!



**Booth #1306**  
**CALIFORNIA STRAWBERRY COMMISSION**  
Watsonville, CA

Strawberries are 42 percent of berry category sales in Canada. Delicious and versatile, strawberries are a healthy choice anytime and available year-round from California, where 88 percent of U.S. strawberries are grown.



**Booth #1517**  
**CHILEAN FRESH FRUIT ASSOCIATION**  
San Carlos, CA



Stop by our booth to meet the CFFA's new merchandising director for Eastern Canada, Susanne Bertolas and learn what's in store for Chilean fruit promotions in 2015.

**Booth # 617**  
**CHURCH BROTHERS**  
Salinas, CA

Church Brothers, a leading grower/processor/shipper of more than 500 fresh vegetable SKUs, is currently growing Heirloom red spinach in its winter growing region of Yuma, Arizona. Church Brothers offers this exclusively in two formats: all red or a 50/50 blend of red and green spinach; both will be on display at the booth. Heirloom red spinach is a vibrant and versatile item that has a soft texture and mild earthy flavor, with all the nutritional benefits of green spinach.



**Booth #1301**  
**DEL MONTE FRESH PRODUCE CANADA**

Boucherville, Quebec  
Fresh Del Monte offers retailers and foodservice operators an array of innovative solutions to address the changing tastes and lifestyle needs of today's consumers.

Our extensive distribution network allows just-in-time deliveries of our premium quality fresh products. For more information call 800.950.3683 or visit our websites, Freshdelmonte.com and Fruits.com.



**Booth #615**  
**GIUMARRA COMPANIES**  
Los Angeles, CA

The Giumarra Companies is a leading international network of fresh produce growers marketing its line of high-quality fruits and vegetables under the trusted Nature's Partner brand.



**Booth #2217**  
**GOOD FOODS GROUP**  
Pleasant Prairie, WI



At Good Foods we make refrigerated natural, high-quality foods utilizing HPP technology with expertise in: guacamole, Greek yogurt dips, chicken salad, and cold-pressed juices.

**Booth #1519**  
**IDAHO-EASTERN OREGON ONION COMMITTEE**  
Parma, ID

Stop by our booth to learn the latest on Idaho-E. Oregon Onions/USA Onions. For a current Shippers Directory, visit USAONIONS.com.



**Booth #1619**  
**IDAHO POTATO COMMISSION**  
Eagle, ID

The Idaho Potato Commission is the marketing arm for the entire Idaho potato industry. The organization created the well-known "Grown in Idaho" seal, which symbolizes quality.



**Booth #1307**  
**MASTRONARDI PRODUCE/SUNSET**  
Kingsville, Ontario, Canada

From the greenhouse that gave you Campari brand cocktail tomatoes comes the perfect way to bring the brightness of sunshine to any meal. SUNSET Y.E.L.O. lives up to its radiant color with the taste of sunshine in every bite.



**Booth #2118**  
**MCCAIN PRODUCE INC.**  
Summerside, Prince Edward Island, Canada

With 100 years of experience growing and shipping potatoes, McCain Produce has the experience and capabilities to ensure customers fresh potato needs are consistently fulfilled.



**Booth #801**  
**MISSION PRODUCE**  
Oxnard, CA

Mission Produce is a global packer, grower, importer and distributor of avocados. Our Ripening and Distribution Centers in California, Denver, Chicago, New Jersey, Atlanta, Dallas, Seattle and Toronto, enable just-in-time delivery to customers nationwide. Mission has operations in Mexico, Peru, New Zealand and Chile. Mission is also a distributor for Frontera Guacamole mixes made famous by celebrity chef, Rick Bayless.



**Booth #719**  
**NASH PRODUCE**  
Nashville, NC

Nash Produce specializes in providing retail and foodservice companies with fresh sweet potatoes in a variety of packaging solutions. French-Canadian and private label packaging is also available.



**Booth #623**  
**NATURE FRESH FARMS**  
Leamington, Ontario, Canada



Family-owned and employee-managed, Nature Fresh Farms ships Non-GMO Project Verified greenhouse grown produce year-round to key retailers throughout North America.

**Booth #2009**  
**NATURIFE FARMS LLC**  
Salinas, CA

Naturife introduces two new additions to its innovative line of Ready-to-Eat Snacks. Now available in Mango-Blueberry and Grape-Blueberry combos, in addition to the original 100 percent blueberry snack pack.




**Booth #2005**  
**NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
Trenton, NJ

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture represents New Jersey's diverse fruit and vegetable industry, and serves as a resource for buyers interested in sourcing New Jersey farm products. For more than 30 years, Jersey Fresh has been the Department's venue to advertise and promote New Jersey's farm products.







**“Retailers will continue to invest in innovative technologies to meet the changing needs of consumers.”**

- Deloitte Report: The food value chain - A challenge for the next century © 2013

**INNOVATE**

**“Learning and Innovation go hand in hand. The arrogance of success is to think that what you did yesterday will be sufficient for tomorrow.” - William Pollard**

Innovation is so very hard to accomplish, but so easy to spot. The art and genius of taking an established product or process and successfully re-inventing it for the better makes history and fortunes. For the fresh produce industry, innovation is not just an aspiration, but an expectation. Surging consumer demands, changing regulatory environments, and competition are just a few of the forces driving innovation in our industry. As Canada's largest gathering of the entire fresh produce supply chain, the 90<sup>th</sup> **CPMA Convention and Trade Show** will showcase innovation as no other event can. By networking with our exhibitors and your peers, or taking in our program of sessions, you will walk away with ideas for innovations that will help to expand your business from coast to coast. It will all happen in Canada's capital for joie de vivre, **Montréal, Quebec from April 15-17, 2015.**

**CPMA**  **CONVENTION  
+TRADE SHOW  
MONTRÉAL 2015**

[convention.cpma.ca](http://convention.cpma.ca)

Registration is open, don't delay!

[convention.cpma.ca/register](http://convention.cpma.ca/register)

**CPMA BOOTH REVIEW**

**Booth #718**  
**PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL MARKETING**  
Salinas, CA

We at Pacific International Marketing are a grower, shipper and processor of quality fresh produce. We offer a wide variety of conventional and organic items.



**Booth #1308**  
**PEAR BUREAU NORTHWEST**  
Milwaukie, OR

Become a fresh pear pro! Learn about the many varieties of pears, and engage in new merchandising opportunities. Discover why USA Pears are a fresh choice for produce departments throughout the year.



**Booth #321**  
**PERISHABLE NEWS**  
Boca Raton, FL

PerishableNews.com is a daily newswire covering the complete range of perishable products, including top-level happenings as they relate to fresh foods.



**Booth #321**  
**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 #301**  
**PURE HOTHOUSE FOODS INC.**

Leamington, Ontario, Canada  
Marzanito is a mini San Marzano tomato. Amazingly good tasting for cooking, and perfectly sized for all your everyday snacking needs. Pure Hothouse Foods Inc. is a grower, shipper and marketer of greenhouse grown vegetables and value-added Fresh Kits sold under the Pure Flavor name across North America.



**Booth #608**  
**RAINIER FRUIT COMPANY**  
Selah, WA



Family-owned, Rainier Fruit Company offers a year-round supply of conventional and organic apples and pears as well as seasonal supplies of conventional and organic cherries and blueberries.

**Booth #714**  
**RED SUN FARMS**  
Kingsville, Ontario, Canada

Red Sun Farms' greenhouse grown produce provides you with greenhouse perfection — all year long. We're known as your greenhouse-go-to team, with produce grown in Canada, U.S. and Mexico. Our regional sales teams are here to support your greenhouse category needs including planning support, marketing support, and new product launch support. Stop by our booth to learn about our new Organic Series.



**Booth #820**  
**ROCKTENN**  
Norcross, GA

RockTenn offers an array of corrugated containers to satisfy your produce packaging needs including standard CCF trays, bulk bins, and our high performance Meta Tray 8.



**Booth #1725**  
**SAGE FRUIT COMPANY**  
Yakima, WA

Sage Fruit is a grower/packer/shipper of high-quality Washington State apples, pears and cherries. We have unique marketing programs and varieties to help you grow your sales.



**Booth #2314**  
**SAN MIGUEL PRODUCE, INC.**  
Oxnard, CA



The Growing Standard of Greens. Vertically integrated grower/processor from California and Georgia celebrating 20 years of the original Cut 'N Clean Greens. Organic greens, Asian vegetables and Persian herbs available.

**Booth #1005**  
**SUNKIST GROWERS**  
Valencia, CA

Like a cherished family recipe handed down through generations, our citrus is nurtured by more than 120 years of experience. At Sunkist, we are deeply committed to tradition, but also to innovation and sustainability, both on the farm and in the marketplace — embracing fresh approaches for citrus lovers today and tomorrow.



**Booth #2109**  
**SUNLIGHT INTERNATIONAL SALES**  
Delano, CA

Home of the Pretty Lady Brand, Sunlight International offers the finest California table grapes, grown by J.P. Dulcich & Sons. Merchandising programs include Harvest Hobgoblin, seasonal Pretty Lady programs, and proprietary Green Emerald Seedless.



**Booth #603**  
**TOM LANGE CO.**  
Springfield, IL



Seven Seas Packers, a division of Tom Lange Company, excels in cartons, bags, and bins packed to order daily for your domestic and export citrus product needs.

**Booth #1815**  
**TURBANA CORPORATION**  
Coral Gables, FL

Turbana is one of the leading, premier importers of tropical produce — including bananas, plantains, pineapples and ethnic tropicals. Our mission is to provide healthy tropical foods that transform people's lives.



**Booth #1525**  
**WELL•PICT BERRIES**  
Watsonville, CA



Superior in size and unmatched in flavor, Well•Pict's proprietary conventional and organic strawberries are available year-round, and extra large proprietary raspberries are available from spring to fall.

**Booth #1715**  
**WESTMORELAND/ TOPLINE FARMS**

Leamington, Ontario, Canada  
Westmoreland Sales/TopLine Farms your place for Premium Greenhouse Produce, direct from the grower 365 days a year!



TRANSITION



**MISIONERO VEGETABLES GONZALES, CA**

Misionero Vegetables continues to expand its sales staff with the addition of its newest salesperson, **Ashley Edwards**. In her new role, Edwards will expand prospective and current accounts to meet

the company's sales objectives. Edwards joins Misionero's internal sales team of Maria Marin, Christina Moag and Dan Avina. Edwards earned her BS in Agribusiness from California Polytechnic State University.

Misionero also developed a newly created sales management position. **Rick Dacey** will oversee Misionero accounts in the Midwest, East Coast and Eastern Canada. Dacey will be based out of Boston, MA. He was most recently employed by State Garden as a senior business manager and previously employed with Earthbound Farm. Dacey joins Misionero's regional sales team of Nancy Bryner (Richmond, VA) and Larry Olivo (West Coast).



ANNOUNCEMENT



**BINATIONAL U.S.-SOUTH AFRICA AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE OPENS U.S. MARKET FOR SOUTH AFRICAN HASS AVOCADOS**

Executives representing the top Hass avocado companies in the United States and South Africa announced during Fruit Logistica/Germany the establishment of the U.S.-South Africa Avocado Committee (USSAAC). The committee's primary purpose is to work with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to obtain the necessary approvals to allow for the importation of Hass avocados from South Africa into the U.S. This landmark committee is comprised of the top U.S. and South Africa avocado grower, packer, exporter and importer companies. The binational co-chairs of the committee are Zac Bard of Westfalia; Johannesburg, South Africa and Jim Donovan of Mission Produce; Oxnard, CA.

TRANSITION



**KINGSTON COMPANIES IDAHO FALLS, ID**

Kingston Companies, the parent company of Kingston Fresh, announced that **Cory Wengreen**, a seasoned financial executive within the food industry, joined the company's executive team as its chief financial officer. Wengreen, who holds an MBA and is also a C.P.A., brings more than 20 years of financial and operational leadership.

TRANSITION

**KINGSBURG ORCHARDS KINGSBURG, CA**

Kingsburg Orchards announces the promotion of **Chad Allred** to vice president of sales and marketing. Allred, 42, has been with Kingsburg Orchards for 15 years and held multiple positions during that time. His most recent responsibilities included: director of sales and head of retail sales.



ANNOUNCEMENT



**SAKATA OFFERS BEET VARIETIES AND INFORMATIVE RESOURCES**

Sakata Seed America, Morgan Hill, CA, introduces its top-quality beet line. Due to its official merger with Chriseed in 2014, Sakata now offers 16 unique beet varieties boasting qualities such as wide adaptability, high yields and suitability for processing, baby leaf and fresh markets. Most notably, Sakata's specialty golden beet, Touchstone Gold, is unique and offers a richer flavor profile and brighter flesh color than competitive varieties.

TRANSITION

**HOMEGROWN ORGANIC FARMS PORTERVILLE, CA**

Homegrown Organic Farms, one of the premier organic fresh produce marketers in the United States, announces **Fred Berry** as a new member of the Homegrown team. Berry is now operating as a senior account manager for the Homegrown sales team. Berry comes from a diverse background in the agriculture industry. Most recently, Berry worked with Mulholland Citrus as their director of marketing. He also maintains a distinct history with industry boards and affiliations, such as California Citrus Mutual and California Fresh Fruit Association (formerly California Grape & Tree Fruit League).



ANNOUNCEMENT



**CHILEAN BIODYNAMIC BLUEBERRIES AVAILABLE FROM GOURMET TRADING COMPANY**

Gourmet Trading Company, Redondo Beach, CA, a year-round distributor of fresh asparagus and blueberries, announces it will have biodynamic blueberries out of Chile. Chloe Varennes, marketing manager, explains in the company's press release, biodynamic is a holistic approach to farming with a higher level of food safety with fewer pesticide residues than USDA certified organic items. "Over the season we have also noticed that biodynamic blueberries also have a better quality and shelf life compared to conventional blueberries," she says.

ANNOUNCEMENT

**INGLES SUPERMARKETS NOW OFFERS VEGA PRODUCE RETAIL BAGS**



Vega Produce, Doral, FL, announces availability of Vega's Consumer Friendly Retail Bags. Ingles Supermarkets, a major southeastern retailer, recently committed to sending Vega microwavable vegetable bags to its stores. The bags enable shoppers to microwave product within it. The inspiration

behind the Vega bags is driven by customer feedback and part of the company's commitment to deliver the latest trend-setting products in one convenient package.

ANNOUNCEMENT



**UNITED FRESH LAUNCHES NEW LOGO AND WEBSITE**

United Fresh, Washington, D.C., launches its new association logo and the redesign of its website. The new brand aims to elevate the Association's mission to build a stronger connection across the United Fresh supply chain and industry service providers. The website carries over the new design from the logo and offers streamlined navigation, improved user functionality, enhanced search features and a robust publications library. The goal of the site is to give the user a cohesive view of the produce industry highlighting news and events, Association commentary and a spotlight on industry achievements.

ANNOUNCEMENT



**LOVE BEETS LAUNCHES NEW ORGANIC BEET JUICE**

Love Beets, Philadelphia, PA, a line of all natural, ready-to-eat beets, launches a new Organic Beet Juice in grocery stores nationwide. The juice has a naturally smooth taste with just a hint of earthiness and comes in a 14-ounce glass bottle. Love Beets is also re-launching its other juices nationwide with a new design. These items include a Cherry-Berry flavor, which

blends the sweetness of beets with the fresh tartness of black currant and cherries, and regular Beet Juice, both of which are available in a 20-ounce recyclable, plastic bottle — making it easy for athletes and beet juice fans alike to enjoy this healthy drink on-the-go.

ANNOUNCEMENT

**MIATECH OFFERS NEW MISTING SYSTEM**

Miatech, Clackamas, OR, presents its new line of increased pressure Produce Misting Systems. The new units mist at about 140psi, up from competitive misting units that typically operate between 70-100psi. Referred to as the Durability Series, these new units add an additional level of reliability with the use of redundant pumps in series. In this design, each pump is only carrying half the load, and therefore will last much longer.



ANNOUNCEMENT

**GENERAL PRODUCE JOINS EAT BRIGHTER! MOVEMENT**

General Produce, a family-owned and -operated produce distributor headquartered in Sacramento, CA, is the first distributor in the industry to receive licensing to join the nationwide Eat Brighter! movement — a joint program with Sesame Workshop and Newark, DE-based Produce Marketing Association that focuses on increasing produce consumption in younger demographics. Through this program, General Produce will have the rights to use Sesame Street brand assets including Big Bird, Elmo and Cookie Monster on marketing materials. General Produce is the first company of its kind to join the movement and will be incorporating the toolkit including the 'Eat Brighter!' tagline, social media hashtag #eatbrighter, and the full library of available character assets.



ANNOUNCEMENT



**VILLAGE FARMS AND AXIA VEGETABLE SEEDS BY ANNOUNCE PARTNERSHIP**

Village Farms International Inc. with U.S. headquarters in Heathrow, FL, and Axia Vegetable Seeds, BV located in Naaldwijk, Holland, announces a long term exclusive partnership between the two companies. Village Farms is a vertically integrated company focused on growing, marketing, and distributing its branded fruits and vegetables to dedicated retailers throughout the United States and Canada. Axia is a breeding company specializing in the development of vegetable seeds for protected crops. This is the first time Axia Vegetable Seeds will partner with any company in North America under an exclusive agreement. Photo (L-R): Klaas de Haan, Axia board member; Debi Street, Village Farms director variety development & innovation; Michael A. DeGiglio, Village Farms president & chief executive; Doug Kling, Village Farms senior vice president & chief marketing officer; Alois van Vliet, Axia chief executive

ANNOUNCEMENT

**VOLCANO PRODUCE'S GOLDENBERRY EXPANDS DISTRIBUTION**

Volcano Produce's, Los Angeles, CA, the Goldenberry is now available in the foodservice industry and select grocery stores throughout the Chicago area. The Goldenberry, which is the Volcano Produce brand of *Physalis peruviana*, offers a multitude of health-benefiting nutritional elements, including polyphenols, which carry anti-inflammatories and antioxidants. Imported from South America by Volcano Produce, the Goldenberry is high in protein, offers a number of vitamins and minerals and is a delicious source of bioflavonoids. The Goldenberry is available at select retailers or can be ordered wholesale directly from VolcanoProduce.com.



ANNOUNCEMENT



**WELCOME BACK RAINIER FRUIT'S LADY ALICE**

Discovered as a chance seedling in the orchards of eastern Washington, production of this apple continues to increase in response to consumer demand. Rainier Fruit's (Selah, WA) Lady Alice variety apples are available now through May (or while supplies last) at many major and independent grocery retailers. Rainier supports each retailer's market introduction with multiple POS options, social media, demos and other customized promotional efforts.

CORRECTION



In the "Protected Produce" article in the February 2015 issue of PRODUCE BUSINESS, one

of Village Farms' products was incorrectly identified. Village Farms' new specialty selection should be identified as "True Rebel Mix," a medley pack of different colors, shapes, and sizes of tomatoes sold in 10-ounce, 1-pound and 2-pound clamshells. Furthermore, Village Farms owns 240 acres of high tech, hydroponic (soil-less) glass greenhouse facilities in the U.S. (130 acres) and Canada (110 acres). In addition, Village Farms partners with high tech, hydroponic greenhouse growers in Mexico.



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# Why The 2015 Child Nutrition Reauthorization Matters To The Produce Industry

DR. LORELEI DISOGRA,  
VICE PRESIDENT NUTRITION AND HEALTH,  
UNITED FRESH PRODUCE ASSOCIATION

**I**ncreasing children's fresh fruit and vegetable consumption has been the goal of the fruit and vegetable industry for years. Children are three markets rolled into one — a primary market, an influence market and a future market. Efforts covering all touch points were deployed, from marketing campaigns, websites, games, and social media featuring cartoon fruit and veggie characters to packaging specifically designed to appeal to kids. For the produce industry to grow, it's understood that we need kids to enjoy eating more fresh produce.

Recent data from the USDA shows 31 million children eat school lunch every day. Another 11 million eat school breakfast daily. Increasing their access to fresh fruits and vegetables in school meals is critical to helping children develop healthy eating habits and improving their overall health.

Schools are an important business opportunity for the fresh produce industry. For years, our industry envisioned school meals that highlight a wide variety of great tasting fresh fruits and vegetables that get children "hooked" on fresh produce for their lifetime.

In 2010, Congress passed bi-partisan legislation, the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, to improve the healthfulness of school meals. In 2012, the USDA updated nutrition standards for school meals that now:

- Double the amount of fruits and vegetables served at breakfast and lunch
- Increase the variety of fruits and vegetables that schools have to serve every week
- Require a fruit and a vegetable to be served at lunch every day
- Require students to select at least a half-cup of a fruit or vegetable at lunch and breakfast

United Fresh played a leadership role in securing the passage of this landmark legislation in 2010 and continues to play a leadership role with USDA in helping schools

**Schools are an important business opportunity for the fresh produce industry. For years, our industry envisioned school meals that highlight a wide variety of great tasting fresh fruits and vegetables that get children "hooked" on fresh produce for their lifetime.**

effectively implement the new fruit and vegetables standards.

Now, new fruit and vegetable standards are under attack. The School Nutrition Association (SNA) and some Members of Congress are aggressively trying to repeal the half-cup of fruits and vegetables requirement, citing plate waste and increased costs.

Are you upset yet?

United Fresh has been fighting the battle to protect fruits and vegetables and the half-cup requirement for the last 18 months as SNA and some members of Congress tried to remove this requirement through the legislative process.

Our key messages on Capitol Hill are:

"How can you call it a meal if it doesn't include at least a half-cup of a fruit or a vegetable?"

"The *Dietary Guidelines* for Americans recommend children make half their plate fruits and vegetables at every meal. Shouldn't this start at school lunch?"

This year, the battle over fruits and vegetables will be even more contentious as Congress reauthorizes all children nutrition programs — including school breakfast and school lunch — in the 2015 Child Nutrition Reauthorization. If kids are going to learn to enjoy more fresh fruits and vegetables, school meals need to model the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and provide kids with a wide variety of fruits and vegetables every day.

How can you help?

Meet with your members of Congress in

Washington D.C. or local district offices and ask them, "How can you call it a meal if it doesn't have at least a half-cup of fruits and vegetables?" Tell them how you and other produce industry leaders are working successfully to provide schools with the highest quality fresh fruits and vegetables and are committed to solutions and collaboration to ensure school success, which in-turn grows business.

Invite members of Congress to visit successful school districts with you to showcase kids eating "your" fresh fruits and veggies.

Join United Fresh in Washington D.C. at our 2015 Washington Conference (September 29 to 30) where we will be on Capitol Hill meeting and influencing our lawmakers. Contact the United Fresh team and offer to help.

The good news is that Let's Move Salad Bars to Schools and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program demonstrated that kids love great tasting fresh fruits and vegetables and will eat more when provided fresh produce options every day. About 4,000 schools received salad bars benefitting 2 million children every day, nationwide. Additionally, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program now provides 4 million low-income (as qualified by the Income Eligibility Guidelines established by USDA) elementary school students with a fresh fruit and vegetable snack every day.

We all have a passion for produce. Now is the time to tell Congress.



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**PRODUCE BUSINESS** is accepting nominations for its Eleventh Annual 40-Under-Forty Project, which recognizes the produce industry's top young leaders. Honorees will be selected based on their professional accomplishments, demonstrated leadership and industry/community contributions. To be eligible, nominees must be under the age of 40 as of March 1, 2015 (People born after March 1, 1975).

To nominate someone, please fill out this form by April 11, 2015, and fax back to 561-994-1610 OR go to our website at [producebusiness.com](http://producebusiness.com) and look for the 40 Under Forty icon to link to the online application.

Once nominated, the candidate will be interviewed by one of our editors, and will receive forms to fill out asking for detailed information. A candidate only needs to be nominated one time. Multiple nominations will have no bearing on selection.

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Nominee's Professional Achievements:

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 \_\_\_\_\_

Nominee's Industry/Community/Charitable Activities:

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 \_\_\_\_\_  
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**ABOUT THE NOMINATOR:**

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### MARCH 3 - 4, 2015 FPA SPRING POLICY SUMMIT

**Conference Venue:** Tubac Golf Resort, Tubac, AZ  
**Conference Management:** Fresh Produce Association of the Americas, Nogales, AZ  
**Phone:** (520) 287-2707  
**Website:** [freshfrommexico.com](http://freshfrommexico.com)

### MARCH 6 - 8, 2015 NATURAL PRODUCTS EXPO WEST

**Conference Venue:** Anaheim Convention Center, Anaheim, CA  
**Conference Management:** New Hope Natural Media, Boulder, CO  
**Phone:** (866) 458-4935 • **Fax:** (303) 939-9559  
**Email:** [tradeshows@newhope.com](mailto:tradeshows@newhope.com)  
**Website:** [expowest.com](http://expowest.com)

### MARCH 8 - 10, 2015 INTERNATIONAL RESTAURANT & FOODSERVICE SHOW OF NEW YORK

**Conference Venue:** Jacob Javits Convention Center, New York, NY  
**Conference Management:** Urban Expositions, Shelton, CT  
**Phone:** (203) 484-8051  
**Email:** [atencza@urban-expo.com](mailto:atencza@urban-expo.com)  
**Website:** [internationalrestaurantny.com](http://internationalrestaurantny.com)

### MARCH 16 - 18, 2015 PRODUCE FOR BETTER HEALTH FOUNDATION'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**Conference Venue:** Hotel Valley Ho, Scottsdale, AZ  
**Conference Management:** Produce For Better Health Foundation, Hockessin, DE  
**Phone:** (302) 235-2329  
**Email:** [salston@pbhfoundation.org](mailto:salston@pbhfoundation.org)  
**Website:** [pbhfoundation.org](http://pbhfoundation.org)

### MARCH 17 - 18, 2015 ANNUAL FRUIT RIPENING & RETAIL HANDLING WORKSHOP

This workshop is intended for shippers and fruit handlers (wholesale and retail), and produce managers. The workshop focuses on how to increase profits by reducing losses at the receiving end, and delivering ready-to-eat, delicious fruits and vegetables to the consumer.

**Conference Venue:** UC Davis Alumni Center, Davis, CA  
**Conference Management:** University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Davis, CA  
**Phone:** (530) 752-7672  
**Email:** [pastockdale@ucdavis.edu](mailto:pastockdale@ucdavis.edu)  
**Website:** [postharvest.ucdavis.edu/Education/fruitripening/](http://postharvest.ucdavis.edu/Education/fruitripening/)

### MARCH 26 - 28, 2015 VIVA FRESH PRODUCE EXPO

**Conference Venue:** Hilton, Austin, TX  
**Conference Management:** Texas International Produce Association, Mission, TX  
**Phone:** (956) 581-8632  
**Email:** [bret.erickson@texipa.org](mailto:bret.erickson@texipa.org)  
**Website:** [vivafreshexpo.com](http://vivafreshexpo.com)

### APRIL 8 - 9, 2015 PMA FRESH CONNECTIONS RETAIL

**Conference Venue:** Philadelphia Airport Marriott, Philadelphia, PA  
**Conference Management:** Produce Marketing Association, Newark, DE  
**Phone:** (302) 738-7100  
**Email:** [solutionctr@pma.com](mailto:solutionctr@pma.com)  
**Website:** [www.pma.com/events/fresh-connections-retail/](http://www.pma.com/events/fresh-connections-retail/)

### APRIL 15 - 17, 2015 CPMA 2015

**Conference Venue:** Palais des congrès de Montréal, Montréal, Quebec, Canada  
**Conference Management:** Canadian Produce Marketing Association, Ottawa, Ontario  
**Phone:** (613) 226-4187 • **Fax:** (613) 226-2984  
**Email:** [cbrault@cpma.ca](mailto:cbrault@cpma.ca)  
**Website:** [cpma.ca](http://cpma.ca)

### MAY 6 - 8, 2015 SIAL CHINA

**Conference Venue:** Shanghai New International Expo Centre, Shanghai, China  
**Conference Management:** SIAL Group, Paris, France  
**Phone:** 33 (0)1 76 77 13 33  
**Email:** [exhibit-sial-china@comexposium.com](mailto:exhibit-sial-china@comexposium.com)  
**Website:** [sialchina.com](http://sialchina.com)

### MAY 16 - 19, 2015 NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION SHOW

**Conference Venue:** The International Foodservice Marketplace, McCormick Place, Chicago, IL  
**Conference Management:** National Restaurant Association, Chicago, IL  
**Phone:** (312) 580-5410 • **Fax:** (312) 853-2548  
**Email:** [nraregistration@restaurant.org](mailto:nraregistration@restaurant.org)  
**Website:** [restaurant.org/show](http://restaurant.org/show)

### JUNE 3 - 4, 2015 THE LONDON PRODUCE SHOW AND CONFERENCE

**Conference Venue:** The Grosvenor House Hotel, London, England  
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**Website:** [londonproduceshow.co.uk](http://londonproduceshow.co.uk)

### JUNE 8 - 10, 2015 UNITED FRESH CONVENTION

**Conference Venue:** McCormick Place Convention Center, Chicago, IL  
**Conference Management:** United Fresh Produce Association, Washington D.C.  
**Phone:** (202) 303-3420  
**Email:** [jwoodside@unitedfresh.org](mailto:jwoodside@unitedfresh.org)  
**Website:** [unitedfreshshow.org](http://unitedfreshshow.org)

### JUNE 8 - 11, 2015 FOOD MARKETING INSTITUTE SHOW

**Conference Venue:** McCormick Place Chicago, IL  
**Conference Management:** Food Marketing Institute, Arlington, VA  
**Phone:** (202) 452-8444 **Fax:** (202) 429-4519  
**Email:** [mgrizzard@fmi.org](mailto:mgrizzard@fmi.org)  
**Website:** [fmi.org](http://fmi.org)

### JUNE 28 - 30, 2015 SUMMER FANCY FOOD SHOW

**Conference Venue:** Jacob Javits Convention Center, New York, NY  
**Conference Management:** Specialty Food Association, New York, NY  
**Phone:** (212) 482-6440 **Fax:** (212) 482-6459  
**Email:** [eriveria@specialtyfood.com](mailto:eriveria@specialtyfood.com)  
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# Study Reveals Produce Consumption Depends On Food Businesses Located Near Home

BY CHISTELLE M. CLARY & YAN KESTENS, UNIVERSITÉ DE MONTRÉAL'S DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL & PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

**A** research team from the Université de Montréal has recently looked at whether the actual consumption of fruits and vegetables was related to the presence of certain types of food outlets and restaurants around home.

Types of businesses in question were: supermarkets, grocery stores, fruit and vegetable shops, fast-food restaurants and convenience stores. The survey has been based on data from about 49,000 Canadians over the age of 18, living in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary and Ottawa between 2007 and 2010. Those data were extracted from the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) that collects each year information related to health status and health determinants for the Canadian population.

## Meals Depend On Local Food

The study revealed that, for both men and women, a greater number of fruit and vegetable shops in the residential area was associated with a higher consumption of fruits and vegetables. Inversely, the consumption of fruits and vegetables decreased with the number of fast-food restaurants available around home.

Those findings highlight that procurement strategies for foods are partly related to the type of food businesses around the home. Easy access to food is often reported as a strong influence on food purchase in health research. Proximity from home may therefore be a purchase incentive.

## Gender Variations In Procurement

The study has also shown that, for men only, the consumption of fruits and vegetables was further associated with the percentage of businesses selling a wide range of fresh fruits and vegetables around home. In short, the higher the overall number of supermarkets, fruit and vegetable stores and grocery stores compared to the overall number of fast-food restaurants and convenience stores, the higher the fruit and vegetable

| Daily fruit and vegetable intake (portion) <sup>*,**</sup> | Mean | SD   | Min-max <sup>d</sup> |
|--|------|------|----------------------|
| Whole population   | 3.98 | 2.34 | 0-21.2               |
| By gender  |      |      |                      |
| Men (n = 22,162)   | 3.47 | 2.20 | 0-19.5               |
| Women (n = 27,241)   | 4.39 | 2.37 | 0-20.1               |
| By Census Metropolitan Area                                |      |      |                      |
| Calgary (n = 4038)   | 3.93 | 2.40 | 0-14.9               |
| Montreal (n = 12,309)                                      | 4.14 | 2.54 | 0-18.7               |
| Ottawa (n = 5589)  | 4.03 | 2.41 | 0-16.3               |
| Toronto (n = 17,290)                                       | 3.86 | 2.25 | 0-20.1               |
| Vancouver (n = 10,177)                                     | 3.98 | 2.34 | 0-16.3               |

<sup>a</sup> Due to restrictions on the dissemination of CCHS data imposed by the provider Statistics Canada, maximum values are the averaged maximum values of the fifteen individuals with the highest fruit and vegetable intake.  
<sup>\*</sup> Gender-differences significant at  $P < 0.001$ .  
<sup>\*\*</sup> CMA-differences significant at  $P < 0.001$ .

consumption of men. Why? This may have to do with conformity to consumption norms. A predominance of a certain type of businesses in the environment may represent an authoritative judgment as to what one ought to purchase and eat. Thus, an area with a bountifulness of shops selling fruits and vegetables may unconsciously encourage men to purchase fruits and vegetables in order to adhere to the underlying consumption norms.

Why men and not women? Women are often reported to be more nutritionally knowledgeable, more sensitive to health-concerns, and more attentive to price and quality of products when food shopping. They may therefore use other criteria than a normative benchmark to decide what to buy. This is a possible hypothesis, which remains to be validated, though.

## Future Perspectives

Fruit and vegetables are important components of a healthy diet, and may help prevent a wide range of diseases, from obesity to cardiovascular diseases to certain types of cancers. A growing number of people are concerned with their health, and health authorities tend to encourage populations to eat more fruits and vegetables.

Yet, there is still room for reaching the national recommendations from Health Canada, which suggest a daily intake of 7 to 10 portions of fruits and vegetables every day for an adult.

In this study, women and men reported eating on average 4.4 and 3.5 portions of fruits and vegetables per day respectively, well below those recommendations. Reinforcing local offerings in fruits and vegetables may be an interesting avenue for encouraging individuals to purchase and eat more of this nutritious food, especially for men.

## The Method

Self-reported fruit and vegetable intake from participants of four cycles (2007–2010) of the repeated cross-sectional Canadian Community Health Survey living in the five largest metropolitan areas of Canada (n = 49,403) was analyzed. Measures of exposure to the food environment around home were computed at participants' residential postal codes. Linear regression models, both in the whole sample and in gender- and city-stratified samples, were used to explore the associations between exposure measures and fruit and vegetable intakes

## The Study

The study, *Should We Use Absolute or Relative Measures When Assessing Foodscape Exposure in Relation to Fruit and Vegetable Intake? Evidence from a Wide-Scale Canadian Study*, was published in *Preventive Medicine* in December 2014. It was conducted at the Quebec Interuniversity Centre for Social Statistics which is part of the Canadian Research Data Centre Network (CRDCN). The services and activities provided by the QICSS are made possible by the financial or in-kind support of the SSHRC, the CIHR, the CFI, Statistics Canada, the FRQSC and the Quebec universities.



Christelle M. Clary and Yan Kestens are respectively student-researcher and professor affiliated with the Université de Montréal's Department of Social and Preventive Medicine. Kestens holds a CIHR Chair in Applied Public Health on Urban Interventions and Population Health.

# Will Changing Food 'Ecosystem' Make A Difference?

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

**T**he issue of food deserts has gone so far as to engage the First Lady of the United States, Michelle Obama. The thought is relatively simple: an important reason why people don't eat more produce is because they live in neighborhoods in which fruits and vegetables are not widely sold, are of poor selection or quality, or available only at high prices.

If, through manipulation of public policy incentives, we can get more venues selling produce in these food-desert neighborhoods, then produce consumption would increase, the health of people in these "underserved" neighborhoods would increase, and the cost of any necessary public policy incentives to make this all possible would be paid for by healthcare savings the government realizes from a healthier population.

It sounds great, but it is more a vision than a thought. There is precious little evidence that any of this actually happens.

The problem is obvious: in a free-market economy, if there is demand for something — say more fruit and vegetable purchasing opportunities — usually retailers will move to capitalize on that opportunity. Existing venues will alter their assortment and new banners will open. The fact that this doesn't happen implies strongly that the demand isn't there — even if we wish it were. So simply saying we will build fruit- and veg-selling stores in these areas may not do much to increase demand. To the extent sales increase, it might be transfers from purchases that had been made near work or on weekend visits to the suburbs where supermarkets may be in more abundance.

This research by the Université de Montréal's Department of Social and Preventive Medicine is interesting because it starts to suggest a more sophisticated course of study. The researchers suggest that the thing to look at is not just an absolute count (how many sources of healthy food are available in a given area) but, instead, a relative count (the ratio of healthy to unhealthy food options in a given area).

**This idea, if true — and the research weighs in that direction — seems to imply that the whole food-desert thought process may be misguided.**

This idea, if true — and the research weighs in that direction — seems to imply that the whole food-desert thought process might be misguided. Though many neighborhoods may seem in absolute terms to offer plenty of options for healthy eating, these neighborhoods may not be conducive "ecosystems" for healthy eating as the ratio of healthy food retailers to fast food restaurants is disproportionate. This would imply a major redirection of public policy efforts.

The problem though is that, of course, correlation is not causality. It is not really surprising that purchasing and consumption statistics should track what is sold in a community. What is unclear is what this research tells us about people's consumption habits.

If you were to travel the country and find communities where the local mall has upscale stores, such as Neiman Marcus and Saks Fifth Avenue, you would almost certainly find that in surrounding areas people buy more expensive clothing items than in those areas where the local mall features Sears or J.C. Penney.

There is surely a bit of "push-me, pull-you" to this phenomenon. These stores identify which neighborhoods to locate in based on demographics and existing

purchase patterns. Then the presence of these stores attracts people who already are predisposed to shopping in these upscale venues.

So this phenomenon — basically that people are influenced by the options available when purchasing — is not surprising. Indeed for a long time, looking at higher per capita produce consumption in other countries, analysts theorized that less availability of fast food outlets and processed snack food has led people to consume more fruits and vegetables.

The question is what to do with this insight? To some whose only interest is improving diet, the answer is obvious: Use the power of the state to reduce the availability of less healthy options and to encourage more healthy options. The question then becomes how intrusive we want the state to be.

Some would say altering welfare policies is fair game. We are giving people food stamp money, because we want them to buy food — not other things. It is a small journey to say we want them to buy fruits and vegetables, not cupcakes, but this would increase demand for fruits and vegetables and thus encourage retailers to offer broader options. Yet even here, it is complicated. Many people receiving welfare are parents, and they know better than the government what their children will eat and what best serves their family. Restricting welfare recipients so as to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables is not unthinkable, but it is problematic.

When we get beyond welfare and move to restricting the options of the general populous, things become more troubling. As the contretemps over Mayor Michael Bloomberg's efforts to restrict soda size indicated, there is something deep in the American spirit that rejects this attempt to intrude on our freedom. The offer of fast foods is part of the cornucopia of food choices Americans have on hand. The evidence that most Americans want their choices restricted is sparse indeed.



# Solving The Right Problems

BY JIM PREVOR, PRESIDENT & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

One of the most difficult challenges in life and in business is choosing to work on the right problem. In the produce industry, we are constantly confronting issues about industry efforts to boost consumption.

The great industry effort, supported by almost everyone, has been United Fresh's salad bar program. The goal: Put a salad bar in every school. The effort hits so many industry hot spots. It influences children — who are the consumers of tomorrow; salad bars offer a wide range of produce, so they appeal to the whole industry — as opposed to a snack-fruit program that might only impact consumption of a few items.

Simply from a business perspective, it is not hard to see why salad bars would be a universally popular industry promotion. Take a school, which last week bought very little produce, add a salad bar, and the next day purchase orders are coming in for an assortment of produce. The result is immediate, tangible and wide-spread.

But is offering salad bars a path that leads to increased long-term consumption of fresh produce? The honest answer is we don't know, but there are some indications that salad bars — which, by definition, leave assortment to the customer — may not be the optimal tool to increase produce consumption.

Recently, PRODUCE BUSINESS curated a series of foodservice case studies for presentation at a special symposium of the Culinary Institute of America. Several studies focused on salad bars, and they raised questions regarding the actual impact of salad bars on consumption; for example:

*Rafi Taherian, executive director at Yale University Dining, is charged with serving 14,000 meals a day to 5,200 graduate and undergraduate students on the University's meal plan. There are 29 foodservice operations at Yale, including 13 residential dining halls, along with convenience stores, cafés, and catering and banquet centers. ...*

*Taherian, a chef himself, has been friends with Chef Joyce Goldstein (the former chef and owner of the Mediterranean restaurant, Square One, in San Francisco, CA) for many years. He invited Goldstein, now a consultant in menu design, to Yale to help create recipes for plant-based food. The two decided to eat a light dinner from the salad bar in one of the dining halls. Goldstein came back to the table with what Taherian describes as the perfect Greek salad. He looked at his plate, which was, in his words, "a complete hodge-podge."*

*"I was so embarrassed," Taherian says. "I wondered, where the heck did she get that beautiful salad?" ...*

*He began to question the whole existing salad bar concept ...*

*"There are people," Taherian explains as an example, "who put shredded cabbage, cauliflower and broccoli — all raw — on their plate.*

*When they eat that mixture, they are going to have problems with digestion," he says. "Then the people who ate it think that 'salad' is making them uncomfortable, when in reality, these are vegetables that should not be eaten together."*

Does it really make sense to think that children are better able to put together combinations that will be delicious and easy to digest than chefs? Maybe composed salads would actually build demand better. They have done so at Yale.

In other words, if the issue is how do we get children exposed to lots of random produce items, maybe salad bars are the optimal choice. If, however, the problem is getting children to enjoy produce by exposing them to composed salads and dishes using culinary technique, maybe those salad bars are not helping.

Similarly, the Produce Marketing Association recently unveiled its support for a major new marketing campaign for the industry — contributing \$1 million to kick it off. The campaign is being led by the Partnership for a Healthier America and is basically a marketing campaign to promote fruit and vegetable consumption. There are many things to be said about these efforts, but one of the more

interesting questions is to assess whether the problem holding back consumption is inadequate marketing.

Of course it is well known that Coca-Cola outspends the entire produce industry on marketing — many times over. And it is easy to focus on this fact.

In fact, many in the produce industry like to focus on this fact because it implies that they are doing everything well and the problem is beyond their control. "If the industry had access to the Coca-Cola marketing budget, then consumption would boom."

Well, we bow before no man in our respect for the power of proper marketing, and individual companies can certainly differentiate themselves through marketing efforts. But whether the industry's issue is really a lack of marketing is most uncertain.

Many a peach sold is virtually inedible. Children love blueberries, but the sweetness is irregular, and even the same brand of "easy peel" citrus peels inconsistently through the year.

In other words, produce is very unpredictable. Today, marketing an individual company's produce under a brand umbrella might make sense. Love Beets can be consistently delicious; POM juices never vary. Branded items can consign lower quality to a different label. But the industry as a whole can't distinguish — it markets lousy produce along with good. It has no mechanism for excluding anyone or anything.

