

# producebusiness

MARKETING • MERCHANDISING • MANAGEMENT • PROCUREMENT



## Wakefern/ShopRite Supermarkets Co-opting **GREEN** the RITE Way

### INSIDE:

THE PUNDIT LOOKS AT REVOLUTIONS IN UK RETAILING  
PRIVATE LABEL COMPETITION • INTERVIEW WITH TOTAL PRODUCE'S DENIS PUNTER  
SOUTHERN VEGETABLES • SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE CITRUS  
CHERRIES • MANGOS • STATE DEPARTMENT OF AG MARKETING  
SUMMER MERCHANDISING • FRESH-CUT TECHNOLOGY • PORTABLE SNACKS  
UNITED FRESH BOOTH REVIEW • IFE BOOTH REVIEW

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is coming back with even more stops and  
promotional opportunities than last year.



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provide you with materials and help  
you schedule a Peel the Love event.



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### CORRECTION FROM APRIL ISSUE GUACAMOLE STORY

A quote from page 42 of the April 2014 issue of PRODUCE BUSINESS ran incorrectly. The correct quote from Tara Murray, senior marketing manager for Saginaw, TX-based Fresherized Foods, is: "If you are looking for sour cream-based 'guacamole' or 'guacamole flavored' dips, well, these are the dips you can find in the shelf stable aisle or with the sour cream dips."

Wholly Guacamole products, which are marketed by Fresherized Foods, do not contain any dairy ingredients and can be found in the produce or deli section of most grocery stores.

**THIS MONTH'S WINNER**



**Rene Millburn**  
Public Relations Director  
King Fresh Produce  
Dinuba, CA

Earlier this year, Rene Millburn was promoted from marketing communications manager to public relations director for Dinuba, CA-based King Fresh Produce. She has over eight years of experience in social media management and communications.

"My husband has worked in the produce industry since 1994," says Millburn. After some time as a stay-at-home mom, Millburn returned to the workforce. "Fresh produce

seemed like a natural fit," says Millburn.

Millburn has been working with King Fresh Produce since September of last year. Some of her job responsibilities include overseeing meetings and event planning, website restructuring and maintenance as well as media relations.

Millburn started reading *PRODUCE BUSINESS* last year. "I love the vibrancy of the magazine, the pertinent and informative industry-related stories, the reminders of upcoming trade shows and conferences, and of course the colorful advertisements," Millburn says.

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

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Perfect for a weekend activity with family and friends, this free-standing badminton set instantly creates a court on a lawn, a driveway, a beach, etc. The PVC poles extend from the carrying case, which acts as a weighted base. No tools or mounting stakes are required for set up. The nylon net slips onto the ends of the PVC and spans the regulation-height of an 11.5-wide court. The case includes four rackets and two shuttlecocks.



**QUESTIONS FOR THE MAY ISSUE**

- 1) What three major holidays make up California Avocado season? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What is the web address for Jersey Fresh? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) What is the phone number for Turbana Tropicals? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) What store is featured on the Mango Mania display contest ad for the National Mango Board? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) What two types of premium Washington cherries are featured on the CMI ad? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) How many types of fruit are shown on the LGS Specialty Sales ad? \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_  
 Company \_\_\_\_\_  
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Photocopies of this form are acceptable. Please send answers to:  
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*PRODUCE BUSINESS* is published by Phoenix Media  
 Network, Inc. James E. Prevor, Chairman of the Board  
 P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425.  
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# UNITED MEMBERS AND KEY LAWMAKERS MEET ON TOP INDUSTRY PRIORITIES



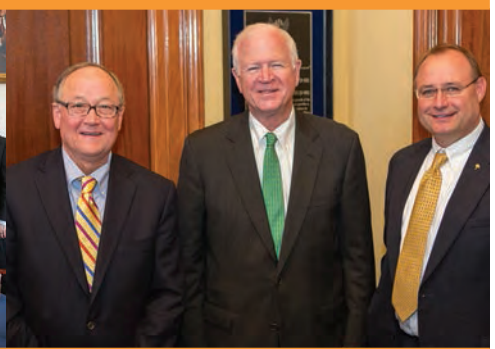
By Ray Gilmer, vice president, issues management and communication



**(L-R) Chairman Frank Lucas (OK) of House Agriculture Committee; Michael Wootton of Sunkist Growers and United Fresh Government Relations Council member.**



**Rep. David Valadao (CA), [fifth from right] meets with United's Government Relations Council.**



**(L-R) Bill Brim, Lewis Taylor Farms, Sen. Saxby Chambliss (GA), Charles Wingard, Walter P. Rawl & Sons.**

United Fresh's Government Relations Council, which sets policy priorities for the association, recently met in Washington, DC to hear current briefings from high-ranking members of Congress as well as question those policymakers about what they are doing to address top fruit and vegetable industry concerns.

During three days of meetings, members of the council had frank discussions with key lawmakers in the Senate and House of Representatives on Capitol Hill. In the Senate, council members met with Senators Debbie Stabenow (chairwoman, Agriculture Committee), Saxby Chambliss, Mike Crapo and Lindsey Graham. In the House of Representatives, council members talked with Representatives Frank Lucas (chairman, Agriculture Committee), Jeff Denham, Sam Farr, Bob Goodlatte (chairman, Judiciary Committee), Steve Southerland and David Valadao.

Each lawmaker the council met either chairs a committee or subcommittee with jurisdiction over industry policy priorities or hails from a state that represents members of the council. The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) rulemaking, immigration reform, Farm Bill implementation and water management were among the priority issues discussed with lawmakers.

House Speaker John Boehner met with



**(L-R) Pat Kole, Idaho Potato Commission; Robert Guenther, United Fresh; Bill Brim, Lewis Taylor Farms meet with Sen. Saxby Chambliss (GA).**

United's Government Relations Council members for candid discussions about the prospects for passing immigration reform in the House and the agenda for the remainder of 2014.

"Having that quality face time with our key members of Congress is critically important," says Robert Guenther, United Fresh's senior vice president of public policy. "It provides a very valuable opportunity for our members to hear firsthand from those who are shaping the policies and regulations our industry has to live with every day. We appreciate the time that our council members and lawmakers took to make these meetings a success."

Earlier, a series of briefings by United Fresh staff and outside experts filled the agenda. The council heard updates on United's government relations priorities and work plan for those

priorities for the remainder of 2014. Specifically, the council heard updates and discussed strategies for Farm Bill implementation, FSMA rulemaking timelines for the years ahead, nutrition programs that include SNAP incentives and school meals, immigration reform legislation strategies, U.S. foreign trade initiatives and other priorities.

The council also heard presentations on issues related to United Fresh's top policy priorities and the growing concerns in the food and agriculture world. Among these presentations were: the food and agriculture sector's work on public policy to establish a federal labeling standard for food and beverage products made with GMOs; media outreach and policymaker opinions on immigration reform; industry opportunities resulting from Farm Bill policy incentivizing fruit and vegetable consumption in the SNAP program; and responses to proposed FSMA regulations from other food and agriculture sectors.

The information presented to council members and gleaned from the congressional briefings sets the stage for United Fresh policy activities for the rest of this year as United Fresh aggressively pursues initiatives to complement growth and innovation in the produce industry.

For more information on the Government Relations Council meetings or the issues, please contact Robert Guenther at 202.303.3409.



# THE LONDON PRODUCE SHOW AND CONFERENCE

PRESENTED BY  
THE FRESH PRODUCE CONSORTIUM  
AND PRODUCE BUSINESS

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# A FLIGHT TO LONDON

By James Prevor  
President & Editor-in-Chief



**A**s we have prepared for the grand unveiling of the inaugural edition of The London Produce Show and Conference, I have often felt like Henry Kissinger doing a shuttle of my own — in this case, back and forth across the pond.

When I fly over the ocean, I now actively seek to fly only airlines with new airplanes offering transatlantic Wi-Fi. To be honest I hate it. I'm connected 24/7, and with the business now more international than ever, I had come to relish a few hours of refuge from it all. Yet I have surrendered to the reality: one chooses to engage in the new global economy or one limits one's potential.

As I sit on the plane, I watch my screen as copies of e-mails appear in my inbox. Scrolling down, each one signifies someone signing up for a booth, doing a sponsorship or registering to attend the new London Produce Show and Conference. As each one appears, I imagine the human being behind it. I think of an earnest young man trying to make his mark, and I remember flying with Ken Whitacre to San Francisco back in 1985 to launch the first issue of *PRODUCE BUSINESS* at the PMA convention.

I love launching these events. We don't just throw up a trade show. We invest, heavily, on the student programs, the chef demos, workshops, seminars, tours, networking events and so much more. I travel the world seeking brilliant minds to gather in one place at one time and give that community a window to a world beyond its confines.

Each event has its own pulse and personality. In the end, we are usually successful for the same reason: Because we care. Because wherever I stand, I carry the legacy of a multigenerational produce family.

My father, Michael Prevor, has passed, yet in the U.K., I often feel his presence with me. Old Covent Garden is an urban shopping mall now, but they preserved the buildings and have pictures of the old market on display. I pause just a moment; I look at the photo of the old Louis Reece company preserved in black and white in a photo on the wall. I remember they were once our big apple customer in the U.K., and I know my father was right there, shaking hands with Wally Olins as they, together, shipped countless apples across the Atlantic on little more than a handshake.

Now, I shake hands with Wally's son, Laurence Olins, and his grandson, Ben Olins. Louis Reece is but a memory, but the Olins family, including Adam Olins and Jonathan Olins, have, along with a crack management team, revived a storied produce firm known as Poupart.

I make a pilgrimage from America to ask for their help in building something exceptional, something that never existed before. Something to make the world of produce pivot and turn to London.

Maybe they liked the idea. Perhaps, in this land of British reserve, they enjoyed this Yank for so earnestly crossing the pond and, like a meteor crossing the British sky, painting the picture of what we could do together. Or was it some mystic bond of memory, crossing time and an

ocean, and a shared respect for those whose commitment to the trade is as deep as their own? In the end, just as Wally and my father worked together, so would we work together once more.

There were a lot of old names my father traded with in the U.K.: Fagin, Saphir, Emanuel, Elliot, Weiser, Glass, so many more — some still around and some long gone. Yet this effort is not about yesterday; it is about tomorrow, and how will I ever thank properly the industry leaders who joined our efforts?

John Shropshire at G's (sort of the Tanimura & Antle of England); Chris Mack at Mack Multiples (a company type that doesn't exist in the U.S., the closest being perhaps the relationship of RLB Food Distributors with Kings but on a national basis); Tony Reynolds at Reynolds Catering (a company similar to Sysco); and Mark Peachey at Prophet (a leading technology provider) each so generously shared their time and knowledge to teach this student all about the U.K. market and the broader European scene. What a brain trust. I am greatly in their debt.

Then there was the market. New Covent Garden stood up quickly, offering its support, as if they instinctively knew that this son of the Hunts Point Market, 3,500 miles away, would stand by the wholesalers, as we shall. Soon Spitalfields joined us as well.

The decision to launch an operation in another country was not taken casually; it had to do, of course, with our assessment of industry need. With the U.K. market fracturing as deep discounters and upscale retailers both gain market share, the trade is in flux. As retailers seek to buy direct, traditional market channels

are fraying, and as the population evolves and culinary trends move, the whole U.K. market — retail, wholesale and foodservice — is superseding an old vision in which there were only four retailers to sell.

Yet, there is more. In business, the temptation is always to do what one knows and, indeed, in the short run, we surely could have made more money by simply throwing up a domestic show in Chicago or someplace else, but it wouldn't have made me smarter or our company better. In this adventure, I have already learned so much and made such good friends, and our company, which originated from a dream and a piece of paper, has acquired new competency as a global player. Our place in the industry is to help lead, so anything I can do to gain knowledge helps everything we do get better, and you can't improve if you just keep doing things you know how to do.

My father was just 18 years old when something told him that in addition to his accounting studies, he ought to add a minor in International Trade. He ultimately made his company a global force, which at one point became the largest independent exporter of produce from America. How he saw an opportunity and somehow acquired the competency to take a small terminal market wholesaler onto the global stage is, as a famous Brit (half American actually) once said, in a different context, "a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma."

There are about 50 minutes left on my flight. I think I will turn off the Wi-Fi now. After all, they didn't have Wi-Fi when my Dad took his first trip to London. And it worked out just fine.

pb

**The decision to launch an operation in another country was not taken casually; it had to do, of course, with our assessment of industry need.**



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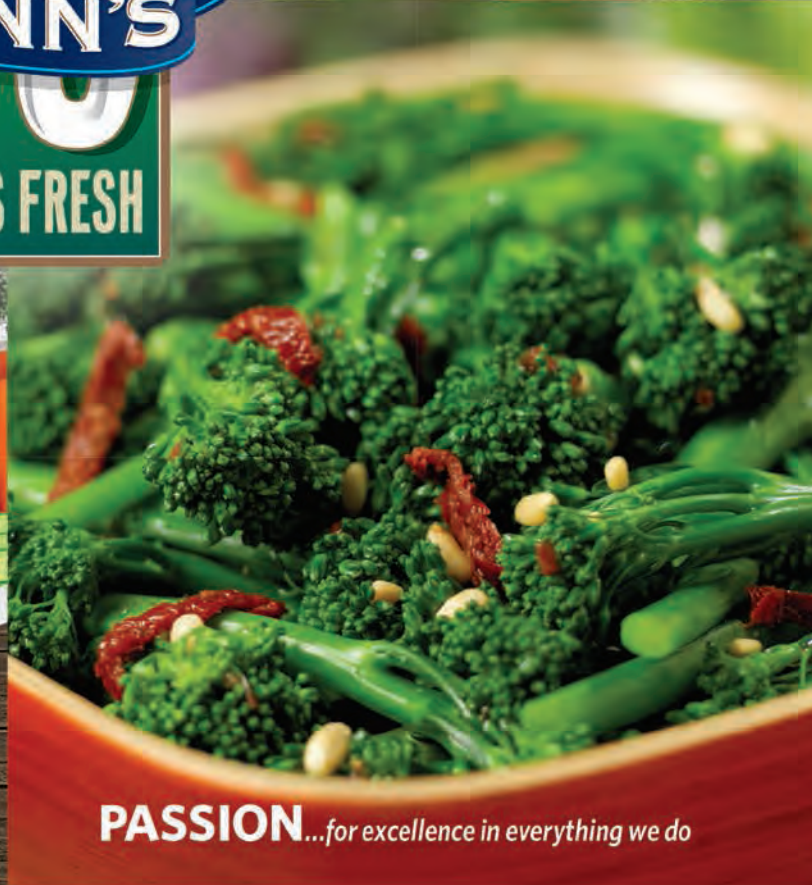
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## TRANSITIONS

### NATURIFE FARMS SALINAS, CA

Naturipe Farms announces the appointment of **Jerry Moran** as the director of business development-west. In his role, Moran will contribute to the company's growth by leading strategic sales and business development activities for Naturipe Farms. Moran will be based out of the Naturipe Farms' headquarters in Salinas, CA and will report to Vince Lopes, vice president of sales-west.



Naturipe Farms also announces the promotion of **Kasey Kelley** as the director of business development-east. Kelley will also contribute to the company's growth by leading strategic sales and business development activities for Naturipe Farms. Kelley will continue to be based out of the Grand Junction, MI office and will report to Jim Roberts, vice president of sales-east.



### MARKET FRESH NIXA, MO

Market Fresh announces the addition of **Nick Corbett** to its Florida staff. Corbett will take on the role of general manager at the Florida re-pack facility. As general manager, Corbett will be responsible for overseeing all aspects of the Market Fresh facility in Florida.



Market Fresh announces the addition of **Brett Lamar** to its corporate staff. Lamar is a VMI/transportation specialist for Market Fresh Produce and will be in charge of timely and accurate fulfillment of daily replenishment from customers. He will also handle logistics for the company.



Market Fresh also announces the addition of **Tomas Bobadilla** to its Florida staff. Bobadilla is the warehouse and production manager for the Florida tomato re-pack facility. His primary duties will include verifying records on incoming and outgoing shipments as well as preparing items for delivery.

### BOSKOVICH FARMS OXNARD, CA

Boskovich Farms announced that **Steve Adams** accepted the newly created position of director of growing operations and grower relations. Adams will oversee the scheduling of all plantings and coordinate with the sales and harvesting departments for Boskovich Farms' California and Arizona operations as well as coordinate with growers and suppliers for both commodity and fresh cut vegetables.



### KEY TECHNOLOGY WALLA WALLA, WA

Key Technology announces the appointment of **Cedric Simmons** as area sales manager for the Southeast United States. Simmons is responsible for bringing Key's high performance digital sorting, conveying, and process automation systems to food processors and other manufacturers. Simmons brings 15 years of experience selling and supporting industrial equipment.



sors and other manufacturers. Simmons brings 15 years of experience selling and supporting industrial equipment.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS



### 'PEEL THE LOVE' CAMPAIGN GOES ON TOUR

DOLE Bananas, of Westlake Village, CA, and co-sponsor, Blue Diamond Almond Breeze Almondmilk, of Sacramento, CA, will visit 26 banana-loving cities Memorial Day through Labor Day. A Peel the Love Banana Cabana caravan will simultaneously depart from New York City and Dallas. The caravans' will journey throughout Eastern and Western cities to reacquaint Americans with the fun, whimsy and versatility of bananas and offer compelling new ways to add fresh produce to summer meals, snacking, parties and entertaining plans.



### VILLAGE FARMS CELEBRATES FIRST ANNUAL 'BC VEGGIE DAY'

Village Farms, Heathrow, FL, celebrated the first annual "BC Veggie Day." The event was sponsored by British Columbia Greenhouse Growers Association in conjunction with and funded by the BC Ministry of Agriculture. In addition, Village Farms will feature a "BC Greenhouse Grown" seal on its tomato packaging sold to local retailers throughout the greater Vancouver area.

### VIDALIA ONION'S 2014 RETAIL PROMOTIONAL CAMPAIGN

The Vidalia Onion Committee (VOC), Vidalia, GA, is launching a new long-term promotional campaign entitled "V is for Vidalia." The campaign focuses on promoting the versatility and use benefits of Vidalia Onions to consumers. As part of the promotion, the VOC will include a digital coupon on its Facebook page as well as give away weekly prizes on Facebook during the months of May and June.