Is the trade's problem really a lack of marketing? Or is it inconsistent product that often disappoints the promise any marketing effort would make to consumers?

**Is the trade's problem really a lack of marketing?**

pb



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# Announcing A New Industry Resource: *PRODUCE BUSINESS UK*

FROM JIM PREVOR'S PERISHABLE PUNDIT 02.25.2015

This coming October at the PMA Convention in Atlanta, we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the launch of *PRODUCE BUSINESS* magazine, which was unveiled at the PMA convention in San Francisco back in 1985.

We actually kicked off this celebration by launching, coincident with *Fruit Logistica*, a new digital publication in the United Kingdom. You can find it at *ProduceBusinessUK.com*.

Yours truly wrote a kick-off editorial, titled "Initiating A New Path For Industry Improvement." Here is an excerpt:

It was just short of 30 years ago — after putting in in a full shift in the Hunts Point Market headquarters of my family's long-established produce firm — that I rushed to the airport and boarded a plane headed to the Produce Marketing Association convention in San Francisco. The year was 1985. The purpose of the trip was to launch *PRODUCE BUSINESS* magazine.

In time, this enterprise that started with a piece of paper and a dream, would grow to become the largest produce magazine in the world. It would give birth to magazines in related fields, such as *DELI BUSINESS* and *CHEESE CONNOISSEUR*.

Web portals would spring forth, such as *Jim Prevor's Perishable Pundit* and *PerishableNews.com*. Live events of all shapes and sizes were created, from small meetings of peers in a multitude of executive share groups to The London Produce Show and Conference and The New York Produce Show and Conference.

More important than size, we have uniquely served the industry with our corporate motto of "Initiating Industry Improvement" guiding our direction in all we do.

Fast forward to 2015, and I am, once again, preparing to board another plane — this one to the United Kingdom (U.K.) and then on to *Fruit Logistica* in Berlin, Germany, — to celebrate the launch of *PRODUCE BUSINESS UK*, a digital publication designed to offer the industry a new perspective on the conversation, innovation, insight and analysis that paves the way for industry improvement. Building on the launch last year of The London Produce Show and Conference, this new publication grows in rich soil.

Our success in America has many roots. After countless generations active in the produce trade, not far from Kiev in the Ukraine, my great-grandfather, Jacob Prevor, immigrated to Brooklyn, New York, where he set up a wholesale produce business in the old Wallabout Produce Market — then the second largest market in all of America.

Later, my grandfather, Harry Prevor, moved the business to the old Washington Market in downtown Manhattan — then the largest wholesale produce market in America — where he became both a wholesaler and auction buyer. My father, Michael Prevor, was an original tenant in the brand new Hunts Point Market and became not only a wholesaler, but the largest independent exporter of American produce to the U.K. and Europe.

This means even before I went to work in the family business, I drank the produce industry in with every dinner conversation.



In time, I took to journalism. And my life has become a unique blend as I strived to combine the real world experience of buying, trading and operating in the produce industry with the analytical perspective of an editor, lecturer, author and commentator.

Another important element to our success has been that we built this business from scratch, and experienced all the real world challenges that businesses face. We sweated out the payroll, made that lonely walk to speak with the banker, pitched the investors, hired and fired, and felt the burden of family honor on the line with every transaction.

So our pieces carried a weight of experience that is rare.

In that very first issue of *PRODUCE BUSINESS*, this editor, in his salad days, green in judgment, wrote a note to the industry. It was long, but we got more than a few things right:

- Great institutions are not created by an act of will; they must grow organically by serving the needs of their community ...
- Our goal is to tell the truth. What every industry member needs is an honest explanation of what is happening in the industry now, what happened in the past and what may happen in the future ...
- We shall not be intimidated into silence ...
- Too often, those who do not truly understand the industry have been called upon to tell the story to produce professionals.
- National borders can no longer serve as moats separating the domestic from foreign markets ...
- We will fail in our responsibilities if we do not tell the truth with the empathy that comes from a genuine understanding of the complexities of context and situation.
- We shall endeavor to have the content that only true inside knowledge of the business can make possible.

These are watchwords for all time but, now, in a U.K. market in flux, there is a special need for new ideas and new perspectives. There is a retail scene fracturing, with Aldi and Lidl on the discount-

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side and Waitrose and Marks & Spencer on the experiential-side, teaming with American interlopers such as Costco and Whole Foods Market to challenge the Big Four to find new ways of being.

We have a foodservice scene that has put to rest the reputation that British menus are plain, and we have a vibrant wholesale sector that may be revolutionized as the storied market that still carries Covent Garden in its name finds its future in flux.

My father visited the U.K. often. He sold apples and grapefruit, carrots and more. Then the U.K. entered the European Union, and the opportunities for trade decreased.

Now we see opportunities for a new type of trade, an intellectual exchange that can leave Britain and the world in better standing. This issue of PRODUCE BUSINESS UK is the very first step in sharing ideas to help all do their jobs, or run their businesses better, as we help the industry advance.

That one open letter I wrote so long ago closed with words that still ring true:

The real genesis of this publication goes back to when I was a boy reading the trade papers that my father brought home. It was through discussing the contents of these papers with my father that I came to know and love this industry. If this publication, or if I, should ever amount to anything, it is surely due to my father's wisdom, guidance and encouragement. It is to him that this enterprise is dedicated.

My father was there to read those words when written. He has since passed away, a victim of pancreatic cancer. Yet, perhaps, somehow, somewhere he might smile knowing that three decades

later as we launch PRODUCE BUSINESS UK, his son would not change a word.

\*\*\*\*\*

You can get smarter and do your job or run your business better by paying attention to this new publication. Here are some topics we covered:

Jeff Jackson's post about retail/supplier relations

We wrote about Alistair Stone of Waitrose before he spoke at The New York Produce Show and Conference, and now he details what an experiential retailer seeks in its supply chain.

Tony Reynolds of Reynolds, the national foodservice distributor in the U.K., also spoke to attendees at The New York Produce Show and Conference. Now he details opportunities for overseas vendors in the U.K. foodservice sector.

Want an international perspective on a U.S. wholesale terminal market? Read what happens when Gary Marshall, chairman of Covent Garden Tenants Association (CGTA), and Chris Hutchinson, chairman of the Spitalfields Market Tenants Association (SMTA), pay a visit to the Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market.

Banana prices at retail are an issue all over the world. You can see this exclusive Kantar data report and PRODUCE BUSINESS UK's Managing Director Tommy Leighton's take on the situation.

There's lots of great video as well, such as one with Denis Punter of Total Produce U.K., or one with Mark O'Sullivan of Banabay.

And much more.

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All banners under Cosentino's Food Stores, including Cosentino's Market in downtown Kansas City (shown here), work with three different suppliers to receive around two to three produce orders per day.

# Cosentino's Food Stores

Much like a detailed fresco painting, this independent blends many facets to provide personalized customer service and quality produce.

BY OSCAR KATOV

**W**hen John Cosentino, vice president of Cosentino's Food Stores, is invited to describe the start of his family's business, he offers this anecdote: "I heard a story that [a customer] told me about her mother being sick, and my uncle went to the house, delivered some groceries, put the groceries away, and sat down behind a piano, and sang her a song. That's the kind of service and relationships they built with their customers back in the 40s."

Cosentino refers to the customer service standards that his grandfather, father and uncle established at the beginning of the family grocery business. Today, Cosentino is part of the second generation (including his two brothers, two sisters, and three cousins) in the industry managing a total of 27 stores: 19 Price Choppers, three Sun Freshes, three Apple Markets, and two Cosentino's Markets throughout Missouri and Kansas.

In 1948, his grandfather, Dante Cosentino Sr., was a successful fresco artist in Kansas City. "As his career was growing, he wanted to buy something for his sons and daughters, which is my father, my uncles and aunts," explains Cosentino. "So he bought them a fruit stand on Blue Ridge Boulevard; today that space is a small conventional grocery store for us.

"From the beginning, in the store that replaced the stand, we put emphasis on fresh produce," says Cosentino. Today, all stores undergo a

triple-inspection program — with product first inspected at the grower, then again at the warehouse, and lastly at the store before being displayed for customers.

"Maintaining a high level of quality produce is a priority for our 27 stores," says Cosentino. "We ensure every piece going out for display has met our quality standard. Associated Wholesale Grocers (AWG) is our main supplier, and its local operation here [in Kansas City] gives us quicker access to product needs." The Cosentino family has a 20-plus year business relationship with the supplier.

"We also have two other distributors (Liberty Fruit Company [Kansas City, KS] and Martinous [Pittsburg, KS])," says Cosentino, "which ensures we are never out of stock. A key factor is being able to get something quickly, and having a very effective replenishment program in place allows our stores to receive two or three produce orders a day."

"We're fortunate to work with AWG — one of the biggest wholesalers in the country — which has the capability to move a high velocity of product in and out of that house," says Ron Hurd, operations director. "With that kind of support system in place, there was no need of our own distribution center."

Pride in staff is also a key factor in the successful Cosentino operation. "Sometimes in business it's not the product that makes the difference; it's the people," says Hurd. "Our average tenure for our



There are 19 of Cosentino's Price Chopper banners, one of which is in Kearney, MO, (shown above). In each store, about 80 to 85 percent of the produce departments are refrigerated.

produce managers is 21 years, and each one is here to stay — working with us until they retire. And the professionalism and enthusiasm of our team stands out in every area.”

A prime example of the Cosentino company culture on the produce floor is when Hurd was watching a clerk talking to a customer who said she was interested in Honey Crisp apples, but she didn't know where to find them. “The clerk not only guided her to the display, but he cut the apple open for her to sample,” recalls Hurd. “In the retail business, if you have good people, you will stand out with customers who will want to come back.”

In addition to the attention to quality produce and service, Cosentino's Food Stores cater to the myriad of demographics in each store location. “Every store we develop, we conduct a study of who our customer is and what they're looking for in a grocery store, and we put a store together [based off those observations],” says Cosentino. “I think that's one thing an independent can do is put a store together that fits the demographics.

“For example, our downtown store — it's an urban store,” says Cosentino. “We built it because . . . there's not that many people who live downtown, although that is growing; but our target shopper was the person who worked downtown, so those people were coming in for lunch and maybe dinner to go home.”

The downtown store, located in Kansas City, also offers an online shopping program, which includes produce and other perishable items, called Shop For You. Customers can place orders for pickup service or have items delivered within a 3-mile radius of the store. The location also boasts an 80-foot salad bar with an exceptional range of offerings.

“We're proud of that. It [the salad bar] is the No. 1 item down there,” Cosentino says about the 80-foot salad bar. “It was what the customer wanted.”

Cosentino says all the designs for the new stores are set up so visitors first enter the produce department, and the customer still has visible access to the other fresh departments such as deli, bakery and floral — which he refers to as the “four fresh look.”

“We have very open stores, and we create a shopping pattern as well — that's very important,” he says. “We don't clutter our stores to where you fight to get around displays. We really do like a traffic pattern, so our customers can flow through the store properly and easily.

“I always say when the customers come in store, we wow them enough that they want to come back,” says Cosentino, “and I really believe our produce department does that. I think when people come in and buy our produce, they trust us. They like shopping in our store because of our people. When they're leaving, they want to return.” **pb**

Editor's Note: We thank the Food Marketing Institute for its recommendation of independent members who are recognized for their outstanding produce operation in this series of PRODUCE BUSINESS articles.



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# Education Is Key



SEE HOW PRODUCE STAFFERS USE EDUCATION OR LACK THEREOF TO ADVISE OUR MYSTERY SHOPPERS.

**P**roviding *PRODUCE BUSINESS* readers with anecdotal reportage about what goes on in produce departments nationwide is something we take very seriously and quite frankly, a cover story we never tire of — even after 28 years.

Giving the piece a new twist for 2015, we asked our veteran team of journalists to scout out produce departments, armed with questions about 10 fruits and veggies that are popular with consumers — familiar favorites such as potatoes, peaches and onions.

Our aim is to recreate for readers the one-on-one interaction between writers and produce personnel inside the retailers' four

walls. There is a lot to be learned from these reports — business intelligence that can be applied to training and evaluating employees, as well as improving operations.

While we are not publishing the names of the stores or employees in an effort to protect the innocent, we are delving into not only what retailers want to know, but also what they need to know.

The series of questions that we posed to produce employees, both young and old, and their subsequent answers were vetted through industry experts to assure accuracy.

Experts include (listed alphabetically by company): Jan DeLyser, vice president of marketing, Irvine, CA-based California



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Avocado Commission (CAC); John Gilstrap, manager, Dinuba, CA-based California Cantaloupe Advisory Board; Samantha Daves, director of education and promotion, Maitland, FL-based Florida Tomato Committee; Will Cavan, executive director, Carlsbad, CA-based International Pineapple Organization; Katie Preis, marketing manager, San Jose, CA-based Mushroom Council; Kim Reddin, director of public and industry relations, Greeley, CO-based National Onion Association; Kay Rentzel, managing director, Dillsburg, PA-based National Peach Council; Priscilla Lleras, coordinator, Miami, FL-based Peruvian Asparagus Importers Association; Jason Stemm, spokesperson, Maitland, FL-based Sunshine Sweet Corn Farmers of Florida; Don Ladhoff, retail programs consultant, Denver, CO-based U.S. Potato Board; and Alan Schreiber, executive director, Eltopia, WA-based Washington Asparagus Commission.

As you will see, sometimes the responses we received were right on the money and other times way off base. When the advice given by produce employees is blatantly false, we point that out. In other instances, where the answers are open to interpretation, we'll leave it up to you. Let the debate begin.

## WEST COAST

### STORE 1

#### Leaving The Asparagus Sorting To Customers

As I approach the front of the store, there are no outdoor produce bins and no tables for sitting a spell with a grab-and-go snack from the deli. There is nothing here but wide-open concrete spaces, and a locked cage of propane containers. It seems like the California tradition of displaying produce outside the entrance of the store has been sacrificed to the other tradition of filling that land with parking lots.

I walk past the sign announcing "Flu Shots Available Today" to see if fruits and vegetables might also be on hand. After passing a display with avocados of a discouraging range from firm to soft lumped together, I encounter an amiable young employee who explains the uses of different potato varieties.

"The Russets are for baking, the Yukons are for mashed, and the Yukon Reds for potato salad. People say the Fingerlings

**"In the summer, this would be one of the best tomatoes you ever had, but none of these are very good. They pick them so green to ship them up here."**

are healthier, with more vitamins, but I don't know about that," he says, adding some advice on home storage. "Keep them in the refrigerator. If the skin turns green, peel them, and get rid of the peel."

The asparagus display also has a distressing range of thin and thick stalked bunches thrown together.

"The thin ones cook faster, and the thick ones are chewier. I would go for the thinner ones and cook them fork tender — about five minutes," he says.

I set about sorting the thin from the thick asparagus, a task the store decided to forgo.

The display on the way out shows this store knows that its clientele is looking for just the basics at a good price — oranges, apples, bananas and berries of all sorts, which is not terribly exotic considering that a majority of the strawberries, raspberries and blackberries in the country are grown within an hour of this store.

**THE VERDICT:** The produce worker at this store is more cordial than informative. He does give me some guidance on choosing asparagus, but the store really should sort thin from thick-stalked.

His advice regarding potato refrigeration is incorrect. According to Ladhoff from the U.S. Potato Board:

"Research by the University of Idaho scientists confirms that the optimum sites for home-stored potatoes are cool, dark and ventilated cabinets, closets and similar spaces," says Ladhoff. "However, potatoes should not be kept in the refrigerator at home, as this environment is too cold for potatoes."

### STORE 2

#### A Produce Manager Who Tells It Like It Is

This market is housed in a stately historic building downtown. The chain, catering to a clientele favoring natural and alternative foods, ably meets the challenge of giving the look and feel of a local market by placing appealing posters of coffee and produce in its tall windows.

Inside, the produce department is tucked away in the back, possibly a mistake considering the health-conscious clientele.

An employee fetches the produce manager from the back who proves to be an able guide to the varieties of mushrooms.

"Stick with the white button or Crimini for salads," he advises. "The Shitake and Crimini are good for cooking. The Shitake is particularly good for stir-fry. People eat the Portobello almost like a hamburger. You cut the stem off, sauté, stuff them and eat them on a hamburger bun and stick them in the oven."

I toss a couple Portobellos in the basket and begin to wonder out loud about the cheesy possibilities for the stuffing in our meatless burgers.

I pass by the avocados, which are lethally rock hard.

"If you put them on a counter in a paper bag with a banana, they'll ripen in two or three days," he explains. "If you put these in the refrigerator, they would just turn black."

As I arrive at the tomatoes, the manager picks up a large purplish heirloom variety from the display, cuts small slices for my tasting, dismisses it as too watery, and gives me the bad news.

"In the summer, this would be one of the best tomatoes you ever had, but none of these are very good. They pick them so green to ship them up here," he says. "Starting around July, we get really good tomatoes picked locally the same day they are in the store."

Next he opens a clear storage bag of organic, on-the-vine cherry tomatoes from Mexico. After a sample bite proves them surprisingly tasty, I toss them into the basket next to the Portobellos.

The produce employee tells me that he does not eat tomatoes in the winter unless they are available from a farmer 20 miles away, whom he mentions by name whose greenhouse tomatoes are "the only ones worth eating." Unfortunately, the store is out of this particular good eating treasure

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because the farmer hit a harvest gap.

Because the present store emphasizes locally grown like no other, there is a surprisingly sparse variety of produce — and nary an ear of corn to be found.

More than any national chain, this store features produce grown in the home county, or the next county over. The pineapples, coconuts, bananas and plants remain tucked away in a modest imported fruit and vegetable ghetto.

The produce department walls are decorated with photos and stories of the local farmers supplying the fruits and vegetables.

There is the largest grower in the county, who gave up on conventional produce and turned to organic vegetables and berries as his only viable market. There is the farm started by a group of students from the local University of California campus, which is known for being quirky and experimental in the days before it is overrun by the high-tech imperative.

**THE VERDICT:** This produce manager is as good as it gets. He not only lets us know that good tomatoes must be picked fresh, he goes the extra mile by cutting open an heirloom variety to let us taste the problem. His advice on handling hard avocados is spot on. He also knows the differences among his ample variety of mushrooms, and even sends us home ready to experiment with Portobello mushroom burgers.

## NORTHEAST STORE 1 Keep An Eye Out For Hair Growing On The Potato

This 2,000-square-foot produce department of a large chain is clean, bright and open, and located right inside the front door. I make my visit on a busy Friday afternoon when a lot of moms with children and single men are perusing the store. Two employees are stocking produce but seem to always disappear whenever I have a question.

I wait for someone to reappear and approach a guy restocking bananas. I ask for help with the mushrooms and with a friendly smile he queries, “What are you going to use them for?”

“I’m not sure,” I reply. “Does it matter?”

“Sure,” he says. “If you want them for salad you want the white ones. If you’re

**“If the hair is short, then it’s probably OK. Just cut it off. If it’s really long, then you probably don’t want to eat the potato.”**

going to cook with them get the brown ones.”

“Why?” I ask.

He stammers a bit and then replies, “Well, they’ll turn brown when you cook them. But you want white for the salad.”

When pressed more about the flavor profile, he continues to stall. I give up and instead ask, as I point to the exotics, “What about those weird looking ones? What do they taste like?”

“Those are ‘exotic specialty mushrooms,’” he replies, obviously reading the label. “They’re good, but they can get really mushy if you cook them too much.”

“Is there a best time of year to buy mushrooms?” I ask. “And how long can I keep them?”

He replies, “I don’t know much about where they come from or any of that, but I know we have them all the time.”

I turn to the potatoes and ask, “How long do potatoes last? I bought a bag on sale last week but don’t know if I can still use them.”

“I don’t think they really have a time-frame of how long they last,” he says. “As long as they don’t have the hair growing out of them, you’re OK. If the hair is short, then it’s probably OK. Just cut it off. If it’s really long, then you probably don’t want to eat the potato.”

Pushing the thought of potatoes with hair out of my head, I change focus asking, “So which potatoes are best for baking and which ones are best for potato salad?”

“I’d go with the Russet for baked,” he accurately replies. “For potato salad, you want a Gold or Red.”

I thank him, hunt down another employee and ask, “Can you help me pick out a good bunch of asparagus?”

“Sure,” he says. Walking me to the asparagus display, he grabs a bunch and explains, “You want one with thin stalks and not rubbery.”

“Is there ever a time when I’d want thicker stalks?” I ask.

“They do promote them for grilling,” he says. “But I think the thicker ones are

tougher and they take longer to cook. Some people cut them in half, length-wise but I just prefer the thinner ones.”

Pointing to the bunch he selects, I ask, “How much should I cut off the end?”

He replies, “I normally just cut about one inch off the bottom — the rest is good.”

Some older ladies shopping near us approach and enthusiastically ask, “Are you talking about asparagus recipes? Do you have recipes to give us?”

He smiles but shakes his head no, saying, “Not really. I usually just grill it.”

I point to a token display of white asparagus, asking, “What is that like and what’s the difference with green?”

“I haven’t tasted it,” he says, “but I’ve heard it tastes just like the green. It’s very popular in Germany. It’s just a different variety.” I thank him for his help and leave.

**THE VERDICT:** Both employees are friendly and manage to get some answers right, like the use for potatoes and how to trim the asparagus. However, both lack depth of knowledge about all the products.

The first employee seems to rely on his own experience and even invents some answers with regard to mushrooms and potatoes instead of relying on industry knowledge and specific terminology. The second is more informed, but lacks the ability to provide specific information, which is key to helping spur sales.

## STORE 2 Don’t Even Think About Buying Peaches Now

The question seems innocent enough, and under the circumstances, I am required to ask it. But when I approach an employee of an independent organic market inquiring about peaches, the question is met with the following response:

“You wanna buy peaches in January?” the young man replies, somewhat shocked.

I reply yes, but peaches are not to be found in this store as it sells organic and in-



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season items only. He assures me there is zero chance of finding a good peach in New Jersey at this time of year.

This is an upscale market, not a super-market, much smaller than a chain, but also extremely clean and well organized. The produce department is like something out of yesteryear, one room with a white floor and no aisles.

Fruits and vegetables line the four walls and a cart in the middle holds a few additional items. Another fixture by the registers is home to tomatoes and potatoes. You can stand in the middle of this department and see all the goods it sells.

Everything looks top-notch, and is extremely visually appealing. The potato bin is filled with perfect-looking spuds: Yukon Gold, Red, huge Russets, and yams in the Jewel and Garnet varieties. The half-dozen shoppers share one characteristic — they all are thin, possibly reflecting the clientele that frequents an organic market.

I tell the associate that I am seeking some help in choosing items for a dinner I am making, and that I don't cook often.

"I want to make something homey, delicious, and simple," I say.



He tells me he can help. He is young, in his 20s I'd guess, and at one point I ask him if he is the manager. He says no, he is just an employee but he knows his food. I tell him I am glad to get him to answer my questions.

"If you hadn't gotten me, whoever you talked to would have come and gotten me," he says with confidence but not arrogance.

In regard to potatoes, he tells me I can't go wrong with baking a Russet, and that the ones they have are really good. But if I want to do something a little different, he says the Yukon Golds are delicious and would be simple to prepare: I could boil them and serve them simply with butter, salt and pepper and a bit of a garnish.

The young man also tells me if I really want to go all out, Yukons also make for great soups. I assure him that's a little out of my league. I ask about mashed potatoes, and he says Yukons make for a good mashed potato, though he says Russets are better. The Red potatoes, he notes, would be ideal for roasting, though the Yukons are great for roasting as well. I went with Yukon, saying it was because it offered options.

For tomatoes, the store offers three varieties: cherry, grape and vine. The employee — who, by now, has spent a considerable amount of time with me, but is still enthusiastic and helpful — tells me that unless I am cooking with tomatoes, I should go with grape. The vine tomatoes are delicious, he says, but the grape tomatoes are nearly as good and easier. Instead of cutting, I could simply wash the grape tomatoes and include them in the salad. He also suggests using them as part of an appetizer plate.

"What about the cherry?" I ask. He replies that they're either too big or too small. "They taste good, but decide what you want to be," he says with humor.

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**THE VERDICT:** Comparing the employee's advice to what an expert on domestic peaches has to say, it does



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indeed seem he knows his stuff. Rentzel, for the National Peach Council, agrees that winter isn't the ideal time for peaches.

"The best peaches tend to be available May through September, with the best quality and flavor from June through August when U.S. peaches peak," says Rentzel. "With new peach production in Florida, early season quality in April will extend the window of availability."

Ladhoff, for the U.S. Potato Board, is much more specific with his advice for cooking with potatoes. Obviously, he agrees that Russets are best for baking. In regard to mashed, he says most people prefer fluffy mashed potatoes made from Russets, but others enjoy creamier mashed potatoes made with Red or Yellow potatoes.

He also is more specific in regard to fried potatoes. For French-fried potatoes, Ladhoff says Russets are most popular.

"However, if they are intending to pan-fry the potatoes, any potato type will come out delicious, but many people prefer the waxier potato types like Reds, Yellows and even Fingerlings," says Ladhoff.

The store employee is also on-target with tomatoes, but omits an important piece of advice from Samantha Daves, director of education and promotion for the Florida Tomato Committee, based in Maitland, FL, who says not to refrigerate tomatoes.

"This destroys the flavor and texture and halts the ripening process," she says. "Instead, place your tomatoes in a bowl on your counter where they can reach full flavor and color — a treat for your eyes and your palate."

### STORE 3 Pineapple Plucking

The produce section is tiny but smartly presented at this small, independent grocery store in an upscale Manhattan neighborhood in New York City.

During an early morning visit one recent weekday, employees are hustling to put the finishing touches on attractive displays of fresh fruits and vegetables, where prices are marked on small chalkboard signs attached to the shelving. Many of the items are displayed in shallow baskets, helping to create the produce department's open-air market ambience.

One 8-foot island of shelves includes rows of tropical fruits, such as mangos, papaya, avocados, melons, and on the



corner of the island, pineapples. The Dole-branded fruit is labeled as "sweet pineapple" for \$4.99 each on the chalkboard attached to the shelf. There are eight pineapples displayed in all.

I ask one of the workers if the pineapple I selected is ripe. He plucks one of the spiny leaves from the top, and hands it back to me and nods. I am about to ask him another question but he hurries off.

I decide to ask another worker in the prepared-food area about cooking with pineapple. She suggests going online to search for recipes, although she notes that pineapple can be grilled, and used with chicken, ham, or on tacos with pork.

The store carries a very small selection of fresh corn — maybe a dozen loose ears, with the silk trimmed off, plus a few three-packs with the husks removed. The worker in that area can't answer most of my questions about corn.

When I ask how to tell if it is sweet, the worker says the best corn comes from New Jersey or Long Island in the spring.

Along the opposite wall there is a small but attractive display of asparagus, with green and white varieties in small bundles standing on end. I ask a manager, who is stocking other vegetables, if he knows the difference between white and green asparagus, and he says — after explaining that the white is more expensive because the store pays more for it — that the white is grown indoors.

He does not know where the asparagus comes from, although the label on the

rubber band wrapping each bundle states that the product comes from Peru.

**THE VERDICT:** The staff in this store tried to be helpful, but lack much information. As far as how to tell if it is ripe, the worker did not say anything about the color — pineapples should be mostly green, rather than yellow — but instead plucks a leaf from the crown.

Pineapples are ripe when picked in the field, says Cavan, of the International Pineapple Organization. "Ninety percent of all pineapples sold in U.S. supermarkets come from Costa Rica, which means that by the time they are put on display in the supermarket they are at least 7 days old. Eat as soon as possible and before the pineapple is completely yellow."

Cavan says the way to cut a pineapple is to chop off the crown and the base. Split the pineapple into quarters lengthwise. Cut out the yellow flesh leaving the thorny eyes behind.

The workers did not seem to have much useful information about either corn or asparagus, although the produce manager was correct about the white asparagus getting less light, says Lleras, of the Peruvian Asparagus Importers Association. "White and green asparagus are derived from the same plant, *Asparagus officinalis*. Green asparagus needs light to obtain its healthy green color. White asparagus undergoes a cultivating process called etiolation where it is deprived of light so to remain white," explains Lleras.

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## STORE 4 Help With New Year's Resolution

The selection of goods in this popular, regional independently operated store is expansive. To the left is a refrigerated aisle with vegetables, including leafy veggies, and pre-packaged versions of leafy greens for salads. The section is relatively busy.

On this visit, I am more concerned with the right half of the produce section, and the staff turns out to be pretty helpful. I approach an employee who is stocking potatoes and ask if he could answer some questions about onions, cantaloupe and pineapples. He tells me he isn't an expert, but that he can get the produce manager. I tell him that would be great if it isn't too much trouble.

The produce manager arrives in less than five minutes. I tell her that part of my New Year's resolution is to eat more salads, and I found recipes that include onions, cantaloupes and pineapples, and I have some questions.

She tells me I was in luck with pineapples, as they are on an "excellent" sale. Her answers to my questions match what I already knew. When picking a pineapple, she says to choose one with green leaves, and with some green coloring to it. She also notes that unlike bananas, pineapples don't ripen after being picked, and the sooner you eat a pineapple, the better it will be.

I ask about cutting a pineapple, and she describes the process to me. First, she says "a lot of people store a pineapple upside down for about 20 minutes prior to cutting so that the flavor from the bottom spreads throughout the pineapple."

(This sounded like an old wives' tale to me, but I later Googled it, and found a few sites that confirmed the process.)

In regard to cutting, she tells me to cut the skin off the pineapple, cutting into as little of the fruit as possible. Then, she says I should look it over and make sure no significant pieces of skin are left, and that I should remove those, again leaving as much fruit on the pineapple as I possible.

Her instructions are easy to follow, and when I ask if she happens to have printed instructions, she says they used to, but not anymore, and I can find lots of websites and videos online describing the process.

Next up, I ask about cantaloupe. The manager tells me that I want one that's firm, but not too hard. Buying one on the harder side isn't all that bad, because it will

**"A lot of people store a pineapple upside down for about 20 minutes prior to cutting so that the flavor from the bottom spreads throughout the pineapple."**

ripen in a few days. She also suggests feeling the spot of the melon where it was cut from the vine. That spot should be a little soft and also should have the aroma of cantaloupe.

Next, I ask about onions. She tells me that yellow onions are a classic onion that could be used for anything and are very affordable. White onions, she says, are stronger in flavor and can be used similarly to yellow onions.

She also talks about sweet onions, saying they're less commonly used than yellow onions, but they're delicious. She tells me sweet onions won't make me cry and will also bring sweet flavor to dishes — including salads.

The other onion she mentions is the red onion, which she says is similar to a yellow onion in flavor but somewhat stronger. She says a lot of people don't like them raw, but soaking them in water for a few minutes before serving can weaken their flavor.

I tell her she is a huge help and thank her for her time. She says she is happy to help and wishes me good luck with my resolution for 2015.

**THE VERDICT:** Many of the manager's answers match or complement advice from the experts. In regard to pineapple, Cavan, of the International Pineapple Organization, says you want as much green as possible, while the manager tells me pineapples should have some green to them. Caven suggests a different cutting method, which involves cutting it lengthwise, as opposed to rings.

For onions, Reddin, of the National Onion Association, stresses the seasonality of onions, which the manager doesn't do.

The manager's advice on cantaloupes matches the suggestions from Gilstrap, of the California Cantaloupe Advisory Board.

"It should be smooth," he says of the ideal cantaloupe. "If not, the fruit was picked too soon. The natural netting on the outside should be a golden green color. The fruit should have a sweet musky smell."

## STORE 5 Lost Avocado Sales

On a quiet Tuesday morning, I visit an independent grocer that is part of a large co-op. The 850-square-foot produce department is the first area customers enter, and though the store is old, the department is clean and well lit.

A handful of shoppers consists of older people and a few moms. There are two young men restocking the department. I approach them both, "Excuse me, I need some help with a few produce items. I'd like a fresh pineapple, but I don't know anything about them."

They both smile and the younger replies while pointing, "This is your guy. He knows everything about pineapples."

The second employee motions for me to follow him and leads me to a refrigerated end-cap display of pineapples with the other employee trailing. "How do I know which to choose?" I ask.

"You want one with good yellow color and one that gives just a bit when you put pressure on it," he mistakenly explains. "Do you know how to cut it?"

"Not really," I stammer. "Can you tell me?"

"We have some already cut," he offers. "Or, I can cut and core this one for you right now if you want."

I elaborate, "It would be fun for my kids to help me cut it. So, if you could tell me how that might be better."

Nodding, he explains to first cut off the bottom, then cut the skin off the sides, then cut off the top. He suggests then making two cuts down the center and taking out the core in each section.

At that point, the other employee pipes up, "We also have pineapple corers for sale right there."

I ask if he has any suggestions for using pineapple.

"Not really," he says. "I know there are some recipes with pineapple, but I can't imagine cooked pineapple with anything

else other than ham.”

I then turn my attention to the nearby onions, pointing and saying, “I’ve heard of sweet onions, are they really sweet? Which are they?”

“They’re not as acidic as the other onion varieties,” he replies. “They call them sweet because you can bite into them raw and they won’t taste so pungent. The varieties of sweet change during the year, but most have ‘sweet’ in the name or on the label,” he says. “We have sweet onions all the time.”

“So how do I choose a good one?” I ask. “And, what do I use it for?”

“It should be firm with no blemishes,” he explains showing me.

“Sweet onions are the best for everything you need.”

“Why do I always see red onion in salads then?” I ask. “Are red onions better for salads?”

“No, not really,” contributes the other employee. “Usually they just put them in for the color. Sweet onions taste better in salads.”

I then change direction one last time saying, “I also want an avocado but need

help. I have no idea how to choose an avocado.”

The first gentleman motions for me to follow but then cautions, “I’ll tell you now that none of them are ripe.”

When we arrive at the avocado display, he picks one up and complains, “See how hard they are? You can’t use them for today. They’ll need a few days to ripen.”

“Will they ripen at home?” I ask. “How long will it take?”

“Yes, just leave them on the counter a few days and they’ll ripen up,” he answers. [It actually took seven days for the avocado to ripen on my counter.]

Then he leans in closer to further confide, “The store doesn’t let us put any ripe avocados out. As soon as they start to turn even a little, they make us take them away from the display — even though I know a lot of people come in looking for avocados to use the same day!”

I thank him then add, “I want to use more avocado because it’s healthy, right? I remember years ago avocados had reputation of having lots of fat, but I think that has changed. Do you know?”

He looks at me clueless and replies,

“No, not really. But they’re changing nutrition ideas all the time, so who knows.”

**THE VERDICT:** Despite these employees’ helpful demeanor, their information contains inaccuracies such as how to select a pineapple. They also are unable to offer key information such as a faster way to ripen avocados and recipe or usage ideas for the produce. With such motivated employees it is unfortunate they don’t have a greater base of knowledge to satisfactorily address customer needs.

## STORE 6 ‘If It Smells Rotten, It’s No Good’

My first visit to this chain supermarket on Manhattan’s Upper East Side on a weekday afternoon proves unsuccessful, as no staffers are on hand to answer questions.

Returning for a second visit on a weekday morning a few days later, I find several employees on duty in the produce department, busy stocking displays. The department — spacious by Manhattan standards — features produce items grouped together in island-style displays,



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some still in their cardboard shippers, others stacked neatly on wooden shelving, and others in small freestanding, open-face coolers along with salads and dressings.

While the store is known for its attractive displays and eclectic assortment, it is also widely criticized as being overpriced.

I ask one of the workers how to tell if a cantaloupe is ripe. He picks one of the melons from the display and sniffs the base, then offers it to me.

"It smells sweet when it's ripe," he tells me, noting that all of the fruits on this display are ripe and sweet. "If it smells rotten, it's no good."

He suggests cutting it up in a fruit salad with other fruits when asked about other uses for cantaloupe.

When I ask where they come from, he points to the label, which indicates the melon is from Honduras. An inspection of the labels on other cantaloupes in the display indicates that a few are also from Guatemala.

"We have them all year," he says when asked about seasonality.

The cantaloupes are displayed in a wicker basket that serves as an endcap to an island of tropical produce, which includes avocados, papayas, honeydew melons, bananas and plantains.

At the tomato island, another staffer carefully stacking a display of beefsteak tomatoes offers some good advice.

"You see this color, and how firm it is?" he says, pointing out a light red/pinkish tomato with flawless skin he has just placed atop his pyramid. "That's a perfect tomato. Grab some now before people start squeezing them. People squeeze them and throw them back. That ruins them."

The tomato offerings also include organic tomatoes, heirlooms, plum tomatoes and organic grape tomatoes. The display also features sun-dried half-tomatoes in 8-ounce and 16-ounce plastic containers, as well as fresh garlic cloves, shallots, and one flat of avocados.

I ask what the difference is between the smallest tomatoes and the larger ones, and which ones are best for cooking. He says the smallest ones are good for salads, and the larger ones can be diced to make salsa.

I ask how I should ripen a tomato at home, and he says it is best to buy them ripe and eat them right away, but you can leave them to sit out if they are not ripe.

Across from the tomatoes is an onion

**"You see this color, and how firm it is?" he says, pointing out a light red/pinkish tomato with flawless skin he has just placed atop his pyramid. "That's a perfect tomato."**

display on wooden slats offering four varieties: yellow, sweet, white and red.

I ask my helpful tomato expert why some onions are sweet, and he says it just depends on the type of onion. He says any onion can be eaten raw or cooked.

"It doesn't matter," he says, noting that red onions can be sliced into salads for added color.

Asked about how to tell if an onion is good, he says it should be firm, with not too many soft spots, and notes that all of the onions in the display are good because he just put them out that morning.

**THE VERDICT:** Overall, the produce department employees are helpful, if not completely knowledgeable. They offer sound advice on how to select the best items, and have some suggestions for how to use the items in dishes. Their answers align closely to some degree with the answers provided by the experts.

The advice to sniff a cantaloupe for ripeness is correct, although the store worker does not mention anything about the golden-green color that the exterior should have, nor does he mention that the stem should be flat to ensure it was not picked too soon.

## **SOUTHEAST**

### **Store 1**

### **There's A Party Going On In Here**

In spring of last year, Palm Beach County, FL, residents were able to enjoy their first foray into this national grocery store known for its neighborhood feel.

Every time I shop here (typically on the weekends) there is much hustle and bustle — from the employees to the customers. Even at 3:30 p.m. on a Thursday, staffers can't replenish shelves fast enough, as customers sip coffee, chat with each other, and read package labels while shopping the aisles.

Upon entering the store, an associate greets me, then I stop at the bagged salad and vegetable section. I don't like that everything is bagged or packaged, especially since I regularly make juices and require full selections of leafy greens. I look for asparagus, but don't find any.

I move to an avocado display and grab a netted bag filled with about six avocados. There are plenty of associates stocking and chatting with customers, so I head to the nearest cluster.

"Excuse me, how can I tell if these avocados will be ready for a Sunday brunch this weekend? They feel a little too hard, but I'm not quite sure how to gauge them," I explain.

"Hmm, well, they feel tough, but they'll probably be ready by this weekend," says the employee as he hands back the bunch of avocados.

The customer standing next to the associate jumps in to respond, "you can tell by feeling the top of each one and by the color — they should be soft and a greenish brown."

Another employee, overhearing the conversation, says he found a great photo online that helps him determine avocado ripeness. He pulls his iPhone from his pocket and shows me the picture that suggests popping off the stem and evaluating the color on top of the avocado. Light green is good, darker green is ready immediately, and brown is completely overripe.

A third employee suggests placing them in a brown paper bag on the countertop. Then, he says, the lot I chose should be ready for Sunday.

Even though the first employee to answer my question was unsure of the answer, the subsequent responses reflects a real team effort. I thank everyone and push my cart along to the next section in search for peaches.

I ask the employee with the iPhone if I missed the display of peaches and asparagus. He says, "I don't believe they



are in season, and that's probably why we don't have any out."

Not completely confident, but a decent answer.

I finish the last of what is on my list and make my way to the cashier. As he rings the items, I bag my purchases. The store promotes recycling bags by offering an incentive. Shoppers who recycle bags or bring personal grocery totes can enter a weekly raffle to win a \$25 gift card for future purchases in the store.

As the cashier weighs the bananas, he says, "We have the best prices on these. I was in [another store] the other day, and two bananas cost almost a dollar."

I was buying a bunch of six Del Monte bananas from Costa Rica for 19 cents each, which totals \$1.14. I ask about the peaches and asparagus being out of stock. He says that peaches are out of season and some of their shipments come from up North — where winter weather delayed some produce shipments.

After packing the car and exiting the parking lot, I remember that there is a larger competitor in the next shopping plaza, which is .5 miles away according to GPS. Maybe they will have asparagus and peaches.

The first produce associate at this new store who greets me confirms that peaches are, in fact, out of season and that's why stores are not carrying them now. Regarding my minimal asparagus choice, the associate helps me pick a good bunch and tells me to cut no more than an inch off the bottom of the stems for cooking.

**THE VERDICT:** In regard to avocados, DeLyser, of CAC, says "place the avocado in the palm of your hand and squeeze gently with your hand" to test the fruit's ripeness. "Avoid using your fingertips, which can bruise the fruit. A ripe avocado will yield to gentle pressure."

The avocado assessment was a bit mixed since both customers and associates were involved. Overall much of the information I received is accurate.

Schreiber of the Washington Asparagus Commission explains in *Chow.com* that as soon as asparagus is harvested, it begins to lignify, which means that the interior becomes woody, tough, and fibrous. Schreiber trusts the snapping method. "If you bend it enough to snap where it wants

to, you are breaking it off above the fibrous region."

## SOUTHWEST STORE 1 Pineapples, Mushrooms And Potatoes, Oh My

Even before entering the bustling upscale grocery store that anchors a large strip mall in Plano, TX — produce is front and center. Hundreds of hard squashes are

displayed in a colorful arrangement outside the doors and the price tag is inviting — 77 cents a pound, 22 cents off.

Eying the produce department, I immediately notice several dozen customers on this beautiful Sunday morning while trying to spy an employee who might answer questions about pineapples, mushrooms and potatoes.

Immediately, I notice the pineapples, which are located in the front of the department. I approach a female



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employee who is stacking product. After inquiring about how to tell if a pineapple is ripe, the woman tells me she works in the deli department, but she had once met a pineapple grower so she is comfortable answering my question.

"If the leaves pull out easily, then you know it is ripe. Also the color should be green; the more yellow, the older it is," she says. I move to the next question, but in short order, she points out a nearby "service specialist" to take over. And while

I am not quite sure of her "leaves" directive as it relates to ripeness — and have since learned that it is, indeed, a debatable premise — I readily move along.

"What is the seasonality of the pineapple, and how do I cut it?" I ask the young man. He tells me the seasonality depends on origin, but that I could buy pineapples year-round. As for cutting the pineapple, he demonstrates his technique and tells me to refrigerate it once the fruit is cut.

Now it is on to mushrooms, which are located along the back wall. "What mushrooms offer the best value?" I ask a middle-aged employee. He wastes little time and picks up a container of Dole's sliced, white mushrooms. He also tells me these mushrooms would be best for salads.