### GIUMARRA INCREASES WATERMELON TONNAGE IN MEXICO

Giumarra, Los Angeles, CA, is currently shipping its West Mexico watermelon program and kicked off the spring season three weeks earlier than last year. The prompt timeframe is attributed to earlier transplanting, improved growing practices, and ideal weather conditions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

**OPPY'S NEW PLUM SHOWS LONGEVITY**

The Chilean plum season will finish with a flourish at The Oppenheimer Group, Coquitlam, British Columbia, when the exciting new fruit known as RR1 arrives. RR1 is a late-harvesting, long-storing plum with yellow flesh that transforms to light red as it ripens. First planted in Chile 2010, RR1 follows the popular Angelino variety in availability and can sustain the plum season.



**TASTE APPEAL DRIVES GROWTH OF 'CHERRY FERRARI'**

Available almost two months before the annual cherry season's first early fruit reaches California markets, Glamour Cherries from Lleida, Spain, are produced in technologically-sophisticated glasshouses, which account for its production cycle, and significantly high price tag. Despite the pricey nature of the product, recent years have seen Glamour Cherries adopted by an increasing swathe of retailers that successfully used the brand to herald the start of the cherry season.



**USAPPLE TAKES HOME FOUR MEDALS**

U.S. Apple Association (USApple) of Vienna, VA, won first place medals for Media Relations, Producer or Company-Funded Consumer Public Relations Campaigns, and Media Events at the Best of NAMA awards ceremony. The company also picked up a Merit Award as first-runner up for Social Media and was one of three nominees announced that evening for Public Relations Best in Show.



**MASTRONARDI PRODUCE NAMED ONE OF CANADA'S BEST MANAGED COMPANIES**

Mastronardi Produce, Kingsville, Ontario, is proud to be one of Canada's Best Managed Companies for the fifth consecutive year. Since first being named one of Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies in 2009, Mastronardi Produce continued growing exponentially. In addition to quality and flavor, Mastronardi is known for its sustainable business practices from growing to packaging to distribution.



**JUST ADD CALIFORNIA STRAWBERRIES**

May is National Strawberry Month, and at the height of the season, there is no better time to observe the California Strawberry Commission, Watsonville, CA, recommendation to "just add California strawberries" to the menu. Strawberries are versatile and can be found across the menu in all dayparts and restaurant categories from QSRs to fine dining.

**MUSHROOM BLENDING IS CELEBRATED IN UNIVERSITY DINING HALLS**

Since January, the University of Southern California, Yale University, University of Massachusetts, University of North Texas and more have hosted Mushroom Mania events. To launch the promotion, Mushroom Council chefs worked with university chefs to incorporate mushroom blendability seamlessly onto campus dining menus.



**PIONEER GROWERS LAUNCH NEW PACKAGED SWEET CORN PRODUCTS**

Pioneer Growers, Belle Glade, FL, is launching two new innovative packaged sweet corn products — providing consumers with more convenience and value-added options in-store. This launch includes a tray package with eight ears of corn sold in a 10-count case instead of the 12-count industry standard and a grab-and-go microwavable bag package. Both products feature the Green Giant Brand.



**TO-JO MUSHROOMS PARTNERS WITH UNIVERSITY CULINOLOGY TEAM**

To-Jo Mushrooms, Avondale, PA, announced its partnership with the Southwest Minnesota State University Culinary Department was a resounding success. To-Jo teamed up with students from the Culinary Department to develop Mushroom "Blended" recipes for submission into the 2014 Research Chefs Association annual student recipe competition recently held in Portland, OR.



**FRESH DIRECT PRODUCE WINS AWARD**

Fresh Direct Produce Ltd., Vancouver, British Columbia, has been chosen as one of Canada's Best Managed Companies for the third consecutive year. The award recognizes overall business performance, and sustained growth, as well as the efforts of the entire organization against its core values. Fresh Direct is one of Western Canada's fresh produce importers, wholesalers, and marketers with distribution centers in Vancouver and Calgary.

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

**UNITED FRESH AISLE-BY-AISLE BOOTH REVIEW**

**aisle 100**

**BOOTH #107  
PRODUCE BUSINESS  
BOCA RATON, FL**

PRODUCE BUSINESS delivers marketing, merchandising, management and procurement insights to retail, foodservice and other buyers. Its 29-year relationship with leaders worldwide is extended online through Jim Prevora's PerishablePundit.com and PerishableNews.com, and in person at The New York Produce Show and Conference and The London Produce Show and Conference.



**BOOTH #108  
HOLLANDIA PRODUCE/  
LIVE GOURMET  
CARPINTERIA, CA**

Experience the difference freshness can make with Live Gourmet and Grower Pete's Organic brand living lettuces, cress and leafy greens by Hollandia Produce LP. Nurtured in a greenhouse and harvested with their roots intact, products stay fresher longer.



**BOOTH #132  
CRUNCH PAK  
CASHMERE, WA**

Visit the slice apple specialist at Crunch Pak for the freshest in slice apple products including award-winning Dipper Z, FlavorZ and brand new Crunch Pak with Marvel Snackers.



**BOOTH #137  
SUN WORLD INTERNATIONAL  
BAKERSFIELD, CA**

Sun World is dedicated to "Nourishing the World Through Innovation." Its proprietary green, red and black seedless grapes include flagship premium brands SUPERIOR SEEDLESS, MIDNIGHT BEAUTY and SCARLOTTA SEEDLESS brand grapes, along with the newest late season additions AUTUMNCRISP and ADORA SEEDLESS. Stop by and see what else is in the grape innovation pipeline.



**BOOTH #139  
MIXTEC GROUP  
GLENDALE, CA**

MIXTEC Group is an executive search firm in produce. Since 1984, they assisted successful companies in agribusiness recruit and hire top talent for their senior-level executive positions. They completed search assignments, leadership consulting and human capital management services for the "Who's Who" of the industry with a high level of expertise in the retained executive search business. Stop by the booth and help celebrate the company's 30th year in business.



**aisle 400**

**BOOTH #407  
DEL MONTE  
FRESH PRODUCE  
CORAL GABLES, FL**

Del Monte Fresh Produce offers retailers and foodservice operators an array of innovative solutions to address the changing tastes and lifestyle needs of today's consumers. Its extensive distribution network allows just-in-time deliveries of premium quality fresh products.



**BOOTH #423  
WELL PICT BERRIES  
WATSONVILLE, CA**

Well Pict Berries' flavor is unmatched. The 100% premium, proprietary, non-GMO berries are sought after by consumers and asked for by name.



**BOOTH #427  
CALAVO GROWERS, INC.  
SANTA PAULA, CA**

Calavo is a leader in fresh avocado marketing. Additionally they manufacture and distribute prepared avocado products. Founded in 1924, the company's expertise in marketing and distributing serves produce wholesalers, retailers and restaurants worldwide.



**BOOTH #427  
RENAISSANCE FOOD GROUP  
RANCHO CORDOVA, CA**

Renaissance Food Group is a national fresh food company that creates, markets and distributes high quality products for consumers via the retail and foodservice channels.



**BOOTH #452  
AMF FARMS, INC.  
BURLINGTON, WA**

Bay Baby Produce, Inc./AMF Farms is pleased to announce its growth with shipping Organic Winter Squash and the long-stemmed Sparkler Pumpkin that is poised to be a customer favorite.



**aisle 500**

**BOOTH #532  
SUNKIST GROWERS, INC.  
SHERMAN OAKS, CA**

Offering more than 40 fresh citrus varieties, Sunkist Growers has been a partner and source for premium-quality citrus since 1893.



**BOOTH #549  
KMT WATERJET SYSTEMS  
BAXTER SPRINGS, KS**

With over 32 million adults shopping at grocery stores everyday, consumers are looking for value included extended shelf life, freshness and flavor. The use of pure water in waterjet cutting systems is capable of cutting at incredible speeds up to Mach 3, does not damage the cells of the produce, and has received USDA approval for creating a bacteria-free hygienic cutting process method.



**BOOTH #553  
STEMILT GROWERS  
WENATCHEE, WA**

Visit Stemilt to see what's new with Stemilt World Famous Fruits! Stemilt is a family-owned and operated grower, packer, and shipper of fresh apples, pears, cherries, peaches, nectarines, and apricots.



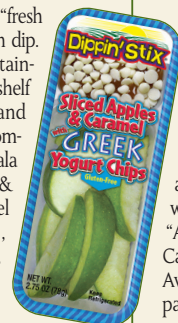
**BOOTH #555  
FRESH PLUS INTERNATIONAL  
MEDIA, PA**

Offering an innovative line of FRESH+ ethylene scrubbers. Reduce waste, extend shelf life and improve food safety throughout the supply chain with FRESH+.



**BOOTH #557  
REICHEL FOODS  
ROCHESTER, MN**

Consumers' top choice for "fresh to go" produce snacks with dip. Retailers benefit with sustainable packaging, extended shelf life, outstanding quality and repeat sales. New flavor combinations include Sweet Gala Apples with Caramel & Nuts, Apples with Caramel & Greek Yogurt Chips, Apples with Caramel, Peanuts & Chocolate and Celery with Ranch.



**BOOTH #569  
PROGRESSIVE PRODUCE  
LOS ANGELES, CA**

Progressive Produce provides customers a national supply of Americas Asparagus year-round. Progressive has thousands of acres of farm fresh asparagus always available because we grow throughout the "Americas" in Mexico, Peru, California and Washington. Available in bulk and retail packages.



**UNITED FRESH AISLE-BY-AISLE BOOTH REVIEW**

**AISLE 600**

**BOOTH #637**

**JEMD FARMS  
KINGSVILLE, ON**

Red Sun Greenhouse grown produce provides greenhouse perfection throughout the year. JemD has six North American distribution centers and designated regional sales teams to support greenhouse category needs including planning support, marketing support, and new product launch support. Stop by the booth to learn about the new American greenhouse in Virginia and the new Hacienda Special Reserve tomatoes in a display-ready case.



**BOOTH #640**

**SAMBRAILO PACKAGING  
WATSONVILLE, CA**

Sambrailo Packaging is a third-generation family-owned company that has served the produce and floral industries since 1923. With locations in California and Mexico, the company built a reputation on service and quality. Known for our "design to distribution" packaging innovations, Sambrailo truly does "whatever is best for the produce."



**BOOTH #645**

**NATURIFE FARMS  
SALINAS, CA**

Naturipe — more than a Trademark, it's a Trustmark. Naturipe represents a commitment, to customers and consumers alike, to be a trusted source of fresh berries that are vibrant, nutritious and delicious.

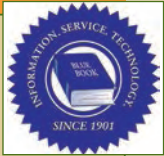


**AISLE 800**

**BOOTH #853**

**BLUE BOOK  
SERVICES  
CAROL STREAM, IL**

Whether a sales team needs leads or a credit team needs Ratings & Scores, Blue Book membership gives the business information needed to grow and protect any business. Blue Book has the data and tools needed to make profitable business decisions. Visit the booth to learn about the "New Hire Academy" — a training program to teach new employees and industry veterans what they need to know to have a productive career in the industry.



**BOOTH #864**

**PURE HOTHOUSE FOODS INC.  
LEAMINGTON, ON**

Pure Hothouse Foods Inc. is a grower, shipper, and marketer of greenhouse grown vegetables. The company recently added to its snacking series — a trifecta of sweet grape tomatoes!



**BOOTH #869**

**DOLE FOOD COMPANY  
WESTLAKE VILLAGE, CA**

Dole is one of the world's largest producers of fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, bananas and pineapples, a leading exporter of Chilean deciduous fruit and an industry leader in packaged fruit products, packaged salad and fresh-cut vegetables. Dole provides wholesale, retail and institutional customers around the world with high-quality food products.

See ad on page 15.



**AISLE 900**

**BOOTH #964**

**RUBY FRESH  
FIREBAUGH, CA**

Retailers and consumers alike seek Ruby Fresh's variety of pomegranates. Fresh-packed pomegranate arils, salad mixes and whole pomegranates are available year-round.



**BOOTH #965**

**YERECIC LABEL  
NEW KENSINGTON, PA**

Yerecic Label prides itself on knowing what consumers need to make purchase decisions when produce shopping through consumer research. Offer snack tips and recipes that showcase the flavor of your product on-pack. The Easy Fresh

Cooking expanded content labels give shoppers the information they want. Entice shoppers to learn more about a product with the new Label-Bling line.



**BOOTH #966**

**DNE WORLD FRUIT LLC  
FORT PIERCE, FL**

DNE World Fruit offers year-round citrus of the highest quality. The company will highlight its upcoming summer imports from South Africa, Australia, Chile, Peru and Mexico. Let DNE World Fruit help grow summer profits and devise a custom program.



**AISLE 1100**

**BOOTH #1152**

**SILVER CREEK SOFTWARE  
BOISE, ID**

The company's accounting/financial management software targets the fresh produce industry and offers unique capabilities to produce wholesalers, distributors, packers, brokers, fresh cut and growers with traceability, customer menus, contract pricing, lot control, route accounting, Visual Internet online ordering, EDI, landed cost and much more.



**BOOTH #1153**

**MISSION PRODUCE  
OXNARD, CA**

Mission is a global grower/packer, importer and distributor of avocados. Its ripening and distribution centers in California, Denver, Chicago, New Jersey, Atlanta, Dallas, Seattle and Toronto, enable just-in-time delivery of both hard and ripened fruit to customers nationwide. Along with fresh avocados, Mission is a distributor for Frontera Foods, featuring guacamole mixes created by Chef Rick Bayless.



**AISLE 1200**

**BOOTH #1249**

**MANN PACKING  
SALINAS, CA**

Join Mann Packing Company as the company celebrates its 75th anniversary in business this year in the Grower Shipper pavilion.



**BOOTH #1261**

**NATURESWEET  
SAN ANTONIO, TX**

NatureSweet is a leading grower of premium fresh tomatoes in North America under the NatureSweet® brand.



**BOOTH #1269**

**C.H. ROBINSON  
WORLDWIDE, INC.  
EDEN PRAIRIE, MN**

C.H. Robinson has exciting news to share at United Fresh. Stop by and visit the family of fresh experts. Guests will discover a produce company dedicated to leading the industry through innovation and high quality products and services.



**BOOTH #1273**

**PRO\*ACT  
MONTEREY, CA**

PRO\*ACT is North America's leading distributor of fresh food to the foodservice and retail industries. PRO\*ACT provides foodservice operators and retail locations with the distinct benefit of streamlining the fresh food supply chain — offering significant cost-benefits and one-call solution to secure the freshest products from over 70 distribution centers.



**UNITED FRESH AISLE-BY-AISLE BOOTH REVIEW**

**BOOTH #1275**

**WESTMORELAND SALES  
LEAMINGTON, ON**

Come visit Westmoreland (TopLine Farms). Get a firsthand look at everything the company has to offer and get a closer look at all the new offerings.



**AISLE 1400**

**BOOTH #1449**

**FOX PACKAGING  
MCALLEN, TX**

Fox Packaging's industry-leading mesh and poly/mesh bags improve consumer interaction with your products and increase your produce sales. Fox Packaging spent the last four decades pioneering one-of-a-kind bag options that reduce product damage, showcase the natural beauty of the product and provide a foundation for branding and artwork. Fox bags consistently deliver a combination of style, form and function that represents our long-standing commitment to product innovation.



**BOOTH #1457**

**THE NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
TRENTON, NJ**

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



**BOOTH #1461**

**FRESH ORIGINS  
SAN MARCOS, CA**

Fresh Origins is a leading producer of MicroGreens and Edible Flowers. Combining the benefits of an ideal climate with a deep passion for quality and innovation, Fresh Origins products are sought after by the finest restaurants and top chefs nationwide. In 2014, Fresh Origins is partnering with U.S. retailers to offer select products for home cooks to enjoy as well. Visit [freshorigins.com](http://freshorigins.com) for more information and recipes, and find the brand on Facebook and Twitter.



**BOOTH #1479**

**MAGLIO & COMPANY  
GLENDALE, WI**

Maglio & Company has been offering fresh produce of the day with old-fashioned, conscientious quality and service since 1902. For over 100 years, Maglio & Company has proven to be a leader in providing innovative solutions to meet every customer's unique fresh produce needs. The company maintains a steadfast commitment to forward-thinking food safety practices and have not shied away from investments in equipment and facility technology.



**BOOTH #1484**

**FRESHXPERTS  
FRESNO, CA**

FreshXperts is a full-service advisory team for profitable, sustainable growth in fresh foods. The company is a one-stop-shop for all consulting services in produce. The company is offering a 30-minute FREE consultation on the show floor for prospective clients who sign up prior to the show.



**AISLE 1500**

**BOOTH #1556**

**APIO, INC.  
GUADALUPE, CA**

Apio, Inc. will be showcasing new products for Spring 2014. Swing by the booth to learn more. Apio provides two of the strongest brands in fresh-cut vegetables, Eat Smart and GreenLine, and looks forward to showcasing its innovative produce solutions in freshly prepared vegetables.



**AISLE 1700**

**BOOTH #1765  
BIOSAFE SYSTEMS  
EAST HARTFORD, CT**

BioSafe Systems' Sonic Fresh Produce Treatment System utilizes ultrasonic waves in conjunction with BioSafe Systems' EPA-labeled, PAA-based, post-harvest products to provide high levels of treatment without danger of damaging your most delicate produce items. This self-contained unit effectively removes toxic pesticides, pathogens and decay-causing organisms from fruits and vegetables.



**AISLE 1800**

**BOOTH #1856  
REYCO SYSTEMS  
CALDWELL, ID**

Stop by REYCO Systems and take a look at the new fabricated stainless steel rotary valves with replaceable seals for your REYCO waste systems. These valves can be used on new systems or as direct replacements to rotary valves in most existing installations. The rubber seals can be quickly replaced without removing the rotor from the valve.



**BOOTH #1876  
PAKSENSE, INC.  
BOISE, ID**

Temperature monitoring just got easier! About the size of a sugar packet, award-winning PakSense temperature monitoring labels enables better food quality and safety decisions, and can be recycled through the PakSense GreenSense program.



**AISLE 1900**

**BOOTH #1956  
WEST COAST SUPPLIES  
RANCHO CORDOVA, CA**

West Coast Supplies will be featuring its Air-O-Film wrapping system which uses a vented stretch film with state-of-the-art stretch wrap equipment to standardize loads while eliminating waste and saving money in the process. Stop by the booth for a demonstration or visit [westcoast-supplies.com](http://westcoast-supplies.com).