As for cooking with mushrooms, he is emphatic. "Choose brown mushrooms, because they have the richest taste and are full of herbal flavors." He also cautions me against refrigeration saying mushrooms last longer outside the refrigerator. "They only last about two and a half weeks in the fridge but much longer outside."

Before approaching the potato section, I notice a large sign touting organic: "Today's Count: 127 Healthy Organic Fruits & Vegetables." Clearly, this retailer has a big organic push.

As I start to run down my list of potato questions, I sense the employee thinks he is spending too much time with me. Sure enough, he quickly turns me over to a junior employee. "What are the best potatoes for mashing?" I ask.

The response is Russet potatoes, which the young man further suggests is best for baking as well. When it comes to roasting, he suggests Yukon Gold and also recommends bagged potatoes for potato salad. "For potato salad, you need strong potatoes, ones that will hold up."

As for new uses of potatoes, the accommodating young man says he has seen a lot of creative chefs carve potatoes into decorative flowers.

When I inquire about eyes forming on potatoes the employee tells me: "Everything on the potato is still growing. You can cut the potato on the top and bury it whole in your backyard. Then you can grow your own potatoes." Interesting advice, but probably not the message-of-choice for the retailer.

**THE VERDICT:** The produce department does a credible job answering questions about pineapples. Even the woman from the deli department seems to know what she is talking about — at least well enough to convince me.

But when it comes to mushrooms — not so much. Concerning the question of refrigeration the produce employee has it backwards: mushrooms do need to be refrigerated.

The information about the best mushrooms to use in cooking also seems

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debatable. Preis, of the Mushroom Council, says all mushrooms are great for cooking, not just the brown varieties. Clearly personal preference plays a factor in determining the best mushrooms for cooking.

When talking potatoes, that employee doesn't hit a bull's-eye either. "Bagged" potatoes are not a variety, but rather a mode of packaging. His other responses are certainly "within the margin of error," but without doubt, this young man could use some additional education about potatoes, especially considering they are a staple in every produce department.

## MIDWEST STORE 1 2 For \$4 Seems To Be The Silver Bullet

I visit a mid-sized, high-end market in suburban Chicago that is part of a chain, and choose to shop mid-morning on a weekday. There are a few middle-aged women shopping when I arrive. The store is clean, organized and well lit.

I don't see a produce department staff member right away, but do come upon my first designated item, avocados. It is an abundant display featuring the large-sized Hass variety. As I pick up one after the other, gently putting pressure with my fingertips to check ripeness, I notice an attractive sign above the display, signaling the avocados are 2 for \$4, so I grab two.

On a mission to find cantaloupes I then walk further into the department. Again, I note an abundant display with ripe-looking fruit. I look through it for a bit, but each one is uniform in size with similar skin. I again note a sign by the fruit that says today's special is 2 for \$4, so I put two in my basket.

It is only then that I notice a produce department employee, a young woman, nearby, pricing a lemon display. I go over to ask her how I can tell if a cantaloupe is ripe enough. She takes one and says, "The best way to do this is to put one hand on the bottom and one on the top, then tap the top. If you can feel the tap from the bottom, it's ripe."

I then ask if the store offers additional types of avocados other than the Hass variety. She says they do not. I inquire if the avocados I have chosen are ripe, and she takes them both out of the bag to feel them with her hand, not her fingertips. "This one is ready to go, but this one



**"This one is ready to go, but this one needs more time to ripen," she says. I ask how that is best accomplished. "Keep them in a paper bag and out of the fridge for a couple of days."**

needs more time to ripen," she says. I ask how that is best accomplished. "Keep them in a paper bag and out of the fridge for a couple of days."

I look around for sweet corn, but don't see any on display, so I ask the employee if there is any available, as I know it is out of season. "We don't have any on display, but I have packaged corn in the back."

I ask, "Do you know if it's sweet corn?" She says, "I'm not sure, but I can go bring you a package." She brings a package with four clean ears of sweet corn.

I ask, "How should this be stored?"

She answers, "You can store it in the refrigerator. Because it's packaged in

shrink wrap, it should last a week." I thank her and go to the register to pay for my purchases.

**THE VERDICT:** The store employee provides accurate insight on storing husked sweet corn, according to Stemm, of the Sunshine Sweet Corn Farmers of Florida. He recommends storing fresh sweet corn in the refrigerator. "If it's not being prepared in the next day or two, the husks should be removed and corn wrapped in damp paper towels or loosely in a plastic bag," he says.

The employee's method for testing an avocado's ripeness is also correct, according to DeLyser of CAC.

Tapping on the cantaloupe was not an accurate way to test its ripeness, but rather the stem where the fruit attaches should be smooth, says Gilstrap, of the California Cantaloupe Advisory Board. "Also, the natural netting on the outside should be a golden green color and the fruit should have a sweet musky smell." **pb**

## YOUR OPINION COUNTS!

Share your thoughts on how retailers support educating their produce staff. Write us at [editor@phoenixmedianet.com](mailto:editor@phoenixmedianet.com) or send us your tweets [#mysteryproduceshopper](https://twitter.com/mysteryproduceshopper).



# A Closer Look At Retail Shrink



This second report in a 3-part series on shrink and waste examines what happens to produce at the retail level.

BY KEITH LORIA

Last month, we reported the staggering amount of produce that goes to waste each year once items are brought home from the store — due to improper storage by consumers and a general disregard for the food shortage facing our world.

Of course, it's not just consumers who are responsible for waste. The USDA estimates that supermarkets waste \$15 billion of unsold fruits and vegetables each year. The main problem is supermarkets often throw away produce that isn't in perfect condition to keep displays attractive and optimize sales.

Victor Savanello, director of produce and floral at Allegiance Retail Services, LLC, based in Iselin, NJ, says the biggest contributor to

shrink in the produce department today is poor handling practices.

"In this day and age, well trained labor that has a level of expertise in handling produce is at its most premium. The result of that labor pool, and the people who manage and staff our departments, is the biggest contributor to shrink in our stores," he says. "The issue of waste is a major concern. In a market where competition is fierce and operation costs are constantly rising, the reduction of shrink is your only way to survive."

Many retailers calculate shrink differently. Participants in FMI's *2014 Food Retailing Industry Speaks* report noted that as an average, annual percentage of sales, shrink accounts for 2.7 percent.

Greg Wank is chairman of Food & Beverage Services Group at Anchin, Block & Anchin, a company based in New York, NY, that provides a comprehensive range of accounting, auditing, tax and advisory services designed specifically to meet the needs of the food and beverage industry. He notes the problem comes from many levels of the food chain and a breakdown occurs when steps are

skipped or there are shortcuts.

"First, the grower raises the most robust produce possible. Next, the sorters in the field need to be realistic about the strength of the product. The regional distributors heavily scrutinize the produce received and only accept product they believe will meet their customers' (the retailers) shelf life needs," he says. "After this, the retailer scrutinizes upon their receipt. Then, the department folks need to properly handle the product when putting on display. Next, the consumer and checkout people need to properly handle the goods to avoid bruising at this stage. Lastly, at home the produce needs to be properly stored."

Justin G. Gardner, Ph.D., associate professor of agribusiness for the Middle Tennessee State University's (MTSU) School of Agribusiness and Agriscience, based in Murfreesboro, TN, says typically when people examine waste, data on costs are calculated, and that's how the economics of food waste are determined.

"But, we would be better served looking at the economic factors that cause waste. Why, for example, is consumer waste so much more than

retail waste?” he asks. “The retailer is trying to earn a profit, throwing away product is throwing away money. The retailers have an economic incentive to fight waste, and they will implement any cost-effective waste reduction strategy they can find.”

Jeanne von Zastrow, director of sustainability and industry relations for the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), headquartered in Arlington, VA, says there are a couple of factors that can help food retailers reduce shrink.

The first is related to food waste. “We found that as retailers get engaged in closely tracking and benchmarking food waste, this puts in protocols and employee training programs for collecting data,” she says. “As employees and stores become enthusiastic and willing to track food waste, they become very aware and want to help save wasted produce. Perhaps stores that typically compete on sales may one day compete on reducing food waste.”

The second factor related to shrink is the cold chain. Controlling cold chain from field-to-shelf is paramount for food retailers.

“The absence of a proper cold chain can cut the life of a product by as much as a week — depending on the specific items. Length of product transportation is also important,” says von Zastrow. “A product shipping from coast to coast, bumping around on trucks impacts the life of a product. The more local a supply chain, the more life in the product.”

## STEPS TO TAKE

By having store-level associates participate

## ■ WASTE AND FOODSERVICE

Janet Haugan, director of marketing for LeanPath, Inc., based in Portland, OR, says the organization helps foodservice operations and restaurants measure and monitor their food waste so they can prevent it in the future. For example, they may be throwing away 20 pounds of peaches due to spoilage, 5 pounds of carrot trim waste, or 30 pounds of overproduced potatoes.

“Everything that’s headed for a waste bin, compost bin or donation facility is first tracked using our automated food waste tracking system,” she says.

“The staff person records what they are throwing away and why, and the system automatically captures the date and time. Chefs and managers log in to a reporting dashboard to see all of the foods going to waste to inform changes to production, purchasing, menus and staff training opportunities that will minimize that waste in the future. The result is typically a

in food waste audits, they can begin to see the waste and get engaged. Electronic-based training for employees and management can also help teach proper cold change and culling techniques.

“One of the biggest challenges for produce managers with waste in the department is the implementation and execution of a proper strategy at the retail level,” says Marion Tabard, director of marketing for Turbana, based in Coral Gables, FL. “Supply chain efficiency, or lack thereof, can lead to incorrect inventory levels, wrong color fruit, and empty displays that all contribute to product shrink. When produce managers are able to define and implement the right strategy, they can significantly decrease their waste.

Savanello believes employee training is the biggest way a retailer can manage waste.

“There are some video training programs you can introduce to help in this area, but in my opinion, the old fashioned way is still the best,” he says. “You need to have qualified experts mentor staff to drive the practices and actions necessary to succeed in deflating shrink in your departments.”

This strategy includes proper handling of products from box to shelf; refraining from dumping products; maintaining a strictly stacked display model; and bringing small quantities of product out of refrigeration at a time, so cold chain disruption is kept to a minimum.

“Cold chain management is a huge part of managing shrink at the retail level,” says

50 percent reduction in food waste in the kitchen,” says Haugan.

LeanPath cites that out-of-home restaurants and foodservice operations throw away 4 to 10 percent of the food they purchase before it even reaches a customer’s plate. Most of this is food waste that can be prevented.

“We encourage our customers to involve their staff members in every stage of the process. Appoint a food waste champion to oversee your program. Create a ‘Stop Waste Action Team’ (SWAT) to meet weekly and review waste to offer strategies to combat it in the future,” says Haugan. “Use recognition and rewards to acknowledge the contributions staff members are making on an individual basis, either by helping to record food waste or providing a good idea for food waste prevention. In a foodservice operation, every member of the team needs to buy-in to the importance of food waste reduction to make your initiatives stick.”

**pb**

Savanello. “It’s probably the biggest contributor to shrink in the department and is huge in certain categories such as value added, mushrooms and the berry categories.”

When it comes to produce marketing, one of the biggest retail problems is “shrink.” In fact, according to a survey of retail industry executives conducted by FMI of the Top 10 problems facing the produce department, shrink was one of the only problems internal company management had a significant opportunity to control.

Ed McLaughlin, the Robert G. Tobin professor of marketing, director of the Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management’s undergraduate program, and director of the Food Industry Management Program at Cornell University, explains that when a retailer establishes a gross margin profile for a particular product, the practice generally involves adding a certain percentage profit to the procurement cost which, in turn, establishes the retail price.

“There are a variety of shrink-reduction tactics — such as ordering green bananas or immature soft fruit — to minimize in-store loss,” he says. “Indeed, such tactics may reduce shrink, but they are likely to reduce sales at the same time. When fruit is not ripe and ready to eat, consumers are unhappy with their purchase and may well leave the category entirely. Similarly, when displays are reduced, stock-outs invariably occur and dissatisfied customers buy other foods instead or abandon the store in favor of a better-stocked competitor. The result is a downward spiral in store-wide sales.”

Additionally, McLaughlin says, some retail losses may be attributed to local ordinances. In St. Louis, for example, lettuce must be sold by weight, not by the head. This leads to closer trim in order to respond to consumer preferences, contributing, therefore, to comparatively higher losses.

## LOOKING INTO THE PROBLEM

The Food Waste Reduction Alliance (FWRA) was created in the spring of 2011 by a group of retailers and food manufacturers to develop a better understanding of the emerging issue of waste. Members include the Grocery Manufacturers Association, the Food Marketing Institute and the National Restaurant Association.

“The problem has gotten to be a social problem and not just a business problem,” says Rick Stein, the Food Market Institute’s vice president of fresh foods. “If you go back 10 years, it was only a business problem, and shrink was a drain on profits. Every retailer

tried to figure out how to fix shrink to make more profits. But now you're looking at all these Millennials who look at sustainability and being Earth-friendly, and it's more of a social issue."

That was a big genesis for the FWRA. Its initial scope of work was designed to focus on manufacturing and processing, transportation, and food sales (in stores and in restaurants) of food products — and how waste could be minimized.

"The ability for retailers to shorten the processes as much as possible — and follow the best practices in cold-chain supply so that a trucker delivers a pallet of produce to the back of a store — someone at the store should be responsible, within the first 5 minutes, to put that pallet in refrigeration, rather than letting it sit on the dock for a day — that's critical for getting the product to the shelf in the freshest manner it can be," says Stein. "Another issue is labor. One of the best ways to provide fresh product to the consumer is when you are putting 'hands on the product' in a constant fashion throughout the day."

So, if you have an apple that's not in great shape — the skin is deteriorating or getting a little soft — it will most likely affect consumers' desire to buy others on the display, because there's an assumption that the other apples will soon look like that one.

"You have to make sure you are culling that product or pulling it off the display, so even though you are adding to shrink, you are actually preventing more shrink, because when that display looks fresh, you're going to sell more product and sell through it quickly," says Stein. "Managing your labor to do that constant culling and detailing is a critical component to keeping a display fresh."

The FWRA also is looking into how produce is handled in the evening. Greens need to be "crisped up" with water and stored, and Stein notes if that is not handled properly, it will add to more shrink.

"You need quality labor in the produce department, and they need to understand what they are doing," says Stein.

## ON DISPLAY

One of the biggest issues with waste in the retail environment concerns the overall look of the product. Consumer standards are higher, everyone wants all products available at all times, and they want them to look perfect. This inevitably creates waste at the retail level as various products get stocked (or overstocked) and go unsold or imperfect product gets culled.

"One challenge is that customers demand

beautiful produce, so with the short shelf life, it is often difficult to sell things that are perfectly good, but not pretty," says FMI's von Zastrow. "If not properly culled, the consumer will not purchase even the good product because poor quality product is on the display, hence more product will shrink."

Additionally many fruits and vegetables are thrown away because their size, shape, or color don't quite match what the consumer thinks these items "should" look like. But for the most part, these items are perfectly good to eat, and buying them helps use food that might otherwise be thrown away.

Tabard says the produce industry and retailers have an opportunity to educate consumers that bad-looking doesn't necessarily mean bad for consumption. If retailers offered these products at a discounted price, they could increase sales and reduce waste.

"Produce managers should display the ripe fruit first and keep the greener ones in the backroom to avoid waste. Additionally, they should ensure the display is always full, this way they also prevent good fruit left in the backroom from getting old," she says. "Something that could be done, but is not often seen . . . retailers could offer fruits and vegetables that

are good for consumption but do not look perfect at a discounted price in a dedicated area of the produce department — could be called 'The Ugly Corner' or 'The Beauty Queens.' This way, retailers could reduce their shrink and also make produce affordable to more people."

Former Trader Joe's chief executive Doug Rauch is aiming to open the Daily Table, a grocery store and restaurant whose mission is to rescue nutritious food from the waste stream, offering less-than-perfect produce that may be past their "best buy" dates or that don't look great, but sold at deeply discounted prices in Boston's Dorchester neighborhood.

Rauch explains to the *New York Times*, the store will prepare meals on site with perishable items that reach sell-by dates, such as milk, eggs, bread and produce. Daily Table will be a nonprofit, so grocers can receive tax deductions for donating food to the store. In theory, grocery stores, restaurants and distributors will supply the outdated and/or blemished food.

Dick Spezzano, president of Spezzano Consulting, based in Monrovia, CA, says one thing that should be considered is offering the not-wanted produce for animal feed, as cows and pigs love the sugary content of produce.

Spezzano also echoes Tabard's point and

## ■ RETAILERS & OTHERS RALLY TO REDUCE WASTE

Many U.S. produce companies are looking to platforms and campaigns that have been successful in other countries at cutting waste.

The U.K. has the "Love Food, Hate Waste" campaign to draw attention to food waste and make people conscious of their choices. The third largest supermarket chain in France, Intermarche, started an Inglorious Foods campaign, which uses storytelling about less-than-perfect produce to get consumers to buy ugly fruits and vegetables.

"Some retailers watch produce quality carefully, pull out less perfect produce and discount it in time for it to not be wasted," says Jeanne von Zastrow, director of sustainability and industry relations for the Food Marketing Institute (FMI), headquartered in Arlington, VA. "Many supermarkets buy a crop in bulk, and donate less-than-perfect produce to food banks."

Twenty-six companies are engaged in FWRA with the goals of helping the industry measure, manage and reduce food waste by benchmarking, developing best practices and fostering collaboration between companies,



NGO's, food relief agencies, and government.

In addition, many of FMI's education conferences, including the Global Sustainability Summit and FMI Connect have had strong speakers on food waste and best practices to help educate food retailers.

The Specialty Food Foundation awarded \$250,000 in grants to support innovative organizations in 10 states that are working to address hunger and improve food recovery.

"With hunger a part of so many lives today, these organizations are playing a key role in addressing the problem in creative ways for the communities they serve," says Ron Tanner, vice president, philanthropy, government and industry relations for the Specialty Food Association. "These first grants will help them refine and expand their important work."

pb

says retailers should follow the lead of a movement in France, where they are marketing “ugly” produce at discounts and finding success.

## TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS

Retailers tried to ameliorate the waste problem with software, but Stein says most of it is a demand-type analysis that helps people write better orders.

“It basically allows retailers to order more properly, which allows less days on-hand, which makes the product fresher,” he says. “If you knew you were selling three cases of apples a day, and your display held five boxes, you would know better than to order 10 boxes.”

Additionally, there is some technology that helps a retailer determine what its strength is by category, so by measuring shrink via category, you can look at steps to determine where there is a hole in the bucket.

“For example, if standard shrink for greens was 4 percent, and your greens were shrinking out at 5.5 percent, you would have the ability to look at cold chain, the rotation, and what’s happening in the evening, so you can do a deeper dive to understand what’s causing it — putting you in line with what you would call standard shrink rates,” says Stein.

## CONSIDER DONATIONS

Lauren Palumbo is chief operating officer for Lovin’ Spoonfuls Inc., a nonprofit organization legitimizing local, immediate, and responsible food rescue. The organization, which is headquartered in Boston, MA, facilitates the rescue and distribution of healthy, fresh food that would otherwise be discarded.

Just this fall, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection enacted an aggressive mandate with the Commercial Organics Waste Ban. It requires companies and organizations producing over 1 ton of food waste per week to divert it from the landfill, with food rescue/donation being the primary and first option.

Palumbo notes a number of things create the shrink which is happening at the store level: stocking too many items to provide as much choice as possible to consumers, poor ordering and forecasting processes, and consumer preference for unblemished products.

“To address these issues, stores need to do a better job of planning and ordering, and consumers need to be educated that imperfect or ‘ugly’ produce still tastes good,” she says. “At Lovin’ Spoonfuls, we address the produce that is getting wasted at the retail level mostly, with some rescue from the wholesale [distribution] and farm [production] levels as well.”

Lovin’ Spoonfuls provides retailers with a safe and efficient method for donating their produce shrink by collecting culled produce (and other perishables) five days a week and creating procedures for upcycling. This way, retailers save money on waste removal fees and can take a tax deduction on the donation of the product.

“When we partner with a store, it’s a shift in procedure from what has been happening for decades, the produce gets culled, the produce gets tossed, maybe composted. When we add a new retail partner, we work with the store to

develop procedures to set the product aside for donation once it is culled,” Palumbo says. **pb**

*[Editor’s Note: In our final installment of this series, we will address ways to reduce waste from the field to the distribution center.]*

## YOUR OPINION COUNTS!

Let the industry know what your concerns are regarding waste and how we all can serve as a solution. Write to us at [editor@producebusiness.com](mailto:editor@producebusiness.com), or send us your tweets @producebusiness #producewaste.

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# Gaining Wholesale Momentum

How an improved economy is providing opportunities for wholesalers to increase their customer base.

BY KEITH LORIA

**A** report by the Department of Commerce released in early 2015 revealed that expectations for retail and food sales will increase nearly 4.2 percent overall in the year ahead, which are numbers that almost match the increase we saw in 2014.

Factors contributing to these increases include lower gas prices (which are expected to drop around 10 percent year over year), lower unemployment rates, and a general feel-good mantra surrounding shoppers.

“Retail sales will be aided by a better job market, higher wages and improved consumer confidence,” says Ellen Zentner, chief U.S. economist with Morgan Stanley. “A greater number of lower- and middle-income house-

holds are starting to see financial improvements.”

The extra money in people’s pockets will most likely result in a rise in shopping, which will affect the entire food chain from growers to wholesalers to retail.

## THE RIPPLE EFFECTS OF IMPROVEMENT

“An improved economy typically affects our business by allowing us to provide a wider range of products to our customer base, so they can extend their offerings to the consumer and capture additional sales on niche items in a more risk adverse environment,” says Julian Sarraino, vice president of marketing and sales for Fresh Taste Produce Ltd., based in Toronto,

Ontario. “It’s something we are seeing more and more as the months go on; a trend that began more than a year ago.”

John Vena, president of John Vena, Inc., doing business in the Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market, says the company has very aggressive revenue goals so an economic upturn is very important to its success.

“We see plenty of opportunity in our area, and we have been hiring at all levels over the past 12 months,” he says. “We increased the size of our custom packing operation for food-service, and we are actively building our fruit pre-conditioning programs.”

Steven Piazza, president with Community Suffolk, Inc., headquartered at the Boston Market Terminal in Everett, MA, says lower





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gas prices are the biggest thing helping the company at the beginning of 2015.

"The gasoline prices have had more of an impact than the overall economy. For the average couple, that extra \$30 to \$40 a week hopefully translates into a dinner out or take-out and that trickles up to wholesale, which trickles up to the market," he says. "People still seem a little shy about how good things are. As far as our strategy, it's to continue to provide good quality at value prices."

Nate Stone is the day-to-day manager at Ben B. Schwartz and Sons, doing business in Detroit, MI. He says that regardless of how the economy is doing, the company continues to be strong, just as it has been the past century.

"We haven't seen a dip in the past 14 years, our sales have done nothing but increase, and mostly dramatically," says Stone. "I don't think the economy has much to do with that, but rather our execution."

One trend that does have an affect on sales, Stone believes, is the public's fascination with eating healthier. "We definitely get a direct benefit from people eating better," he says. "People started to get the idea that high cholesterol diets weren't the way to go, and we happened to be in the business of helping

people become smarter about their personal health and well-being. I think people are eating more produce now than ever, and in some cases they may not even realize it."

Greg Cessna, chief executive of Consumer Fresh Produce, based in Pittsburgh, PA, says the improved economy has a greater affect on its foodservice business than its retail business, but both get a little shot in the arm.

"As the economy improves, the restaurant business improves with it and we get a natural flow and rise," he says. "When you look at the retail side of things, most of the time those companies consolidate and roll up to corporate grocery chains, like Kroger. Most of the time we are serving as an abundant inventory supplier to their inventory. It doesn't tend to matter if the economy is strong or weak."

Cessna admits that while cheaper gas prices are nice, most of Consumer Fresh Produce's fleet runs on diesel, and there hasn't been the same extreme decreases in prices that regular fuel has seen.

"However, when you see the general consumer index spending moving up, we tend to move up with it," he says. "Also, when new housing rises, we move up, though it's tough to draw a direct correlation. Where we see an

impact is when markets tighten up and prices inflate, we don't make higher margins but our net prices improve."

Ken VandeVrede, chief operating officer of Edible Gardens, which provides locally grown GMO free herbs and leafy greens to supermarkets and restaurants, says thanks to the improved economy, the company has more capital to invest back into the company.

"With those investments we have been able to increase innovation and efficiency. We've also been able to continue to expand our footprint and started exploring new possible research opportunities," he says. "With increased production and economies of scale, we can offer better prices to a larger amount of customers. So from that aspect the economy really allows us to grow and expand our footprint quickly."

According to VandeVrede, it's hard to say if the upward mobility of the economy helps generate more profits or cheaper produce for customers, since it depends on what the supermarkets decide to do with markups.

"That's up to each individual supermarket chain, but the economy has allowed us to expand our reach and get into more stores," he says. "We've been increasing our capital



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spending to help take advantage of the better economy. We're buying new equipment, investing in new technology, and hiring on new employees."

## A HELPING HAND

Bill Schuler, president of Castellini Co., headquartered in Newport, KY, notes the wholesale business needs to uphold relationships and keep providing high service standards whether the economy is good or not.

"In the food business, when the economy is good, restaurants are busy, and when the economy is bad, grocery store business tends to tick up because people aren't going out as much," he says. "Our approach, regardless, is to keep pushing meals."

"The better you can help a produce department merchandise their store," says Castellini's Schuler, "the greater opportunity to build more business."

When wholesalers sell more, it's good for everyone in the supply chain, and the brighter economy makes it easier for success.

"At Fresh Taste, we position our customers in a place where they can confidently market their products and break away from their competitors by providing superior quality and economic costing," says Fresh Taste's Sarraino. "Beyond that, it is up to the customer to adjust their profit margins accordingly."

With the improved economy, there are opportunities with marketing innovations that can peak people's interest in unique categories such as specialty produce.

A wholesaler can help, Sarraino says, by providing customers with attractive, fresh tasting product that simply markets itself. "If the consumer enjoys their purchase, they will come back," he says.

Stone says that it's important for a wholesaler to work with a retail partner, and it's a major part of Ben B. Schwartz and Sons' business strategy for increasing volume.

"We take the guesswork out, so we inspect and care so much about what we ship that if we tell a chain we're not sending something, it's because we know it's not good enough for them," he says. "Our game is not to slip something in on anybody. Our whole program is based on pride of delivery. That helps everyone."

Daniel Vena, sales manager at John Vena, Inc., based in Philadelphia, PA, says the company installed new ripening facilities about two years ago, just as the economy was showing signs of getting better.

"Having these facilities allowed us, first of all, to be able to present to potential customers

the full range of green and pre-conditioned fruit in any size, grade or package," he says. "We have found this to be a great 'ice breaker' with new customers. Very simply, we can better serve our customers."

The rooms are specially designed for avocados, which allows the company to control a wider temperature range within the ripening process. Because of that, it has been able to experiment with a few items other than avocados.

"These rooms are the product of a joint

venture with our supplier, West Pak Avocado, Co., and are located in our facility within the state of the art Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market," says Vena of John Vena. "This allows us to take advantage of total cold chain management in a centrally located modern facility."

## INCREASING CUSTOMER BASE

A savvy strategy for wholesalers when the economy is stable is to work on gaining new customers, because retailers are typically

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looking to add to their supply.

“Our track record is typically cited as being our best trait. Over four generations, our company developed a world-class reputation in the industry,” says Sarraino. “We are situated to serve some of the world’s most demanding markets, and we evolved to help our clients reach their goals within these markets.”

In an effort to improve its customer base, Community Suffolk has been experimenting more with social media and email.

“It’s important to stay in touch with your

customer base to give them a head’s up on what’s coming down the line a week or two in advance,” says Community Suffolk’s Piazza. This allows clients to plan menus and specials so advertising is executed in a timely manner.

“We try to keep them [clients] abreast of market conditions and are aggressive with pricing and let them know what’s going to be available when,” says Piazza. “In Boston we have a great ethnic community that loves fresh fruits and vegetables, and we try to keep our prices down and inventory up.”

**“The better you do, the better you service your customer, the greater opportunity to service other customers.”**

— Bill Schuler, Castellini Co.

Piazza says the company has made inroads with some of the smaller inner-city markets catering to their ethnic neighborhoods specifically. For example, a Russian market opened recently, and Community Suffolk negotiated a deal to supply them produce.

In the past restaurants or retailers would have to buy green fruit that they were not sure they would need, and manage the ripening process themselves. Thanks to Vena’s ripening services, now they can have exactly the right amount of ripe fruit on hand all the time, without the risks associated with ripening too much fruit.

Adding ripening services is just one way that John Vena, Inc. has been able to increase the range of services that we can offer our customers, says Vena. “When we started selling Hass avocados more than 25 years ago, it was very small volumes and truly a specialty. With the rapid growth in both supply and demand for Hass avocados, offering pre-conditioned fruit has been a great tool to help our product stand out.”

Cessna notes — since Pittsburgh is not growing at the same rapid pace as some other major cities, and there is little population growth — a great way to gain new customers is to increase the company’s category base.

“We’ll introduce specialty produce items or try to cross-sell customers in the retail sector with new items they can merchandise and offer to various classes of their customer,” he says. “We don’t have a strong outreach to add new customers; there’s a limited universe of opportunities. If we are going to grow, we have to offer more range across the spectrum.”

Schuler says improving the customer base has a lot to do with your past levels of service. “The better you do, the better you service your customer, the greater opportunity to service other customers,” he says.

“We work on improvements in operation and quality of product, turning our inventory faster, and keeping product fresher. We build off of that.”

**pb**

|      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
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| 1966 | 1967 | 1968 | 1969 | 1970 | 1971 | 1972 | 1973 | 1974 | 1975 | 1976 | 1977 | 1978 | 1979 | 1980 |
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| 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 |
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| 2071 | 2072 | 2073 | 2074 | 2075 | 2076 | 2077 | 2078 | 2079 | 2080 | 2081 | 2082 | 2083 | 2084 | 2085 |
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# south florida

# RETAIL SCENE

BY LINDA BROCKMAN

## Fresh Off The Farm

### BEDNER'S FARM FRESH MARKET

12033 U.S. 441,  
Boynton Beach, FL 33473  
(561) 733-5490  
bedners.com

Hours of operation:  
Mon. - Sat.: 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.;  
Sun.: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

●  
**Retail Category: Farmers Market**

Marie Bedner and her family kept hearing the feedback from customers who wanted to

buy fresh from the farm. So five years ago, the family opened a farmers market on the grounds of their 80-acre Boynton Beach farm and began selling directly to the public.

"We saw the need for a local market," says Bedner, who married into a family of farmers. Now, Bedner's Farm Fresh Market is the first farmer-owned and-operated green market and destination in Palm Beach County.

"Anything we can grow, we do," says Bedner, who oversees the wholesale and retail operations. And "anything" encompasses quite a lot — corn, green beans, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach, kale, radishes, cucumbers and eggplant.

The Bedner's family also farms an additional 1,500 acres throughout Palm Beach and Martin counties. These plots grow cucumbers,

sweet corn and peppers to sell wholesale in South Florida, up the East Coast, and into Canada. There is also a "U-Pick-It" field where customers can choose their own peppers, tomatoes and strawberries.

Whatever Bedner's doesn't grow comes from neighboring farms. Items such as herbs are from Pontano Farms and Asian vegetables are from Yee Farms, both of which are located in Boynton Beach. The market buys exotics like jackfruit and star fruit, when in season, from local farms as well. Bedner's apples come from out of state.

Bedner's father-in-law, Arthur, a farmer who came to South Florida from Bridgeville, PA, in the early 1950s, started the farm. Today, the business is run by Marie, her husband Steve, and Arthur's other two sons, Charlie and Bruce



Jesse Bedner, fifth generation farmer, helps pick peppers in the "U-Pick-It" field.

— who advanced the business with current technology. Also involved is Arthur's grandson, Jesse, who is the fifth generation of Bedner farmers.

Bedner's strives to grow a quality vegetable, free of GMOs or pesticides, at a reasonable price. "What makes us different is that we are the actual farmer, and we welcome customers into the fields to see where and how their produce is grown," says Bedner. "It gives them a better understanding of what it takes to grow a stalk of corn."

Bedner's 80 acres is strictly dedicated to supplying the farmers market. "We pick it fresh daily, so it goes straight from our field to your table. It's as fresh as you can possibly get." Out of the 300 types of produce at the market, 90 percent is home grown, says Bedner.

The farmers market is open seven days. On the weekends, Bedner's becomes a destination farm. "We're kind of far out, near the Everglades, so we realized we would have to make the farm more of an event or destination — agritourism is the new term." So on the weekends, Bedner's has hayrides, a petting zoo, homemade ice cream, a barbecue and pony rides, "so a family can make a day of it."

The market supports its neighbors, selling locally produced chips, breads, pies, and Amish dairy products. Bedner's Market also sells its private label line of bottled jams, jellies, relish, pickles and salad dressings.

---

## Special Care From An Italian Nonna

### DORIS ITALIAN MARKET

Five South Florida locations: Pembroke Pines, Sunrise, Coral Springs, Hollywood and Boca Raton  
(954) 921-9647  
Dorismarket.com  
Hours of operation:  
varies by store

●  
**Retail Category: Independent Market**

---

Throughout the past 10 years, the produce section at Doris Italian Market grew to be the chain's second highest volume department right behind meats. It's often one of the reasons customers shop at Doris, an Italian specialty market that also sells fresh meats, prepared foods, baked goods and gourmet packaged products.

Jacqueline Alfano, marketing director for the family business, credits Doris' produce

purchasing for its success. "We get deliveries of produce on a daily basis. We buy from local farms as well as local distributors. We make sure everything being sold at Doris is fresh. If we can't go to the farms ourselves, we hand inspect the produce when it comes in to ensure the quality is at par to what we sell."

Doris Market gets its peppers, cucumbers and eggplant from Pero Family Farms in Delray Beach; fresh herbs such as basil, dill and cilantro from Pontano Farms in Boynton Beach; and green peppers, poblano peppers, eggplant and grape tomatoes from Whitworth Farms, also in Boynton Beach.

A wide variety of customers shop at Doris, from those venturing into an Italian market for the first time to an older Italian Nonna who knows exactly what she wants. If customers are looking for a particular product, they should ask, advises Alfano, who says her staff is very knowledgeable and

accommodating.

"We focus on customer service," she says. "Ask one of our produce clerks to hand pick a perfectly ripe melon or vine-ripened tomatoes. We have staff on the sales floor always available to answer any questions or fill any requests customers may have. It's more personalized than the larger supermarkets."

The variety of produce depends on the demographic of each location. For instance, Pembroke Pines has a higher Latin population, so that store has more fruit from Latin and Caribbean countries.

Doris Market began as a single location in Hollywood in 1947. The market was named for the original owner's wife. When Alfano's Sicilian-born grandfather, Carmelo, bought the market in 1982, the name was well known in Hollywood, so he kept it. When the business expanded, Doris already had a following so the name stayed.



## Where Key Lime Pie Rules

### BOB ROTH'S NEW RIVER GROVES

5660 Griffin Road,  
Davie, FL 33314  
(954) 581-8630  
Newrivergroves.com  
Hours of operation:  
8 a.m. - 5:30 p.m./Daily

Retail Category: Farmers Market

"A society grows great when old men plant trees in whose shade they know they shall never sit." At Bob Roth's New River Groves, a sign with this message sits on the threshold separating the parking lot from a small park that welcomes families visiting the market and grove. The Greek proverb is a favorite of Roth's. His father, Al, now 104, enjoyed the shade longer than most, and is one of the best cases for the benefits of fresh produce.

It's likely that Bob Roth inherited an affection for citrus groves from Al, who built his real



PHOTOS BY LINDA BROCKMAN

estate office on a small orange grove in 1960. In 1964, a few miles east of his dad's space, a 20-year-old Bob opened his New River Groves

on 5 acres. Back then, the town of Davie was a rural, western-themed town of horse trails and rodeos. According to the town's website, today



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PHOTOS BY LINDA BROCKMAN

it is the most populous town in Florida with more than 90,000 residents.

For 50 years, folks have been coming to Roth's fruit stand, right off the Florida turnpike. Now, instead of citrus, the grove has mango trees that yield enough fruit — thousands of pounds — from June to September to keep Roth in mangos year-round. His tropical land also grows coconuts and jackfruit.

Now, Roth gets his citrus from a grove in Indian River, less than 2 miles north, and his strawberries and tomatoes are from local farms in Homestead (about 50 miles south).

In addition to seasonal fruit, New River Groves has a nursery, a vendor on-site selling baked goods, coffee and sandwiches, as well as a smoothie bar selling juices, shakes, smoothies and Terry's Famous Key Lime Pies.

"I started making shakes when I was 15," says Bob's daughter, Lisa, who grew up in the business with her brother, David. The family home was an apartment above the farmers market, until Roth built a home on the southern end of the property, where his kids grew up.

There is also a basket business that sells the quintessential Florida goodies such as key lime cookies, chocolate covered coconut candy, orange blossom honey, bottled key lime juice, orange chocolate fudge, guava jelly, even stone crab claws, and of course, citrus.

Roth credits his late wife, Terry, for keeping the business going strong while groves all over Florida suffered. Forty years ago, she started making pies and shakes to offer customers something more. The pies became such a hit that the Roth family even lobbied successfully

in Tallahassee to make the key lime pie the official state dessert in 1988.

"She put us on the map," Lisa Roth says about her mother, who died in 2002. "She made New River Groves a destination because of the pie. Nobody else was doing that. My mom started it."

Today, Lisa and the staff at the market continue Terry's legacy of making key lime pie, along with coconut cream, chocolate turtle, banana cream and fruit pies — and the fans keep coming.



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## Going The Distance For Local

### NORMAN BROTHERS PRODUCE MARKET

7621 SW 87 Avenue

Miami, FL 33173

(305) 274-9363

Normanbrothers.com

Hours of Operation:

Mon. - Sat.: 8 a.m. - 7 p.m.

Sun.: 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.

●  
**Retail Category: Farmers Market**

Norman Brothers Produce began as a roadside stand in 1965 on 87th Avenue in Miami. Eventually, it moved into a small, covered open-air market — a shell, says Kim Booth, whose parents and grandparents bought the 5 acres where the market stands today from brothers William and L.J. Norman in 1980.

“We grew up farming,” says Booth, whose father, David Nelson, still works at the store at age 75. So do her three siblings. “We work so hard, but we are doing what we love.”

Booth’s family decided to keep the Norman Brothers name since it was already known in the community. Today, the store, which spans more



Kim Booth, produce manager and co-owner, is part of the third generation of the family-owned, Norman Brothers.



PHOTOS BY LINDA BROCKMAN

than 29,000 square feet, sits on 5 acres of land. It employs 72 people, with another 15 behind the store farming the trees that yield avocados, mangos, carambola and lychee fruit.

The rest of the produce comes from other local farms, mostly in Homestead, and citrus from Indian River, FL. Booth gets tropical fruits from New Limeco in Princeton, FL; lettuces and wheat grass from Health and Happiness Farm, and squash, zucchini and green beans from Torbert Farms, both located in Homestead.

“Why would you buy avocados from another country or state, if you can grow it in your backyard and enjoy it fresh? Our government has such high standards for produce. Foods from other countries don’t have the same standards. We eat local and buy local and support local businesses,” says Booth.

Norman Brothers sells 250 varieties of produce (in peak season), along

with meats, deli fare, juices, baked goods, and gourmet gift baskets with cheese, wine and fudge. “We evolved with the community,” she says.

“At first, we only sold what we grew. One day, a customer told my father: ‘If I could get a chicken here, I would do all my shopping here,’ and it grew from there.”

In the center of the store are aisles of produce. Fruits and vegetables from local vendors are marked with green signs. “All of my regular customers know that and they look for local,” says Booth. From the fall to the spring, about 65 to 75 percent of Norman Brothers produce is local.

Juan Badia, who has been shopping at Norman Brothers for 30 years, appreciates the fresh, local produce — and the warm reception. Knowing the kind of wine he likes, an employee brings a bottle from a new line that she thinks Badia will enjoy.

“They treat you like family. They go to great lengths to get local produce, and I can’t get local in other places. It is one of a kind,” says Badia.



---

## An Homage To Produce

### SAM & PHILLY'S

16790 SW 177 Avenue (Krome Ave.)

Miami, FL 33187

(305) 233-FARM (3276)

Samandphillys.com

Open Mon. - Sat.: 8 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.

●  
**Retail Category: Farmers Market**

---

Do 1,000 people visit Sam & Philly's every Saturday because the U-Pick plot and farmers market is closed on Sunday, or is it closed on Sunday so the staff can recover after 1,000 customers? In either case, the staff and owners of Sam & Philly's earned their day of rest.

During Florida's peak season, local farmers have fresh, beautiful produce to show off and kids are itching to do something fun at the end of the school week.

Sam & Philly's annual strawberry festival in February attracts 2,000 people. Come July 1, it quiets down, but for now, each Saturday siblings Susie Accursio-Ebersole and Sam Accursio Jr. tempt Miami families to pick strawberries and tomatoes, ride ponies, navigate a corn maze, and sample freshly baked breads and jams.

Their father, Sam Accursio Sr., moved to Homestead from Boston in 1943, and began farming in 1948 and married Phyllis ("Philly") in 1950. Farming became his life's work and passion, and he instilled the importance of that work in his children, says Accursio-Ebersole. She and her siblings decided to take the land they inherited from their folks and turn into a living legacy — a farm called Sam and Philly's.

The elder Accursio left the family business, Sam Accursio and Sons Farms, to Sam Jr., while Accursio-Ebersole runs the market, in its third year. The farm is a total of 284 acres, on which Sam & Philly's is located. The siblings fenced in the 10 acres for a shopper's u-pick section, a market, and a grassy area "where people bring blankets and chairs and sit, while their kids are free to run around in the fresh air," she says.

During growing season, strawberries, zucchini, squash, green beans, tomatoes, cabbage, eggplant and onions are farmed fresh in Sam & Philly's own backyard.