**BOOTH #1964**

**SCHUR STAR  
PACKAGING SYSTEMS  
ELK GROVE VILLAGE, IL**

Schur Star Packaging Systems operates from Chicago and Flensburg, Germany, and is utilizing the knowhow within the entire Schur Group to supply customers worldwide the highest standards of flexible packing materials and systems.



**BOOTH #1985**

**GARLOCK PRINTING & CONVERTING  
GARDNER, MA**

Garlock Printing opened its second facility in Reno, NV in March 2014. Garlock is one of the only flexible packaging manufacturers servicing the United Fresh Family with facilities on both coasts. The two facilities give Garlock Printing a major advantage on lead-times for customers while maintaining the highest level of quality and service. Visit our booth to see the latest in fresh-cut packaging using 175HD flexographic printing on lidding, rollstock, bags and pouches.



**AISLE 2200**

**BOOTH #2257  
PRODUCE PRO SOFTWARE  
WOODRIDGE, IL**

Built by the produce industry, Produce Pro Software provides its produce distributors, processors and growers/packers/shippers with the industry's best practices. Complete with real-time inventory control, sales, warehouse, accounting and reporting features.



**AISLE 2300**

**BOOTH #2386  
BIOMERIEUX  
HAZELWOOD, MO**

When it comes to food safety, there are no short cuts around sample preparation, quality indicator testing, and pathogen analysis. But that doesn't mean reliable results can't be accessed by the next day. As part of a comprehensive approach, the bioMérieux Performance Solutions team will assess staff utilization, workflow efficiencies, and technological needs to optimize lab productivity. Next-day results. Confident decisions. Faster-to-market.



**AISLE 2400**

**BOOTH #2465  
MULTIVAC, INC  
KANSAS CITY, MO**

The T 600 Traysealer is the most recent addition to the MULTIVAC Traysealer portfolio. This machine is a healthy combination of the T 300, designed for small to medium sized businesses, and the T 700, which is designed for larger businesses. This machine has many of the advanced capabilities of the larger T 700 traysealer, but with the footprint of the smaller T 300 traysealer.





# Simple. Delicious. Nutritious.™

At Dole Food Company, we are committed to providing you with the finest fresh fruit and vegetables available. Eating plenty of colorful fruits and vegetables is a cornerstone of good health. Just think of us as your partners in healthy living!

For more information and recipes, visit [dole.com](http://dole.com)





**INTERNATIONAL FLORICULTURE EXPO**

**JUNE 11-13, 2014**

**MORIAL CONVENTION CENTER, NEW ORLEANS, LA**

The International Floriculture Expo is the leading trade exposition and educational conference for mass market retailers, supermarkets, garden centers, retail florists, growers, nurseries, event floral designers, and other retailers of floral and foliage products. Produced and hosted by Diversified Business Communications of Portland, ME, the New Orleans event includes a full day dedicated to industry education sessions on Tuesday, June 10. The Opening Cocktail Reception at 5:00 pm at the Morial Convention Center is where the recipients of the 2014 Merchandising Awards will be announced and celebrated. For more details see florierexpo.com. (Booth numbers are subject to change.)

**AISLE-BY-AISLE BOOTH REVIEW**

**BOOTH #427 WESTBROOK FLORAL ONTARIO, CANADA**



Westbrook Floral Ltd. is a full-service wholesaler offering floral supplies, home and garden décor, botanicals and potted plants. With 1.5 million square feet of greenhouses, Westbrook specializes in supplying North America with mini Roses, Phalaenopsis Orchids, Kalanchoes, African violets, ferns, succulents and seasonal potted plant varieties.

**BOOTH #447 THE ELITE BOUQUET MIAMI, FL**



Located in the heart of Miami, Elite also has four other U.S. locations covering the surrounding regions of New Jersey, Chicago, Denver and Los Angeles. Elite's primary imports are roses, spray roses, Gerberas and Alstroemeria. See Elite for bouquets, consumer bunches, cut greens, fresh arrangements, grower bunches, fresh cut and specialty cut flowers.

**BOOTH #457 AVERY IMPORTS/WILLOW GROUP BATAVIA, NY**

Whether you are a garden center, florist, greenhouse, nursery, designer or gift store, Avery Imports offers a variety of more than 1,000 different items to choose from.

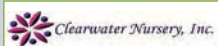


**BOOTH #511 DECOWRAPS DORAL, FL**

DecoWraps is a supplier of distinctive packaging options for fresh flowers and potted plants. DecoWraps offers prompt service, simplified logistics, and competitive pricing. Visit DecoWraps and see the exciting new items.



**BOOTH #521A CLEARWATER NURSERY NIPOMO, CA**



Founded in 1986, Clearwater Nursery is an 80-acre coastal California company. The mild climate is exceptional for producing premium grade indoor blooming plants all year long. The Nursery continues to expand its product mix to add new plants. Visit the booth and explore the culture and climate that is Clearwater.

**BOOTH #521B B AND H FLOWERS CARPINTERIA, CA**



B and H Flowers produces a variety of commercial, VeriFlora-certified flower crops for both mass retail and wholesale distribution, providing customers nationwide with sustainably grown, vibrant, and long-lasting California flowers. Sustainably grown for a beautiful world.

**BOOTH #533 MRS. BLOOMS DIRECT ELMSFORD, NY**



With more than 15 years of experience importing and exporting cut flowers from premium sources worldwide, Mrs. Blooms Direct is poised to provide the high-quality blooms. Offices in New York and Quito, Ecuador cater to service and customer satisfaction.

**BOOTH #633 MELLANO & CO. LOS ANGELES, CA**



For nearly 90 years, Mellano & Company has been a grower of cut flowers, fillers and foliage. Mellano crops are found in uncommonly appealing bouquets, consumer bunches and cutting edge floral offerings.

**BOOTH #639 ART IN BLOOM MIAMI, FL**



Art in Bloom/Equiflor Corp. is a producer of bouquets, grower bunches, consumer bunches and rose bouquets. Products are artistically created by trend-setting designers and made in the company's state-of-the-art bouquet facility. The roses are grown in the mountains of Cayambe, Ecuador and are Rainforest Alliance, BASC, FlorEcuador and VeriFlora certified.

**BOOTH #645 ALPHA BOTANICAL HOMESTEAD, FL**



With spacing guidelines 1.5 times the industry standard, the finished product is exceptional. Make Alpha Botanical your source for florist quality foliage and exceptional customer service.

**BOOTH #649 C.H. ROBINSON TAMPA, FL**



With more than 100 years of experience in perishable products, C.H. Robinson understands that every day is a logistical race against time in the retail floral world. They offer a comprehensive suite of services designed to optimize the efficiency of your floral supply chain.

**BOOTH #657 CHRYSAL AMERICAS MIAMI, FL**



Chrysal Americas is an international company offering a multitude of products for the complete nutrition and care of fresh cut flowers for growers, wholesalers, florist and supermarkets in the United States, Canada and Latin America.

**BOOTH #703 SUNSHINE BOUQUET COMPANY MIAMI, FL**



Get ready to be blown away with the latest trends and cutting-edge designs this year. The product line is getting a fresh look with the addition of new premium California enhanced bouquets, which is the perfect way to help increase your sales.

**BOOTH #713 ALDERSHOT GREENHOUSES ONTARIO, CANADA**



One of North America's premier potted blooming producers. The company's unsurpassed commitment to quality has made it one of the top producers of potted blooming plants in North America. Long lasting blooms for home and office.

**BOOTH #729 EVE'S GARDEN LAND O' LAKES, FL**



Eve's Garden Inc., established more than 30 years ago, is a Lucky Bamboo and Bonsai tree nursery. The company strives for quality and perfection in every order. Eve's Garden produces unique products that are designed, produced and sold directly to the buyer.

**BOOTH #733 ENCORE FLORAL MARKETING GRAND RAPIDS, MI**



Encore will showcase a selection of color bouquets, arrangements and balloons. Importing allows the company to bring together product from countries around the world into its unique offerings. In addition, its Miami and Dallas facilities enhance distribution opportunities nationwide.

**BOOTH #757 POTTER INC. BRYAN, OH**



Potter Inc. specializes in products to enhance floral and produce departments. Its hand-tied bows and corsage lines are proudly made in the USA. Potter Kit programs create gift-ready merchandise, quickly and easily, in today's labor-crunched market. Visit Potter Inc. to learn about new 2014/2015 upgrades.

**BOOTH #813 MEYERS FLOWERS NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE ONTARIO, CANADA**



With 15+ acres of greenhouse space and more than 50 years of experience, Meyers is the choice for quality potted flowers. Its floral products range from spring bedding plants to holiday crops. Meyers is accommodating with its variety of weekly flowers and promotional programs.



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



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Boca Raton, Florida

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# INTERNATIONAL FLORICULTURE EXPO

JUNE 11-13, 2014

## AISLE-BY-AISLE BOOTH REVIEW

**BOOTH #839**  
**GALLERIA FARMS**  
**MIAMI, FL**



Galleria Farms is a vertically integrated grower, importer and distributor of fresh cut flowers. Galleria provides solutions and service for premium innovative floral products to supermarkets, mass market retailers, bouquet manufacturers and wholesale florists nationwide.

**BOOTH #847**  
**TEMKIN**  
**INTERNATIONAL**  
**PAYSON, UT**



Whether it's a coordinated program, a stylish new sleeve, or a custom floral pick, Temkin International will help create an enticing look to any blooms. Temkin's coordinated sheets, sleeves and accessories make it easy to craft a striking display with designs made for every season, holiday and special occasion.

**BOOTH #903**  
**BOTTOMLEY EVERGREENS & FARMS**  
**ENNICKE, NC**



Bottomley Evergreens will help you meet all your live Christmas decor needs including garlands, wreaths, bouquets and centerpieces. The company provides high quality and service to its valuable customers.

**BOOTH #939**  
**SANDE FLOWERS**  
**MIAMI, FL**



Committed to breeding, growing and distributing the highest quality Calla lilies, Sande Flowers operates production facilities and sales offices in Ecuador, Miami and The Netherlands. The company has novel and exciting Calla lily varieties. Sande is committed to the sales and marketing of Calla lilies to wholesalers and mass market customers throughout the world.

**BOOTH #947**  
**TEUFEL HOLLY FARMS**  
**PORTLAND, OR**

Our exceptional quality and customer service allow Teufel Holly Farms to be a leading supplier of Pacific Northwest evergreens for more than 120 years. Stop by to see how Teufel's experience and expertise can maximize your holiday sales.



**BOOTH #1003**  
**BURTON + BURTON**  
**BOGART, GA**



burton + BURTON will showcase 2015 Valentine and Spring products at this year's IFE show. Come by to see the latest designs in balloons, plush, pot covers, ribbon, and more! burton + BURTON is a family-owned and operated business, serving the floral industry since 1982.

**BOOTH #1013**  
**THE USA BOUQUET**  
**COMPANY**  
**MIAMI, FL**



The USA Bouquet Company, a North American provider of fresh floral products, will showcase new and exciting ideas for stores. See the new line of Premium Arrangements. Look for the innovative designs when visiting the booth.

**BOOTH 1039**  
**BAY CITY FLOWER CO.**  
**HALF MOON BAY, CA**

Family owned Bay City Flower Company—more than 100 years of growing! The company is known for producing diverse assortments of unique, high quality flowering plants in the country. Its aim is to keep our customers floral displays fresh, interesting and colorful.



**BOOTH #1120**  
**WHITE'S NURSERY**  
**& GREENHOUSES INC.**  
**CHESAPEAKE, VA**



White's has been growing quality potted plants and outdoor annuals and delivering throughout the United States for more than 55 years. Customers include supermarkets, wholesalers, other growers and mass marketers.

**BOOTH #1121**  
**A-ROO COMPANY**  
**STRONGSVILLE, OH**



For more than 40 years, A-ROO has created marketing, merchandising and packaging solutions for the floral industry. It has containers and vases, decorative packaging, display fixtures and accessories, films, sleeves and wraps, pot covers, ribbons, bows and picks. Offices in Ohio, Florida, Texas and California provide service to North, Central and South America.

**BOOTH #1149**  
**BALL HORTICULTURAL**  
**COMPANY**  
**WEST CHICAGO, IL**



The Ball Horticultural company offers the newest innovation in vegetative material for summer-cut fresh flowers and the newest breeding and selection. Through distribution companies, it offers seeds, plugs, bulbs, cuttings and tissue culture plants to the professional flower growers all over the world.

**BOOTH #1149**  
**BURPEE HOME GARDENS**  
**WEST CHICAGO, IL**

A trusted name in garden bedding flowers, vegetables and herbs. Burpee has been making gardeners successful for more than 130 years. Visit Burpee in the Ball Horticultural Company's booth.



**BOOTH #1157**  
**THE SUN VALLEY GROUP**  
**ARCATA, CA**



Moments of Awe! Sun Valley captures the emotions of flowers and connects consumers with the magic they possess. Sun Valley's purpose is to achieve an unwavering dedication to quality, year-round availability and unparalleled customer service in the floral industry.

**BOOTH #1221**  
**BAYVIEW FLOWERS**  
**ONTARIO, CANADA**



With more than 40 years of experience, Bayview specializes in potted plants, dish gardens, indoor tropical foliage along with cut greens and fresh cut flowers. Its vases, containers and home décor items will entice customers.

**BOOTH #1231**  
**FLORAL SENSE**  
**MIAMI, FL**



Distributing lilies directly from Costa Rica is the company's core business. It has flourished, growing from a small distributing company to one of the largest lily producers and distributors in the western hemisphere. Floral Sense also distributes Gerbera daisies, tropicals as well as Hydrangeas.

**BOOTH #1238**  
**MEI SPECIALTY REFRIGERATION**  
**AND FIXTURES**  
**LA GRANGE PARK, IL**



MEI is a knowledgeable supplier that can help make a floral program productive and profitable. MEI can help increase store sales through planning, department design, refrigeration, custom fixtures, accessories and merchandising planograms.

**BOOTH #1239**  
**WORLD CLASS FLOWERS**  
**EGG HARBOR CITY, NJ**  
**MIAMI, FL**

GROWERS, PLANNERS, MARKETERS, INNOVATORS — let WCF create your next winning program.



**BOOTH #1247**  
**TRIUMPH PLANT CO.**  
**NEW CITY, NY**



Triumph Plant Company specializes in unique plant products. See the company's Crayola — "My First Garden" children's seed kits and its gardening for dummies planter's kits, "Gardening for the rest of us." Triumph also has real mistletoe, hanging salad gardens and air fern.



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



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**AISLE-BY-AISLE BOOTH REVIEW**

**BOOTH #1257**  
**SYNDICATE SALES**  
**KOKOMO, IN**



Syndicate Sales is a manufacturer, importer, and distributor of more than 1,500 items to the floral industry. Brand names including Aquapic®, Aquafoam®, Aquaplus the Difference is Clear®, Aquahold®, Garden Collection®, Hoosier Glass®, and designer vases are known throughout the industry as representing the highest quality products, second to none.

**BOOTH #1321**  
**FRESHBLOOMS**  
**SEWELL, NJ**



FreshBlooms is an accomplished floral importer and full-service distributor dedicated to servicing all facets of the floriculture industry. It presents an extensive variety of premium fresh-cut flowers from our worldwide farm sources while providing custom-made promotions, innovative product lines, hardgoods, and integrated logistics.

**BOOTH #1346**  
**FLOWERS CANADA GROWERS**  
**GUELPH, ONTARIO, CANADA**



Flowers Canada Growers represents floriculture greenhouse growers and industry partners. The company produces the *Canadian Greenhouse Growers' Directory & Buyers' Guide*, a resource tool for the floriculture industry.

**BOOTH #1347**  
**HOMESTEAD GROWERS NIAGARA**  
**ONTARIO, CANADA**

See the wonder of the potted Calla Lily at Homestead Growers Niagara's booth. Its inventive and fun booth theme will inspire creativity in any floral department. Fabulous colors and amazing quality will be showcased.



**BOOTH #1348**  
**BLOOMQUEST**  
**ENGLEWOOD, NJ**



BloomQuest supplies roses and carnations directly from Kenya to retail partners in the U.S. The company has strong trading relationship with Kenya and works closely with a number of specially selected farms in Ecuador. This enables the company to offer its customers the best possible flowers in the industry.

**BOOTH #1349**  
**KOEN PACK USA**  
**MIAMI, FL**



Koen specializes in containers and vases, films, sleeves, wraps and pot covers. Especially known for its innovative packaging in potted plants and bouquets, the company has a large inventory of sleeves, sheets, picks, bags and other accessories to enhance the look of a final product.

**BOOTH #1446**  
**ARPELLINI**  
**EXPRESS LINES**  
**PALM CITY, FL**



Look to Armellini for scheduled LTL service. Since 1945, Armellini Logistics, a family owned perishable logistics business, has specialized in the transportation of flowers. It offers freight service and performance handled with complete care as well as temperature-controlled shipments.

**BOOTH #1449**  
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**APOPKA, FL**



For more than 30 years, Penang Nursery has been a top producer of unique bamboo, bonsai, and tabletop gardens, including the popular braided Pachira tree. Penang takes pride in offering beautifully designed gardens in the latest, trend-setting containers available at an exceptional value.

**BOOTH #1457**  
**HIAWATHA CORPORATION**  
**SHELTON, WA**



The Hiawatha Corporation is a shipper/supplier of fresh Christmas greens, Western greens and Moss products from the Pacific Northwest. Visit the booth to see a large selection of product offerings. Be the first to preview the new 2014 holiday decorative items.

**BOOTH #1502**  
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**MIAMI, FL**



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**BOOTH #1639**  
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A direct source for fresh-cut flowers, novelty plants, lucky bamboo, premium cactus, floral supplies, succulents as well as seasonal items such as palm crosses, all Christmas fresh green items and pre-made fruit baskets. Procacci offers direct store delivery or it arranges direct shipment from growers to a buyer's distribution center.

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# Blueberries More Plentiful on Top Chain Menus, Adding Interest to Meals and Reflecting Consumer Demand

BY MARK VILLATA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council

**B**lueberries, once seen as “just another berry” that tastes great in muffins, have over the past six years been transformed in the eyes of restaurant operators to a new menu standard. Overall mentions of blueberries on 500 top chain restaurant menus have doubled, references to fresh blueberries have nearly tripled, and restaurants are using blueberries in more different types of dishes than ever before<sup>1</sup>.