Crops are picked daily and stocked in the market. Seventy percent of the produce sold at the farmers market is local, within 50 miles of the farm. Corn comes from Homestead, FL-based Borek Farms; mamey, arugula and

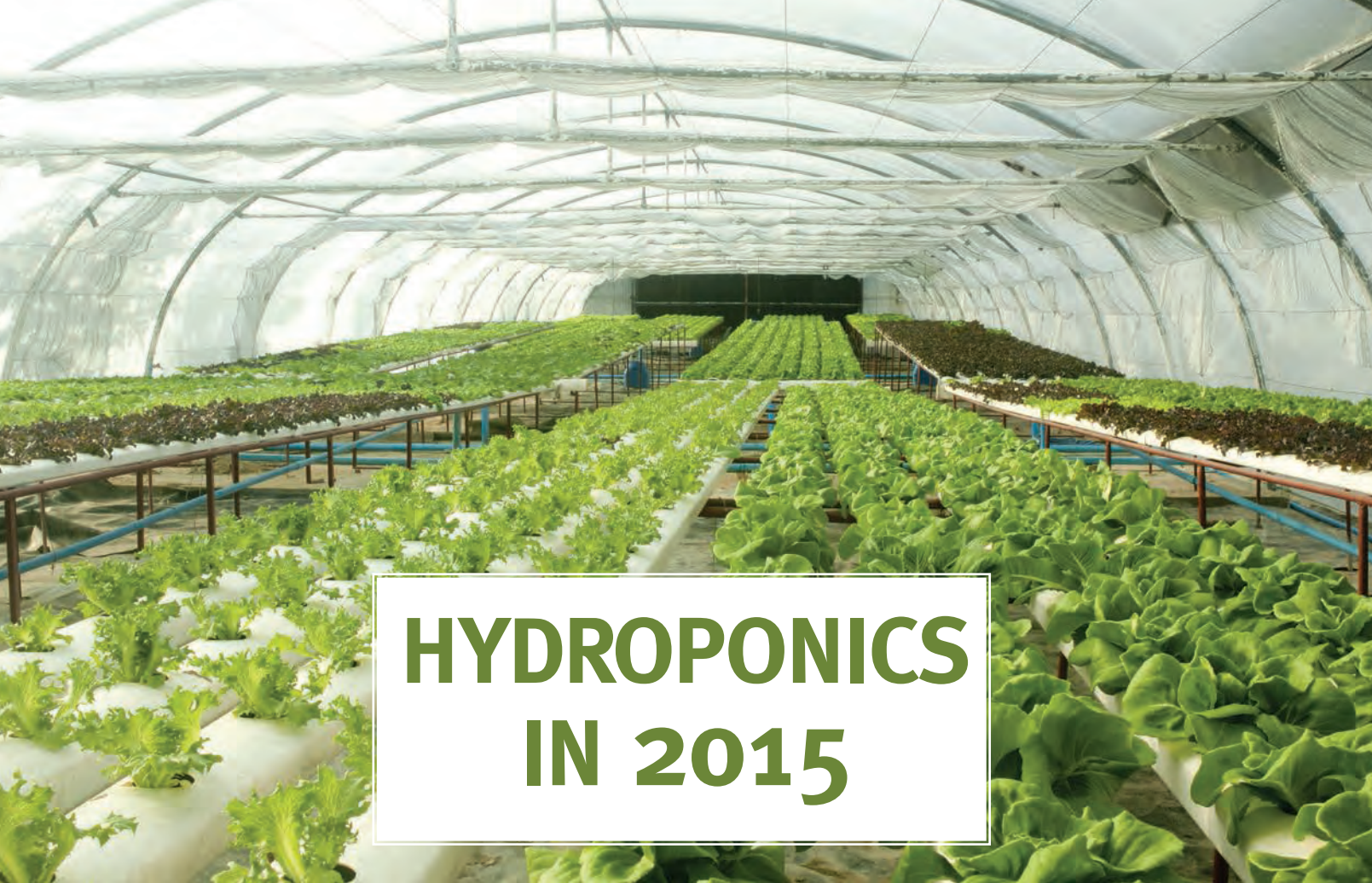


heirloom grape tomatoes from Health and Happiness Farm (also in Homestead); peppers come from Delray Beach, FL-based Pero Family Farms; and citrus from farms in Fort Pierce, FL.

The store is 2,000 square feet, which includes the kitchen where homemade breads are baked and fresh fruit shakes are concocted. "There are the classic flavors and awesome

unusual shakes, like toasted coconut — my personal favorite — and many others. I like to develop new shake flavors all the time," says Accursio-Ebersole.

The market also sells its homemade cinnamon roll monkey bread, brownies, cookies and pies. Salsa and bruschetta toppings are made from the farm's own fresh tomatoes. **pb**



# HYDROPONICS IN 2015

**C**ommercial growers are flocking to hydroponics like never before to grow produce, but this isn't a new concept; in fact, the ability to grow plants in nutrient solutions (water mixed with minerals or water mixed with fertilizers) with or without the use of artificial environments to provide mechanical support has been around as long as history has been documented.

Howard M. Resh, author of *Hydroponic Food Production*, detailed its history in his book. "The hanging gardens of Babylon, the floating gardens of the Aztecs of Mexico, and those of the Chinese are examples of 'hydroponic culture,'" he wrote. "Egyptian hieroglyphic records dating back several hundred years B.C. describe the growing of plants in water."

Of course, there have been large innovations in hydroponics over the centuries, as more in the industry understand its power and importance. The growing method also helps to supplement areas that might have diminished farmland or less fertile land to feed the world.

Minimal diseases, pests, salinity, poor structure and/or drainage are the typical advantages of hydroponics for growing produce as compared to field-grown produce. Addition-

## Are consumers finally catching on?

BY KEITH LORIA

ally, with more farmland making way for developments, this growing method can be done even when no suitable soil exists, regardless of the ambient temperature and seasonality.

Doug Kling, senior vice president and chief marketing officer of Village Farms International Inc., headquartered in Heathrow, FL, says the company owns and operates 240 acres of high-tech, hydroponic greenhouse and also has marketing agreements with high-tech, hydroponic greenhouse operations in Canada and Mexico.

"Hydroponics is a very sustainable, environmentally friendly, and a safe method of farming," he says. "It's great for water conservation, good for land conservation and offers a growing environment that speaks to the needs of the future in terms of growing more and using less land."

Renee Cooper, marketing manager for Hollandia Produce, L.P., headquartered in

Carpinteria, CA, says hydroponic greenhouse farming is far more resource-efficient than field-grown crops, as growers can nurture and protect their crops in ways that conventional farmers cannot.

"At Hollandia Produce, our sophisticated greenhouse environment allows us to control key inputs such as light, temperature, humidity and nutrient uptake," she says. "We also can protect our crops from external factors such as drought, rain, pest infestation and disease that affect crop growth and adulteration. These factors, and some of the industry's latest trends including the use of all-natural root media and consumer demand for unadulterated produce, are helping to increase the use of hydroponic greenhouse farming globally."

## THE GROWING PERSPECTIVE

While hydroponics is catching on with growers, consumers have not been as quick to adapt. This is a challenge that many in the industry face in the 21st Century.

Gotham Greens is a Brooklyn, NY-based urban agriculture company founded in 2009 with the mission of growing premium quality, local and pesticide-free produce in cities. In just five short years, it quickly became a worldwide

pioneer in the growing urban agriculture industry and is considered one of New York State's leading greenhouse growers.

In 2011, the company built its first greenhouse in Brooklyn's Greenpoint neighborhood, the first facility of its kind in the U.S. In early 2014, Gotham Greens opened its second greenhouse on the rooftop of Whole Foods Market's flagship Brooklyn store in Gowanus and is the first example of a commercial-scale greenhouse integrated into a supermarket, says Viraj Puri, co-founder and chief executive of Gotham Greens. "Perhaps the biggest challenges facing urban agriculture are the lack of safe, fertile, arable land and the cost of real estate. As a result, Gotham Greens elected to focus on hydroponics, which does not require the use of soil and can be extremely productive and space efficient."

Gotham Greens currently operates more than 35,000 square feet of greenhouse and grows more than 300 tons of salad greens and herbs annually for the New York City market. Plus, it will be expanding with its third and fourth farms opening later this year in Queens and Chicago, IL, measuring 60,000 square feet and 75,000 square feet, respectively.

Puri says almost anything can be grown hydroponically, but Gotham Greens chose to focus primarily on leafy greens, lettuce, culinary herbs and tomatoes using organic, non-GMO seeds, as these vegetables are highly perishable and are difficult to find locally year-round.

"Industry wide, the most commonly grown greenhouse crops include tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers," he says. "It should be noted that growing using sophisticated controlled-environment agriculture and hydroponics on a commercial scale requires a high degree of technical skill including both horticultural and engineering experience."

Marc Oshima, chief marketing officer and co-founder of AeroFarms, based in Newark, NJ, says there's a great amount of pressure on traditional agriculture due to water shortages, disease and other typical problems with growing in the field.

"We typically use 90 percent less water, and we manage the growing much more efficiently," he says. "There are a number of key things we are doing to help address the global food shortage, and we are leveraging science and innovation to cultivate a sustainable growing environment."

Because AeroFarms can provide the perfect amount of light and the exact nutrients, photosynthesis is done much easier in a controlled environment.

Hollandia Produce has been growing crops hydroponically since 1986. Over the past 17 years, its focus has been on growing conventional and certified organic brands of living lettuce and leafy greens.

"While one can grow almost anything hydroponically, some vegetables will thrive in hydroponic systems more than others. What will grow best depends on the particular system used," says Cooper. "Hollandia Produce uses a Nutrient Film Technique (NFT) system, and it works best with plants that have long root systems. This circulatory system allows nutrient-based water to be continuously pumped into the channel, while the roots dangle in the solution."

## THE CONSUMER CONNECTION

While this vitamin-enriched produce is gaining a lot of attention in the industry, there's still a question as to whether consumers are interested and are willing to pay a little bit more for the product.



**EDUCATE**

**INNOVATE**

**CREATE**

**"Modern consumers are more health conscious than ever before. They are worried about the content of their food, its origin, freshness, and safety."**

- Deloitte Report: The food value chain - A challenge for the next century © 2013

Our industry has been challenged as never before to meet more demanding consumer expectations and to perform in volatile conditions. We must **EDUCATE** ourselves as to the latest opportunities to grow; we must **INNOVATE** constantly so as to remain competitive, and we must **CREATE** new consumer experiences that satisfy the mind and stir the soul.

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From what Village Farms' Kling has seen, today's consumers are interested in hydroponics because of a growing regard for sustainability and the environment.

"Hydroponic growing is a very safe method. It's more environmentally friendly in terms of land-use and preservation," he says. "These are all concerns that consumers and retailers have, and is a reason that there has been an increase in the hydroponic product."

Generally speaking, says Cooper, consumers who initially began regularly purchasing organic produce and hydroponically greenhouse-grown produce tended to be more affluent and educated than conventional, non-organic produce buyers.

"However, as living lettuce (heads with the roots still attached) continues to gain more mainstream awareness, our target market is broadening," she says. "Customers recognize that although our products may cost a bit more, they deliver more value because of their lasting freshness and less waste."

Gotham Greens has seen similar increases in popularity. "Our product has been very well received since we launched in the marketplace in 2011. We noticed that consumers increasingly care about how and where their food is produced," says Puri. "They are demanding more integrity and transparency in food production. Urban farming is an extension of that. It allows urban consumers to get a little closer to the food they eat and connect with it in ways that were not of as much interest or even possible in the past."

Hydroponic customers are often people who care about eating locally and who want a fresh, tasty and nutritious product. According

## "Customers recognize that although our products may cost a bit more, they deliver more value because of their lasting freshness and less waste."

— Renee Cooper, Hollandia Produce

to Puri, Gotham Greens products are competitively priced and on par with other leading local and national organic brands.

"Our products are labeled to reflect they are sustainably and greenhouse-grown using Non-GMO seeds, renewable energy and pesticide-free growing conditions. We don't just blindly talk about being 'local,' 'sustainable' and 'natural,'" says Puri. "While our business is about those things, we care about what those things stand for: flavor and nutrition, preserving water and soil resources, biodiversity, reducing harmful chemical use in food production, fair treatment of workers, and spending our dollars closer to home."

Hollandia Produce's Cooper says consumer interest in purchasing organic produce is definitely on the rise (in general) and within the business as well. "Due to the increasing demand, we are in the process of expanding our organic footprint with the addition of new greenhouses at our Oxnard, CA, facility," she says. "Upon completion of our facility expansion, we expect to double our output of hydroponically greenhouse-grown organic produce."

One way to get consumers interested, says AeroFarms' Oshima, is to focus on taste.

"What we think consumers are excited about are the flavor profiles," says Oshima. "We spent the past 10 years focusing on optimizing our growing recipes for taste, texture, nutrition and yield, and that creates a lot of excitement."

### THE GROWING CYCLE

Since hydroponics grow in climate-controlled greenhouses, using a high level of technology, they're able to grow in almost half the time of conventional field agriculture.

"We're able to supply our customers with fresh and hyperlocal produce 365 days a year," says Puri. "Our greenhouse facilities are about 20 times more productive per acre than conventional farms in our region. Our current 35,000 square feet of greenhouse space produces the equivalent yields of a 20-acre farm. By the end of 2015, we will be producing close to 1,000 tons of fresh, local, pesticide-free produce each year."

Gotham Greens uses unique and proprietary blends of mineral salts and micronutrients including nitrogen, potassium, magnesium, selenium, etc., many of which are OMRI (Organic Materials Review Institute) certified.

Hollandia Produce's state-of-the-art greenhouses can control light, temperature, humidity, and nutrients. By controlling these factors, it can increase yields, shorten crop times and produce a uniquely uniform high-quality product on a year-round basis.

"Hydroponic greenhouse production of lettuce generally produces 3.55 times more lettuce per acre than conventional field growing methods — thereby reducing the amount of arable land necessary for production," says Cooper. "Our hydroponics system will conserve from 66 to 84 percent of the water that would be used if the lettuce were grown in the field — depending upon the region, soil structure, time of year and irrigation method used."

The continuing locavore movement is a key challenge for both consumers and retailers. Competitive pricing challenges retailers, while consumers grapple with less consistent availability, quality and uniformity. These are all key attributes that hydroponically grown produce routinely delivers.

### ■ THE RETAILERS' ROLE IN HYDROPONICS

When dealing with produce grown using hydroponics, it's important retailers take the time and effort to distinguish the produce and highlight the pros.

Marc Oshima, chief marketing officer and co-founder of AeroFarms, based in Newark, NJ, says with hydroponically grown produce, retailers should take advantage of consumers' love for local foods.

"Local is a powerful aspect," he says. "We highlight the idea that it is responsibly grown with no pesticides and the fact that we use less water on our labels, and retailers should be making that known to customers as well."

Viraj Puri, co-founder and chief executive of Gotham Greens, based in Brooklyn, NY, suggests retailers inform customers about how

and where products are grown. Puri cited Whole Foods Market's Responsibly Grown Rating System, "which rewards farmers who work hard to protect human health and the environment, while providing customers with an at-a-glance rating for sustainable farming practices," he says.

With the increasing popularity of hydroponically grown organic vegetables, Renee Cooper, marketing manager for Hollandia Produce, L.P., headquartered in Carpinteria, CA, recommends retailers consider creating destination sets specific to hydroponics.

"Moreover, setting competitive price points at retail for hydroponic organics will likely impact adoption and consumption rates," she says.

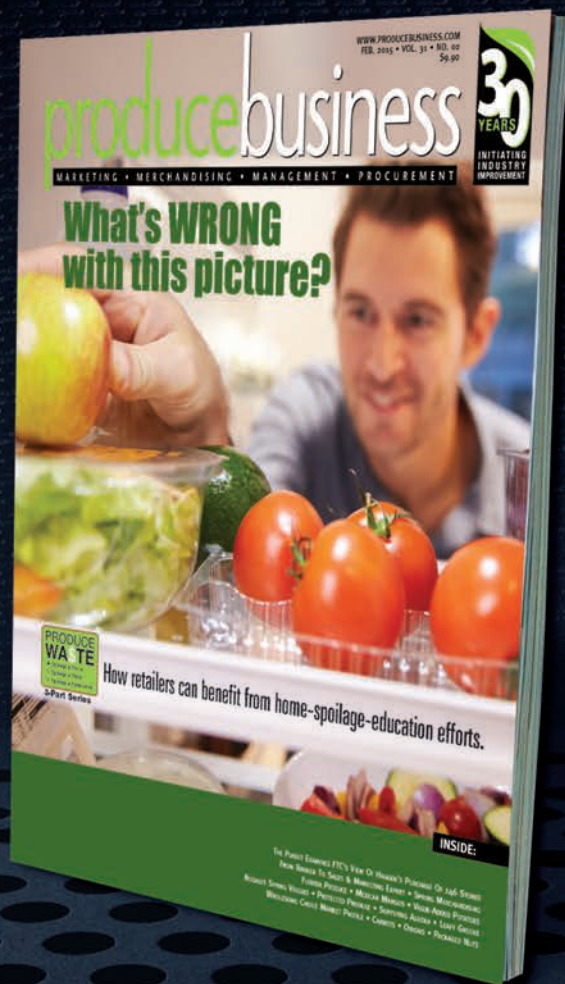
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# KEEP ON TRUCKING: Four Big Factors Affecting Transportation

Industry fragmented, but still crucial  
for year-round retail deliveries.

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

**T**ractor-trailer trucks are the lifeblood of the produce industry supply chain in the U.S. In fact, refrigerated trucks transport 94 percent of domestic fresh fruits and vegetables from packaging facilities to grocery stores across the country, as cited in *How Transportation Costs Affect Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Prices*, published November 2013 by the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, in Washington, D.C.

“Truck transportation offers timely delivery, which is critical for perishable product,” says Paul Kazan, president of Target Interstate Systems, Inc. in Bronx, NY.

“Trucks are able to make more than one pick up, such as from four or five growers in a particular area. People like the comfort level of knowing there is a driver on board with their load.”

Truck transport of fresh produce nationwide works like one big well-oiled machine. Yet, it's far from a single entity. In fact, it's highly fragmented. There are more than 500,000 trucking companies in the U.S., including owner-operators, small, midsize and large fleets. Ninety percent of these companies have 6 trucks or less and 97.2 percent have 20 trucks or less. What's more, refrigerated trucking companies are even smaller and dominated by owner/operators and companies with less than five trucks, according to *Transportation: The New Critical Control Point in Produce*, a presentation delivered by Ken Lund, vice president of operations for the La Canada, CA-headquartered Allen Lund Company, at the 2014 United Fresh trade show.

“We use 23,000 different trucking companies to move some 250,000 truckloads annually.



The average truck carries 10 loads a year for us and is owner-operated. They are small businesses, and a single claim could wipe them out, so they need to care about what they are carrying," says Lund.

This makes truck drivers one of the most important factors in supplying retailers with a consistent year-round supply of produce.

## 1. DRIVER SHORTAGE

The U.S. is currently short an estimated 30,000 truck drivers. This deficit is projected to grow to 239,000 by 2022, according to the Arlington, VA-headquartered American Trucking Association.

"Getting enough qualified drivers is the biggest issue facing our industry," says Stephen Armellini, vice president of sales for Armellini Logistics, in Palm City, FL. "Why? There are several reasons. For example, their CSA — (Compliance, Safety, Accountability) safety measure and reporting initiative of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) — score won't qualify them if they ever had a speeding or DUI violation. Government regulations recently reduced the hours of service from 80 to 85 hours a week to 70 hours, which

is a big difference in the driving world and amounts on average to a \$20,000 pay cut. Plus, long-haul trucking isn't conducive to family life."

The trucking of perishable product, especially, can demand much out of drivers and make the job less appealing for some.

"I require two drivers, and many of them don't want to do this. Plus, there are multiple stops, up to 15 to 20, on a single trip. That's because local wholesalers don't buy a truckload of flowers, unless they are someone like Wal-Mart. Instead, they each take 150 to 200 boxes. This compares to straight haul from Point A to B, which most drivers prefer," explains Armellini.

Immigrant populations such as Hispanics as well as Eastern Europeans and East Indians are moving behind the wheel. The benefits of this driver pool bring with it challenges too. A language barrier can make it difficult to communicate directions for a change in delivery destination or problems with weather or traffic flow along the way. There can also be seasonal issues.

"In the week between Christmas and New Year's, we couldn't get a truck to haul avocados out of Nogales, AZ, or McAllen, TX, no

matter what we wanted to pay. That's because this is a big holiday time in Mexico, and drivers like to be with their families. We could have booked 100 trucks during that time. This also has to do with the tremendous increase in avocado production now coming out of Mexico," says Lund of Allen Lund Company.

The sheer number of regulations is also contributing to this driver shortage. "Many owner-operators, especially the older guys, love their trucks and love the business," says Fred Plotsky, president of Cool Runnings, Inc., in Kenosha, WI. "For them it's like being a cowboy without a horse on the open road. When more federal regulations are imposed, they typically say, 'If I have to do all this, then I'm out.'"

## 2. FEDERAL REGULATIONS

The Motor Carrier Act of 1980 is a federal law that deregulated trucking that same year.

"In reality, and most frustrating, is that the industry is actually more regulated than ever," says Bill Martin, a Tulsa, OK-based trucking consultant, freelance writer and owner of the website HaulProduce.com. "These regulations create longer transit times which is a prime concern in perishables such as produce and



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higher costs for operators.”

Trucking industry professionals’ chief concern is that government entities creating some of these regulations don’t have actual industry experience. Plus, they feel that one-size-fits-all regulations don’t adequately account for the myriad of routes, length of routes and number of stops on a particular haul. As a case in point, the FMCSA proposed the requirement of Electronic Logging Devices (ELD) in vehicles to improve trucker’s compliance with hours of service regulations. This is geared toward reducing driver fatigue, which was listed as a factor in more than 12 percent of total crashes that involved large trucks in 2012, according to the FMCSA.

“These ELDs plug into the engine and start logging time from the minute the engine is turned on. This means that if a short-haul trucker has to get up at 2 a.m. to make a delivery, he can’t come home afterward to sleep for a couple of hours before getting up and back on the road rested. His time is ticking, so he stays up and drives his full 14 hours. This is an example of a regulation designed to fix one problem, but starts another one,” explains Cool Runnings’ Plotsky.

Beyond federal, there are state regulations.

California is one of the most regulated states when it comes to trucking. Interestingly, California also ranks No. 1 in the nation in terms of agricultural cash receipts, according to the USDA ERS report, *Agricultural Productivity in the U.S.*, updated as of June 13, 2014. Said another way, California supplies nearly 12 percent of the country’s agricultural products, including fruits and vegetables that need to be trucked to markets nationwide. Yet, the California Air Resources Board regulations affecting Transport Refrigeration Units (or refrigerated trucks) makes the cost of doing business in the state prohibitive for some.

“To operate in California, you need special tires (low-rolling-resistance or LRR tires); aerodynamic trailer skirting and the engines on refrigerated trucks can’t be more than seven years old. If they are, there’s a fine of up to \$10,000, but not just for the trucker. The broker or shipper and receiver are all subject to the same fine,” says Cool Runnings’ Plotsky.

### 3. FUEL & FREIGHT RATES

The cost of diesel fuel represents one of the largest expenses for a carrier. In fact, many trucking companies remained solvent during the past eight to 10 years by living off a fuel

surcharge passed to customers.

“Fuel coming down in price is a major blessing for us. At the same time, I’m seeing most fleets raise their rates in an effort to recoup expenses such as the cost of equipment to meet CSA regulations. This can be as much as \$50,000 extra per truck, or \$70,000 more for a truck operating in California,” says Armellini Industries’ Armellini.

Supply and demand is another reason why lower cost fuel may not result in a downward direction in freight rates.

“The economy was so bad eight years ago that 6,000 trucking companies representing 20,000 trucks went out of business. This included small companies, the majority of which were owner-operators. No one missed them because the economy was down. Now, with the economy coming back, there’s a shortage,” says Armellini.

“Every state in the U.S. currently has more loads than trucks,” says Jimmy DeMatteis, Jr, president and chief executive of Des Moines Truck Brokers, Inc., in Norwalk, IA. “This means drivers can pick and choose where they go since there is demand everywhere.”

One of the key challenges facing produce shippers is positioning their freight in this

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# “The refrigerated trucking industry is one of the best examples of the free market system at work.”

— Ken Lund, Allen Lund Company

market, where demand exceeds supply.

“Carriers are looking for efficient freight that allows them to maximize their equipment and retain their most important asset — their drivers,” explains Bob Biesterfeld, vice president of North American Truckload Services at C.H. Robinson Worldwide, headquartered in Eden Prairie, MN.

There is no single or overarching entity in the U.S. that sets truck freight rates. “The refrigerated trucking industry is one of the best examples of the free market system at work,” says Lund of Allen Lund Company.

## 4. THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY

There is no question, especially from an efficiency standpoint, that new technologies play an important role in streamlining the supply chain and help to contain costs.

“Today’s wireless and disposable technologies provide real-time visibility to produce location, relay ambient air temperatures of trailers, and communicate information on-demand, as well as have the ability to level the playing field for carriers of all sizes,” explains C.H. Robinson’s Biesterfeld. “For a few dollars a month, a small carrier or owner-operator is able to provide the same level of real-time-shipment visibility that was only historically available to larger carriers with more capital.”

Integrated supply chain solutions, where logistics and information services are bundled together in order to provide a single uniform solution to the client, have changed the way suppliers and receivers alike purchase and procure logistics services. For example, C.H. Robinson’s Navisphere, a single global technology platform the company launched in 2012, allows customers to communicate worldwide with every party in their supply chain across languages, currencies and continents.

Beyond this, lots of technological advancements remain untapped on a major scale, but industry players envision an open playing field.

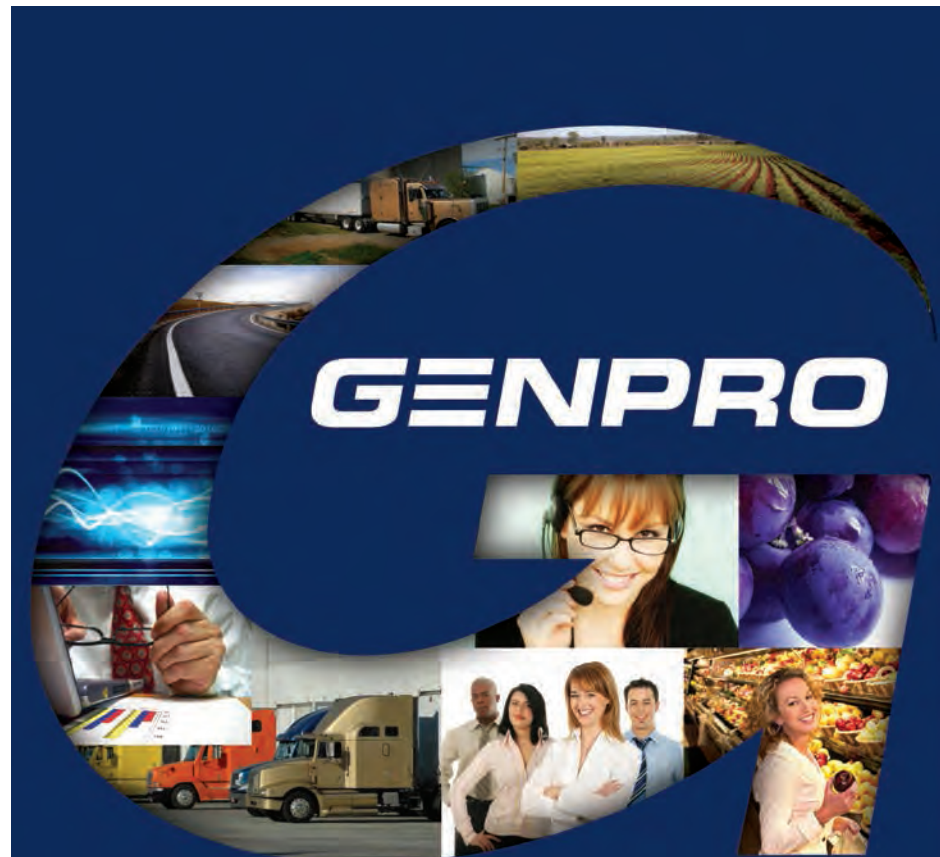
“I foresee a push for bigger tractor trailers, from 53- to 57-foot, that can hold 5,000 more pounds in weight. That’s because you can load

a truck two thirds full with something like oranges that max out on weight. Bigger trucks will of course necessitate an upgrade to our country’s infrastructure in terms of highways and bridges,” says Des Moines Truck Brokers’ DeMatteis.

Low fuel prices aren’t likely to spur a change from diesel to natural gas engine conversion technology, says Target’s Kazan. “Plus, it’s currently hard for cross-country truckers to find enough filling stations with natural gas.”

Apparently, driverless trucks are already being tested in Europe, reports DeMatteis of Des Moines Truck Brokers.

Last year, Daimler Trucks test-drove its big-rig Mercedes-Benz Future Truck 2025 on the autobahn in Germany, where it stayed neatly within its lanes at speeds of up to 53 mph thanks to a proprietary autonomous driving system. Driverless trucks might be one way to solve the driver shortage challenge, but what driverless trucks would mean to the fresh produce industry remains to be seen. **pb**



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# POS TECHNOLOGY:

With beacons and coupon apps, produce is 'pushed' into the customer's shopping experience.

BY BOB JOHNSON

**W**hen loyal customers enter the supermarket of the future, a strategically stationed device will detect the signal from their cell phone and begin making promotional offers tailored to their preferences as determined by a record of their shopping history. These offers will even take care to avoid items containing ingredients the customer has designated as potential allergens.

This device offering technology poised to take fruit and vegetable retailing by storm is the beacon, a miniature radio tower that can both track customers' movements in the store through the GPS capability in their smartphones, and send promotional offers geared to their individual locations and past purchasing

preferences.

"At the first level, it [the technology] is about driving loyalty," says Gary Singh, head of product marketing in enterprise network communications for Zebra Technologies, Lincolnshire, IL. Singh says the purpose behind this technology is to alert shoppers as they enter a store about the specials available. The technology allows people to customize offers. "You can be alerted if items are suited for you, or not — depending on your allergies."

Zebra Technologies finalized a deal to acquire Motorola Solutions last October, with an eye toward helping take beacon technology into the retail world.

Some of the biggest sellers are already quietly working on pilot projects using beacon technology to detect when a particular

customer enters the store, follow them as they shop, and make offers to their smartphone based on their tastes and location in the store.

"There are definitely pilot projects going on," says Singh. "There is interest among large retailers. We are working with seven to nine retailers worldwide."

Drones are already used to photograph vegetation differences within fields, orchards and vineyards afflicted with pest, water or nutrient issues, and some of these unmanned aircrafts can even land and scoop up a soil sample before returning to base.

In some overseas locations, temporary, unexpected surpluses in a particular store are being remedied by shipments of fruits and vegetables far smaller than a truckload to nearby stores that are short.

The age of smartphone technology and related systems of gathering and transmitting information is on the verge of changing everything about the way we retail produce.

"There is certainly a lot of technology that disrupts traditional ways of doing things in the agriculture industry, including fruits and vegetables," says Dan Vache, vice president for supply chain management at United Fresh Produce Association, Washington, D.C. "I heard a number of presentations from people in Silicon Valley about tools to make agriculture efficient and precise. The industry is getting there."

High-tech produce retailing may still be in the future, but when it comes to monitoring

the cold chain as fruits and vegetables move from the field to the distribution center — that future is now.

## A POWERFUL SIGNAL

A new system is emerging that will combine the features of smartphones and loyalty cards into a tool that lets retailers track and communicate with customers in ways that, a short time ago, were unimaginable.

"The beacon technology has a couple of benefits," says Singh of Zebra Technologies. "It lets you engage the customer in the right place, at the time, with the right offer. You can modify your engagement strategy based on the customers' buying habits. You get the

customers offers and information. It's too late when they reach the check out."

This opens possibilities for combining promotion and inventory management.

"You can reduce the price on, say, green salad with a purchase-by date coming up soon," says Vache of United Fresh Produce Association. "Some stores do that already, but with beacon, you could alert customers that the flash sale just started. You have to make the shopping process easy. When you can track a shopper, and know their buying habits, you can offer dynamic pricing and flash sales. No one is doing that yet — that I know."

Many of the pieces of this mind-boggling promotional technology are already in place

## ■ KEEP IT FRESH AND SAFE

While wireless technology is poised to take promotion to new levels of precision, package and display technologies are already taking food safety and freshness to new heights. The addition of a simple label on the familiar clamshell adds an entirely new dimension to the package.

"With traceability labels the retailer can see when the product was shipped," says Kurt Zuhlke, Jr., president and chief executive of Kurt Zuhlke and Associates, Easton, PA. "They all have to have traceability. You can tell which company grew, packed and shipped it, and the expiration date. This feeds into software for inventory control. You

can have the label right on the clamshell or poly bag, not just on the case."

When combined with smartphones, the label on the package adds unexplored possibilities for giving the consumer information.

"Consumers can find out what country, what location, what grower and what field this produce is from by just pointing and clicking their smartphone," says Charles Shafae, founder and president of dProduceMan Software, Half Moon Bay, CA. "Was this field a 'registered organic' field? What pesticide, if any, was used? What seed was used? You can go as detailed as you want to

inform the consumer."

Interest in food safety has also spurred development of tamper-resistant packaging for an ever-longer list of products.

"One trend is the extension of tamper-resistant packaging into additional applications, especially in the growing grab-n-go segment," says Jack Tilley, market research manager at Inline Plastics Corp., Shelton, CT.

"Inline has a dedicated Grab & Go line of products featuring snack cup containers that fit into automobile cup holders, sandwich wedge and hoagie containers, and our Hangables line of containers that can be merchandised on pegboards and racks."

New packaging also reduces shrink in some items by forming a more leak resistant seal.

"Another trend is increasing desire by retailers for greater leak resistance along with increased shelf life of food contents in containers," says Tilley. "Some technologies used to obtain better leak resistance and shelf life include perimeter seal design containers, such as our line of Visibly Fresh containers. Retailers are anxious to increase sales and reduce shrink in perishable products, and they are looking to packaging producers to help them achieve those goals."

Yet another advance in freshness is misting technology that keeps leafy greens moist, and customers dry.

"Our new produce misting systems use significantly higher pressure than that of any competitive produce misting system," says Costas Ionomou, chief executive at Miatech, Clackamas, OR. "This allows for a much friendlier experience in the produce department, one that does not offend highly valued shoppers."

The new Miatech units mist at about 140 psi, compared to conventional units that mist between 70 and 100 psi.

**pb**



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and gaining in popularity at breakneck speed.

"There are many possible uses for beacon technology in retail stores," says Shafae of dProduce Man.

"I am not sure about other parts of the U.S., but here in the Silicon Valley, I see many people in the store looking at their smartphone for their grocery list," says Shafae. "It would be very easy to create an app to utilize this technology to direct the user to the exact location in the store where they could simply pick up that item."

Most customers already have a wallet full of loyalty cards, and software firms learned how to use smartphones to download special offers onto these cards.

"When consumers load coupons to their loyalty cards, it is automatically deducted at the point of purchase," says Robert Drescher, chief executive of Cellfire, San Jose, CA.

"Cellfire has an app, on behalf of retailers, that will send a push notification upon entering the store — if the shopper has opted in to that service."

The application on the Cellfire Internet site allows the user to choose as few or as many retailers as they want from among a list.

"The shopper can select which retailers, and which retail locations to accept notifications from. The coupons may be those which were previously loaded to a card by the consumer in addition to any new coupons that may have become available," says Drescher.

Cellfire already delivered a billion of these digital coupons. The company aims to pick up the pace following its acquisition last October by digital media firm Catalina, St. Petersburg, FL.

The next step in wireless coupons will be use of the beacon to make offers to individual

## ■ TRACKING COLD CHAIN ON THE RUN

There are already pilot efforts to monitor the temperature of produce as it moves from the field and to reroute the truck to a nearby distribution center to manage freshness issues before they become problems.

"This is going to change the way we monitor temperature, so we can be more proactive. It's going to help both the grower and retailer as well as bring more accountability for the truckers," says Todd Baggett, chief executive of Redline Solutions, Santa Clara, CA. "For the same cost as people are paying today for traditional temperature recorders, they can get significantly more data. The traditional system records data that you access after the trip. The device can tell you when the temperature is above 45 degrees, so you can reroute the truck."

RedLine Solutions, which specializes in inventory and traceability solutions, is partnering with Santa Clara, CA-based Roambee Corp., a supplier of tracking services, to offer real-time tracking and monitoring solutions for produce shipments.

A method of monitoring coldness in transit is to use a sensor that records temperature, much like the black box records vital information about an airline flight.

When you add to that sensor a GPS device and a cellular sim card, an entirely new level of temperature monitoring technology is born.

"There's a lot you can do with these three technologies [the sensor, the GPS and the cellular data]," says Baggett. "We can transmit the temperature and where on the

highway the shipment is. If you're going from Fresno on Highway 99 to Highway 80, then to Denver, you can request the device let you know when it's 2 miles off Highway 80, and also when it's 60 miles outside of Denver. It can also send an email when the product is delivered."

This technology allows the user to decide how often the cell phone will send a message or receive a call regarding temperature or location. "This [technology] is currently being used with pharmaceutical companies on drugs that must be temperature-controlled. It's been used for six to eight months with pharmaceuticals," says Baggett. "Other firms are getting deals with companies that want to be able to set rules."

Although the transport of high value pharmaceuticals is an ideal use for this technology, fruit and vegetable vendors are also beginning to show interest.

"We're piloting it with several produce companies," says Baggett. RedLine is currently working with three or four produce companies. This technology interest is a new venture for this particular client, and Baggett says they're still deciding what rules they want to use.

Promotional deals make it possible to try this technology out with a minimal financial commitment.

"Redline is keeping track of the technology and introducing it to the produce industry," says Baggett. "You don't have to make a long term commitment. You can rent it on a per trip basis, or rent it for a month."

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## ■ NO JOB TOO SMALL

If you need a ride in a large metropolitan area, you may be able — without calling a taxi company — to access a smartphone app linking people who need rides with individuals offering them. This technology strategy — popularized by the transportation company, Uber — may offer a modern, more efficient, method of arranging home deliveries of groceries.

“Utilization of the uberification method of delivery is more attuned to the existing way of life. After all, people use taxis for ordering take-out food in the metropolitan areas. They can have an Uber driver do the same,” says Charles Shafae, founder and president of dProduce Man Software, Half Moon Bay, CA.

Currently, Uber partners with a variety of companies — most notably Starbucks, OpenTable, United Airlines, TripAdvisor and Hyatt — to offer its transportation services via mobile apps for each company.

Retailers in other countries are already using this marriage of small-scale delivery and high-tech inventory information to even out supplies of perishable produce items

among individual stores.

“I don’t know of uberification being used here, but I know in China, they use it to move produce from one store that is long on a product to another that is short,” says Dan Vache, vice president for supply chain management at United Fresh Produce Association, Washington, D.C. “They make deliveries too small for a truck.”

Drones are making their entree into produce at the farm level, and their application in retail is less obvious.

“As the drone technology expands and drones can carry more weight, and when it is more economical there might be a future for delivery in the congested metropolitan areas. This method of delivery may be used for consumers, but I can see its use more for delivery from the distributors to foodservice outlets and restaurants,” says Shafae.

“Because shoppers like to look at the freshness and other qualities of the products before buying, I don’t expect to see drone technology being used in the produce distribution at the retail level,” says Shafae. **pb**

consumers based on their buying history as they move through the store.

“People are using their smartphones and getting information about the products,” says Vache. “The retailers will figure out a way to know consumers are in the store, their buying habits, and direct them to opportunities, or offer them a coupon as a reward for being a loyal shopper. I know Safeway is grappling with the challenges of how they can make this work. It’s going to take a while; I think it will take a decade.”

Beacon business insiders, however, believe they will find their holy grail far sooner than a decade from now.

“From the market research we conducted, we’re thinking some retailers will employ beacon technology in apparel in 2015, and in one to three years in groceries and produce,” says Singh. “It’s definitely a promising technology.”

Singh believes this tactic will rapidly be deployed as we move forward. Much in the same way individuals and companies use location-based technology, such as Google Maps, this technology simply uses the same premise, but inside the store. **pb**



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# PALLETS: A Matter Of Logistics

The key to efficiency is the right number at the right place and time.

BY BOB JOHNSON

PHOTO COURTESY OF GERAWAN FARMING

**T**he revolution in information technology is driving more efficient use of pallets, as it becomes simpler and easier to synchronize the size of loads from the field to the produce department floor. This coordination reduces perishable food waste and makes it easier to determine the right number of pallets, at the right place, and right time.

“There has been a dramatic improvement in collaboration between grower-shippers and retailers with the goal of increasing sales and reducing cost of delivery,” says Dan Martin, senior vice president at CHEP in Orlando, FL.

“To this end, trading partners are implementing supply chain solutions that limit the amount of human handling from the time the produce is harvested to the time the shopper selects it. These include enhanced primary, secondary and tertiary packaging, and more efficient scheduling of inbound deliveries.”

The Australian firm Brambles, which owns wooden pallet pooling leader CHEP, also acquired reusable plastic container leader IFCO four

years ago, with an eye toward improved logistical flexibility of its operations in the United States and Western Europe.

“Traditional CHEP pallets are pooled rather than recycled,” says Martin. “They are never discarded but are repaired back to our high-quality standards, taken apart and used for components on other pallets or are chipped and used as mulch.”

There are situations, however, where a low cost one-use pallet makes the most economic sense.

“One way/limited reuse pallets are utilized in the majority of the overall non-rental market,” says Gary Sharon, vice president of Litco International, Vienna, OH. “They are ideal for companies where it is not practical to retrieve pallets for return and reuse. A few example applications for produce and other food-related products would be: as a shipping base for point of purchase and bulk displays, companies that export, products that may contaminate the shipping pallet, and products and packages that do not fit on the standard size 48-inch by 40-inch pallet.”



Tracking technology driven by increased demand for food safety is also improving the ability to follow pallets as they travel through the produce distribution system.

Kevin Marrie is vice president of strategic accounts at Willoughby, OH-based The Kennedy Group, which is a company providing market-tested solutions to help customers package, promote, identify and track their products. Marrie says some growers and retailers use barcodes on their reusable containers and pallets to help track shipments and their contents.

“Barcodes affixed to each reusable asset can include information about the contents of the container or pallet, where it came from, and the day it was packed,” says Marrie, who is also a member of the Reusable Packaging Association (RPA), Linden, VA.

The Reusable Packaging Association, formerly the Reusable Pallet and Container Coalition, is a trade group of manufacturers, poolers, retailers and others in the business of reusable packing.

When the reusables arrive at their destination, the barcodes are scanned and their contents are emptied.

“The barcodes also help growers and retailers track the use of their reusable pallets and containers,” says Marrie. “By analyzing the data, they can determine how long each reusable asset was out in the supply chain, the number of times (turns) the item is used in the supply chain, which customer or distribution center was tardy in returning the items, and whether any customer or distribution center damaged the pallets or containers.”

This information helps companies keep track of their reusables and gain a stronger return on investment through maximum reuse.

## PALLET BENEFITS

Advances in information technology are driving increased pallet efficiency, but the material of choice is still overwhelmingly wood.

“The latest [stats] I’ve seen is about 93 percent of the pallets are wood, followed by plastic, metal and corrugated material,” says Brad Gething, technical and pallet design system manager at National Wooden Pallet & Container Association, Alexandria, VA. “As far as I know, as long as they’ve been tracking it, wood makes up more than 90 percent of the pallets being manufactured.”