What’s causing this striking shift? A number of factors, including the growing number of consumers who see blueberries as a little change they can make in pursuit of a healthy lifestyle and the expanding group of foodservice operators who discovered blueberries as a simple way to turn a commonplace dish into a great one.

The fact that blueberries show a stronger growth rate as far as overall mentions on 500 top chain menus than blackberries, raspberries and strawberries<sup>1</sup> suggests greater appreciation of the dynamic combination of qualities they bring to the table: natural simplicity, nutritional benefits, great taste and amazing versatility.

## Not Just For Muffins

While interest in classic items like blueberry muffins and pancakes hasn’t waned, today’s consumers want to eat blueberries in more adventurous ways; for example, cooked into meat dishes, sprinkled on salads, blended into salsas or smoothies. The chain restaurants surveyed are using blueberries in different types of dishes than ever before, with increased usage apparent across all restaurant segments and meal parts<sup>1</sup>. It seems each week, chefs and dietitians are bringing new blueberry items to restaurant menus.

Key areas of growth in the period 2007-2013 include non-alcoholic beverages and smoothies, where incidence of blueberry mentions increased 93 percent; entrees and salads, where incidence of blueberry mentions increased 66 percent; and dessert dishes, where incidence of blueberry

mentions increased 45 percent<sup>1</sup>.

The upward trend in the dessert category is consistent with the finding that 60 percent of consumers now say they choose fruit for dessert at least once a week — more people than those who regularly opt for cookies (51 percent) or ice cream (47 percent)<sup>2</sup>.

While fresh and frozen blueberries are still the forms used most frequently, more chefs and product developers are experimenting with dishes featuring dried, freeze-dried, pureed and powdered blueberries.

## Riding The Smoothie Wave

As smoothie fever sweeps the nation, many chain restaurants are offering blueberry as an option and discovering the flavor is most popular with younger Gen-Y [or Millennial] customers. Menu incidence of blueberry mentions in smoothies increased 60 percent since 2007<sup>1</sup>, with 54 percent of consumers overall<sup>3</sup> and 63 percent of 18 to 24 year olds saying they find blueberry an appealing smoothie flavor<sup>4</sup>.

## The Blueberry Effect

There is no shortage of reasons to love blueberries, but consumers rank health, taste and convenience as their favorite things about the fruit<sup>5</sup>.



And, for many consumers, the blueberry’s positive halo extends all the way to restaurants that serve them. When consumers see a blueberry item on a menu, 58 percent perceive it as healthier, 44 percent find it more appealing, 24 percent perceive the restaurant as offering healthy fare, and 20 percent are compelled to order that specific item<sup>5</sup>.



## Key Takeaway

Among consumers and chain restaurants alike, interest in and usage of blueberries has never been greater. Blueberry marketers should capitalize on this trend by helping restaurants explore more unconventional ways to incorporate this dynamic fruit into their everyday offerings. Visit [blueberrycouncil.org/foodservice](http://blueberrycouncil.org/foodservice) for more information on blueberries in foodservice, restaurant-style recipes sourcing information and cooking tips.

## About The U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council



The U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council represents blueberry growers and packers in North and South America who market their blueberries in the United States and work to promote the growth and well-being of the entire blueberry industry. The blueberry industry is committed to providing blueberries that are grown, harvested, packed and shipped in clean, safe environments.

## Methodological notes:

- 1-Research** was conducted by Technomic, Inc., in January 2014. Base: Jul-Dec 2013 – 8,953 items from 773 restaurant menus from the Top 500 Restaurants, Emerging and Independent Operators; Jul-Dec 2010 – 4,665 items from 548 restaurant menus from the Top 500 Restaurants, Emerging and Independent Operators; Jul-Dec 2007 – 3,158 items from 440 restaurant menus from the Top 500 Restaurants, Emerging and Independent Operators.
- 2-Base:** 1,500 consumers aged 18+. Source: Technomic - The Dessert Consumer Trend Report (2013).
- 3-Base:** 624 consumers aged 18+. Source: Technomic - The Flavor Consumer Trend Report (2013).
- 4-Base:** 250 consumers aged 18+. Source: Technomic – The U.S. Beverage Consumer Trend Report (2012).
- 5-Research** was conducted by Hebert Research on behalf of the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council in May 2013 among 3,765 nationally representative Americans ages 18 and over. Data was collected via a combination of online, mobile and telephone surveys. Respondents were categorized into a general population group of 1,797 primary shoppers and an oversample of 1,968 women ages of 25 – 44 who also identify themselves as primary shoppers.

# Big Lessons From Little Fruit

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

**R**esearch based on menu mentions is always difficult to interpret, particularly if one's goal is to identify whether consumption of a particular item is increasing in foodservice. After all, though an increase in mentions on menus could indicate an item is featured in more menu items, it also could indicate other things.

Perhaps menu styles have changed to feature more descriptions of ingredients. Or, perhaps, positive news about an item has led restaurants to think highlighting it on the menu is a great idea, even without changing recipes at all.

Even if, in fact, increased menu mentions indicate that more items are being sold with a particular ingredient, we can't tell how well they are actually selling or what percentage of the dish this ingredient represents.

If one's interest is not strictly the sales of the particular ingredient but, rather, a broader interest in increasing produce consumption in foodservice, menu mentions are opaque in terms of interpreting the total composition of sales. Did more sales of blueberries at the restaurant level mean fewer sales of strawberries? Or did the produce category grow overall? One can't really ascertain any of this from a study of menu mentions.

Still, blueberries are an incredible product, and one for which the stars seem to have aligned. The research highlights the trifecta of health benefits, good taste and convenience as powerful forces driving increased usage in foodservice and increased consumption overall.

We would add two more factors that have contributed to the success of blueberries in foodservice: Innovative packaging, such as the ready-to-eat pack that Naturipe Farms used to get McDonald's to sell blueberries with oatmeal, has allowed for the product to enter new market segments.

In addition, imports from Chile, Mexico, Argentina, Uruguay, New Zealand and

Canada have exploded — thus making the integration of blueberries onto infrequently changing menus more plausible.

Of course, it is easier to surf if there is a good wave coming by, and kudos belong to the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council for seeing the massive smoothie wave and riding it to glory. Hooking in on a hot culinary trend is a surefire way of building demand, and the blueberry industry is making it happen.

To increase demand, the industry needs to move beyond traditional usage patterns. This is especially true when some of those traditional uses — say blueberry muffins — are somewhat at odds with the healthy positioning that the industry is going for. And the whole effort of the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council is right on target; it might as well be called “beyond blueberry pancakes....”

Not so obviously stated within this research is a hidden gem, a thought important to all produce marketers and an element that chefs and restaurateurs should pay mind to: The value of featuring an item can go beyond the sales and profit associated with that item directly. Featuring blueberries and other fresh produce items doesn't just lead to sales of these items; it changes the consumer perception of the whole restaurant.

Years ago, the California Avocado Commission ran a series of ads that played off the famous Perception/Reality campaign, which *Rolling Stone* magazine used to run. In those ads, *Rolling Stone* would feature images such as an old Volkswagen mini bus on the left (perception) and a BMW on the right (reality), showing that although *Rolling Stone* might have been perceived as a rock anthem magazine from the counter-culture era, in fact its readers had high incomes and bought materialistic cars.

The California Avocado Commission ads would feature a plain food item, say a basic chicken sandwich, on the left. The ad would say something such as “Chicken

sandwich: \$1.99” and then on the right page, they would put the sandwich on a colorful plate, add a slice of avocado and declare it, “Chicken sandwich *a la Mexicana*: \$3.49.”

The point? Small changes — a slice of avocado and a nice plate — can lead to big changes in perception.

**Featuring blueberries and other fresh produce items doesn't just lead to sales of these items; it changes the consumer perception of the whole restaurant.**

So restaurants should lead with produce because that fresh, healthy image is what they want for the whole concept. This research by the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council tells us that featuring this little fruit can warp the arc of consumer perception. That is an important lesson for restaurants and for produce marketers.



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# Revolutions In UK Retailing Is Tiny Whole Foods Setting An Example For London Retailing?

FROM JIM PREVOR'S PERISHABLE PUNDIT 04.30.2014

In preparation for the upcoming London Produce Show and Conference, we've been spending a good amount of time in the U.K., and a fair amount of that time has been spent visiting retailers.

As the battle has been painted, you have the so-called "Big Four" — Tesco, Sainsbury's, ASDA and Morrison's — struggling, while deep discounters, such as ALDI and Lidl, and upscale chains, such as Waitrose and Marks & Spencer, gain market share. This is all true, but we wonder if Whole Foods Market isn't a sleeper in the market, one deserving of much more attention.

Way back when Whole Foods first opened its large and high service Kensington Store in 2007, much attention was paid to Whole Foods. Waitrose particularly saw it as a threat and focused on preventing Whole Foods from growing in the U.K.

Yet that initial store lost a fortune, and we are told that, seven years later, it is moving into the black. As the losses cascaded, other retailers looked away, figuring that model was a failing one.

Kudos is due to Whole Foods, though, for staying true to its strategic vision. One notes the distinction in the approach from Tesco's journey to America as Fresh & Easy. Whole Foods made a mistake with the Kensington store. It was too big, required too much labor for the service and restaurant areas and, as such, it lost a lot of money. But it was just one store, and Whole Foods did not build a giant distribution center.