Flexibility of design is a major advantage of wood, and the Wooden Pallet Association even offers the use of software to design pallets tailored for specific uses, and to test whether a design would hold up under a certain weight.

“The Pallet Design System (PDS) is an engineering software program you can use to design a pallet,” says Gething. “Say you want to carry 1,000 pounds of onions; the software will let you know if the pallet can handle that weight.

“Another consideration is the stiffness, or how much the pallet will deflect. In many commercial applications, people don’t want the pallets to deflect much. Our software will also tell you how many uses you will get out of the pallet. The software provides the pallet manufacturer the opportunity to design a pallet without an excess use of wood, which decreases cost and makes for the most efficient use of the wood material.”

Wood’s flexibility of design allows producers to offer pallets smaller than the standard size, easier handling and improved efficiency on some loads.

“CHEP recently launched the half pallet in the U.S. market,” says Martin. “The benefits of the 40 by 24-inch pallet include its ability to assist retailers in reducing the cost to ship, handle and display products from the point of manufacturing to the point of sale. The idea is that half-size pallet loads can go from the farm and processing facility to the retail store with minimal handling. This drives efficiency, reduces product damage and eliminates other wasteful practices.”

Precise design lets you pay for the pallet you need, and no more.

“Generally speaking, pallets are priced by the amount of material, labor, factory overhead and a markup for profit contribution,” says Litco’s Sharon. “But prior to pricing, the pallet should be designed with the stiffness necessary to transport the unit load, safely and damage free, from the shipper to the receiver.”

Another area where flexibility can come into play is the design of pallets that can carry food from the field to the distribution center, and then display it on the produce department floor.

“One of the trends that we continue to see in the produce

industry is the concept of retail-ready packaging,” says Martin. “With retail-ready packaging, products are easily placed on the store shelf or on the shop floor for display without the need for unpacking or repacking.

“This one-touch packaging increases productivity and lowers the opportunity for damage through the supply chain. For pallets, this means floor-ready displays that can be placed on the store floor with minimal effort. It also means increased use of partial pallets — such as the half pallet CHEP introduced last year. These efforts are driving sales lift in Europe, and we’re seeing similar trends in the United States.”

Economy and the reduced use of fossil fuel are other areas where wood has a leg up. “Wood is still the cheapest material,” says Gething. “The environmental advantage is that it is made from a renewable resource, and when it’s at the end of its lifecycle, it can be recycled into many products — chips, mulch, animal bedding, fuel. Wood is also a stiff material that protects the product well, and it can be customized easily.”

The design feature also lets the users decide how long they want the pallet to last, and how much they want it to cost.

“Pallets are so customizable that the cost can vary,” says Gething of the Wooden Pallet Association. “Some pallets are designed to be low cost for one trip, or you can design a more



PHOTO COURTESY OF LITCO

robust pallet that can be used several times. Multiple-use tends to be more popular. More than half the pallets are used more than once.”

Wood may be more economical than plastic, but the market can drive the cost up. “Because of the rising prices of new conventional wooden pallets, the demand for lower cost, recycled 48-inch by 40-inch pallets has increased,” says Sharon. “This has created a strain on the supply of used pallets available for repair and thereby decreasing the quality of the pallet pool.

“To meet these demands, Litco offers the innovative Inca wood pallet. Inca pallets are molded from wood fiber and resin under high heat and pressure. They are certified sustainable, free of pests and are not regulated by IPPC-ISPM 15. This means that they meet the ‘heat treatment’ requirements for trouble-free export shipping,” says Sharon.

This molded alternative is intended to provide a low-cost, reliable option when wooden pallets are in short supply.

“Inca pallets are economically priced and can help to take the bite out of the rising cost of new conventional wooden pallets and the decreasing quality and uncertainty associated with using recycled pallets,” says Sharon.

## LEASE OR BUY

Just as there are many options in design, there are also options in whether to lease or buy the pallets.

Most CHEP pallets stay in the company pool, and are leased for a short time, and improvements in the technologies of logistics are making this arrangement more efficient.

“The move to advanced forecasting technology has greatly improved the matching of consumer demand with supply, and this resulted in reduced waste and improved customer service,” says Martin. “A lot still needs to be done to optimize the supply and demand chains, but recent progress means retailers sell more produce at regular prices and reduce the amount of fruits and vegetables they throw out.”

This arrangement has the advantage of extending the life of the pallet, and even the materials used to make it.

“A typical cycle for pooled platforms starts at a CHEP Service Center, which issues ready-for-use pallets and containers to aviation and automotive suppliers, manufacturers and growers for use and movement through the supply chain,” says Martin.

“Products are loaded onto the CHEP

equipment and shipped through the supply chain. At the end of the supply chain, the receiving business unloads the goods and returns the pallets or containers to the nearest CHEP Service Center, where the equipment is inspected and repaired to meet quality standards if necessary. The equipment is then made ready for issuing to the grower/shipper.”

One California stone fruit and table grape grower/shipper prefers to make new pallets for every shipment as part of its quality assurance program.

“Prima fruit is always shipped on new, clean, unused pallets which are monitored through packing, storage and shipping,” says Denver Schutz, technical services manager at Gerawan Farming, Sanger, CA.

“All to ensure that our fruit arrives with the quality Prima is known for. There is simply no room for error from a retail perspective. Retailers should focus on having a smarter, stronger, safer and cleaner pallet. This is what the Prima Pallet provides.”

The rationale behind this approach is that the cost of a new pallet is a small price to pay for a guarantee the fruit arrives in good shape.

“First and foremost, the retailer should focus on arrivals and getting their produce in the same condition as when it was shipped,” says Schutz. “When suppliers ship on reused wood pallets, there is a chance for product damage. This would include crushed boxes, pallets that may have fallen over in transit and damaged product.”

One advantage of shipping on plastic is the ability to take full advantage of the latest tracking technology.

When wood is used, the traceability RFID tends to be on the cases but not on the pallets, according to Gething.

There is no one size to fit all, as the best pallet choice depends greatly on the use.

“Both the leasing and sales options for pallets are popular for specific uses,” says CHEP’s Martin. “Leasing works well for almost all produce items that are shipping into most U.S. retailers, major wholesale grocers and some foodservice lanes. Purchased recycled pallets may work better for products with long storage times, export products and non-traditional retail lanes.”

The decision on what sort of pallet to use, and how to arrange the lease or sale, ultimately rests with the retailer.

“Renting or purchasing depends on the retailer; the retailer normally drives this decision, but we always share our point of view,” says Schutz.

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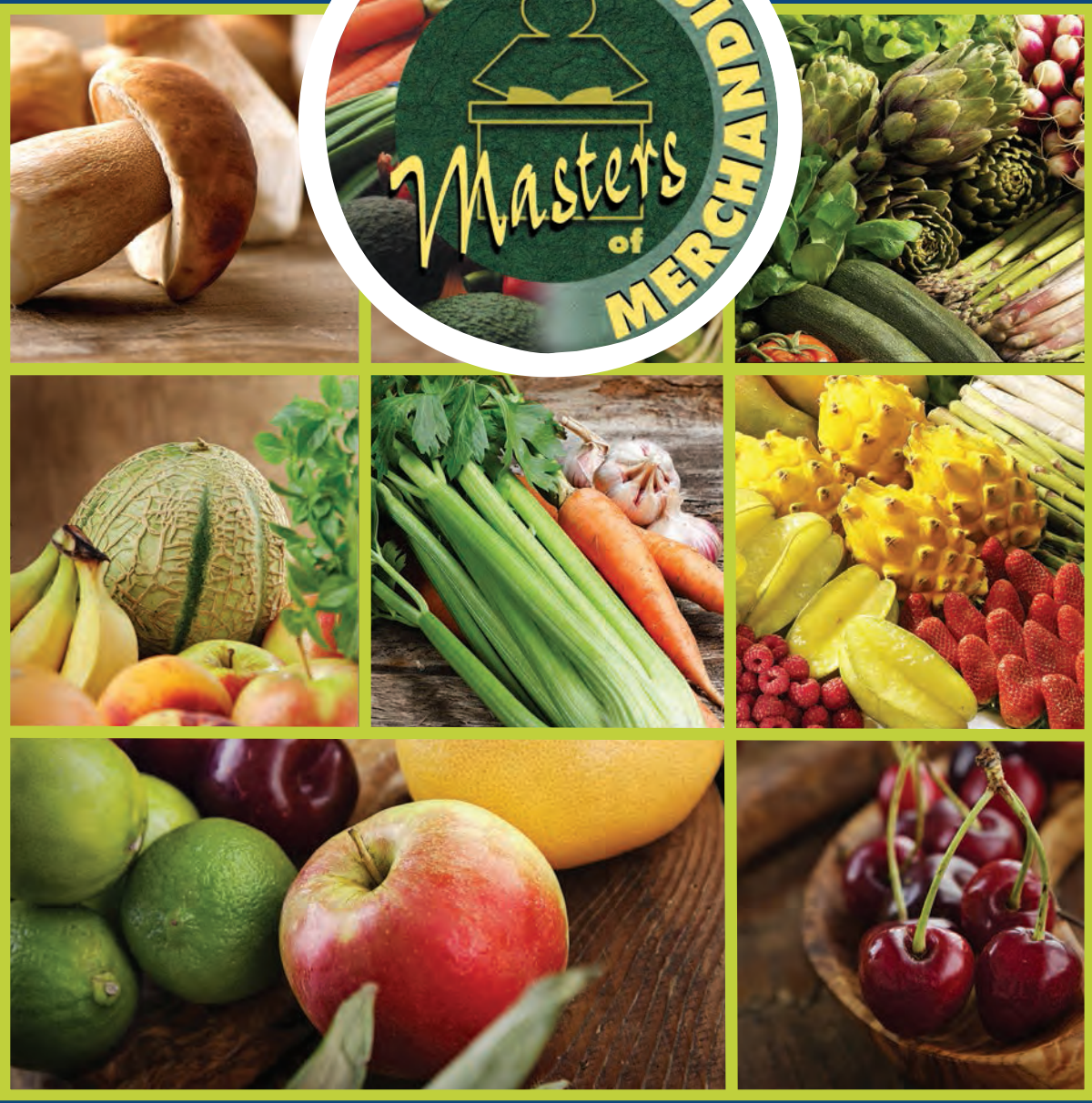
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# 14th ANNUAL MASTERS OF MERCHANDISING SUPPLEMENT



14th ANNUAL MASTERS OF MERCHANDISING SUPPLEMENT

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A note from Jim Prevor,  
Editor-In-Chief,  
PRODUCE BUSINESS magazine

Every once in a while, the opportunity presents itself to do well while also doing good. Such is the case with this, our 14<sup>th</sup> 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 carrots? Or papayas? 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 tactics 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 essentially said, "That is the retailer's problem; we just book loads."

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

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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 2015 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.

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It's perhaps the best over-the-counter prescription available, as the old adage goes, "An apple a day, keeps the doctor away." Apples are proven to help lower cholesterol and combat cancer. A primary item in your produce department for years, apples present many fun and unique opportunities to enhance sales. As a proud grower of Washington Apples, we at Yakima Fresh, are enthusiastic about apples and getting consumers to eat more! Join us as we journey through the wonderful world of apples.

## DISPLAY AND MERCHANDISING

The average U.S. consumer eats 19 pounds of apples a year . . . equating to about an apple a week! Giving your department the tools to educate consumers on the benefits of eating apples and increasing consumption from one apple a week to two, can quickly grow your category.

**USE SIGNAGE/POP:** Yakima Fresh enjoys working with partners to create eye-popping, inspiring P.O.S. material to assist in the education and sales of apples. Ranging from our "Fit for Life" campaign to a hand-crafted grower profile, connecting consumers to the orchard. Let us help you create the signage you want, highlighting variety names, variety flavors and food pairings.

**PLAY UP THE COLOR:** In addition to signage telling the profile of each variety, utilize the unique coloring of each variety to give a color break to the display. This can drive your consumers curiosity to try something new! And don't be afraid to sample new and old varieties. The more they know, the easier it is to buy.

**INCLUDE SOME PARTNERS:** Be sure to cross-merchandise to create impulse and added purchases! For an easy cross-merchandising set, put a pie crust near the apples to spur customers to make their own fresh pie (most recipes call for 2 to 3 pounds of apples. Quite an increase in sales!)

## PROMOTION

Let the Yakima Fresh team help you put some buzz in promotions. Utilize everything from the U.S. Apple Association's promoting the 28 days of apples in February (giving you 28 reasons to inspire apple consumption) to supporting national and local giving back to community programs.

Add some fun to consumption with bobbing for apples during Halloween, giving the teacher an apple in May for teacher's appreciation week, or joining the fight against cancer in "Mo"vember with mustache-powered apple advertising.

Healthy promotions are another proven avenue to boost the category. Recent studies linked apples to helping with everything from weight loss to different types of cancer, heart disease, type 2 diabetes and even asthma. The more we can educate, the more people will eat. Yakima Fresh wants to help you make that one apple a week eater into a one apple



a day eater!

Stop comparing apples to apples. Instead, help consumers compare apples to coffee. Various studies show the benefits from waking up to an apple far exceed the benefits from a cup of coffee. The apple's natural sugar provides an energy boost. The fruit's good carbs fuel the body, and doesn't initiate drastic energy slumps like coffee. Also rich in fiber, apples aid in the absorption of sugar into the body.

## HANDLING TIPS

- Don't dump, hand stack
- Watch color schemes
- Temperature changes: Apples ripen 10 times faster at room temperature. This leaves most varieties with low pressure after only four to five days at room temperature
- Don't mist your apples: misting causes a white buildup, or Calcium (which is okay to eat, but doesn't look that great). Misting also can make your apples dull!
- "One bad apple, spoils the whole lot" — it can! Apples are ethylene producers, which can affect other fruits, vegetable and flowers. (This gives you an additional answer when consumers ask why their produce goes bad in their refrigerator.)
- Watch where you store your apples in the cooler. Apples can cause:
  - ▶ Russetting of lettuce
  - ▶ Increased ripening of tomatoes
  - ▶ Sprouting of potatoes
  - ▶ Yellowing of broccoli and cauliflower
- If you are going to cut apples for display, use lemon juice on your knife (or a porcelain knife) to slow the browning process.

## VARIETIES

With over 7,500 types of apples grown worldwide, priority is a must when choosing what varieties to carry. For now, we are proud to be a grower of your staple items from Honeycrisp and Gala's to Red Delicious to the next big thing. Yakima Fresh is there for you as a leader in year-round supply of the varieties that mean the most to your category. We believe the perfect apple starts in the orchard, and its beauty and taste is reliant on a perfected supply chain. Come visit us in the Pacific Northwest to see a vision of the perfect apple. Variety charts and availability available at [Yakimafresh.com](http://Yakimafresh.com)

## QUICK TIPS

APPLES MAYBE THE EASIEST SNACK ON THE PLANET TO EAT — FROM A HEALTHY EXTERIOR, TO A THIRST QUENCHING CORE.

APPLES PROMOTE HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY AS THERE IS NO PACKAGING TO THROW AWAY, JUST DISCARD THE BIODEGRADABLE CORE AND SEEDS! NO "BAD" GARBAGE, JUST A TASTY SNACK.



## FUN FACTS

- 80 to 130 calories per apple (average size)
- 25% of an apple is air — that's why it floats
- It takes about 36 apples to make 1 gallon of apple cider
- High in fiber: 5 grams of fiber per apple, that's more than a serving of oatmeal — 2/3 of which comes from the peel
- Largest apple to record is 3 pounds
- Average European eats 46 pounds of apples annually versus the U.S. Consumer at 19 pounds
- Apples are a member of the Rose family

Fact Resources: U.S. Apple Association & Washington Apple Commission



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### CROP FORECAST

Ocean Mist Farms is the only year-round grower of fresh artichokes. Three growing areas provide a 52-week harvest schedule. We work with our retail partners to leverage the variation of crop volume by size to maximize sales.

### PEAK SEASON

This spring, Ocean Mist Farms projects a very big crop of Heirloom artichokes. March through mid-May is peak season for artichoke production overall, but it is the only time of year that Ocean Mist Farms Heirloom artichokes are available. Retailers can create in-store excitement around the artichoke category by highlighting the seasonality of these delicious vegetables.

### MAXIMIZE SPRING

Artichoke sales exhibit sharp peaks in both volume and dollars during holiday weeks, and elevate from February through May including the following holiday weeks: Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day and Memorial Day.

### CONNECTING WITH SHOPPERS

Artichoke household penetration is approximately 30 percent nationally, at approximately the same level as Brussels sprouts. With less than half of shoppers making a purchase decision in the grocery store, it increases the importance of reaching out to people when they are not in the retail environment with information about artichoke usage, nutrition and preparation. Ocean Mist Farms has invested in our website to do that as well as social media tools such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

We see an opportunity this spring with our existing social media tools and our Artichoke Club members to update artichoke lovers about weekly specials for fresh artichokes. These social media tools allow us to promote retailers' specials to a very targeted, motivated audience that wants to know when artichokes are on sale and where.



### CREATIVITY SELLS

There is an opportunity to capitalize on key grilling occasions, such as the Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day weekends, to increase artichoke category sales and profits. We have POS and other information available to educate shoppers in the store about using a grill to cook artichokes.

Stores may want to consider cross-merchandising artichokes with other categories that appeal to artichoke shoppers. In the produce department, categories with similar target consumers include berries, mushrooms, and prepared vegetables. Retailers can easily identify high opportunity areas for artichokes by looking for store locations with strong sales of these compatible products that share similar consumer profiles.



## Heirloom Artichokes

Like a family recipe, Ocean Mist Farms has been growing a unique variety of Heirloom artichoke from the same rootstock that has been passed down to each generation of Ocean Mist Farms family growers for more than 90 years. The Ocean Mist Farms Heirloom artichoke is never grown from seed and grows only in and around Castroville, CA. This variety is seasonally available between March and May; a chef favorite, we made it identifiable to shoppers with a distinctive red UPC sticker.

### ARTICHOKE MERCHANDISING 101

Artichokes have a rich, deep-green color that complements other items in the produce department and stack well when building large end-cap displays. If handled properly, artichokes will look and taste fresh for up to two weeks. It is important to keep them cool and moist. Tips to merchandise artichokes:

- Refrigerate artichokes at 34° Fahrenheit or 1° Celsius.
- Remove any damaged petals. Do not re-trim stems. Re-trimming will cause artichokes to lose up to 30 percent of their moisture and weight, and stems will darken within seconds of re-trimming. Asparagus trays or bowls work well as merchandising tools to keep stems hydrated.
- Merchandise artichokes on their sides,

stem-to-stem, for easier handling by store personnel and shoppers. Place next to lemons for both color blocking and impulse purchase. Lemons are commonly used in preparing fresh artichokes.

- Create side displays in other departments such as in the meat and fish department, to prompt an impulse purchase. Artichokes make the perfect side dish to any meat, poultry or fish entree.
- Cross-merchandise with dipping ingredients such as mayonnaise, balsamic vinegar and ready-to-eat sauces.
- Offer many sizes for increased sales. Shoppers use different sizes for different recipes.



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## HEIRLOOM ARTICHOKE

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**PEAK SEASON  
March-May**



asparagus can also be cross-merchandised with packaged salad.

Fresh and packaged asparagus can be cross-merchandised in other departments to provide a meal solution.

**Go Big for Special Occasions:** Creating special promotions at holiday time, especially during Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas, results in big sales. Retailers can also capitalize on the opportunity to promote asparagus during the summer for picnics or barbecues.

**Highlight Health & 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; a 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.

### CARE AND HANDLING TIPS

- 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 IDEAS TO GROW SALES

1. Build large, prominent displays.
2. Communicate easy preparation instructions such as steaming or grilling to customers.
3. Promote alternative colors; offer mixed-color packs for holiday or summer entertaining.

4. Cross-merchandise with proteins as a meal solution.
5. Educate consumers on nutrition and health aspects.

## OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

PROVIDE CUSTOMERS A MEAL IDEA BY DISPLAYING ASPARAGUS AND A PROTEIN TOGETHER.

PROMOTE MIXED-COLOR PACKS FOR HOLIDAY OR SUMMER ENTERTAINING.

OFFER VALUE-ADDED OR PACKAGED FRESH PRODUCT FOR AN EASY CONVENIENT SIDE DISH.

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## A LOOK BEHIND THE AVOCADO LABEL



### THE CALIFORNIA LABEL

The California label is the symbol retailers rely on for consistent quality, delicious taste and freshness that comes from avocados grown in the ideal coastal climate of California. In fact, it's the only avocado with a symbol of quality — a promise of outstanding, American-grown avocados.

California Avocados are local, fresh and fast to market. Now, more than ever, consumers want to buy more locally grown food.

The California label helps differentiate California Avocados from imported avocados making it easy for consumers to identify California's premium brand.

- 72% of shoppers indicated that buying avocados grown in the U.S. is important to them<sup>1</sup>
- 30% of shoppers claim they look for local food selection at their retail store and will switch stores for a better selection<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bovitz, Inc. 2014 Avocado Tracking Study

<sup>2</sup> "Buying Into the Local Food Movement" A.T. Kearney, May 2013

### LOCALLY GROWN

Our nearly 5,000 family farmers put endless care and craftsmanship into growing California Avocados so they are just right for your customers. And our knowledgeable marketing team and personalized programs help grow your sales. Trust the leaders to bring you a customized retail program developed just for you.

### INTEGRATED MARKETING PROGRAMS

The California Avocado Commission (CAC) connects consumers to premium California Avocados through integrated marketing programs including advertising, social media, dietitian programs, merchandising and promotional support. In 2015 CAC will continue to support retailers with materials promoting California Avocados for American summer holidays. Recipe booklets featuring produce-rich dishes for summer

entertaining help draw attention to California Avocado displays. And new this year are recipe booklets designed to increase avocado usage on sandwiches, from a simple California Club to a decadent California Lobster Roll. All easy to make and delicious with California Avocados.



**THE SCOOP**  
TIPS, RECIPES AND MORE FROM THE CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION

Over 15,000 unique visitors per month checked out the content on the Commission's newly launched blog *The Scoop*.

### INSIST ON CALIFORNIA AVOCADOS

- Visit [CaliforniaAvocado.com/Retail](http://CaliforniaAvocado.com/Retail) or contact your California Avocado Commission Retail Marketing Director for more information and to order your promotional material.



**CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION**  
12 Mauchly, Suite L, Irvine, CA 92618-6305

- ☎ 800.344.4333
- ☎ 949.341.1970
- 🌐 [CaliforniaAvocado.com/Retail](http://CaliforniaAvocado.com/Retail)
- ✉ [dcruz@avocado.org](mailto:dcruz@avocado.org)

# CALIFORNIA AVOCADOS



The California label is the symbol retailers rely on for consistent quality, delicious taste and freshness that comes from avocados grown in the ideal coastal climate of California.

Available spring through fall.

For a look behind the label, call (800) 344-4333  
or visit [CaliforniaAvocado.com/a-look-behind-the-label](http://CaliforniaAvocado.com/a-look-behind-the-label) to learn more.



### INCREASE AVOCADO CATEGORY SALES WITH SLIMCADOS®

With less fat and fewer calories\*, SlimCados deliver a delicious choice for the avocado aficionado, the healthy-minded and the diet-conscious. Many Latinos choose SlimCados because they're the avocado of choice in their native cuisines.

The SlimCado is an attention grabber. Its large size complements any avocado display, and interests your value-conscious customer.

Avocados are a growth category. Wider selection expands sales. After all, you don't eat just one variety of apple, so why limit your sales to one variety of avocado?

New research says avocados keep the "bad" cholesterol at bay. Add that to research showing avocados containing the "good" fat and you have a powerhouse of nutrition in one great tasting fruit. Still, doctors suggest that even with such nutritional benefits, avocados should be eaten in moderation (70 calories a day). Those 70 calories go much further with SlimCados.

SlimCados' distinctive, light avocado taste can be added to:

- Green Salads
- Hot Soups
- Chunky Guacamole
- Sandwiches or Hamburgers

Or SlimCados can be simply enjoyed with a squirt of lime. Any dish can be made into a little celebration with SlimCados. Besides being lower in fat and calories, these Florida avocados are also rich in vitamin A, high in potassium and cholesterol-free. SlimCados are food safety certified from the field to the store. They are not genetically modified — SlimCados come by their size, lower fat content and fewer calories naturally.



### POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Consumers want information about what they eat. Signage showing the SlimCados' nutritional information (highlighting the lower fat and fewer calories of the fruit) pays off. Emphasize that this fruit is non-GMO and has been grown in the U.S. for more than 80 years by Brooks Tropicals. Let consumers text or scan to access tips and recipes for this fruit. This online information can be branded for your stores.



### BACKROOM RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES

Store SlimCados by keeping their environment cool and humid, between 42° F and 48° F. Do not store below 40° F.

Optimum humidity is between 85 percent and 95 percent.

SlimCados are UPC- and PLU-coded as well as 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 additions to salads.

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

### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY

Available June through January, Florida avocados are generally pear-shaped and green-skinned. Their weight can vary from 14 ounces to a hefty 34 ounces. Avocados will vary in size. They can be from four to 12 inches long and up to six inches wide.

*\*Contains 50 percent less fat and 35 percent fewer calories than the leading California avocado.*

*SlimCado and the Brooks Tropicals logo are registered trademarks of Brooks Tropicals, Inc.*

## OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

THE SLIMCADO SEASON IS IN FULL SWING BY MID-JULY, JUST IN TIME FOR SUMMER'S OUTDOOR EATING EVENTS. LOOK FOR PROMOTIONAL VOLUMES OF 12-COUNT FRUIT IN JULY AND 10-COUNT FRUIT IN AUGUST — JUST IN TIME FOR CHOPPING UP INTO THE SALADS THAT MAKE THEIR YEARLY DEBUT DURING SUMMER BARBEQUES.

DURING DEMONSTRATIONS, GARNISH IN-STORE COOKED FOOD WITH A PIECE OF SLIMCADO. ANY HEATED DISH WILL SLIGHTLY MELT THE SLIMCADO FOR AN ADDED TREAT.

AVOCADO DISPLAYS CAN BE A SEA OF DARK GREEN. BREAK IT UP WITH BRIGHT GREEN-SKINNED SLIMCADOS.

GUACAMOLE DISPLAYS WORK, BUT DON'T STOP THERE. SALSA DISPLAYS CAN ALSO ENTICE SLIMCADO BUYERS.

### 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

From hydro-cooling to single-purpose dedicated coolers set at optimum temperature and humidity levels to refrigerated loading dock, SlimCados are 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 four-day shelf life, with the fruit being ready to eat for another one to two days.



### BROOKS TROPICALS

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SlimCados are the green-skinned avocados with sell-thru,  
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- In-house research and development
- Hydro-cooled straight from the field
- Food safety-audited fields, harvesting crews, packing and shipping facilities
- 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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## INCREASING SALES OF AMERICA'S FAVORITE FRUIT

Bananas are as popular as ever. In many ways they are an almost perfect food. They are convenient, economical, full of nutrients, naturally sweet, just the right size for kids lunches, and come in their own bio-degradable packaging; hence, bananas continue to be the top-selling item sold in grocery stores with more than 90% of households buying bananas each week. Yet the average retail banana transaction size remains at roughly 2.5 pounds.

To increase banana purchase size and profits, Dole provides retailers with turnkey promotional programs as well as the customized components to ensure success including point-of-sale materials, in-store posters, take-one educational materials, and retail-specific webpages. We're committed to making it easy for retailers to give their consumers more of what they love, and more of what's good for them. Contact your Dole representative today to start building your extra half-pound!



## RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

A fully-stocked and properly merchandised display is the key to attracting consumers' attention. For the best results, your DOLE® Banana display should be positioned in a prominent area, preferably a front-end display in the produce department so it can draw shoppers into the section. That beautiful banana display is most effective at stimulating banana sales when it is supported by a secondary display in the front of the store or at check-out. This second display can specifically target bananas as a grab-and-go snack option or impulse purchase, or even as a complement to breakfast cereals, peanut butter, milk and yogurt when strategically placed next to these sections in the store.





## DOLE CHALLENGES NORTH AMERICANS TO "GET UP AND GROW!"

Dole's Fresh divisions and Dole Nutrition Institute are coming together to host the company's largest promotional program in its history: "Get Up and Grow!," a yearlong campaign that challenges North Americans to make the world a happier and healthier place by adopting an active lifestyle and a diet rich in fresh fruits and vegetables.

### 'Get Up and Grow!' Campaign Elements

- Customer Pledge for Better Health
- North American "Get Up and Grow!" Tour
- Ongoing Interactive Emails to Participants
- Latest Research from the Dole Nutrition Institute
- Compelling new Fruit and Vegetable Recipes
- Serving, Pairing and Entertaining Suggestions
- Trade Shows and Retailer Events



## DOLE'S NORTH AMERICAN GET UP AND GROW! TOUR

After taking its healthy-eating message on the road for the past several years, Dole is expanding its North American Tour in 2015 with more supermarket and lifestyle event stops, recipes, free tastes and hands-on experiences than ever before. Which means we're giving your shoppers more reasons to visit you again this summer!

### 'Get Up and Grow!' Tour Details

- 480 Stops at Supermarkets and Events in the U.S. and Canada
- Hands-on Activities to Engage Shoppers
- Onsite Samplings of New Recipes
- Local PR, Social Media and Blogger Support
- At-store Retailer Programs

As always, Dole will offer local PR, social media and bloggers support in tour cities and partner with retailers to collaborate on in-store promotions, point-of-sale materials, local community events, and other activities to create incremental awareness, excitement and traffic to your store.

**Come grow with us in 2015!**  
**For more information, visit**  
**[Dole.com/GetUpAndGrow](http://Dole.com/GetUpAndGrow).**



#### DOLE

One Dole Avenue, Westlake Village, CA 91362

☎ 818.874.4000

☎ 818.874.6501

🌐 [www.dole.com/bananas](http://www.dole.com/bananas)



INTRODUCING

• GET UP •

AND GROW!<sup>TM</sup>  
*for a happier world*



Dole's initiative to encourage healthier eating - and drive retail traffic.



## GROW WITH US IN 2015!

We're making it easy for retailers to Get Up and Grow! Join us on our North American Tour when we bring recipe tastings, hands-on fun, and local at-store and PR support to 480 supermarkets and lifestyle events in the United States and Canada. We're also challenging your customers to take our Personalized Healthy Eating Pledge and arming them with the latest fruit and vegetable research and tips, courtesy of our Dole Nutrition Institute.



Contact your Dole representative to provide you with all of the ways to Get Up and Grow! In 2015. Visit [Dole.com/GetUpAndGrow](http://Dole.com/GetUpAndGrow) for more information. #GetUpAndGrow



## DISPLAY IDEAS

Take advantage of the growth and popularity of the berry category and give your customers every opportunity to include them into their daily diet. Create "Peak of the Harvest" or "Peak of the Season" displays. Feature growers in your ads, add in-store POP and sampling demonstrations to promote flavor! Encourage more berry behavior and purchase intent by cross-merchandising products with berries. Customers continue to buy more berries and represent almost 20 percent of total fruit sales (see chart). Take advantage of increasing berry demand by creating a "berry destination" with strawberries, blueberries, raspberries and blackberries.

## PROMOTION & ADVERTISING

- Create an "in the field" experience: display a complete berry patch, feature a grower and their family-farm story, offer consumer take-a-ways for more grower information.
- Use health, flavor and convenience messages to help consumers find tips, usage information and recipes.
- Berries on promotion or ad are the best way to increase consumer awareness and create purchase intent.
- Promote health and flavor aspects with signage, recipe suggestions and in-store sampling.

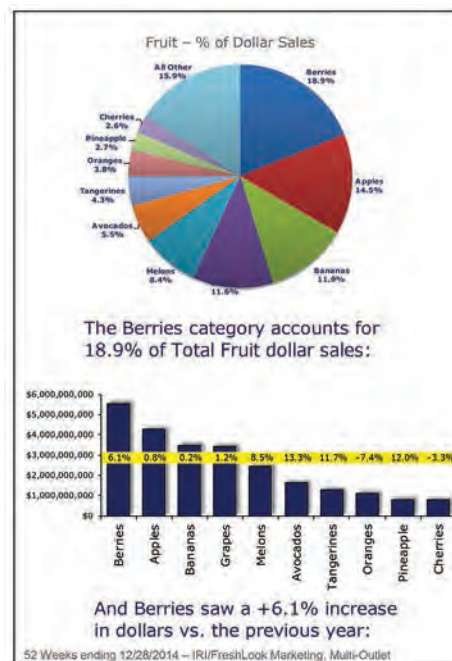


## VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY

Naturipe® berries are available year-round! Take advantage of this fact and get creative with holiday opportunities such as long-stem strawberries for Valentine's Day, or a red, white and blueberry flag cake for the Fourth of July. Create additional excitement and drive sales by featuring Naturipe Selections: the next generation of healthy and better tasting berries through our international plant breeding programs. Highlight these great berry varieties with terms that draw consumers and stimulate impulse sales like: "New," "Proprietary Varieties," "Best Tasting."

## DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

Strawberries, blueberries, blackberries and raspberries should always be stored and displayed with as little break in the cold chain as possible. Berries should always be kept at 32°F.



Impact of in-store sampling  
**+656%**  
avg. sales lift for one day of engagement  
Source: PromoWorks

DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING  
BERRIES SHOULD ALWAYS BE KEPT AT:  
**32°F**  
& STORED/DISPLAYED WITH LITTLE BREAK IN THE COLD CHAIN

## OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

DARK AND WHITE CHOCOLATE ARE ALWAYS FUN FOR CREATIVE DIPPING.

THINK OUTSIDE OF SWEETS, AND PAIR BLUEBERRIES WITH AVOCADOS AND CHIPS FOR A SALSA; OR STRAWBERRIES, BRIE CHEESE AND CRACKERS.

PROMOTE A BETTER BREAKFAST WITH RICE CAKES, GREEK YOGURT, HONEY AND BERRIES.



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sales@naturipefarms.com





# NATURRIPE

## WHERE INNOVATION IS ALWAYS IN SEASON

Naturipe® Farms, is an industry leader in producing healthy and delicious Fresh berries and Value Added berry products. With our wide selection, commitment to quality and food safety, year-round availability and a focus on innovation, we are perfectly suited to be your **Total Berry Solution**.







Green Giant™ Fresh—the industry leader in Brussels Sprouts category sales—offers Whole Head, Trimmed & Peeled, Halved, Shaved and Baby Brussels Sprouts for a variety of preparation options for your time-starved customers. Their versatility provides consumers with a healthy ingredient to create innovative and tasty dishes.



**Green Giant**™  
*Fresh*

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for more information.  
831-757-9700

Exclusive supplier of Fresh Brussels Sprouts.

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### DIVERSITY OF CARROTS

- Carrots are the “go-to” fresh vegetable snack
- Their crunch, color and sweet flavor are desirable across all age demographics
- Immense fresh versatility — from your simple fresh snack, salad and sandwich topper, through your favorite dipper — carrots come in all ready to eat shapes and sizes
- Cooking applications from your favorite soup ingredient to your simple roasted side dish, carrots are a logical fit to any cooking occasion.
- Carrots are the perfect complement to other cooking vegetables

### MERCHANDISING CARROTS

- Best-in-class merchandising starts with segregating the carrots into two occasion based groups — value-added carrots and whole carrots
- Value-added carrots are best suited next to the pre-packaged salad category
  - The baby carrots, shred carrots, carrot chips complement the pre-packaged salad category
  - A block of all value-added carrots enhances the pre-packaged salads and dressing sets driving incremental sales
- Whole carrots are primarily used as an ingredient for cooking and are best suited in the wet rack area adjacent to other cooking vegetables
  - Whole carrots complement the other vegetables found in the wet rack area of the produce department creating a convenient shopping experience for the consumer

### ASSORTMENT

- Baby carrots are the staple in every produce department
- Whole carrots provide the key ingredient for most cooking applications
- Value-added carrots are driving impressive sales growth across the category serving the time-starved consumers
  - Petite carrots, shredded carrots, carrot chips, portioned-sized baby carrots
- Organic carrots, both baby carrots and whole carrots, are a must in the produce department



- Consumers are more educated about their food today and are looking for organic alternatives
- Organics are driving the overall growth in the carrot category
- An integrated merchandising approach is most effective

### POINT OF SALE MESSAGING

- Highlight the health benefits of carrots
- Feature the trusted farm or farmer responsible for growing the carrot
- Provide shelf-talkers promoting various recipes that direct consumers to your website or your suppliers website

### PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

- Promote carrots regularly throughout the year
- Work with your supplier to develop creative displays during key promotional carrot holidays: Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year, Superbowl and Easter
- Develop social media campaigns that engage consumers about carrots
- Integrate lifestyle and family messaging into the carrot set — summer road trips, picnics, tailgates, New Year resolutions,

and party appetizers

- Cross-Promote with other produce items or grocery items
  - Buy a 1-pound baby carrot bag and save \$1.00 on your pre-packaged salad
  - Buy a 2-pound baby carrot bag and save \$1.00 on zip-lock baggies

### DISPLAY CARE HANDLING

- Carrots should be maintained between 33 to 35 degrees F with a relative humidity of 98 to 100 percent
- Carrots are ethylene-sensitive and should not be stored or transported with ethylene-producing items
- Whitening of carrots is caused from air within drying the outer cells, otherwise known as oxidation, of 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 is crucial to extending the shelf life of the product



A family of *Growing* companies.™

**GRIMMWAY FARMS**

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661.845.9435

grimmway.com





# Endless Versatility Carrots

*Perfect for all occasions.*

Today's more health conscious consumers are not only snacking on carrots, they are using carrots in creative ways incorporating them into every eating occasion.

Carrots Sparkle!

They have everything going for them-beautiful color, sweet taste, good texture, excellent plate coverage, and a terrific nutritional profile.



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

661.845.9435

*Carrot Cake Oatmeal*



*Balsamic Roasted Baby Carrots*



*Asian Carrot Stir Fry*



*Mini Carrot Cheesecake*





## DUDA FARM FRESH FOODS CELERY

Duda Farm Fresh Foods is the largest celery grower/shipper in the country; our roots with celery began in 1926. We built our business on growing the best quality celery products, and today, Duda's Dandy® is the leading brand in fresh-cut celery sales and growing.

## THE CATEGORY LEADER

Duda Farm Fresh Foods is the category leader because we:

- Invest in innovation to ensure our celery products meet consumer preferences for taste, quality and convenience.
- Work with our retail partners to ensure each customer's celery assortment is optimal for their unique shoppers.
- Raise consumer awareness through high-profile marketing communication activities.

## DRIVE IMPULSE SALES

Shoppers buy celery to eat as a snack and for use as a cooking ingredient. Fresh celery snack consumption is growing, which creates opportunities for overall category growth. Promote celery as a snack with complementary items such as peanut butter, ranch dressing, or dips to drive impulse sales.

## PROMOTE AND GET SOCIAL

Duda Farm Fresh Foods provides coupon opportunities and offers additional support such as 18 promotional weeks per year that can be tailored to retailers' individual sales goals.

Duda is socially connected, nurturing a network of brand ambassadors including bloggers, food writers and editors who help us connect with consumers, driving product awareness and inspiring new celery usage ideas.



## HANDLING AND DISPLAY

- Merchandise value-added celery in the cold case adjacent to packaged salads and refrigerated dips/dressings.
- Proper temperature control is paramount to the success of these items.
- Keep celery refrigerated between 34°F and 38°F.
- Value-added celery should be refrigerated immediately upon receipt. Even a few minutes at room temperature will greatly impact fresh-cut celery shelf life and quality.

## CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Key eating occasion for celery is dinner. Inspire consumer usage of celery for soups, casseroles and sauces by promoting with other fresh ingredients, such as onions and carrots. Provide simple recipes and signage to spotlight complementary items and drive sales.

Celery can also be cross-merchandised with nut butters, hummus and refrigerated dips, for convenient grab-n-go snack impulse sales.

## BEST PRACTICES

- Keep displays consistent.
- Use point-of-purchase signage to draw attention to the category and new items in the category.
- Promote, promote, promote
- Leverage Duda's customer support and integrated marketing program.

## OCCASIONS AND HOLIDAYS

Celery purchases are occasion and holiday-driven; sales peak in January (weight loss season), Easter, Thanksgiving and Christmas while sales of prepared celery peak at New Year's, Super Bowl, Labor Day, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

If space allocation is under sized, the category will fail to grow, despite the innovative packaging provided. Increase the display and build secondary displays during peak snack seasons, especially during Super Bowl week.

- Merchandise a full line of fresh celery items from bulk to value-added
- Manage for out-of-stocks
- Cross-promote with complementary items to drive sales
- Draw consumer focus with signage



**DUDA FARM FRESH FOODS, INC.**

PO Box 620257, Oviedo, FL 32762

407.365.2111

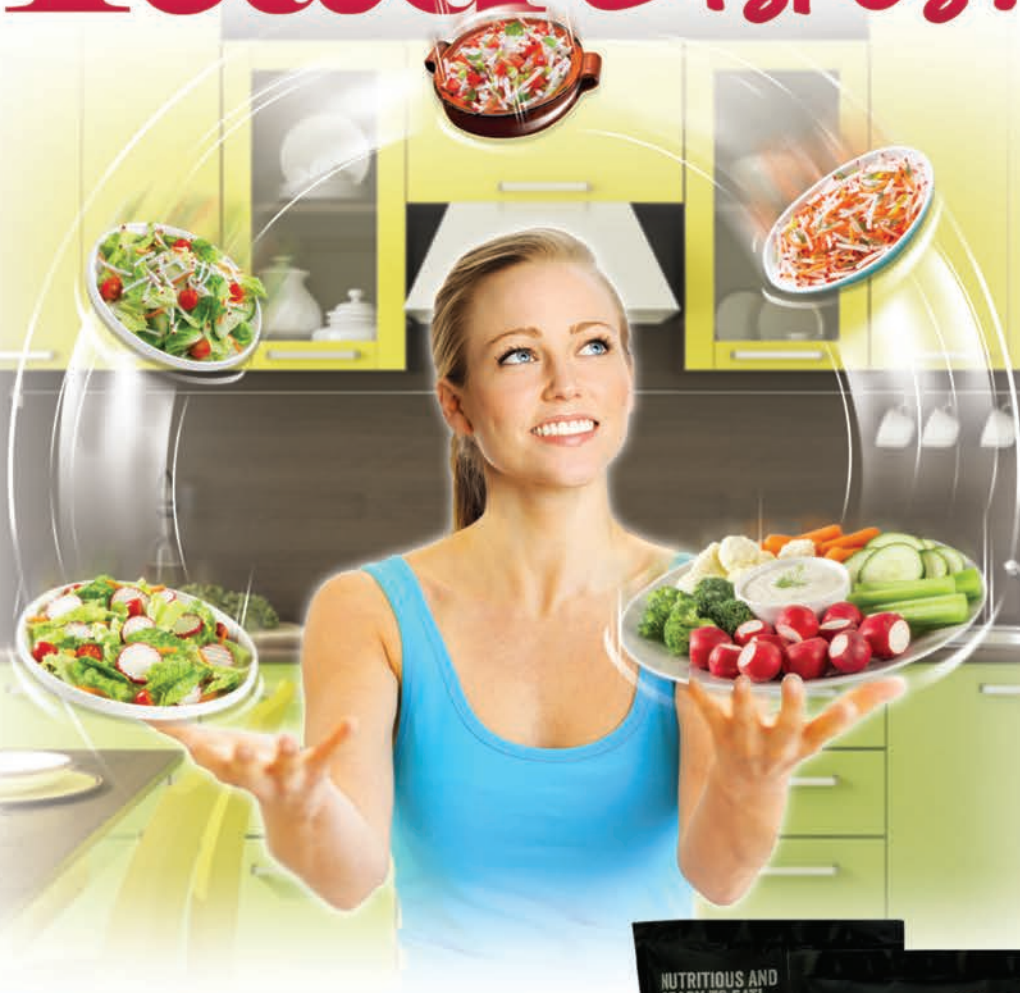
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dudafresh.com



# Totally Rad Dishes!

Visit us at CPMA!  
Booth #1515



Exclusively from Duda Farm Fresh Foods is the first line of fresh-cut, ready to eat radishes. Delivering on the convenience your shoppers desire—Dandy® Ready Radishes, Radish Coins and Radish Ministicks® are an exciting addition to the fresh-cut category. Shipping in new packaging that has been proven to grab consumer attention and drive purchase intent—it's time to get ready for radishes.



Duda Farm Fresh Foods  
(866) 792-DUDA  
dudafresh.com



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Dandyfresh



### QUICK TIPS

OFFER IN-STORE SAMPLING.

ASK FOR YOUR COMPLIMENTARY CHELAN FRESH SECONDARY DISPLAY TO INCREASE IMPULSE SALES.

MAKE DISPLAYS VISIBLE; BUILD THEM FRONT AND CENTER!

OFFER CUP O' CHERRIES AS GRAB-N-GO IN PRODUCE AND DELI.

## CHERRY SALES ARE SWEET, VERY SWEET

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

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.



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

USE DEMOS TO WIN OVER THE 73 PERCENT OF CUSTOMERS WHO REPORTEDLY DON'T PURCHASE CHERRIES.

PROMOTE HEALTH ASPECTS OF CHERRIES TO HEALTH-CONSCIOUS CONSUMER SEGMENTS, INCLUDING THE ELDERLY AND PARENTS.

CAPTURE THE GRAB-N-GO CUSTOMER WITH THE CHELAN FRESH CUP O' CHERRIES IN YOUR CUT FRUIT SECTION OR ADDITIONAL DISPLAYS.

PROMOTE HEAVILY IN JULY, WHICH IS PEAK PRODUCTION TIME!

EXPAND SALES WITH SECONDARY DISPLAYS! SECONDARY DISPLAYS INCREASE SALES FROM 10% TO 70%. USE CHELAN FRESH'S STAND-ALONE DISPLAYS TO PLACE CHERRIES IN HIGH-TRAFFIC AREAS AND CREATE IMPULSE SALES.

### DISPLAY IDEAS

- A large, high-quality display is the base of profitable cherry sales. Display cherries front and center in produce to ensure customers see them.
- Allow ample shelf space in that high-traffic area and steadily rotate supplies during the course of the day.
- Remember, a display doesn't have to be mounded to look big! Use false-bottom displays to avoid crushing fruit. Also, display bulk Northwest cherries in shipping cases.
- Offer a mix of Dark Sweet and Rainier in the display and include different packaging options. Additional choices spur extra sales.

### AVAILABILITY

Northwest cherries are available from early June to late August with peak volumes in July.

Package types include:

- slider bags
- clamshells
- cup of stem-free cherries with a reservoir lid for the pits



# CHELAN FRESH

**CHELAN FRESH**  
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Citrus and especially oranges are a stable category in the U.S. market. By ensuring high quality, flavorful fruit and focusing a little extra promotional and merchandising effort in this category, retailers can significantly affect sales.

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

- **Focus on Making it an Attention Getter!**
  - Place in store front
  - Create a large display
  - Use rich vibrant colors
  - Ensure its an eye catcher
  - Display bags or bulk fruit or both
- **Take Advantage of a Second Display**
  - Place additional bulk fruit and/or bags in secondary areas
  - Bags are convenient and can encourage more spending

### POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

- **Stimulate Movement with Useful Information:**
  - Use dynamic, high-graphic bins
  - Smaller high-graphic, pop-up bins are easy and convenient
  - Bins and pop-up bins are great for Waterfall Displays
  - High-graphic cartons on shelves or displays catch customer attention



## OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

SET UP CROSS-MERCHANDISING DISPLAYS IN OTHER DEPARTMENTS LIKE MEAT AND SEAFOOD FOR EXTRA SALES! INCLUDE A SIMPLE RECIPE SUGGESTION, LIKE A MARINADE OR GLAZE.

USE JUICERS, BEER (WHERE ALLOWED) OR DRINK MIXES WITH CITRUS DISPLAYS TO ENCOURAGE IMPULSE SALES AND HIGHER RINGS IN THE DEPARTMENT.

PROMOTE SMALLER CITRUS SIZES AS A PERFECT SNACK OR A LUNCH BOX ITEM FOR KIDS.



### PROMO/ADVERTISING DEALS

Because of the generally competitive price, oranges make a great promotional item any time of year.

- **Take Advantage of Competitive Pricing Year-round**
  - Promote “value” of citrus
  - Perfect for promos in winter or summer
  - California Navels offer a great affordable healthy snack
  - California Valencias offer a sweet and juicy option in summertime
- **Promote via Large Displays to Draw in Consumers**
  - Use high-graphic options to really generate sales!

### CROSS MERCHANDISE OPPORTUNITIES

- **Pair Oranges with Many Items, Including:**
  - Juicers
  - Beer aisle (Blue Moon or Shock Top)
  - Greens (citrus salad)
  - Meat (orange glaze)

### VARIETY & AVAILABILITY GUIDE

- **Year-Round Availability**
  - Navels: November – June
  - Valencias: April – October

### RECOMMENDED RIPENESS

- **Oranges are Ripe and Ready to Eat**
- **No Wait Time!**
- **Booth Ranches is a Single Grower**
  - Grows the best varieties and picks fruit for flavor
  - More control and consistency in each pack

### BACKROOM RECEIVING & PREPARATION PROTOCOL

Oranges will display better and last longer if temperature is properly maintained.

- **Optimum Temperature is 38-42 Degrees F**
- **Oranges are a Hearty Fruit**
  - Can display at room temperature
  - Best to refrigerate when not displayed

### QUICK TIPS

AT BUSY TIMES OF THE DAY, ORANGES CAN MOVE FAST, SO MAKE SURE DISPLAYS ARE WELL FILLED AND FRESH.

OFFER BAGGED AS WELL AS BULK.

USE HIGH GRAPHIC BINS/CARTONS TO DRAW ATTENTION AND MOVE PRODUCT!



### BOOTH RANCHES

12201 Avenue 480, Orange Cove, CA 93646

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info@boothranchesllc.com



Booth Ranches started in 1957 with 40 acres of citrus in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada's in Central California. Today we are still family owned and operated, farming 7500 acres from Orange Cove to Maricopa. We are a fully integrated company farming, packing and marketing only the product we grow ourselves. Booth Ranches has made the investment for a true sustainable future with 100% of our groves and packing facilities certified under the GlobalG.A.P. standard. We have enhanced our sustainability program and partnered with SureHarvest using the latest technology in the groves. Every box we pack is PTI compliant with full traceability. We take great pride in our Navels and Valencias. Booth Ranches consistently packs oranges that are ready to eat and full of flavor.

Only the best from our family to yours!



**Booth Ranches, LLC**  
Orange Cove, CA 93646  
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[info@boothranchesllc.com](mailto:info@boothranchesllc.com)  
[www.boothranches.com](http://www.boothranches.com)



**THE LEADER IN FRESH-CUT VEGETABLES**

Apio is a category leader offering two of the strongest brands in fresh-cut vegetables. The GreenLine® brand leads sales of fresh-cut green beans within the U.S., and Eat Smart® is the leader in fresh-cut branded bag and tray sales. Together, Apio brands account for 14 percent of fresh-cut vegetable sales. Contact us to learn more.



**QUALITY ASSURANCE — FROM FIELD TO FORK**

Apio has implemented an extensive quality assurance and food safety program designed to minimize food safety risks and ensure top-of-our-field quality — from the farm to the consumer's table. A California Leafy Greens Agreement signatory, Apio utilizes post-harvest physiologists, an on-premises microbiological lab, and annual third-party food safety and quality audits. The company has also adopted a complete HACCP program, a vendor approval program, and both GAP and GMP/Food Safety Training Programs.

**RECEIVING AND PREPARATION PROCEDURES**

Fresh-cut vegetables should be received from adequately refrigerated trucks and transferred immediately into storage that is ideally cooled to 34 to 36 degrees F. Shelves should be well stocked and products culled with attention to code date.

**CAPITALIZING ON FRESH-CUT VEGETABLES' HOLIDAY POPULARITY**

Fresh-cut vegetable sales peak at various times throughout the year. Carrying adequate supply is essential during these weeks.

Cross-merchandising value-added vegetables with their bulk counterparts (e.g. fresh-cut broccoli merchandised next to bulk broccoli) can entice shoppers to trade up and lead to higher basket rings.

| Value-added Vegetable | Peak Sales Week   |
|-----------------------|---|
| Bagged Slaw .....     | Fourth of July and Memorial Day                                 |
| Broccoli .....        | Easter, Super Bowl  |
| Cauliflower .....     | Thanksgiving  |
| Trays .....           | Christmas, New Years, Thanksgiving, Super Bowl & Fourth of July |

Given the greater appeal of trays throughout the year, holiday or event-themed trays can provide a point of differentiation and catch the attention of additional shoppers.

**HOW DOES ITEM COUNT STACK UP?**

Nationally, an average of 40 unique fresh-cut vegetable items are carried per store, per week.

|                 |    |               |   |
|-----------------|----|---------------|---|
| Side Dish ..... | 22 | Snacking..... | 7 |
| Meal Prep.....  | 8  | Trays.....    | 3 |

Specifically for trays, the ideal assortment includes one large tray (32-ounces or larger) and two small trays (8-ounces - 32-ounces) items.



**THE FRESH-CUT VEGETABLE CONSUMER**

Fresh-cut vegetables appeal most to premium, healthy-living couples and families. These consumers tend to cook fresh home meals, but they value products that serve as meal starters. Apio's Steam in the Bag feature is ideal for these core consumers, as they can eat fresh vegetable side dishes at home with minimal preparation.



FRESH-CUT VEGETABLE HOUSEHOLD PENETRATION

**54%**

In the past year, 50% of U.S. households purchased fresh-cut vegetables up 15pts in 2013

AVERAGE FRESH-CUT VEGETABLE BASKET SIZE

**\$86.64**

Compared to the average basket size with any produce item: \$61.73

**AVERAGE VOLUME % LIFT ON PROMOTION**

When promoted, fresh-cut vegetables' volume sales increase on average 77%. Promoting during their holiday peaks can help attract incremental sales.



**77% lift**



**APIO, INC.**

PO Box 727, Guadalupe, CA 93434

800.454.1355

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### NEW ZESPRI® SUNGOLD KIWIFRUIT

Developed through natural breeding processes, Zespri® SunGold Kiwifruit is ready to revolutionize the kiwifruit category. With smooth skin on the outside, this nutrition-packed, golden-fleshed variety features a delicate texture inside that tastes refreshingly juicy and deliciously sweet with just a hint of tanginess.

### PROMOTING ZESPRI'S NEW VARIETY – SUNGOLD KIWIFRUIT

Overwhelming results from recent sensory testing tells us consumers love the taste of new SunGold Kiwifruit! However, recent consumer research finds that few consumers know about this new deliciously sweet and refreshingly juicy golden-fleshed variety. Educating consumers and showcasing this amazing new piece of fruit at store level are the keys to success. We know once customers try Zespri® SunGold Kiwifruit, they will want more!

- **In-Store Demos** offer great ways to not only taste the product but also communicate key product messaging such as ripening, handling and health benefits to customers.
- **Silent Demos** are an inexpensive way to get consumers to try a new product. This is also a great way to show the unique golden-fleshed color of SunGold Kiwifruit. Many consumers have never seen a gold variety kiwifruit, so let's show them!
- **Dedicated POS** and Packaging that show the inside color of SunGold Kiwifruit and communicate health and taste information will raise awareness and help consumers find it in the store.
- **Large and/or prominently placed displays** will help make SunGold Kiwifruit more available to consumers. Help them find this great tasting piece of fruit!

### SUNGOLD HEALTH MESSAGING AT POINT OF PURCHASE

A recent study found that consumers are 59 percent more likely to buy more produce when there is health messaging at point of purchase. Use the following health messages with your displays or on packaging to help sell more Zespri® SunGold Kiwifruit!

- Zespri® SunGold Kiwifruit is one of the world's most nutrient dense fruits. It's a nutrition powerhouse!

## OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

CONSUMERS ARE 71% MORE LIKELY TO MAKE A PURCHASE BASED ON SOCIAL MEDIA REFERRALS. CONNECT ZESPRI® WITH YOUR CORPORATE SOCIAL MEDIA TEAM. ZESPRI® HAS LOADS OF READY TO USE CONTENT TO EDUCATE CONSUMERS ABOUT THE BENEFITS OF EATING ZESPRI® SUNGOLD KIWIFRUIT.



- Zespri® Kiwifruit is high in vitamin C. SunGold Kiwifruit has three times your daily recommended intake!
- Zespri® SunGold Kiwifruit is a good source of vitamin E, folate, and potassium.

### CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SUNGOLD

- **Berries:** SunGold Kiwifruit's bright gold color is a great complement to many different varieties of berries, especially strawberries and raspberries. Display cut kiwifruit next to the berries with a delicious fruit salad recipe.
- **Greek Yogurt:** Display SunGold Kiwifruit near the yogurt section. With the popularization of many low-carb diets, many customers are choosing a protein filled breakfast over traditional cereals. Greek Yogurt is a fan favorite and pairs perfectly with kiwifruit.
- **Chips & Kiwi Salsa:** Display chips and SunGold Kiwifruit salsa ingredients together in the produce department accompanied by our delicious kiwifruit salsa recipe!

### EATING SUNGOLD KIWIFRUIT IS EASY – CUT, SCOOP AND ENJOY

Fifty-one percent of consumers surveyed stated they peel a kiwifruit when they eat it making it very inconvenient. Remind your consumers through display signage how easy it is to eat kiwifruit. All they need is a knife and spoon to cut, scoop and enjoy kiwifruit.

### LOOK AT SUNGOLD KIWIFRUIT PACKAGING OPTIONS

- **Per Pound versus Per Piece Pricing:** It's been proven by several retailers, when Zespri® Kiwifruit is sold by the pound and near other produce with similar pricing strategies, sales have increased.
- 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

PROMOTE HOW EASY IT IS TO EAT SUNGOLD KIWIFRUIT. CONSUMERS CAN CUT AND SCOOP WITH JUST A SPOON AND KNIFE!

LET YOUR CUSTOMERS KNOW THAT A READY-TO-EAT ZESPRI® KIWIFRUIT SHOULD GIVE TO SLIGHT PRESSURE. SUNGOLD KIWIFRUIT TASTES SWEETER WHEN SOFTER.

DISPLAY AND ENCOURAGE USE OF ZESPRI'S POS MATERIALS AND DISPLAYS.

USE ZESPRI'S SHELF-READY BOXES TO DISPLAY SUNGOLD KIWIFRUIT, OFFERING BRAND RECOGNITION AND EASE OF MERCHANDISING.

WHEN STORING ETHYLENE SENSITIVE KIWIFRUIT IN BULK, BE SURE TO PLACE NEXT TO LOW ETHYLENE PRODUCING FRUITS SUCH AS BLUEBERRIES AND CHERRIES.

DON'T THROW AWAY CULLED KIWIFRUIT. USE IT IN PREPARED FOODS, SALAD BARS, JUICE BARS, OR CUT-FRUIT OPERATIONS.



**ZESPRI® KIWIFRUIT**  
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# MONTEREY MUSHROOMS

## MUSHROOMS

### RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

A dedicated mushroom section including all varieties located next to the salad section (the No. 1 use of fresh mushrooms) will increase sales up to 40 percent versus separating items by use. Demographics are important in determining space allocation.

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

### SECONDARY DISPLAYS

On-going secondary displays in the salad and the meat cases will generate 12 percent growth in category sales. Seasonal displays can feature eggs, potatoes, rice, pasta, tortillas, cheese, onions and other cooking vegetables. Many diets are enhanced with mushrooms.

### POINT OF PURCHASE/SIGNAGE

Attention through use of section signage, recipe cards, shelf talkers will drive sales. Mushroom consumption grows when consumers become more educated on the flexibility, nutrition and weight management benefits. Educational packaging is most effective.

### CROSS-MERCHANDISING OPPORTUNITIES

Achieve year-round meal solutions 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, meat replacement or a complementary ingredient in pastas, soups, eggs, rice, casseroles or pizza.

### VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY GUIDE

Practice maximum assortment, including 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.

### PROMOTIONAL/ADVERTISING IDEAS

Mushrooms need promotional activity to help bring shoppers to the category. However, they are not price sensitive, so deep discounts are not necessary. On average, promotions should be utilized six to eight times per quarter to maximize overall sales. Discounts should generally be between 15 to 30 percent. Three for \$5, two for \$4, or multiple pricing, tends to be the most effective method of promoting mushrooms.

### PRICING RECOMMENDATION

Consumers have shown they appreciate added-value from sliced, brown, and specialty varieties. In the current national pricing range, there is little price sensitivity in changing purchase decisions. Therefore, consumers do expect to see the following:

- 10% premium in retail for sliced product over whole
- 10% premium for crimini over white
- 50% premium for ports over crimini
- 80% premium for exotics over ports
- 30% premium for organics over similar conventional item

### DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

Think, "eggs and ice cream." Handle mushrooms gently like breakable eggs. Never stack anything on top of them. Also, never let them sit on the unrefrigerated dock. Like ice cream, get them in the cooler immediately and maintain the cold chain.

### QUICK TIPS

KEEP MUSHROOMS REFRIGERATED AND DRY.

PROMOTE MUSHROOMS CONSISTENTLY YEAR-ROUND AND PARTICULARLY THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER. VARY PROMOTIONS TO INCLUDE ALL VARIETIES. DEEP DISCOUNTS ARE NOT NECESSARY.

UTILIZE MULTI-ITEM ADVERTISING HIGHLIGHTING ALL CATEGORY SEGMENTS. IN-STORE PROMOS HELP, TOO.

MERCHANDISE BASED ON DEPARTMENT SALES AND CONSUMER DEMOGRAPHICS. EMPHASIZE VERSATILITY, NUTRITION, AND WEIGHT MANAGEMENT. DEFINITELY ADD A SECOND DISPLAY OF SLICED MUSHROOM PACKAGES IN THE SALAD SECTION. CROSS-MERCHANDISE WITH COMPLEMENTARY ITEMS.

PROMOTE LARGER PACK SIZES AND EXOTICS. USE PROMOTIONS TO BUILD CONSUMER AWARENESS OF SPECIALTY VARIETIES AND TRADE THEM UP.

ORGANIC MUSHROOMS SHOULD BE MERCHANDISED IN THE MUSHROOM SET.

## OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

PROMOTE AND MERCHANDISE MONTEREY'S GRILL-A-BELLA® MUSHROOMS IN THE HIGH PROFILE BIODEGRADABLE TRAY. THEY PROVIDE 100% DAILY REQUIREMENT OF VITAMIN D PER SERVING FOR CONSUMER HEALTH BENEFITS.

SELL BULK PORTABELLAS BY THE 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 AS WELL AS NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS.

PICTURES OF RECIPES ONPACK AS SHOWN ON MONTEREY'S BAG PRODUCTS AND ON NEW LABELS, OR DISPLAYED IN THE SECTION GET THE CONSUMER THINKING IMMEDIATELY, "WHAT'S FOR DINNER?" SERVING SUGGESTIONS AND HEALTHY RECIPES ARE ON EVERY PACKAGE.

### RECEIVING, STORAGE AND HANDLING TIPS

Carry minimal overstock. To cut your current shrink numbers in half, reduce your holding cooler inventory to a 24 hour supply after each delivery. Most stores get delivery every other day. Fill your displays after each delivery and inventory only enough to refill before next delivery. Plan accordingly for promotions. Refrigerate mushrooms immediately.

Additionally, store mushrooms off moist floors, away from warm doorways, out of direct airflow and away from odorous perishable items.



### MONTEREY MUSHROOMS, INC.

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# LEADING in Organic Mushrooms



Innovation as Natural as Our Mushrooms





# USA ONIONS



## RECOMMENDED DISPLAY IDEAS

USA Onions, homegrown in Idaho-Eastern Oregon, are versatile onions that may be used at any meal or in any favorite onion recipe. The appeal of USA 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. "From the heart of Onion Country, buy USA 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 (USAOnions.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

USA Onions, homegrown in Idaho-Eastern Oregon, 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 Onion region provides 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 (Idaho-E) office to learn about the promotional



opportunities for your store.

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 an attractive label available that will be sure to draw customers to a display of consumer packs and 10-pound bags. Many shippers carry the label, so ask for it on your next order!

## DISPLAY CARE AND HANDLING

USA 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 1 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°F 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

USA Onions has a special alliance with Weber-Stephen LLC and has focused on healthy grilling over the past year. The grilling theme has proven very effective in marketing and something worth trying. This promotion effort is great for cross-merchandising onions in the meat department. USA 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 barbecue 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.



**USA ONIONS**  
**IDAHO-E OREGON ONION COMMITTEE**

- 📍 PO Box 909, Parma, ID 83660
- ☎ 208.722.5111
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- ✉ [www.USAOnions.com](http://www.USAOnions.com)

# USA Onions

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# TAYLOR FARMS ORGANIC

## ORGANIC SALADS

For three generations, the Taylor Farms Family has delivered the finest quality fresh vegetables and salads. Our family is passionate about offering the best tasting fresh value-added produce. We are strategically located in 12 processing facilities, across the country and Mexico, to deliver fresh product daily. Taylor Farms believes enhancing our communities and reducing our impact on the planet go hand in hand. We strive to make a difference and give back to the communities where we live and work, because a prosperous community and healthy planet ensure the future for generations to come.

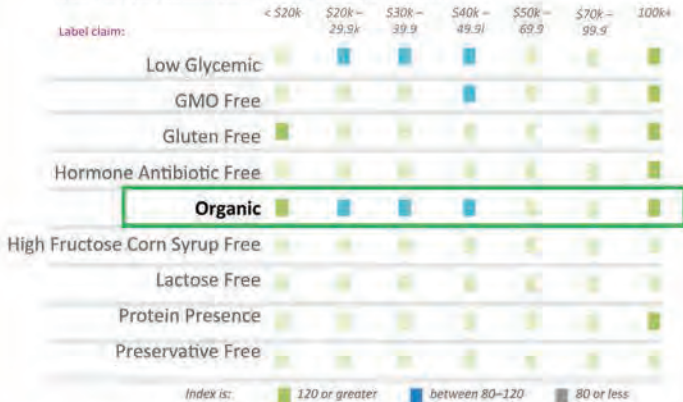


organic sales skew extremely high among 35-44 year olds as new families are started<sup>1</sup>



organic indexes the highest among under \$20k and over \$100k incomes with strong purchase index in middle income levels<sup>1</sup>

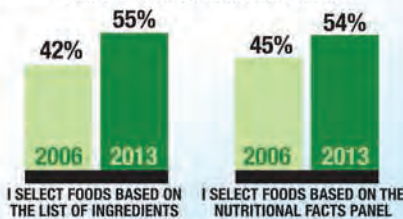
SALES PER 1,000 HOUSEHOLDS INDEX BY HOUSEHOLD INCOME



Health and Wellness claims are big business and growing.<sup>2</sup>

Top 5 Claims  
Organic  
Low Glycemic  
GMO  
Gluten Free  
Probiotic

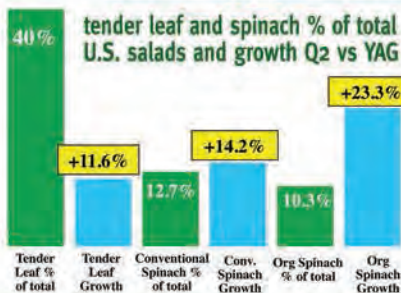
CONSUMERS ARE INCREASINGLY MONITORING FOOD LABELS ...AND BASING PURCHASE DECISIONS ON THEM



Tender Leaf is 40% of total salad Dollars

Spinach is 23% of total salad dollars (conv. + organic)

Organic Spinach is 10.3% of total salad dollars



### organic dollar growth 2007-2014



Total US Organic Supermarket Salad Volume Has Increased by 158% over 8 years

Including club volume organic salad dollars equal \$951,000,000/yr

### packaged salad consumer household penetration metrics

| Sub-Category   | Household Penetration | YAG Prime Retailer YAG | Penetration Point Change | Trips per HH | Trips per HH % Change | Volume per Trip | Avg. Store \$ per Product Basket | Avg. Spend per Product Basket % Change |
|----------------|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Packaged Salad | 75.39%                | 75.36%                 | 0.0%                     | 7.2          | -0.3%                 | 1.4             | \$77.8                           | -0.5%                                  |
| Organic Salad  | 20.49%                | 18.63%                 | 1.9%                     | 3.5          | -3.7%                 | 1.1             | \$89.1                           | -0.1%                                  |

Organic Salad household penetration gained the most versus YAG  
Organic salad dollars/basket are the highest

### organic • salad kits • greens are driving US salad category growth

| Salad category share and growth total US all channels | \$-CURR \$2wk   | \$-CURR 24wk    | \$-CURR 12wk    | \$ Share CURR \$2wk | \$ Share-CURR 24wk | \$ Share CURR 12wk | % Chg YAG-CURR \$2wk | % Chg YAG-CURR 24wk | % Chg YAG-CURR 12wk |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| SALAD BLEND   | \$1,412,647,586 | \$638,237,710   | \$308,564,618   | 30.45%              | 79.45%             | 29.00%             | 1%                   | 3%                  | 7%                  |
| ORGANIC SALAD   | \$1,082,225,044 | \$499,948,868   | \$244,547,166   | 22.60%              | 23.16%             | 23.00%             | 14%                  | 12%                 | 13%                 |
| SALAD KIT   | \$806,007,860   | \$389,678,001   | \$196,375,334   | 16.90%              | 18.00%             | 18.50%             | 35%                  | 35%                 | 33%                 |
| CLASSIC SALAD   | \$665,738,551   | \$255,190,490   | \$123,076,528   | 11.80%              | 11.80%             | 11.60%             | -2%                  | 2%                  | 3%                  |
| SPINACH SALAD   | \$347,793,003   | \$150,598,165   | \$74,869,461    | 7.30%               | 6.90%              | 7.00%              | 9%                   | 9%                  | 3%                  |
| PREMIUM CLASSIC SALAD                                 | \$210,433,865   | \$93,990,219    | \$45,457,197    | 4.40%               | 4.30%              | 4.30%              | -5%                  | 3%                  | 5%                  |
| GREENS  | \$134,462,958   | \$69,149,002    | \$37,948,730    | 9.20%               | 3.20%              | 3.60%              | 26%                  | 17%                 | 11%                 |
| COLESLAW  | \$160,155,219   | \$70,894,693    | \$42,117,005    | 3.40%               | 3.30%              | 3.00%              | 5%                   | 7%                  | 7%                  |
| Grand Total   | \$4,779,464,090 | \$2,167,687,146 | \$1,063,158,040 | 100.00%             | 100.00%            | 100.00%            | 9%                   | 10%                 | 10%                 |

Organic salads represent approximately 23% of total salad \$



947 B. Blanco Circle  
Salinas, CA 93901  
1-877-323-7374

<sup>1</sup> Source: Nielsen Homescan with Nielsen LabelTrends, 52-week ending 12/28/2013, UPC-coded products

<sup>2</sup> Source: Nielsen Strategic Planner & Nielsen Wellness Track, Total U.S. - All Outlets Combined (AOC), total store & top 5 based on 52-weeks ending 6/7/2014 vs. year ago; organic based on average 4-weeks ending 7/10/2010 through 4-weeks ending 6/7/2014; UPC-coded.



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TO YOUR STORES

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Papayas



Great taste and long shelf life delivered from our fields to your stores. 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



when food safety counts

Call Brooks today to get Caribbean Red papayas coming your way.



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The sweetest of the papayas, Solos are pear-shaped with bright orange flesh. Weighing about 1 pound, this fruit can be eaten starting at 50% yellow, when it gives to a gentle squeeze. Grown in Brazil, these Solos are non-GMO.

This fruit is a great treat for breakfast, lunch and dinner. For breakfast, Solos becomes the bowls to hold yogurt or cereal. No need to top that breakfast with fruit because the fruit is the delicious bowl. Or fill the Solo with berries for a fruity breakfast treat with every spoonful.

Fitting perfectly in the hand, this fruit is perfect for work lunches. Eat whole or save the other half in the refrigerator for a snack.

Solos are known for their dinner flare whether chopped in salsa or showing up as a bowl for a seafood salad. Ice cream is made



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

MAKE SURE YOUR SIGNAGE SAYS NON-GMO FOR THESE SOLO PAPAYAS.

A SOLO PAPAYA CUT IN HALF (SEEDS DISCARDED) AND WRAPPED WITH A SLICE OF LIME, A SLICE OF STARFRUIT AND A SPOON MAKES FOR A QUICK BREAKFAST OR TREAT ON THE GO.

DO THE DISHES! MAKE SOLO PAPAYAS THE EDIBLE DISH FOR ALMOST ANY ITEM IN THE "READY-TO-EAT" SECTION. WHETHER ACTING AS A DELICIOUS DISH FOR BERRIES, HONEYDEW OR COLESLAW, THE SOLO IS AN EYE-CATCHER THAT HEATS UP "READY-TO-EAT" SALES AND FOLLOW-ON SALES IN YOUR PRODUCE DEPARTMENT. USE ONE HALF OF THE SOLO AS THE DISH, AND CHOP UP THE OTHER HALF TO TOSS INTO THE SALAD.

TRY A DISPLAY NEAR THE SEAFOOD COUNTER WITH A TANTALIZING PHOTO OF A SEAFOOD SALAD NESTLED IN A SOLO BOWL.

MANY IN-STORE COOKING DEMONSTRATIONS GAIN FESTIVE PROPORTIONS IF THE DISH IS GARNISHED WITH A SLICE OF A SOLO PAPAYA. SLICE FROM TOP TO BOTTOM OR GET A STAR EFFECT WITH A SLICE ACROSS THE WIDTH. THE DEMONSTRATION GAINS RAVE REVIEWS IF THE SOLO PAPAYA ACTS AS THE DEMO'S DISH.

YOGURT LOOKS LIKE A DESSERT WHEN SERVED IN A SOLO PAPAYA HALF. ADD A DISPLAY OF THIS FRUIT AND STARFRUIT NEAR THE YOGURT. HAVE A WRAPPED, READY-TO-GO SOLO PAPAYA HALF FILLED WITH YOGURT AND TOPPED WITH A SLICE OF STARFRUIT NEARBY.

extra special when served in a Solo or served with chopped Solo papaya on top.

This fruit also fits well in the kitchen fruit bowl, ready to grab.

Ask Brooks about smartphone accessible tips for selecting, ripening and preparing Solo papayas. These mobile websites can be branded for your stores.

### DISPLAY

- Melon or tropical? Why choose? Solos' increasing demand deserves a spot in both displays. A basket of this beautiful golden fruit (with protection between the basket and the soft-skinned fruit) in the midst of your cantaloupe displays will grab attention that'll motivate impulse buys.
- Anything you'd fill a Solo with is a great cross-merchandising display idea. Make some room next to the berries, yogurt, limes, and cereal, to name a few.
- Show how this fruit can deliciously contain some breakfast, lunch and dinner favorites by having sliced Solos wrapped with a couple of berries in the seed cavity, along with a spoon and a slice of lime.
- Solos and salads go perfectly together. Any salad from Caesar to chopped fruit to veggie mix can sparkle with a Solo chopped in it. Chop half and use the other half as the bowl. Any salad ingredient display is enhanced by adding Solo papayas, including seafood salads whether crab, tuna or shrimp.
- Display Solos with a fruit ripening chart and smartphone accessible recipes and tips.
- Condiments rev up their party appeal when Solos make an appearance. In salsa, the Solo papaya's flavor nicely complements the tomato's acidic flavors. Make sure this fruit is a part of any salsa or relish display.

### KEY POINTS

- **Taste:** Similar to a melon in flavor; it is juicy and sweet, and provides a fragrant aroma.
- **Selection:** Solo papayas yield to gentle pressure when ripe. Their skin should be smooth and free of decay.
- **Ripening:** Keep fruit between 70°F and 80°F until it reaches at least 50 percent color.
- **Ethylene Production & Sensitivity:** High
- **Shelf Life:** Once 100% yellow, the papaya should be used within two to three days.
- **Brooks Availability:** Year-round
- **Brooks Origin:** Brazil
- **Storage Temperature:** 50°F to 55°F. Solo papayas won't ripen if kept too cold.
- **Storage Humidity:** 85 percent to 95 percent



### BROOKS TROPICALS

PO Box 900160, Homestead FL 33090  
305-247-3544  
305-242-7393  
brookstropicals.com  
info@brookstropicals.com

FROM OUR BRAZILIAN  
PAPAYA FIELDS  
TO YOUR STORES

SOLO  
*Papayas*



Great taste delivered from our fields in Brazil to your stores. Perfect for individual salads, breakfast bowls and dessert cups. These solos are backed with:

- Ongoing research and development
- Food safety audited fields, harvesting crews, packing and shipping facilities
- Quality control team

All that hard work delivers quality — Solo papayas with great taste and proven shelf life. Call Brooks today to get Brazilian Solo papayas coming your way.



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# THE NEWEST SENSATION!

*From the #1 Snap Pea Supplier*



Mann Packing Co., Salinas, CA • 800.884.6266 • [veggiesmadeeasy.com](http://veggiesmadeeasy.com)



Starfruit (or carambola) is a sweet and tangy fruit that varies in size from 3 to 6 inches in length. It's a good source of vitamins A and C. Starfruit turns from green to yellow during ripening. During this process, the tips of this fruit's ribs will naturally turn brown.

Brooks' starfruit are now available on the West Coast including California, Texas and Arizona.

Although starfruit can be enjoyed as a nutritious snack, bite-by-bite, like an apple, it's often sliced into star-shapes for topping salads or garnishing an entree or cocktail. Chopped, it's also enjoyed in dishes adapted from its native cuisines of Southeast Asian like relishes and curries. Of course, starfruit in the Western Hemisphere finds its way into salsas, pastas, pies and veggie toppings. No matter the recipe, the cook always saves some star-shaped slices for the top.

As the largest grower and shipper of domestic starfruit, Brooks grows this fruit in food safety-audited fields, picked by audited crews, and packed and distributed in audited facilities. Brooks' starfruit is also non-GMO.

*Health Note: Those with kidney problems should check with their doctor before eating starfruit.*

### DISPLAY

Let your customers know they're in the presence of stars. Signage showing how starfruit gets sliced into stars helps fruit recognition and impulse buying.

These stars deserve multiple appearances in your produce aisle. Pack them in wicker



baskets with star-shaped ends pointed out to accentuate star-shapes. Add a small basket of thought-provoking displays for on-the-go lunches, fruit salads and salsas. Break up the greens of different avocado varieties with these bright fruits.

Give in-house, chopped-fruit salads the star treatment with starfruit slices strategically placed on top and around the container's sides.

Just as you'd add a couple of berries as garnish to cut fruit, go for some diversity and add stars to the mix. Slices of melons and papayas look even more appetizing with starfruit slices. Star appeal can be added to almost any "ready-to-eat" and "ready-to-heat" dish.

Help the impulse buy with easy access to tips on selecting, ripening and preparing. Ask Brooks about smartphone access — scan and text — to tips and recipes. These mobile websites can be branded for your markets.

### BACKROOM AND HANDLING TIPS

Keep storage temperatures between 48°F to 55°F.

When adding to fruit salads, take a vegetable peeler and remove the brown tips of the starfruit. Slice the fruit and punch out seeds, and it's ready to go.

As starfruit turns yellow, it becomes sweeter. Display starfruit with varying degrees of ripeness.



### KEY POINTS

● **Taste:** Similar to that of a tart apple when green, starfruit sweetens as it turns yellow.

● **Selection:** Choose a firm, crisp fruit. Browning on the edges is a sign of ripeness.

● **Ripening:** Store fruit at room temperature until most traces of green have disappeared and ribs turn brown.

● **Ethylene Production And Sensitivity:** Low

● **Shelf Life:** One week, depending on temperature and humidity. Once fully ripe, it should be eaten within two to three days.

● **Brooks Availability:** July to April

● **Brooks Origin:** Florida

● **Storage Temperature:** 48°F to 55°F

● **Storage Humidity:** 88 percent to 90 percent

Starfruit is also available in clamshells called StarPac®, which prevents bruising during transport and customer handling. It stacks easily, reduces shrinkage by controlling humidity, tracks and scans more easily with UPC coding, and enhances ripening.



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## OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

ON-THE-GO LUNCH DISPLAYS SPARKLE WITH SOME STAR APPEAL. IT'S EASY TO ADD A STARFRUIT TO THE BROWN BAG OR ADD SLICES TO MOST SANDWICHES TUCKED INSIDE A LUNCHBOX.

INCLUDE TIPS AND IDEAS FOR SIDE DISHES IN BARBECUING, GRILLING AND TAILGATING DISPLAYS. STARFRUIT CAN PLAY STARRING ROLES IN SALSAS, POTATO TOPPERS, RELISHES, CREAMY SALADS AND MORE. IN A SUPPORTING ROLE, STARFRUIT CAN TOP ALMOST ANY SALAD, FRUIT OR VEGETABLE DISH.

ALMOST ANY IN-STORE COOKING DEMONSTRATION CAN ADD TO SALES. A STARFRUIT SLICE MAKES AN EYE-CATCHING GARNISH FOR MANY SAMPLE DISHES. THIS INCLUDES MANY DRINKS. STARFRUIT CAN BE SQUEEZED JUST LIKE A LIME FOR A GREAT CITRUS FLAVOR TO ADD TO TEA, CARBONATED DRINKS, EVEN FINE WINES.

SUMMER HOLIDAYS (ESPECIALLY THE FOURTH OF JULY) ARE ALL ABOUT THE STARS AND STRIPES. STARFRUIT HAS THE STARS PART COVERED. MAKE SURE YOUR CUSTOMERS KNOW IT.



FROM OUR  
STARFRUIT FIELDS  
TO YOUR STORES

FLORIDA

Starfruit



## Leading Food Safety

First with starfruit that's food safety-certified across the board: groves, harvesting crews, packinghouse and storage facility.

Grown by Brooks for over fifty years, this Florida-grown starfruit has a refreshing, sweet-tart, crisp taste ready for your customers' dining tables. Available in bulk or StarPac clamshell packaging and with double-stack barcode labels.

Brooks Tropicals' high-scoring starfruit audits join the roster of other successful audits for Caribbean Red papayas, SlimCado avocados and more.



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**Primus Labs**

Groves  
Harvesting Crews  
Packinghouse  
Storage Facility



## SNACKING TOMATOES RULE WITH CONSUMERS

Greenhouse Grown snacking tomatoes have shown steady growth in dollars and volume compared to other varieties within the tomato category. Consumers desire tomatoes with real garden-fresh flavor compelling them to put their purchase dollars toward snacking tomatoes. With a higher average retail ring and greater pull, this equates to higher ACV for your store.



## VARIETY AND AVAILABILITY

Greenhouse Grown tomatoes have the luxury of being available 365 days a year providing consistent supply for your customers.

Greenhouse Grown tomatoes are vine ripened for consistent garden-fresh flavor with every purchase

Greenhouse Grown tomatoes use sustainable growing methods that require no pesticides or herbicides — making them healthier for people and the planet.

## MERCHANDISING AND DISPLAY

Because tomatoes should be stored at room temperature, this makes them ideal for display in areas outside of the produce section. Try a display of grab-and-go bags in the snacking aisle of the store or near the register to promote healthy eating.

Village Farms can work with you to create a unique POP display for your store format. RPC wraps, pallet wraps, banners, and shelf talkers all add value for consumers in the tomato category.

Village Farms' Heavenly Villagio Marzano tomatoes are the ultimate snacking tomato loved by all! Kids love to snack on the tender juicy little bites, and adults go ga-ga for their well balanced garden-fresh flavor.



## OUT-OF-THE-BOX PROMOTIONAL IDEAS

FOR A HEALTHY SNACK DISPLAY, SHOWCASE GRAB-N-GO BAGS OF HEAVENLY VILLAGIO MARZANO IN THE SNACK AISLE OR NEAR CHECK-OUT.

## QUICK TIPS

LOCALLY GROWN IS HOT. PROMOTE LOCALLY GROWN FRUITS AND VEGETABLES WITH POINT OF SALE SIGNAGE. VILLAGE FARMS' NEW PACKAGING FEATURES TEXAS GROWN AND BC GROWN ON EVERY PRODUCT. DID YOU KNOW WE ARE GMO FREE? LOOK FOR SEALS ON PACK.



Greenhouse Grown

### VILLAGE FARMS

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Greenhouse Grown

Committed to meeting consumers' needs as well as the environment... through innovation.

good for the

# tastebuds & the earth.



While we love that exclusive Village Farms varieties like our Heavenly Villagio Marzano® are often described as out of this world, we remain firmly planted in this world and our mission to sustain it for future generations. Village Farms – the best of both worlds.



The sweet taste of heaven on earth.

Greenhouse Grown



## heavenly villagio marzano

Authentic Mini San Marzano | Mini San Marzano authentic

Produce of USA • Produit des E.-U.

454 g / 1 lb

GMO FREE

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### Access Untapped Shoppers Ripe In Your Area

1

Buying power for Hispanics and Asians are expected to reach 2.5 trillion in 2015 and 5.3 trillion by 2020. They spend 41% more than any other customer, make 2-3 store visits per week, and choose stores based on high quality fresh produce. Turbana will help you identify ethnic shoppers in your market and make your store a destination!

### Boost Tropical Sales With Current Customers

2

It's not just Hispanic and Asian shoppers that are looking for more variety in their tropicals. Thanks to the foodie boom, fusion ingredients are hot! Food shows and blogging have risen greatly. Over 50% of millennials refer to themselves as foodies. Mainstream shoppers are venturing out; feed their cravings and introduce them to new tropical flavors.

### Tailor Displays to Your Shoppers

3

For ethnic shoppers, create bilingual displays and add staff knowledgeable in tropicals. For mainstream shoppers, education is key. Showcase food samples for inspiration and instructions on storing and choosing the right tropicals. Turbana provides tailored collateral materials, signage, promotions, and cross-merchandising opportunities to keep your store fresh for shoppers!



6  
TROPICAL  
UNSTOPPABLE



# STEPS TO MAKE YOUR STORES' CALLS RESPONSEABLE

TURBANA

## PRODUCTS

ALOE VERA



## PRODUCT INFORMATION

## CONSUMER PROFILE

in community.  
an Indian  
for kidney and  
longevity  
juice

## Go High Tech

Access to demographic data, specific to your local market area, will help tailor produce orders and better cater to each of your stores' consumers. Thanks to Turbana's proprietary app, retail partners gain real-time key insights that enable a store to understand eating habits of shoppers and learn more about tropicals. The result: customized assortments and growth of the category.

4

## One Stop Shop

Flexibility to mix different tropicals is essential to provide a customized assortment. Turbana offers the ability to mix a shipment of any of its tropicals with its bananas. This enables retailers to customize orders for each store's needs while reducing costs and ensuring the highest quality produce.

5

## Partner With a Tropicals Expert & 360° Turnkey Solution Provider

Turbana provides a 360 degree turnkey solution to your store's tropical needs. We work hand-in-hand with retail partners to deliver expertise, marketing intelligence, staff training and tools to help stores build a successful tropicals program that increases overall sales.

6

For partnership opportunities call 1-800-Turbana | [www.Turbana.com](http://www.Turbana.com)



# Celebrate

## National Nutrition Month<sup>®</sup> with Fruits & Veggies—More Matters!

March is National Nutrition Month.

Help your customers enjoy the  
taste of eating right!



Find a wealth of **FREE** information and resources at  
**FruitsAndVeggiesMoreMatters.org** and **PBHFoundation.org**  
to promote healthy choices during March and beyond.

# Maximizing Avocado Sales



PHOTO COURTESY OF BROOKS TROPICALS

## Positioning and POS can go a long way to drive sales.

BY LISA WHITE

**A**vocados have become a fruit for all seasons, regions and reasons. No longer positioned as an ingredient for guacamole, a spring/summer ingredient or just a California staple, avocados are now a main component in the produce department.

“In 2015, we may hit a new milestone, with 2 billion pounds of avocados anticipated to be sold in the U.S.,” says Dan Acevedo, director of business development for West Pak Avocado, Inc., based in Murrieta, CA. “Sales are close to doubling, compared to 2008.”

Part of the success is attributed to the year-round availability, with U.S. avocados now being sourced not only from California and Florida, but also Mexico, Chile, the Dominican Republic and Peru. Each region’s growers’ association has played a part in bringing this fruit to the forefront.

### INCREASING DEMAND

Retailers are discovering that, in order to take consumption to the next level, consumers need more reasons to purchase avocados.

“If you look at what major retailers across

the country are doing to market avocados and other fresh fruits, you’ll see an ever-increasing focus on communicating new usages and nutrition information,” says Karen Brux, managing director, North America at the Chilean Fresh Fruit Association, based in Santiago, Chile.

“For example, our bin wrap not only educates consumers on how to choose an avocado, it gives consumers numerous ideas on how they can easily incorporate avocados into eating occasions throughout the day.”

Mission Produce Inc., Oxnard, CA, incorporates a different business model into its repertoire. The company has a marketing team that travels to its customers throughout the country looking for selling opportunities.

“Retailers are now doing a great job merchandising avocados, which is evident by increased sales for this product over the last 15 years,” says David L. Austin, Mission Produce’s director of marketing. “Our challenge as an industry is finding enough fruit to adequately supply the demand.”

This varies, depending on region. While the Southwest and California are mature avocado markets, sales in the Midwest, Northeast and Southeast are growing between 10 and 40 percent per year, depending on the retailer, according to Austin.

Although there is still an Hispanic influence on this segment, the demographic and usage

potential continue to grow.

There has been more focus on the healthy aspects of this fruit. For example, the Hass avocado industry is making more findings available.

Researchers at Penn State University say including avocados in the diet could help lower the bad cholesterol that can lead to heart attacks or strokes.

While traditional avocados are about 300 calories, Brooks Tropicals LLC, based in Homestead, FL, has created an alternative produce line called SlimCados that has half the fat and about a third fewer calories than the traditional fruit.

“Consumers want quick access to recipes,” says Mary Ostlund, marketing director at Brooks Tropicals. “Google, Pinterest or other social media sites are important, and social media contests and search engine optimization are all vital to market our brands.”

To help expand avocado usage in America, a number of suppliers are including recipes on their websites that are easily accessible via smartphone or computer.

However, the main way retailers have helped expand this segment is by meeting consumer expectations in terms of quality and ripeness, which has played a part in driving incremental sales.

“When consumers purchase ready-to-eat avocados, we see increased consumption and

store purchases,” says West Pak’s Acevedo. “There is nothing worse than waiting for an avocado to ripen or playing the guessing game on when it’s ready to eat.”

Cross-merchandising also has played an important role in terms of guacamole ingredients and recipe ideas and is anticipated to expand this year to breakfast, lunch and snack options.

“The number one thing retailers need to do to increase sales is have ripe fruit on display at all times, year-round, according to our findings,” says Michael Angelo, director national sales at Calavo Growers Inc., based in Santa Paula, CA. “The second aspect is proper placement, which used to be out of the mainstream, by the tropical fruit, like mangos and kiwi. Now, with more people understanding the versatility of this fruit, it garners positioning in two to three areas within the produce department.”

### PLACEMENT WITH A PURPOSE

One fundamental rule for avocados, according to experts, is to place them next to the tomatoes.

This not only provides a dramatic color break, but the tomatoes give off ethylene, a gas that helps ripen the avocados quicker. Plus, these two fruits are often paired together in recipes, so it makes sense that both are in close proximity.

About a decade ago, ripening programs were implemented for avocados, as the industry discovered that consumers will buy and eat

more of this product when it’s already ripe.

“After these programs were instituted, we saw a 300 percent overall increase in sales,” says Mission’s Austin. “Most stores on average experienced between a 25 and 40 percent sales increase in these products after we started our ripening program.”

Lakeland, FL-based Publix, a chain of more than 1,000 stores in the South, carries traditional and organic Hass avocados as well as the green skin variety from Florida and the Dominican Republic.

“Avocados at Publix are displayed in produce and can also have a secondary display in the store, depending on the tie-in,” says Maria Brous, director of media and community relations at Publix. As a case in point, for the Super Bowl, Publix featured a secondary display tie-in with Old El Paso products.

Publix also has incorporated its Aprons Simple Meals program, an in-store recipe demonstration plan. This provides one to two meal ideas per week from the chain’s meals specialists, who prepare dishes and provide samples. Also, recipe cards are provided so customers can recreate the meal at home. The items needed for the recipe are located in an adjacent bunker.

There is no longer a main selling season or region for avocados.

“When I started in the business, the only avocados I was marketing were from California,” says Austin. “Then we introduced Mexican avocados into the mix in 13 states and this increased to all states, with the excep-

tion of California and Florida.”

With the increase of imports, avocados are now available all year, albeit from different sources. And newer growing regions have been popping up, including most recently Peru.

Now Mission Produce imports from Chile, Peru and, most recently, New Zealand to supply the growing U.S. demand.

“Because retailers want the best quality at the best price, source-based marketing is rapidly going by the wayside due to the high demand,” says Austin. “As a shipper, we’re touting fruit from all regions, although two-thirds of avocados are sourced from Mexico.”

Also, due to this increase in availability, avocados are now always in season. Still, volume typically lifts in spring and summer due to California’s peak harvest.

Consumers are typically unaware of the country of origin, since the majority of avocados are Hass.

Whether during a festive holiday season, Super Bowl, Cinco de Mayo, summer grilling season or Major League Baseball’s Fall Classic, the avocado commissions have created marketing programs to drive consumer awareness. Wellness education and recipe ideas also are becoming more prevalent.

“Retailers should highlight the versatility of avocados in the product department,” says Angelo. “Not only is this a healthy product, but it’s also suitable for all dayparts.”

Calavo Growers is focusing on cross merchandising programs as well as highlighting countries of origin, spotlighting avocado varieties that are at peak flavor.

“This is not because the fruit is cheaper; it’s about what provides optimum flavor and peak eating experience,” says Angelo.

Retailers invested in this category can increase visibility and sales by placing secondary avocado displays at the store’s checkout area to help promote impulse purchases.

### SIZING UP THE MARKET

In the avocado segment, price is important in the eyes of the retailer and consumer. Sizes are typically not merchandised differently, just priced accordingly.

Size popularity depends on the region it’s sold in, but most suppliers recommend offering more than one option.

“Retailers should definitely investigate the viability of a dual size program,” says Mission Produce’s Austin. “We always advocate bags for the value buy, but also tout providing small and large sizes.”

This can sometimes be a challenge in terms

## AN AVOCADO MERCHANDISING PRIMER

### Merchandise to Highlight Ripe Fruit

- Ripe avocados outsell unripe avocados as much as 4 to 1 in new demand markets and up to 2 to 1 in established markets with implementation of a dedicated ripe avocado program.
- Use stickers and POS to highlight ripe fruit.
- Display an assortment of ripe and breaking fruit to maximize sales with both impulse and planned purchases.

### Merchandise Premium Avocados in Season

- Locally-grown matters to consumers.
- Use point of sale to highlight fruit origin.

### Display Multiple Sizes

- Small, medium and large avocados meet different consumer needs and uses.
- Retailers who display both bulk and

bagged avocados attain incremental sales.

### Maintain High Quality Displays

- Do not display on wet racks or refrigerate below 42°F.
- Never display California avocados near misting systems.
- Rotate the display daily and remove any poor quality or overripe fruit.

### Display Near Complementary Produce Items

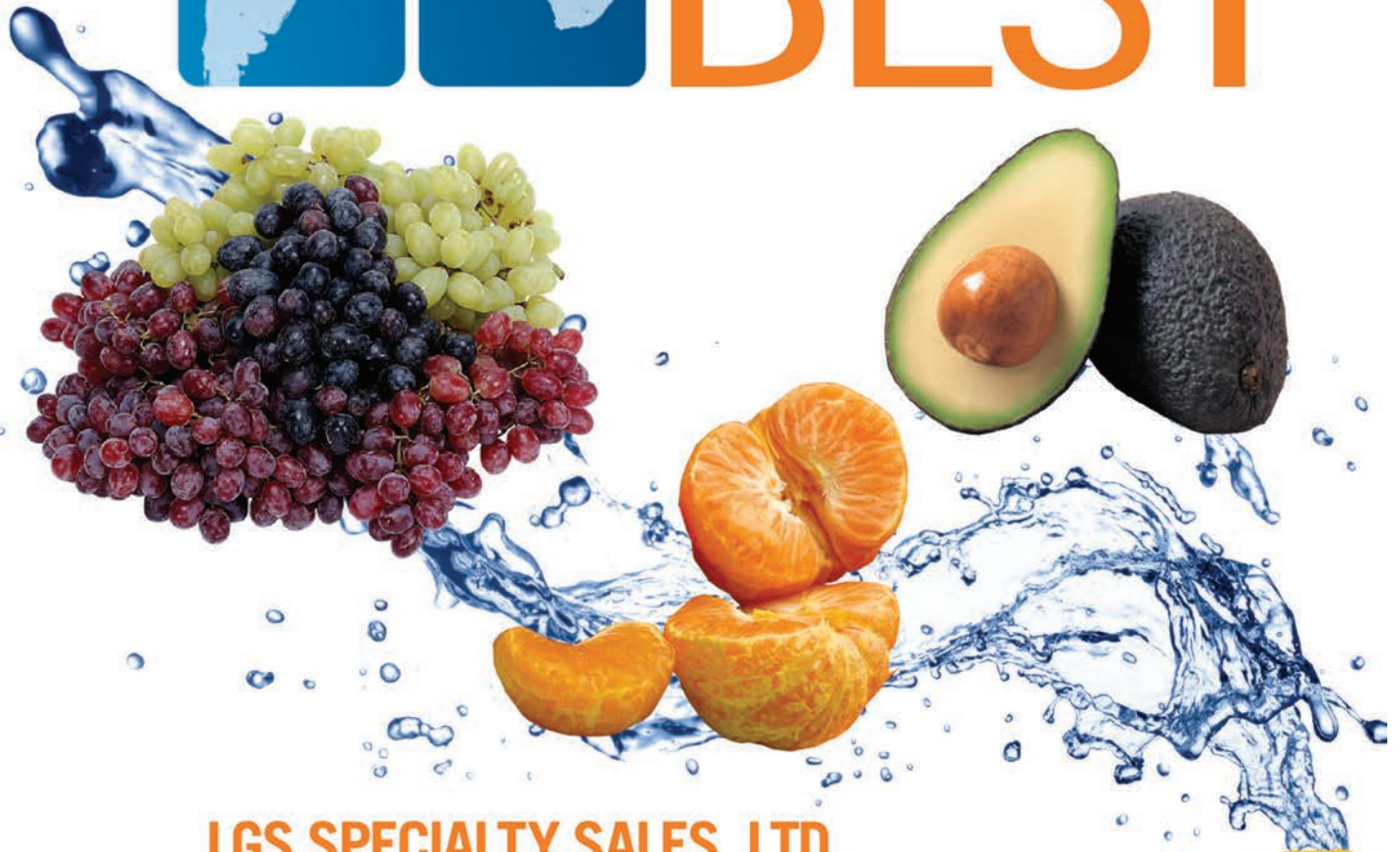
- Display next to tomatoes, cilantro, onions, limes and peppers for guacamole usage and incremental sales.
- Display near fresh-cut salads to increase basket ring.

Source: California Avocado Commission





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of scanning, since most stores are set up to input the PLU. This means a smaller avocado would ring up the same price as a larger size.

As an industry, there is also new programming being introduced around smaller-sized avocados that can be utilized all at once by the consumer.

“As an example, a size 84 is the size to cut and slice on an omelet, bagel or toast for breakfast, sandwich or individual salad for lunch,” says Maggie Bezart-Hall, vice president of trade and promotions for Avocados from Mexico Inc., based in Irving, TX.

In terms of display, it helps to differentiate the sizes by positioning the fruit in different spots in the produce department.

“We advise most retailers to space different size avocados apart so they’re distinctly different,” says Austin. “However, sizes aren’t really marketed differently, as most of the industry puts small fruit in bags and large fruit in bulk.”

The bread and butter of this segment are the 48s and 60s, which are the majority of avocados sold. As a result, these are what sizes the majority of the industry is trying to push.

Recently, Peru has been providing a larger Hass variety in the summer months, so suppliers have been encouraging retailers to carry larger fruit sizes as an in-and-out item.

“Peruvian pricing has been so favorable, which means we can market big fruit often at the same price as smaller fruit, which is a big change from the past,” says Austin. “Price is a bigger component in certain parts of the country.”

There is definitely a sweet spot where avocados move well and a good ad price can help move these products. But there is a fine line. Suppliers say if the price is lower than 99 cents, sales can be negatively impacted.

Plus, retailers need to keep in mind there are only so many avocado customers will purchase at one time.

This means when this fruit is priced too low, stores will be leaving money on the table.

While some consumers are seeking a value item, others are more concerned with convenience. For this reason, stores that merchandise at least two different sizes, as well as avocado bags, can appeal to a wider demographic.

“Some produce departments sell a large size 40 count that is popular, while others have 60 or 70 count avocados that sell like crazy,” says Calavo’s Angelo. “It depends on the customer base, but there is no reason to give these products away.”

Although in the past, 48s and 60s were the most common sizes being purchased, in recent years it is more likely for multiple sizes to be displayed.

“Consumers like having a choice,” says Brooks Tropicals’ Ostlund. “Retailers can expand avocado sales even more by providing that choice.”

Stores can create merchandising programs that tout the different sizes, prices and usages.

Decatur, AL-based Priceville Foodland, a single-store operator, mainly sells Hass avocados from California.

“This is displayed with garlic cloves, chopped mint, jars of roasted garlic and fresh tomatoes for making guacamole,” says Tye Newburger, produce manager. “We display both ripe and unripe avocados, with the ripe fruit on top.”

Suppliers say avocados can be sold at a premium and still maintain high velocity on display. This is because the different sizes attract different users.

“In well-developed markets, we see jumbo size avocados in specialty displays, 48 and 60 size avocados on large bulk displays, organic avocados in separate sections and bagged smaller avocados as a grab-and-go item,” says

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West Pak's Acevedo. "All are positioned for different consumers."

Smaller avocados are used to drive multiples in a price point, such as five for \$5 or 10 for \$10 to grab consumers' attention. By the same token, medium and larger avocados are more likely to attract the attention of premium users.

The Hass Avocado Board has raised the bar in marketing this fruit with its Love One Today campaign. This science-based food and wellness education program encourages consumers to include avocados in their meal plans. It also touts the fresh and natural health benefits of avocados with a distinctive mark available free for the industry to use in marketing these products. The descriptive words used in this campaign include 'fresh avocados,' 'naturally good fats + cholesterol free.'

Avocados from Mexico continues its aggressive consumer education program through television, print, social media as well as paid social media and a new consumer website that yields more than 1.5 billion media impressions.

West Pak Avocado includes recipe ideas on its bagged avocados and will be launching new bag configurations that have recipes and health benefits.



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHILEAN FRESH FRUIT ASSOCIATION

**The bin wrap from the Chilean Fresh Fruit Association educates consumers on how to choose an avocado and gives consumers ideas for meals.**

Retailers that have a strong merchandising program can easily become a destination for avocados.

"We can't rest on our laurels," says Austin. "We need to create ways to push it to the next level."

In addition to a wide range of promotional

campaigns, Mission Produce is focusing on cross merchandising to bring added attention to the category.

As a distributor of Frontera Guacamole, created by famed Chicago chef Rick Bayless, Mission Produce uses promotional messaging on its avocado bags, which includes redeemable coupons where customers can buy a bag of avocados and guacamole mix for \$1 off.

"Other successful merchandising programs include utilizing high graphic colored bins retailers can put out in front of the avocado display," says Austin.

Indisputably, the Super Bowl and Cinco de Mayo are the two drivers of avocado sales.

This is when retailers can ramp up merchandising by holding display contests with their other stores, which can drive up sales with a minimal investment. Also, demos can help move avocados as well as price specials, such as 10 for \$10 or four for \$5.

Packaging also is a key component to successful merchandising.

"Whether it's an RPC wrap, avocado box, bin wrap or a band that goes around a net bag of avocados, retailers are incorporating more key messages into their avocado displays," says Brux. "I think this will be an ongoing trend." **pb**

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# Berries Command Attention



These fruits offer robust flavor, brilliant color, and superior nutrition to influence produce sales year-round

BY KRISTEN POPE

If you've seen your local weathercaster holding up a container of Florida strawberries lately, they likely came from Sue Harrell, director of marketing, Florida Strawberry Growers Association, Dover, FL. The association is making an effort to reach potential customers who live in cold-weather climates in order to encourage them to take full advantage of Florida's winter berry season.

The Association sent insulated boxes of berries, complete with fun facts, to regional weathercasters. "If they have time on air, they can pull the boxes out and talk about Florida berries and fun facts to share with viewers," says Harrell. The Association also uses wrapped semi trucks promoting the berries, as well as a focus on "Fresh from Florida" to differentiate domestically grown berries from those grown in Mexico.

"The biggest impact to increase berry

consumption is at retail level, working with our retail partners to create a berry 'destination' by displaying more than just one berry," says Kyla Oberman, director of marketing, Naturipe Farms, Naples, FL. "Ideally, we put strawberries, blueberries, blackberries and raspberries together. We use enticing, eye-catching point-of-sale messages of flavor and health, co-merchandising with complementary items such as yogurt, chocolate, and pastries, and recipe suggestions. In-store sampling is also a great way to encourage purchase intent and then repeat purchase of berries."

## TAKE ADVANTAGE OF FARM-TO-TABLE

How do these promotions translate to the supermarket? As consumers pay more attention to where their food comes from, the berry industry is taking note with a variety of farm-to-table promotions that encourage consumers to learn about where their food comes from.

Publix takes advantage of the height of berry season through its "At Seasons Peak" program. "Customers have grown to expect year-round availability of fruits and vegetables, which we provide," says Maria Brous, director of media and community relations, Publix, Lakeland, FL. "However, having product available year-round may also disconnect the

customer from the true seasonality of the fruits and vegetables. Thus, we created our At Season's Peak program six or seven years ago to remind our customers when fruits and vegetables are most flavorful."

Publix customers can sign up for email reminders, recipes, and additional information on Publix's At Seasons Peak website. "Part of our At Season's Peak program includes in-store signage, media mentions, and media buys (such as billboard spaces)," says Brous. Publix also advertises and promotes prime produce in its weekly ads.

## SEASONALITY SELLS

With Florida's winter strawberry season, Christmas, New Year's, and Valentine's Day are key holidays. "There's a niche market there for us, and they're red and green, so they're great for the holidays," says Harrell. "Some of our growers pick stem berries, which are a specialty item. They pick the berry with a long stem, so it's a big opportunity to actually promote the stem berry."

"Naturipe is a partnership between four berry growers located throughout North and South America," says Oberman. "Our multiple growing areas allow us to offer fresh blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, and blackberries year-round. Naturipe berries are

in season locally and in season globally."

Wish Farms also focuses on the winter holidays, especially Christmas and Valentine's Day. "Valentine's Day is really a big push for us," says Amber Kosinsky, director of marketing, Wish Farms, Plant City, FL. "Everyone is thinking about berries and love, and it's a treat that people use around Valentine's Day."

For California berries, spring and summer holidays are prime time. "Berries fall into the typical Easter, Mother's Day, and Memorial Day holidays," says Cindy Jewell, vice president of marketing, California Giant Berry Farms, Watsonville, CA. "We offer all kinds of fun contests and recipes and meal options."

However, they also emphasize using winter berries for baking. "We also focus a lot on the winter holidays, because we know we have our berries year-round and we're really trying to let folks know that winter is especially great for berries," says Jewell. "When people are hunkered down in cold weather, they want to get into the kitchen and make their house smell good. It's great that the berries lend themselves to that and bring a taste of fun and flavor into the winter blues."

Chris Christian, senior vice president, California Strawberry Commission, Watsonville, CA, recommends promoting for three weeks around each holiday, via feature ad. "Research in the past shows that retailers who follow that type of promotional strategy around the holidays really maximize their sales as opposed to retailers who might promote in just one or two of those weeks," says Christian.

There is a focus on educating consumers about growing seasons, as year-round seasonal produce can distort people's perceptions of growing seasons. "We're trying to get people more education about our season, because the fruit is available and consumers don't pay attention to where it comes from," says Harrell. "Even in our own state, a lot of people don't know when our season is. We want shoppers to be more conscious of where they are getting fresh produce."

## REACHING OUT TO KIDS

With a berry mascot named Jammer, the Florida Strawberry Growers Association is reaching out to promote the kid-friendly nature of berries. Jammer attends events, retail locations, and store openings, passing out coloring books and cultivating the next generation of berry lovers.

Other berry promoters also emphasize the importance of reaching out to children. California Giant Berry Farms has a "Kids Corner"

## "The berry category is typically a top category in the product department, and one of the most popular categories with consumers."

— Chris Christian,  
California Strawberry Commission

section on its website, focusing on getting kids involved in the kitchen and with food in general. "We have a whole series of videos on our website focusing on kids working side by side with chefs, creating meals that include berries," says Jewell. "They can see how easy and fun it is to play with your food."

Wish Farms reaches out via its logo character, named Misty the Garden Pixie. Wish Farms owners Gary and Therese Wishnatzki also wrote a children's book illustrating Misty and her farm adventures. The company tied the book into its "How's My Picking?" promotion, and people who completed their online survey received a link to download a digital version of the book. The company also distributed printed copies at trade shows and community events.

Publix also focuses on connecting with children through partnering with Produce for Kids twice a year. "We work to make produce fun and include child-friendly recipes for fruits and vegetables," says Brous. The program also includes in-store and produce signage.

The California Strawberry Commission engages kids through local strawberry festivals, as well as kids' activities at those festivals. "We plant strawberries and have 'build your own shortcake' contests," says Christian.

"Naturipe is a proud supporter of the 'Eat Brighter!' promotion," says Oberman. "We believe and agree with the promotion that the use of the Sesame Street characters is a great tool to gain the attention of children towards healthy fruits and vegetables. The 'Eat Brighter!' message is easy to understand and a great way to teach kids about the ease, as well as importance of healthy eating."

## BERRY PATCH DISPLAYS BOOST SALES

So, berry publicity has the capability to be everywhere; the kids are jazzed about berries, the weathercaster is toting them, but how do

you most effectively display these timely treats in your produce department?

Jewell notes that "berry patch" displays work very well. "They're a great impulse display, featuring all the berries in one display; you have blackberries, strawberries, blueberries, and raspberries all together. People are going in to buy one type of berry, and they see them packaged and together, and that increases the chances of an impulse purchase," says Jewell.

California Giant Berry Farms works with retailers on promotional pricing, and incentives to the retailer to promote berries in the store. They also promote directly to the consumer, emphasizing social media, online promotions and offers.

Strawberries can be a huge draw to the produce department, and having multiple displays in high-traffic areas throughout the store can further enhance sales. "The berry category is typically a top category in the product department, and one of the most popular categories with consumers," says Christian. "There are numerous consumer surveys where consumers name strawberries as their favorite fruit. The best way to promote strawberries is to put them in prime display position and have secondary displays in produce throughout the store in peak season."

## CROSS-MERCHANDISING PAYS

In-store recipe demonstrations and meal-planning kiosks are great ways to show off just what berries can do. Harrell cites these in-store programs, as well as in-store meal-planning kiosks (which give consumers cooking ideas, recipes, and even provide an ingredient list complete with instructions on where to find each item in the store, including aisle numbers) "There are all sorts of things retailers can do to help the consumer," says Harrell.

In Publix, cross-merchandising is huge for the category. "You'll often find our berries cross-merchandised with accompanying products, such as dessert shells and whipped toppings," says Brous. "With berries, you may also see a secondary display in-store in addition to their feature within the produce department."

Publix also uses berries in its Aprons Simple Meals Program, which is its in-store demonstration of meal ideas, created for customer convenience and flavor profiles. "Customers may sample the meal of the week, pick up the recipe card, and then pick up all the items needed to recreate the meal at home, all in one convenient location," says Brous.

Packed with nutrients and antioxidants,



berries are a healthful food choice, and consumers are using this information in their purchasing decisions. “There are a lot of opportunities to promote the health benefits of berry consumption,” says California Strawberry Commission’s Christian. “There are also plenty of supermarket opportunities to cross-promote berries with other healthy foods, such as yogurt, or healthy items in the center of the store or bakery. There is also the opportunity to promote value-added or ready-to-eat pre-washed berry convenience items.”

While consumers are seeking a healthy fruit option, many are also opting for berries due to one simple factor: They taste great. “One thing we see over and over again is that the flavor and taste of berries drives consumption more than health benefits,” says

Wishnatzki, of Wish Farms. “When they have good tasting berries, consumers want to come back for more.”

According to Frances Dillard, director of marketing for Watsonville, CA-based Driscoll’s, “We work closely with our retail customer to merchandise all our berries in a branded destination in the front center of the store. Consumers are looking for brands they trust in the berry category. When you deliver a consistent, premium tasting berry offering people ask for you by name.”

## SOCIAL MEDIA IS VITAL

Everywhere you go, including the supermarket, people wander around glued to their smartphones, scrolling through their social media feeds. Marketers are using this fact as a

growing opportunity to reach consumers.

Wish Farms uses online bloggers and foodies to generate recipe content, and the company found that recipes are a huge draw to bring fans and new visitors to its website. “Pinterest is our biggest social media driver to our website by far,” says Wish Farms’ Kosinsky. “Consumers, mostly the females who are doing grocery shopping, are on Pinterest looking for different ideas for entertaining, as well as tips and tricks on feeding fresh produce to their kids. When they see recipes featuring berries, and posts featuring berries, they click and this draws them to the recipe catalog on our website.”

The California Strawberry Commission promotes recipe and usage tips 365 days a year through social media. They also do promotional partnerships with restaurants in order to promote California strawberries during their peak spring and summer season — working to promote the strawberries across multiple menu items, including salads, which is one of the fastest growing menu items. “We like to show consumers different ways to use strawberries,” says Christian.

Recently, California Giant Berry Farms used social media to host a pie recipe sharing promotion. “Because of that promotion, we have more than 100 new pie recipes,” says Jewell. “Some are really interesting. The winner was a blueberry pie roll-up that used wonton wrappers and pie filling within the wrappers, then fried them. It was almost like blueberry pie egg rolls, and it was amazing.”

Harrell of Florida Strawberry Growers

## BLUEBERRIES PACK A POWERFUL PUNCH

### Consumption doubled in recent years.

Over the past few years, blueberry consumption has doubled. “Research shows today, Americans are twice as likely to buy blueberries as 10 years ago,” says Cindy Jewell, vice president of marketing, California Giant Berry Farms, Watsonville, CA. “Consumption has literally doubled in fresh blueberries since 2008.”

Jewell believes this is in part due to a growing awareness of blueberries’ health benefits and the fact that each tiny berry is bursting with antioxidants. “Consumption of blueberries in particular increased so much after the health news came out in the mid-2000s, because of their antioxidants, and they were considered a superfood,” says Jewell.

Blueberries’ quick snacking power and versatility led to an increase in consumption as people have fallen in love with the indigo-hued fruit. “People started eating them because of their health benefits and realized they taste amazing, are convenient, and are really versatile,” says Jewell. “Just throw them in the freezer, then pop them in your cereal or smoothie in the morning. They’re easy for kids to eat, and you can literally pop them right into your mouth. There’s no cutting or slicing.”

One way to capitalize on this hot trend is to delve into the world of social media to spread the blueberry message and keep the fruits in the forefront of consumers’ minds. “Social media is a way that consumers are looking for information,” says Amber

Kosinsky, director of marketing, Wish Farms, Plant City, FL. “We’re promoting what’s local and in season through social media. It’s a good, cost-effective way to get messaging information out to consumers and to share recipes. People like to purchase and cook things that are in season. Any way you can get that message out to consumers will ultimately increase demand for that commodity.”

More consumers are turning toward organic blueberries. “In terms of organic blueberries, the demand keeps increasing every year,” says Maria Brous, director of media and community relations, Publix, Lakeland, FL. “However, supplies have struggled, especially in the past two years when the crop from Argentina suffered.” **pb**

Association focuses on reaching out to a younger, social media-savvy crowd. "The new generation is pretty interested in the kitchen," says Harrell. "We have a Pinterest account, a blog, and there are all sorts of ways to get strawberry recipes off our website and Facebook page. The younger cooks are into making easy, delicious, nutritious things for their families instead of the pre-packaged."

## NOT JUST FOR DESSERTS

Berries are an incredibly versatile fruit, easy to blend into a smoothie, toss with a salad, or incorporate into an unconventional meal.

Blueberry goat cheese pizza, blueberry corn fritters, strawberry pizza, and poultry marinades are just a few of the recipe options California Giant Berry Farms provides. "We try to stretch a little bit and show how versatile berries can be and how to incorporate them in lots of things people wouldn't think berries are good in," says Jewell. "I've tried most of the recipes, and they're pretty darn good."

"By going outside of the box and encouraging consumers to think beyond the typical berry-infused breakfasts and desserts, we definitely see an increase in consumption," says Naturipe's Oberman. "Recipes such as a blueberry chipotle sauce served with ribs for dinner, combining strawberries with brie and crackers as an appetizer, or simply adding fresh berries to a salad for lunch all inspire new and different uses for berries."

The Florida Strawberry Growers Association promotes many unconventional meal opportunities including strawberry salsa on grouper. "This shows consumers what to do with strawberries other than shortcake and dessert, and helps promote recipes and getting consumers interested in cooking again, using berries in different ways," says Harrell.

Tossing berries into a blender is another popular and classic option. "Smoothies and shakes are trending right now, and they will be a trend to stick around for a while," says Kosinsky. "They're kid-friendly, and you can make a smoothie or shake very quickly. It's always going to be healthy, but you can make it really healthy and throw in some spinach or kale, or have an all-fruit smoothie. Someone who is really into working out could throw in protein powder or other supplements. Strawberries and blueberries are a good base for any drink that's blended."

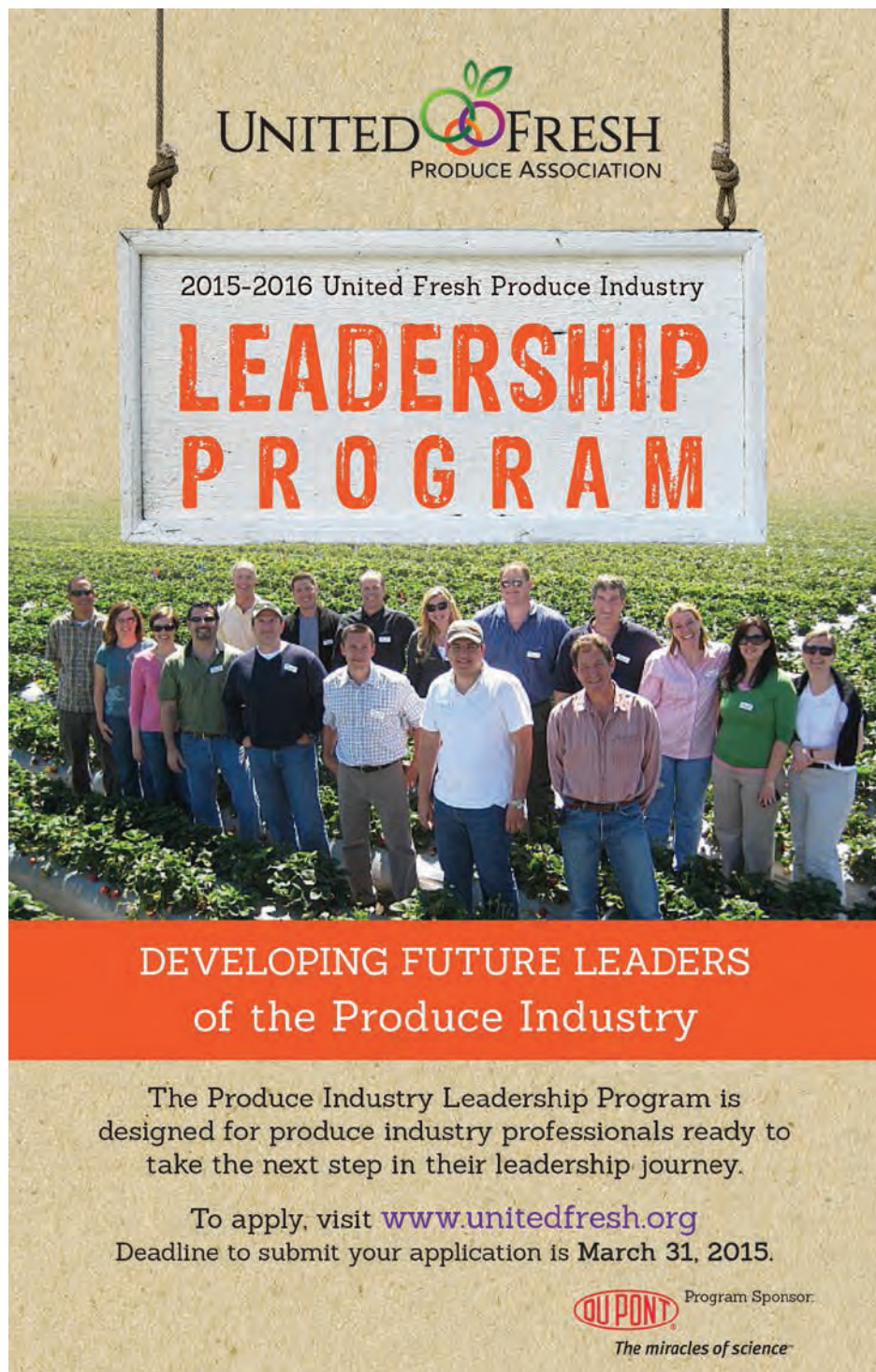
## REFRIGERATION DRIVES REPEAT SALES

Handling berries properly is key to selling the freshest berries that keep consumers

coming back. "The primary concern is to make sure you're handling the berries properly," says Christian of the California Strawberry Commission. "It's important to keep them cold at 32 to 34 degrees, and maintain the displays properly, rotating and making sure the displays are always fresh, bright and full."

Wishnatzki of Wish Farms also emphasizes the importance of refrigerating berries at all steps of the supply chain. "It's important to consider how well berries are maintained, and that the cold chain is maintained until they get

to the consumer." He cites big, unrefrigerated displays in the front of stores as affecting long-term sales negatively. "Those displays do drive immediate sales," says Wishnatzki. "But, unfortunately, what ends up happening is that some berries sit out for an entire day or multiple days unrefrigerated and consumers have bad berries, and a bad experience. They end up not buying them again for a while. You get a quick boost in sales from it, but you pay later. It hurts demand in the long run when refrigeration isn't maintained." **pb**



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# A Blended Family Of Leafy Greens



PHOTO COURTESY OF HIGH MOWING ORGANIC SEEDS

Organic salad blends offer healthy meal options and easy cooking enhancements.

BY ANTHONY STOECKERT

**M**ore shoppers want the taste and other benefits from organic vegetables, even as those veggies come at an extra cost. And people with busy schedules need an easy way to make healthy meals for their family. That combination is one reason the produce industry gravitated toward pre-packaged salad blends.

According to a report from the Rochester, MN-based Mayo Clinic (a nonprofit dedicated to medical care, research and education), while it isn't known if organic foods are more nutritious than conventional foods, many consumers are choosing organic because of taste and concerns with pesticides that are used to grow conventional vegetables, additives, and the more environmentally friendly methods used to grow organic vegetables.

"As organic product options and sales increase, organic is becoming a larger part of the packaged salad set," says CarrieAnn Arias, vice president of marketing for Dole Fresh Vegetables, based in Monterey, CA. "The price

premium for organic continues to come down, which lowers the barriers to entry for more consumers, and invites organic trial and, ultimately, adoption."

"It seems there is an increased interest in salad blends geared toward specific uses in the kitchen," says Sophia Bielenberg, marketing content specialist with Wolcott, VT-based High Mowing Organic Seeds (which offers one of the first full lines of organic, Non-GMO Project Verified seeds for farmers).

While demand for classic mesclun and lettuce mixes remains strong, there is a growing market for braising blends intended for cooking or sautéing. These usually contain a mix of baby kales, collards and mild mustards that are harvested at the teenage stage for a tender cooking green."

## NEW OFFERINGS

Arias says Dole's organic line includes organic takes on popular conventional salad blends in re-sealable clamshells in various sizes. Dole's Organic Arugula blend offers a "delectable zesty and bold flavor," according to Arias. The organic 50/50 blend mixes baby spinach and organic spring mix, with baby lettuces, baby greens and endive. And Arias describes Dole's organic Spring Mix Blend as a "delicious spring mix containing baby lettuces, baby greens, endive and radicchio."

Arias says these offerings are driving growth in the value-added salad category, and that they are used in many different ways.

"Consumers now enjoy a wider array of organic salad choices, led by darker, more nutrient-dense greens like kale," says Arias. "The newest organic trends include organic salad kits, organic salad bowls, and more organic options with darker 'power/super' greens including family-size bags for cooking and juicing."

"The biggest emphasis we are seeing right now is on color — growers want to offer mixes with bright, eye-catching colors that get customers excited about cooking, eating and the health benefits associated with those colors," says High Mowing's Bielenberg. "For example, purple and blue vegetables are popular right now because they are rich in anthocyanins, a powerful type of antioxidant."

Bielenberg says this year High Mowing introduced the Gemstone Greens Mix, a salad mix featuring incredible color contrasts and leaf textures. "Deep green leaves are accented by the nearly black leaves of red mustards and lacy, neon green mustards. The diverse leaf shapes in this mix are really what set it apart from others on the market, offering a unique presentation on the plate highly valued by chefs and salad connoisseurs," explains Bielenberg.



## GROWING TRENDS

Samantha Cabaluna, vice president of marketing and communications for Earthbound Farm, based in San Juan Bautista, CA, says the most popular organic packaged salad blends are of the tender leaf variety, such as spring mix, baby spinach, baby arugula, baby Romaine and baby kale.

“Over the past year or so, the baby kale-based blends are really growing in popularity and sales,” she says.

Earthbound also offers a line of organic baby lettuces (including red and green Romaine, red and green oak leaf, red leaf, lollo rosa, tango, and butter lettuce), organic red and green chard, organic mizuna, organic arugula, organic radicchio and organic baby spinach.

Lindsey Roberts of Lakeside Organic Gardens, based in Watsonville, CA, says vegetables that are growing in popularity — and which are being featured in salads — include Brussels sprouts. They are “gaining popularity and happen to be one of the toughest commodities to grow organically,” says Roberts. “Pests often attack seedling roots before the plant has a chance to grow.”

Other salad-friendly, on-the-rise veggies that are being grown organically by Lakeside



are radishes, dandelion greens and spinach.

Bielenberg says mixes that perform well in particular regions are also showing strong growth. “Growers are excited when they find a mix, like our Yankee Lettuce Blend or DMR [downy mildew resistant] Salad Mix that is specifically created to perform well in the conditions they deal with.”

As demand for local and organic produce grows across the country, says Bielenberg, “we see increased demand for organic seeds across the board. Organic salad mixes, particularly mesclun, are such an essential component of most diversified vegetable farms, whether they

market directly, through community-supported agriculture (CSA) networks, to restaurants or wholesale avenues. All of these outlets have strong demand for washed, ready-to-eat salad mixes, and that demand continues to grow.”

## FOR HEALTH AND FLAVOR

Earthbound’s Cabaluna says shoppers are turning to baby greens, because they want salads with flavor and nutrition, and she adds that health doesn’t have to mean sacrificing taste. And packaged blends are being used to make all sorts of dishes beyond salads.

“It’s so much simpler to make a delicious

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and satisfying salad when you start with flavorful greens,” she says. “These tender leaf varieties now make up the biggest segment of the packaged salad category — bigger than chopped iceberg or chopped Romaine. And people are using these greens for things other than salads. In fact, research we did in 2013 showed 34 percent of the time that when consumers use packaged ‘salad,’ they’re using it for something other than salad — smoothies, juicing, cooking or sandwiches. It’s quite an eye-opener.”

She also notes cooking trends are helping to grow the category. “Consumers are becoming more adventurous when it comes to greens, and since they’re using them in so many ways other than salads, it’s easy to understand why,” she says. “The kale-based blends are very popular. Earthbound Farm’s Deep ‘Green Blends’ line consists of all-organic baby kale: Power (baby kale, spinach, chard), Zen (baby kale, spinach and Asian greens) and Kale Italia (baby kale, mizuna, arugula and radicchio).”

According to Dole’s Arias, the popularity of organic products, and organic salad blends, means new lines could be hitting the market. “As demand for organic packaged salad increases, there are opportunities to provide new blends and eventually kits, as well as a variety of sizes that fit the unique needs of each of our consumers,” she says.

Earthbound also offers multi-serve salad kits, which help make it easier to have quick salads for lunch on-the-go, or at home. The California Blend includes tender baby spinach, dried blueberries and sliced almonds. The Harvest Blend includes dried cranberries, walnuts and a spring mix. Both come in 4.9-ounce clamshell packaging.

### MARKETING BLENDS

Arias says Dole used a soft launch to introduce the Dole Organic line in 2013. “We created an elegant clamshell design showcasing the newly branded line and conveyed essential product information to consumers,” she says. “Graphic Design USA selected Dole Organic for the 2014 American Package Design Award, which, according to the awards criteria, ‘recognizes well-designed graphics as well as the power of design to advance a brand promise and forge an emotional connection with the buyer at the moment of truth.’”

The big challenge with organic, of course, is price, but Cabaluna says that doesn’t have to be a huge factor. “In the tender-leaf segment of the category, the price premium for organic is typically less than 20 percent,” she says. “Because of that, more than 50 percent of that

segment of the category is organic.”

One way retailers can help promote packaged organic blends is by offering them new ideas as to how to use them. “That’s key in marketing these types of greens,” she says, adding that promoting the health benefits of greens is another selling point.

Cabaluna also notes that educated shoppers contribute to increased sales for these organic salad blends. And the potential for sales growth appears to be strong, because people are continuing to learn about organic products.

“The audience is definitely growing,” she says, “as demonstrated by the growth of this segment of the category.”

High Mowing’s Bielenberg suggests retailers take advantage of the kale craze by

stocking blends that contain the leafy green. “Retailers can also support consumers by providing preparation instructions or recipes for newer mixes, such as braising or sauté mixes that consumers may not be familiar with, and recipe inspiration for tradition mixes like mesclun as well.

“Consumers want to know where their food came from,” says Bielenberg. “Retailers can capitalize on this sourcing enthusiasm by creating materials that show which farm grew the crop, the name of the farmer, the location, photos, unique things about that farm (such as growing techniques, the source of the seed it grew from), and more. Consumers show they are hungry to know what they’re eating — and retailers are in a great position to satisfy.” **pb**

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# Michigan College Rethinks Culinary Education With ‘Farm-To-Table’ Approach



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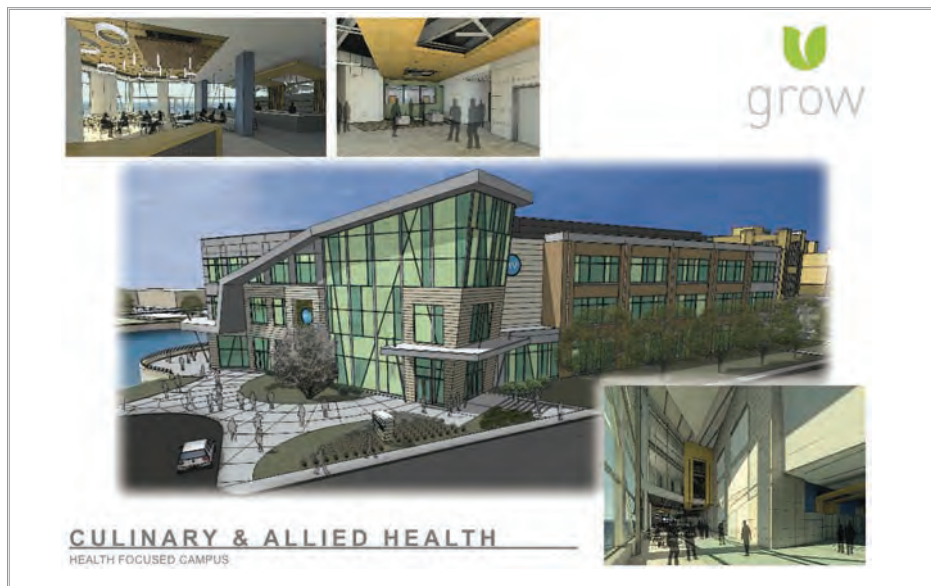
Kalamazoo Valley Community College to focus on food processing with a locale twist.

BY MARK HAMSTRA

**K**alamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC) is betting locally grown produce will play an important role on the foodservice menus of the future as it seeks to rethink the nature of culinary education.

The Kalamazoo, MI-based school is preparing to launch a comprehensive new culinary program this fall that will focus on food processing from farm to table, complete with its own food innovation center and urban farm.

KVCC will offer an Associate of Applied Science degree in Culinary Arts and Sustainable Food Systems — a new degree that will seek to develop chefs and other food-industry professionals with a background in the entire process of food production, from growing and harvesting crops through processing, distri-



KVCC's Culinary Arts building will be completed in late 2015.

bution and finally, preparation for the table of the end user.

“The chefs who are training will spend about a third of their time outside of the kitchen,” says Dean McCurdy, associate vice president for Food and Community Sustainability at KVCC. “They will be spending time

on our urban farm, with processors and distributors getting experience in the food system.”

The goal of the program is to prepare students for employment opportunities in food production, “which increasingly calls for experience in or knowledge about concepts such as local sourcing and sustainability,” he



**Dean McCurdy, associate vice president for Food and Community Sustainability at KVCC.**

**“If we want to have an impact on our community, really it is our chefs, foodservice managers and menu planners who are determining what we have to pick from.”**

— Dean McCurdy, Kalamazoo Valley Community College

says. The program is built around the theme of “Menus That Matter.”

McCurdy, who had been a biology professor for most of his career and has a background in sustainability and environmental science, took over the program in the middle of 2014 after a stint as the dean of math and science at the college.

The school is constructing a network of new facilities for the comprehensive program, including a teaching restaurant and food innovation center with hydroponic growing systems, greenhouses and hothouses to explore experimental urban agricultural techniques as part of a larger urban farm.

“There will be some high-tech and low-tech mixed together,” explains McCurdy.

The urban farm — to be connected to the main campus via a walking trail along Portage Creek in downtown Kalamazoo — will supply produce for the culinary school as well as for some local organizations, he says.

The new, 13-acre network of campus facilities is being built at a reported cost of about \$45 million, and is slated for completion around the end of 2015, which is shortly after the campus actually begins classes for its inaugural semester.

The campus facilities will also work with local farms to process produce and prepare it for distribution, explains McCurdy.

“We plan to receive things from local farms, and then be able to distribute them within the community,” he says noting the main function of the program will be to provide the education and training that go along with those types of facilities.

KVCC has been working closely with Cherry Capital Foods, a Traverse City, MI-based distributor of local food products, to create the structure for the college’s

processing and distribution program.

“They are very helpful in terms of thinking about how we might set up our food distribution center, and, in many ways, they are a model for how to work with the local food system,” says McCurdy.

### **DIFFERENT APPROACH TO CULINARY EDUCATION**

The school is also in conversations with various other members of the community, including local farms and institutional foodservice operations, to determine the best structure for the facilities and the educational program.

“As we were looking at the landscape of culinary education, what we didn’t see was anyone systematically taking the farm-to-table approach,” he says. The KVCC curriculum will also differ from many other culinary programs in that it will emphasize training for institutional foodservice — venues such as schools and hospitals — as much as it focuses on training for traditional restaurants.

In addition to giving the students an understanding of how the local food system works, the school will seek to train students to be aware of cost-saving efficiencies in terms of reducing food waste, and it will seek to give the students a deeper understanding of nutrition with an eye toward being able to provide healthier choices for diners.

“All of this goes much broader than what you would usually see in a culinary program, which would focus on restaurants,” says McCurdy.

He says the program’s developers spent “quite a bit of time” looking at research done by Harvard University and the Culinary Institute of America called “Menus of Change,” which he described as a farm-to-table culinary philosophy.

“It recognizes that chefs are kind of our new parents, because people eat out almost twice as much as they did a generation ago and our kids are eating many, if not most, of their meals in institutional settings.

“If we want to have an impact on our

community, really it is our chefs, foodservice managers and menu planners who are determining what we have to pick from,” says McCurdy.

KVCC also has a relationship with the medical school at Western Michigan University (WMU), located in Kalamazoo as well. The two schools discussed the possibility of leveraging KVCC’s new curriculum to help medical students understand the farm-to-plate local food movement, develop culinary skills, and better understand the connections between food and health, as well as “food as a form of medicine,” says McCurdy.

The two schools will also partner on their degree programs, so KVCC students who pursue a two-year degree in foodservice administration can transfer their credits to WMU to complete a four-year degree.

Likewise, McCurdy says KVCC is also partnering with local technical and vocational schools in the area to ensure the programs complement each other.

KVCC recently reached an agreement with the Battle Creek, MI-based International Food Protection Training Institute (IFPTI) — which builds competency-based training and certification systems as well as cultivates leadership for the food protection community worldwide — to provide classes in food safety and develop a farm-to-table food safety essentials course.

McCurdy says developing the entire culinary program from the ground up allowed the school to incorporate efficiencies into the degree program, such as math courses that are geared specifically for agricultural and culinary needs.

“There are benefits to building upon what already exists, but it also can limit your thinking,” he explains. “In this case, we were able to build this completely from scratch — not just the buildings, but the whole model of how we were going to run it, and that gave us the opportunity to take a hard look at where the food system is now, and where we think it is going.”

**pb**

# Cultivating A Bulk-Nuts Experience



PHOTO COURTESY OF TRADE FIXTURES

Industry players discuss how display aspects and variety can induce customers to purchase.

BY MICHELE SOTALLARO

In February, Sprouts Farmers Market, a grocery chain with about 190 stores throughout 10 states, entered the Alabama market by opening a location in Birmingham. The 25,200-square-foot-store puts a significant focus on produce and bulk foods.

"About 25 percent of our sales floor is dedicated to fresh produce," Janet Little, director of nutrition for Sprouts, told Alabama Media Groups' news website AL.com.

The Sprouts/Birmingham location boasts 300 varieties of bulk food items (40 of which are bulk nuts). The assortment is so large that it's treated as its own category.

"Nuts and other bulk items . . . are classified to the bulk department; although bulk foods, floral, and produce are tied together from a management and support perspective," says Andrew McGregor, vice president of produce operations for Sprouts.

Much like Sprouts' name implies, the farmers-market- and natural-foods-style shopping experience is usually synonymous with bulk-nut sections.

## THE DNA OF BULK NUTS

Chad Hartman, marketing director for Charlotte, NC-based distributor Tropical Foods, says during his 20-year career in the produce industry, bulk nuts experienced ebbs and flows of popularity. The common denominator throughout the years, from Hartman's perspective, is retailers use bulk in high-volume/A-stores; locations where retailers know they can consistently turn product.

"All sizable natural food stores have a bulk section, so if a mainstream grocer puts a store close to an area with an existing natural foods store, then the large store typically includes a bulk-nuts section to compete," says Hartman.

"I think there is a certain type of bulk buyer; it depends on demographics," says Hartman. "It all goes back to the clientele. You have to listen to what they want."

As far as where bulk is popular, "we notice bulk follows a certain demographic; a more affluent shopper, a better-educated and more environmentally conscious — part of the LOHAS (lifestyle of health and sustainability) demographic," says Bart McKnight, natural foods category manager for Little Rock, AR-based Trade Fixtures.

The company manufactures bulk displays from 500-plus SKUs to small 6-bin table-top units. Trade Fixtures has been providing bulk-merchandising solutions for about 25 years and offers an array of stock fixtures as well as

customized service work.

"We make these displays for nationally known chains as well as independent operators and distributors," says McKnight. "We work with the retailer to provide renderings of different displays — depending on the needs of the store and the needs of the customer."

McKnight says the other side of the buyer coin is people like bulk because it is more cost effective, and customers can buy what they want. "Much like buying produce, you can control the amount you're getting."

The Portland, OR-based Bulk Is Green Council, or BIG, (an organization dedicated to helping consumers, food makers and grocers learn the many environmental and economic benefits of bulk foods) reports bulk foods are, on average, 89 percent lower in price than packaged goods, according to a bulk foods study conducted by researchers at Portland State University's Food Industry Leadership Center.

## USING VARIETY TO WOW

Joseph Setton, vice president of sales and marketing for Commack, NY-based pistachio grower and distributor, Setton International Foods, Inc., says the customer's shopping experience is one of the allures to bulk nuts. Part of the novelty is providing variety.

"We find that people want to experience pistachios in as many ways as possible, so we're

introducing different ways for consumers to experience pistachios and to include them into their lifestyles,” says Setton. “Variety is what will bring customers in.

“It used to be that retailers would sell only roasted and salted [pistachios] in bulk,” says Setton. “Then we introduced the raw shelled, which is being used a lot in baking, and the chocolate-covered pistachios are popular as a snack or dessert.”

Much like McKnight’s philosophy about the consumer base, Setton believes other popular reasons for bulk variety options are health concerns and health-conscious shoppers.

“We’re finding retailers are expanding on the no-salt in displays now — for bulk and packaged — for health reasons,” says Setton. “We also had requests for raw shelled pistachios and roasted/no salt/dry shelled pistachios because of the health benefits of these pistachios. People are including them more in diets and cooking plans. People are actually experimenting and cooking with shelled pistachios as a pesto replacement.”

As a line extension, Setton is introducing its Pistachio Chewy Bites (pistachio and cranberry snacks) as individually wrapped pieces with a UPC on it for bulk bins. “Retailers can sell them by unit, price, or by the pound,” says Setton. “We made these [individual Pistachio Chewy Bites] to be appealing to the on-the-go person, the athlete and the working Mom.”

Vic Savanello, director of produce and floral for Iselin, NJ-based retailer-owned co-op Allegiance Retail Services, says all Allegiance banners (such as Foodtown and D’Agostino) sell bulk nuts in produce — especially around the holidays. Most stores use bulk bins to allow variety. “I recommend that the stores cross-merchandise dried fruits (such as dates, figs, apricots, to name a few) around or within the nut display for additional sales. These items are rarely a destination purchase, so you have to display them prominently to get good sales.”

## HARVESTING THE EXPERIENCE

To enhance the variety and elevate the customers’ experience when shopping the bulk-nuts area, Jonathan Raduns, owner/merchandising consultant, Somerdale, NJ-based *MerchandiseFood.com*, says combining the holistic feel of a bulk section with the convenience of packaged nuts can be beneficial for the retailer and consumer.

“I’m always a proponent of merchandising fresh product next to packaged product whenever possible,” says Raduns. “For example, a fresh head of lettuce is much more compelling visually than a bag of lettuce, but people desire



**Beginning in April/May, retailers have the option to add the individually wrapped Pistachio Chewy Bites to an existing bulk section or use the dump-bin display from Setton.**

convenience.”

Savanello agrees that convenience is crucial for bulk-nut programs. “I recommend to my stores that they merchandise in bulk, but make bags available in the same display. Even if they have to make some bags up [with a selection of nuts], in a mesh bag, it helps move more product, reduces consumer handling and potential shrink.”

Merchandising by using the juxtaposition of bulk and packaged side-by-side is an option, and playing off of the human senses is another method of cultivating a bulk-nuts experience.

The BIG Council actually has an annual Bulk Foods Week. The goal of this year’s event, which takes place October 11 to 17, is to “educate shoppers on the environmental and economical benefits of purchasing foods from the bulk bins and to bring people into the bulk aisles who don’t normally shop there,” says Linnea Stenberg, a BIG Council member as well as brand manager at San Francisco-based natural and organic cereal and snack company, Attune Foods. “Our thinking is that once people realize all the benefits, and just how easy it is to use the bulk bins, they’ll continue to shop there all year long.”

In 2014, BIG had more than 1,300 retailers — including Hy-Vee, Fresh Market and TOPS, to name a few — participate in its Bulk Foods Week. The council supports retailers by providing a toolkit to generate awareness of, and excitement around, the benefits of shopping the bulk bins. The toolkit includes collateral that can be posted in bulk sections, including cling-ons and fun decorations for bulk aisles as well as store staff. The BIG members also work with each participating retailer to offer special discounts on select foods to generate consumer incentive to explore the bulk section.

## THOUGHT-PROVOKING VISUALS

“Maximize the visual nature of whatever you are selling, and for bulk nuts, I think that

[perspective] is key,” says Raduns of *MerchandiseFood.com*. “I think a major element is to show as much vertical height as possible, use good color blocking between varieties, and allocate space to corresponding sales of the item; for example, if you are selling twice as many pecans to hazelnuts, you wouldn’t allocate equal space to both items.”

Trade Fixtures’ McKnight agrees that the visual components to the bulk display entices the customer to walk down the purchase path, “so the reasons to buy bulk should be communicated to them,” says McKnight.

“One of the first things we do when crafting a bulk section [for a retailer] is create a unique experience,” he says. “We want to design a display that will engage the customers. We accomplish that with the right assortment of product, and we highly recommend adding signage, using visual images or text that says: ‘Save Money,’ ‘Reduce Packaging,’ all kinds of things that tell the bulk story.”

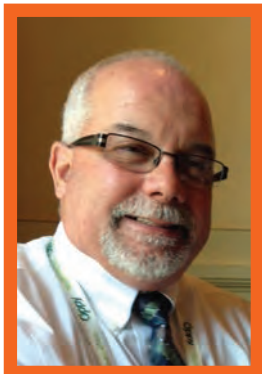
Raduns echoes the storytelling approach. “Use signage to show how nuts are harvested, or make the connection to a specific grower; they certainly have a story to tell.

“In my opinion, the one thing missing with many bulk-nut programs in store is the connection to the tree that the nut is grown on,” he says. “I’m not sure most people know what a pecan tree looks like — I know I don’t. I think there may be some opportunities to connect a wholesome feel to the consumer through educating consumers on the origin of the nuts.”

Using the local aspect to highlight certain nuts that have different flavors, colors, or textures is another way to call attention to the bulk-nuts section, according to Raduns. “A sampling event, or dialogue with shoppers about a local crop or fresh flavor profiles compared to packaged could be a great selling point from a culinary perspective.”

“Not too many Millennials even know what to do with a chestnut, never mind have an acquired taste for them,” says Allegiance’s Savanello. “Tying in fruit and nut trays, bagged product, chestnuts, as well as any recipes, could drive more sales.”

No matter how retailers choose to approach a bulk-nut section, one variable remains important. “The best advice I can give a retailer about bulk nuts is make sure you have an employee who cares for the section, because one shopper can make the area look bad,” advises Tropical Foods’ Hartman. “But if you have one person, or every employee within the produce department, be responsible for it, customers will enjoy the shopping experience.” **pb**



# Save Mart's Ed Corvelo Shares Views Of 40-Year Produce Career

**L**ong before the days of baby carrots and bagged salad, Ed Corvelo started his career in retail. After 26 years at store level for Save Mart, he became a produce buyer working in a buying office for five years, then took an opportunity as a floral buyer for three years for the Modesto, CA-based chain of more than 180 stores. Today Corvelo is senior manager of Fresh Procurement.

BY E. SHAUNN ALDERMAN

## What was the grocery industry like when you started your career?

My career began in 1975, when SKUs were limited to the seasonality and sourcing availability; imported produce was limited. Southern Hemisphere fruit and vegetables were unheard of. There was a true gap in asparagus, stone fruit, citrus, grapes and melons. Organic was just a word. There was very little discussion on this topic. Fresh-cut or packaged items had just started to become available.

## When did you begin to see things change?

We broke through a barrier when bag salad and spinach became available, and we

## PRODUCE SHRINK ▶

“Not all stories have happy endings, and knowing when to reduce the retail on an item to move it through the system is something I learned from my produce roots.”

began selling mushrooms in a Styrofoam tray. Cello-wrapped lettuce was a premium item wrapped in a facility — not in the fields like it is now. Asparagus was in wooden crates that needed to be banded to create a consumer package. Strawberries were in pint containers. They were hand-wrapped or capped by hand with a clear dome. No baby carrots were available for sale. Technology was just starting. PLUs for the cashiers to use at the check-out helped ensure proper sales per item, manage retails and track movement.

## PRODUCE BUSINESS is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year. Can you share with our readers what the retail environment was like in 1985, when the magazine was founded?

As a customer, you knew your produce guy. Local produce was sourced sometime off

the back of a farmer's truck. Today this practice is not feasible for so many reasons — food safety, liability, cold chain, traceability, financial transaction issues, to name a few.

Total SKU count was less than 300 items. Now there is more than that just in ancillary produce items like dry seasoning packets, refrigerated dressings, croutons, packaged nuts and dried fruit.

Floral departments were feeling their way with selection. Standard green plants were sold in 3-inch, 4-inch and 6-inch pots. Mums, begonias, violets were the core. Some hard-line items were for sale to complement the department. Hoses, lawn sprinklers, potting soils, assorted fertilizers, and mousetraps and pest sprays had a small section.

Seasonal items such as Easter Lilies and Poinsettias took center stage when appropriate. We always did a great job with bedding plants in the spring. Everyday fresh-cut flower selection was limited, but for Memorial Day weekend, fresh-cut flowers were really big for us. Stock, Statice, Gladiolus, Gypsophila, leather fern came to us dry packed. Cutting stems and rehydrating was time-consuming. We would rearrange the walk-in box and erect temporary shelves to accommodate the buckets of flowers.

## TRACEABILITY ▶

“If we all pay it forward, we need to do the work up front with documentation from the source at the grower end running all the way through the supply chain.”



### What did you learn along the way?

After 26 years at store level, I became a produce buyer. This was a dream come true. I was able to relate back to the stores. What I did as a buyer directly affected the stores. The floral buyer position became open after the Albertsons acquisition. I left the produce buying office for a new chapter as the floral buyer.

I related my experience in produce at store level to help me in the floral buying arena. The similarities being that both are highly perishable. They must be quickly moved through the supply chain. Not all stories have happy endings, and knowing when to reduce the retail on an item to move it through the system is something I learned from my produce roots.

Floral growers are farmers on a different scale. The lead-time and forward planning is crucial to success. I always say it takes 48 weeks to grow a hydrangea; so if you want to sell them for Mother's Day, you need to plan ahead.

With that said, growers during this time period always had a 'little extra' product available. They would grow a small percentage on speculation. With the economy beginning to take a downturn in 2007 to 2008, customers began to look at floral purchases differently.

Floral items started backing up. Retail chains' programs were scaled back. Chains began giving growers back their commitments of plants they had agreed to buy. This became a serious issue for most potted growers. They needed to sell what they had on hand and rethink the market going forward. The speculation growing stopped. It became evident that the grower and retailer need to be connected. This is where relationships really

## ON-LINE SHOPPING ►

**"Web-based retailing will continue to grow. The Millennials that want instant gratification will make sure of that."**

began to solidify for me as a buyer. Our vendor relationships are very important. Quality is always first, then price.

With PLUs and UPCs being used on produce and floral items at the point of purchase, the retailer began to have visibility to categories. This led to managing categories, tracking or drilling down to a single item became standard practice. Decisions are now based on this task.

### Could you share your views on the topic of food safety?

Food safety is always in the headlines. I was in a produce buying office at 6 a.m. when the first phone call came in from a store asking a question regarding a possible issue with tainted spinach. A customer had seen something on the Internet and was questioning the produce manager. I was actually on the value-added buying desk at the time of the spinach recall.

Produce traceability has become a hot topic. In my opinion, if we all pay it forward, we need to do the work up front with documentation from the source at the grower end running all the way through the supply chain. When an issue does occur, it will speed up the process — and in this area, speed is important. During the spinach recall in 2006, the entire spinach crop was pulled from retailers' shelves. This sent shock waves through the leafy greens community. The

financial loss was staggering. With accurate documentation, only the suspect item would be removed from the system. This could limit a total market disruption.

### How do you see the position of importation compared to 1985?

International or global trade has become the norm. Customers are looking for a year-round eating experience. Years ago, there was truly seasonality of items. The anticipation of a California or domestic piece of fruit is gone. Sourcing from the Southern Hemisphere changed that. Related to floral, using Valentine's Day as an example, if we didn't import fresh roses from Ecuador and Colombia, the cost for a dozen roses would be staggering and unobtainable for most customers.

### What do you see for the future of retail?

In my opinion, web-based retailing will continue to grow. The Millennials that want instant gratification will make sure of that. The interesting part will be when they settle down and become busier with family life and careers. Will the allure continue, or will they want to break away from the norm and get back to shopping at local establishments?

As a Baby Boomer, I think it's cool that I can use my computer on Monday and have what I want delivered to my doorstep by Wednesday. As these companies continue to develop quicker and less-expensive logistics, the issue of quality still needs to be addressed. And what this means for produce will always be a challenge. How do they get that fresh lime to land at my door to look just like the high-graphic picture I clicked on two days earlier?

### What are your thoughts on choosing retail/produce as a career today?

For anyone new to the industry, I would suggest they find a mentor; someone with experience to collaborate with. Sharing the lessons from the past brings two people together, and it helps preserve traditions and core values. The core values instilled in me 40 years ago are still evident today in my thinking and go-to business strategies. **PB**

## MENTORSHIP ►

**"For anyone new to the industry, I would suggest they find a mentor; someone with experience to collaborate with. Sharing the lessons from the past brings two people together, and it helps preserve traditions and core values. The core values instilled in me 40 years ago are still evident today in my thinking and go-to business strategies."**



## Holidays Revisited

BY DON HARRIS

**A**t this time of year, many of the country's retailers are having meetings to prepare plans for the upcoming traditional holidays. These holidays include Easter, Mother's Day, Memorial Day, and the Fourth of July, along with preliminary discussions for Labor Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. These preparations always contain a variety of produce items. However, during the discussion, the produce team brings up other holidays and events they think should be included. The response from management is a questioning look as to what they are talking about. We reiterate that there are many other holidays that should be observed and promoted due to our changing population and demographics. Most often management postpones the inevitable and says, "We will get to those later." Once again in terms of these other holidays, "they just don't get."

If there's anything that recent history taught us it is that the successful retailer recognizes the other ethnic, regional, cultural, and religious holidays that occur throughout the year. They aggressively promote these holidays to their advantage and pay special attention to the produce offerings and other fresh foods. Most management teams, however, don't devote enough focus and attention to these "minor" holidays. They believe that they do not affect enough stores to warrant a major effort to promote them and often only mention them in their promotional materials. In other words, they don't believe that they are worth the effort to promote. This is a very shortsighted and ultimately disastrous misstep in promotional strategy. It provides an opening for more aggressive competitors to take advantage of this opportunity.

Instead of giving up on these opportunities, and concluding that they are not worth the effort, a progressive retailer welcomes the challenge. This retailer prepares a complete promotional strategy for all holidays conceivable based on the demographic, ethnic, and regional makeup of their entire market area. Each plan designates key items throughout the store, but especially in produce and the fresh foods departments. It details the display and merchandising of each product and how to sign and highlight its relationship to the holiday.

The best part of this strategy is that it is not a "one size fits all" program. It allows the flexibility for promotional activity in stores located in specific demographic areas where these holidays are observed versus an attempt to try to spread this holiday across all stores. Each store is allowed the freedom to promote those holidays

and occasions that mean the most to their clientele and the area in which they operate. This type of promotional strategy allows for an enhancement of the local focus of the retailer and their concern for all of their customers. Given the increasingly diverse ethnic, demographic, and economic makeup of our country's population, [a year-round promotional strategy] would prove to be a considerable asset in enhancing the reputation of the retailer as well as providing the impetus for driving sales.

Additional benefits from this strategy would include the interaction with groups of consumers in specific neighborhoods where these holidays and events are celebrated. This tactic can be cultivated as the "word-of-mouth" strategy. Other parts of the promotional strategy would include specifically targeted neighborhood events in the store to showcase what the store has to offer and to target the local needs of the community. It would seem the farther you probe into the available opportunities, the more you will find and be able to incorporate them into the overall program.

The effort that would be needed to prepare such a "calendar" of all holidays represented by the wide variety of ethnic, demographic, and regional holidays and events seems a small price to pay for all of the potential opportunity offered by such a strategy. For the progressive retailer, this would seem to be a natural step to gain an advantage over other retailers utilizing the common strategy of sticking to the major holidays as tradition dictates.

This would represent a true break with traditional holiday planning and allow for the inclusion

of many more customers in our increasingly diverse consumer world. Despite all the intrinsic opportunities available to such a strategy, it may not be "easy" to develop, much less execute such a strategy. Such effort requires a commitment of the proper resources and the courage to allow for this type of flexibility within the operations of the store and departments. However, it is clear that the old adage "nothing worthwhile comes easy" definitely applies here and will reward the retailer that invests in developing this type of promotional program.

*Don Harris is a 40-year veteran of the produce industry, with most of that time spent in retail. He has worked in every aspect of the industry, from "field-to-fork" in both the conventional and organic arenas. Harris is presently consulting on all subjects of retail, category development and sales strategies, among others. Comments can be directed to editor@producebusiness.com.*

**Given the increasingly diverse ethnic, demographic, and economic makeup of our country's population, [a year-round promotional strategy] would prove to be a considerable asset in enhancing the reputation of the retailer as well as providing the impetus for driving sales.**

# 2015 FRUIT LOGISTICA INNOVATION AWARD

Organized by Messe Berlin GmbH in cooperation with *Fruchthandel Magazine* (Düsseldorf), Fruit Logistica 2015 (February 4 to 6) was attended by 65,000 high-level trade visitors from more than 135 countries and 2,785 exhibitors from 83 countries presented a complete market overview of the fresh produce industry.

Numerous industry innovations that serve as valuable driving forces in produce were presented. Ten candidates were nominated for the coveted Innovation Award. Here is a review of the winner and the contenders (listed alphabetically by company).

## WINNER

**Aviv Flowers Packing House Ltd, Israel**  
**Aurora Seedless Papaya**



Along with the remarkable fact that it is completely seedless, this unique papaya is characterized by its delicate fragrance and firm, full-flavored pulp. Even after it is sliced, the fruit maintains its excellent consistency for a long time. The Aurora Papaya is the product of

natural selection and crossing different varieties. Target markets include the European Union, Switzerland and Canada. The weight of the fruit ranges from 200 to 1,000 grams.

**Atlas Pacific Engineering, Inc., USA**  
**FC 15 Fruit Chunker**



The FC Fruit Chunker is a compact solution for processing pineapples, cantaloupes and honeydew melons. It accepts whole fruit in a full range of sizes and automatically senses fruit size. The machine cores the fruit, removes seed membrane (in melons), and peels and cuts chunks or spears.

**Bakker Barendrecht**  
**(Member of the UNIVEG Group), The Netherlands**  
**DIY Fresh Packs**



DIY Fresh Packs help consumers prepare a meal, soup or side dish using fresh ingredients. They are available in several varieties: asparagus soup (in spring), gazpacho, exotic salsa and tomato salsa (in summer), and lasagna, couscous and curry madras (all year), and include a recipe with a step-by-step guide based on the "no waste" principle.

**BelOrta, Belgium**  
**Lemoncherry**



The Lemoncherry is a new variety of yellow cherry tomato on the vine. Lemoncherry tomatoes are transparent yellow in color, giving them a unique and very decorative appearance. Their taste is rich and sweet with a delicate touch of lemon. The tomatoes weigh 10 to 12 grams, making them ideal for snacks and foodservice. The

vine contains 14 to 16 tomatoes and weighs approximately 175 grams.

**Cabka Group GmbH, Germany**  
**"Eye-Catcher" RPC Shelf**



The Eye-Catcher provides a particularly attractive presentation of fresh produce at the point of sale by raising the products automatically out of their tray or crate. The Eye-Catcher also prevents trays slipping on sloping shelves.

**Hepro GmbH, Germany**  
**UP-8000 Peeling Machine**



The Hepro UP-8000 is a universal peeling machine for vegetables such as carrots, long radishes and cucumbers. A V-shaped belt feeds the product horizontally to the peeling system, where 36 soft rollers carry it to the eight cutting units without the use of water or compressed air.

**Holfeld Plastics Ltd, Ireland**  
**Low Carbon rPETeCo**



Low carbon rPETeCO is a multipurpose lightweight packaging material made 90 percent from recycled plastic bottles. rPETeCO uses 20 percent less material than conventional recycled PET, is lighter, more temperature resistant and requires less cutting force.

**Polymer Logistics, Germany**  
**Wood Finish Holzdekor-RPC**



The Holzdekor-RPC is a returnable plastic crate in a wood optic finish, which promotes sales by creating an attractive farmer's market atmosphere in the retail fresh produce department. The crate can be folded when empty and stacked to save space during transport and storage. It has an active-lock system for optimal ergonomic handling.

**Regal'in Europe, France**  
**Regal'in Apple**



Regalyou cov and Regalstar cov are two new apple varieties with an attractive 100 percent orange-red color, a pleasing shape, and a slightly sweet aromatic taste with the right amount of acidity. The fruit flesh is crisp and crunchy with good keeping qualities.

**Sunforest Co. Ltd., South Korea**  
**Portable Nondestructive Fruit Quality Meter**



The Sunforest H-100 series is a range of portable devices for measuring the Brix level of fruit still hanging on the tree, which means that the fruit does not have to be picked or cut open. The H-100 is an NIR spectrometer, which measures sweetness, dry matter, color etc. — determining estimated ideal harvest time and ensuring batch uniformity.

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| Blue Book Services                     | 27      | 630-668-3500 | www.producebluebook.com          |
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| Brooks Tropicals                       | 128-129 | 800-327-4833 | www.brookstropicals.com          |
| Brooks Tropicals                       | 86-87   | 800-327-4833 | www.brookstropicals.com          |
| California Avocado Commission          | 84-85   | 800-344-4333 | www.californiaavocado.com/retail |
| Canadian Produce Marketing Association | 61      | 613-226-4187 | www.cpma.ca                      |
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| Capital City Fruit Co., Inc.           | 39      | 515-981-5111 | www.capitalcityfruit.com         |
| CarbAmericas                           | 82      | 954-786-0000 | www.carbamericas.com             |
| Chelan Fresh Marketing                 | 100-101 | 509-682-3854 | www.chelanfresh.com              |
| L. Cherrick Horseradish Co., Inc.      | 147     | 314-421-5431 |                                  |
| Ciruli Brothers                        | 114-115 | 520-281-9696 | www.cirulibrothers.com           |
| Coast To Coast Produce Co.             | 51      | 877-836-6295 | www.ctcproduce.com               |
| Crystal Valley Foods                   | 82      | 800-359-5631 | www.crystalvalleyfoods.com       |
| Customized Brokers                     | 83      | 305-471-8989 | www.customizedbrokers.net        |
| D'Arrigo Bros. Co. of New York         | 49      | 800-223-8080 | www.darrigony.com                |
| Del Monte Fresh Produce                | 160     | 800-950-3683 | www.freshdelmonte.com            |
| Dole Fresh Fruit Company               | 88-89   | 818-879-6600 | www.dole.com                     |
| Dole Fresh Vegetable Co.               | 2       | 800-333-5454 | www.dole.com/saladkits           |
| dProduce Man Software                  | 70      | 888-PRODMAN  | www.dproduceman.com              |
| Duda Farm Fresh Foods, Inc.            | 98-99   | 561-978-5714 | www.dudafresh.com                |
| Dulcinea Farms                         | 37      | 800-495-1561 | www.pacifictrillifruit.com       |
| Edinburg Citrus Association            | 56      | 956-383-6619 | www.txcitrus.com                 |
| Fierman Produce Exchange               | 50      | 718-893-1640 |                                  |
| Fox Packaging                          | 71      | 956-682-6176 | www.foxbag.com                   |
| Fresh Origins, LLC                     | 41      | 760-736-4072 | www.freshorigins.com             |
| Fresh Produce & Floral Council         | 42      | 714-739-0177 | www.fpf.org                      |
| Genpro Transportation Services, Inc.   | 67      | 800-243-6770 | www.genproinc.com                |
| Gourmet Specialty Imports LLC          | 146     | 610-345-1113 |                                  |
| Gourmet Trading Company                | 83      | 310-216-7575 | www.gourmettrading.net           |
| Grimmway Farms                         | 96-97   | 661-845-9435 | www.grimmway.com                 |
| Growers Express/Green Giant            | 139     | 831-751-1379 | www.greengiantfresh.com          |
| Growers Express/Green Giant            | 94-95   | 831-751-1379 | www.greengiantfresh.com          |
| Harris Consulting Solutions            | 66      | 269-903-7481 |                                  |
| Hass Avocado Board                     | 159     | 949-341-3250 | www.hassavocadoboard.com         |
| Hollandia Produce                      | 108-109 | 805-684-4146 | www.livegourmet.com              |

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| Idaho Potato Commission                        | 53        | 208-334-2350 | www.idahopotato.com/retail      |
| Idaho-Eastern Oregon Onion Promotion Committee | 118-119   | 888-466-4667 | www.usaonions.com               |
| Keystone Fruit Marketing, Inc.                 | 83        | 717-597-2112 | www.keystonefruit.com           |
| Lakeside Organic Gardens                       | 145       | 831-761-8797 | www.lakesideorganics.com        |
| LGS Specialty Sales, Ltd.                      | 137       | 800-796-2349 | www.lgssales.com                |
| Litco International, Inc.                      | 74        | 330-539-5433 | www.litco.com                   |
| Mann Packing Company, Inc.                     | 21        | 800-884-6266 | www.veggiesmadeeasy.com         |
| Mann Packing Company, Inc.                     | 126-127   | 800-884-6266 | www.veggiesmadeeasy.com         |
| Melissa's/World Variety Produce, Inc.          | 147       | 800-468-7111 | www.melissas.com                |
| MIXTEC Group                                   | 50        | 626-440-7077 | www.mixtec.net                  |
| Monterey Mushrooms                             | 116-117   | 636-587-2771 | www.montereymushrooms.com       |
| Naturipe Farms                                 | 93        | 239-591-1164 | www.naturipefarms.com           |
| New York Apple Association, Inc.               | 35        | 585-924-2171 | www.nyapplecountry.com          |
| Ocean Mist Farms                               | 80-81     | 831-633-2492 | www.oceanmist.com               |
| Paramount Citrus Association                   | 23        | 213-612-9957 | www.paramountcitrus.com         |
| Peri & Sons Farms                              | 39        | 775-463-4444 | www.periandsons.com             |
| The Perishable Specialist, Inc.                | 83        | 305-477-9906 | www.theperishablespecialist.com |
| Prime Time                                     | 31        | 760-399-4166 | www.primetimeproduce.com        |
| Procacci Bros. Sales Corp.                     | Floral 15 | 800-523-4616 | www.procaccibrothers.com        |
| Produce for Better Health Foundation           | 134       | 302-235-2329 | www.pbhfoundation.org           |
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| Red Blossom Farms                              | 7         | 805-981-1839 | www.redblossom.com              |
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| Ben B. Schwartz & Sons, Inc.                   | 52        | 313-841-8300 | www.benbdetroit.com             |
| Silver Creek Software                          | 71        | 208-388-4555 | www.silvercreek.com             |
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| Spice World, Inc.                              | 34        | 800-433-4979 | www.spiceworldinc.com           |
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| Tanimura & Antle, Inc.                         | 33        | 800-772-4542 | www.taproduce.com               |
| Target Interstate Systems, Inc.                | 65        | 800-338-2743 | www.targetinterstate.com        |
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| Turbana Banana Corp                            | 132-133   | 800-TURBANA  | www.turbana.com                 |
| United Fresh Produce Association               | 47        | 202-303-3400 | www.unitedfresh.org             |
| United Fresh Produce Association               | 143       | 202-303-3400 | www.unitedfresh.org             |
| The USA Bouquet Co.                            | Floral 5  | 800-306-1071 | www.usabq.com                   |
| Vega Produce                                   | 138       | 305-285-1235 | www.vegaproduce.com             |
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| Vision Import Group LLC                        | 112-113   | 201-968-1190 | www.visionimportgroup.com       |
| Yakima Fresh LLC                               | 78-79     | 800-541-0394 | www.yakimafresh.com             |
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## SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

**A**fter the Great Depression in the 1930s, millions of families across the country were hungry, homeless, and searching for work. Many poignant stories of Midwesterners leaving the “Dust Bowl” to seek work in the West were immortalized in John Steinbeck’s literary classics, such as *Of Mice & Men*. The stories were the same: the weak typically perished, while the strong and intrepid thrived. One of the survivors was Carlos Bennen, future founder of Ta-De Produce and a pioneer of the vine-ripe tomato.

Bennen was one of the lucky ones after Black Tuesday on October 29, 1929, because he found work growing produce in Nogales, AZ — the “ground zero” of Mexico. Bennen took all jobs offered to him in Nogales.

With the job uncertainty after the First World War ended, Bennen saw an opportunity for professional growth with a local distributor, R. G. James Tomato Co. He worked there for 10 years when a unique opportunity arose for him to have his own business, which initiated a partnership with long-time pal Phil Linde.

Together, they formed Ritz Distributing (not the same as the same-named Sinaloa business), focused on distribution for Tamayo and Demerutis, which were Northern Mexico’s premier grower families at that time.

The three partners focused on packing tomatoes — spearheading the practice of reaching a color and maturity level they term “vine-ripes” in place of the old term “mature green.” These vine-ripes became a customer favorite and a cash cow for the partners.

The new vine-ripes, packed at the peak of color — along with beans, cucumbers, eggplant and other vegetables — went into the new El Rey brand box. Bennen was instrumental in continuous improvement of packs, which garnered the brand and company a premium image and eventual commercial success. This prompted

Bennen and the Tamayo/Demerutis families to form their own partnership in the early 1960s, which became Ta-De Distributing Co.

Eventually, another generation of Bennen’s jumped on board. Robert Bennen Sr. began working with Ta-De after proving himself in the tough Los Angeles Terminal Market. Bennen Sr. helped launch extensive land development and construction activities that resulted in one of the largest and most modern produce distribution warehouses in Southern Arizona.

“The El Rey brand reflected the best quality and most flavorful product at that time, including the first vine-ripe tomatoes in commercial volume, which were a novelty back then,” says Bennen Sr. “The bell peppers were also well known for their color, shape and shelf life. At that time there were no European or colored peppers, so they were green bells.”

The photo shows Bennen (in the center below the arrow) and the only identifiable members of the crew at the time, Alex Relias and Lucas Barreda to Bennen’s immediate left. They are standing in front of a newly arrived produce rail shipment by Southern Pacific, which, according to Bennen Sr., was the premier mode of produce transport during that time.

Today, Bennen Sr. is mostly retired, and Bob Jr. runs the business, taking the company to the next level and applying best practices.

“The vision for the new Ta-De generation is to continue to build the reputation of the company as a premier industry supplier,” says Bennen Jr. “But we do much more than ship vegetables. Our goal is to partner with our customers in developing what we term ‘market-makers.’ Whether it’s developing a more robust variety — like we did with vine-ripes — better packaging, more efficient logistics, compelling social responsibility initiatives and consumer education.”

**pb**



Here's to the next  
**1,000,000,000 lbs.**

Seems like yesterday we eclipsed the 1 billion pounds threshold for Hass Avocados consumed, and now we've got 2 billion pounds in our sights. To keep the momentum going, the Hass Avocado Board is introducing the Love One Today® program to help promote our nutritional research initiatives and make avocados even more compelling to consumers.

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