In fact, it worked with distributors and wholesalers, to build its first small DC last year. Also to gain local knowledge, Whole Foods bought Fresh & Wild, a small chain, back in 2004 — three years before opening its Kensington flagship. This dramatically reduced the number of expatriates Whole Foods had to send to the U.K.

Keeping overhead low, acquiring local knowledge, and opening just one store gave Whole Foods that most precious of resources — time. As it developed new stores and closed other stores, it has come upon a formula that in many ways deserves a second look.

We went to visit the new Whole Foods in Fulham. It is a small store, about 23,000 square feet, but it is absolutely beautiful and an incredibly different experience compared to the heavily packaged experience the big multiples proffer in the U.K.

Everything is loose and fresh. It has service meat and a cheese bar, innovative items such as bulk frozen fruits sold loose and a very popular in-store smoothie and juice bar.

Now it has to be noted that the big multiples in the U.K. probably have the most efficient supply chain in the world. They have for decades relentlessly worked to reduce labor needs in stores and to drive costs out of the system.

Unfortunately, reducing costs in the supply chain only produces a competitive edge if one chain does it and others do not. Morrison's, which doesn't really play in London, is a bit different, but all the rest of big chains in the U.K. are, however,

**To triumph, retail  
giants in the U.K.  
need new and  
innovative products,  
and that means they  
will need a supply  
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Exterior to London's Kensington Whole Foods Market location.



Whole Foods Market employee passes appetizers during the grand opening of the Kensington store.



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Vegetable display at Kensington Whole Foods Market in London.

ultra-efficient. So they beat each up over price because that is the competitive edge that efficient supply chains produce, but the relentless focus on price just leads to beating up suppliers, squeezing margins out of the system until, in the end, suppliers want to sell you only as a last resort and consumers tolerate but don't enjoy the low levels of service and lack of warmth.

Now one question is whether, as an American, the Pundit is looking at it wrong. We in America are used to big bulk displays of produce and to interacting with people at service departments. Perhaps the British find all this packaged stuff just wonderful.

We don't think so, but a look around the Whole Foods clientele base reminds us of another fact: Those who view London as a British market are doomed to fail.

This is a city filled with people from Poland, Russia, Algeria, Nigeria, the Caribbean, Rumania and a whole lot more. And it is not just Americans accustomed to bulk fruits and vegetables. The way they sell product in Algeria carries a closer resemblance to the U.S. practice than to the British.

U.K. retailers have micro-marketed their stores to ethnic groups, but just recently have started recognizing that London is a world apart. Tesco recently set up a separate focus for London, but there is no evidence of totally different concepts.

Yet the critique of Fresh & Easy when it opened was that it was cold and sterile as opposed to say, Trader Joe's, which was warm and friendly. This is the same critique a big part of the London population feels toward many British retailers.

Does the Whole Foods model have legs? Certainly management in the U.K. is still experimenting. Whole Foods opened a store in Scotland, which has struggled, and now they seem intent to focus on London, where the diverse population is more open to the concept.

**Perhaps the biggest difference that Whole Foods brings to the market is a pivot in focus. All retailers everywhere and all the time have to choose where to focus their attention.**

There is no question that the Whole Foods supply chain is less efficient; on the other hand, because Whole Foods does so much in-store preparation, if the avocados are going soft, it can make guacamole. The big British multiples, which have outsourced everything and do no in-store preparation, have no such capability.

Perhaps the biggest difference that Whole Foods brings to the market is a pivot in focus. All retailers everywhere and all the time have to choose where to focus their attention. In advertising meetings in the U.S. at the right time, you see one inclination urging that cherries be placed on ad, because that is what will delight the consumers. Another side argues for something more stable — pointing out that there might be hail, and the cherries may not be available, etc., etc.

And so each retailer has to always confront whether it will be logistics-driven or merchandising- and marketing-driven. And that makes all the difference.

For a long time, Tesco in the U.K. saw incredible growth because it opened many more stores. With talk of its incredible "land bank," it seemed impregnable in the U.K. But the ALDIs, Lidl's, Costcos and Whole Foods of the world are finding their way in. Even ASDA, a sleeping giant that was frustrated by its inability to find sites, seems to now be finding a new focus, and with Ocado and Morrison's new online service, real estate isn't necessarily going to be as important as it once was.

This is going to mean that the giants, such as Tesco, have to change. Partly they will need to focus on delighting consumers more than driving pennies from the supply chain. And then there is this secret: To triumph, retail giants in the U.K. need new and innovative products, and that means they will need a supply chain that wants to help them win.

The British suppliers have little choice and want to work with the British multiples, but you go to foreign supply sources — places that have options — and they will say that the big British multiples are very demanding and don't want to pay.

Increasingly that will mean that the big British multiples will lose out as growers of proprietary varieties divert these valued and sometimes scarce products to markets that will pay a premium. So firms such as Tesco need a cultural shift where they try to win the Miss Congeniality Award when dealing

with vendors. That's not a cultural shift; that is an earthquake.

It is really quite fascinating and important to the future of the industry. We will be discussing this topic and more at the Perishable Pundit's "Thought-Leader" Breakfast at The London Produce Show and Conference.

If your company is interested in exhibiting or sponsoring an event, just let us know at [exhibit@londonproduceshow.co.uk](mailto:exhibit@londonproduceshow.co.uk).

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# Wakefern/ShopRite RETAIL SUSTAINABILITY AWARD



# WAKEFERN/SHOPRITE Supermarkets: Co-opting GREEN the RITE Way



Armed with Wakefern's innovative sustainability platform, ShopRite members champion personal sustainability paths and team up to maximize winning strategies. **BY MIRA SLOTT**

**T**his year's sixth annual retail sustainability award beckons a new and unique dimension. As the first cooperative to win the honor — this is not just any co-op — it's the largest retailer owned co-op in the U.S. Capitalizing on inherent and rare dynamic structural attributes, corporate executives and independent members collectively breathe sustainability and jettison green across a wide and varied swath.

Wakefern Food Corporation, based in Keasbey, NJ, is ShopRite Supermarkets' procurement and warehouse distribution arm. The company provides members with a host of services and resources, from common marketing and advertising programs to engineering systems, promising technologies, and food safety best practices, among others. The core pillar, though, is its cleverly collaborative sustainability platform and tactical implementation and measuring tools, such as its Retail Green Team Sustainability Tool Kit, which garnered a coveted Award of Publication Excellence [APEX] for Education.

Wakefern corporate executives modestly accepted the award, crediting the success to its members, and emphasized the importance of honoring the 50 multi-generational families, who independently own and operate some 250 ShopRite Supermarkets, as well as seven Fresh Grocers between them. Wakefern also has a group of 33 wholly owned ShopRite stores and 54 corporate-owned PriceRite stores.

The cooperative's sustainability commitments strongly intersect with the produce department and its operations as well as procurement, critical touch points in the members' individual accomplishments as well as their collective mission toward green, according to Derrick Jenkins, vice president produce and floral at Wakefern Food Corp. [See Q&A on page 30.]

ShopRite members/owners serve a wide spectrum of commu-

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Members of the Wakefern Environmental Committee: (L-R) Bill Sumas, Diane Drust, Charles Culver, Harry Garafalo, David Deets, Charles Miller

nities across the Northeast and neighboring regions, with stores in New Jersey, New York, Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, and Pennsylvania.

**Joining Forces**

“Our structure is unique,” says Suzanne

Forbes, Wakefern’s environmental affairs administrator. “Our members own Wakefern, which is different than many other cooperatives. All members share resources to help them compete with international firms,” she says.

“It’s a pretty tight family. We adopt poli-

cies as a group and do things through committees — Produce, Quality Assurance, Environmental, etc., which include both members and Wakefern staff. We identify initiatives, such as energy, waste and water use reduction we believe is worthwhile for our members to pursue,

*Continued on page 34*

**DERRICK JENKINS,**  
**Vice President of Produce**  
**and Floral, Wakefern Food Corp.**

Within Wakefern/ShopRite’s overall sustainability mission, produce-related programs play a key role. The produce department has been a cornerstone in many of the company’s winning strategies. Derrick Jenkins, vice president of produce and floral at Wakefern Food Corp., shares his thoughts on sustainability from a produce perspective, and as an active industry proponent of environmentally friendly solutions.



**DERRICK JENKINS**

**PB: How did Wakefern’s sustainability platform grow to a prominent element for the stores?**

DJ: Locally grown has become a popular movement symbolically linked to sustainability, and issues of reducing carbon footprint, protecting the environment and eliminating food waste. So sustainability went from not even a concern to one of our core values, particularly in the produce arena.

**PB: How have you tackled this shift in business?**

DJ: We made a big push into locally grown. Some products are sourced through Wakefern, where we at corporate, work directly with local farmers, while individual members also have separate locally grown programs.

From Baltimore, MD, to Buffalo, NY, most of the members do local programs at the store level, and then there are certain products in season we provide in our warehouse. Customized programs really go deep using local farms in the communities.

Our locally grown campaign continues to grow, with a 15 percent increase every

year. I attribute a major reason for the growth to internal marketing and advertising, and point of sale displays.

**PB: Please elaborate on the merchandising and promotional activities.**

DJ: From May to November, we advertise what’s local in season through a weekly circular, complemented by merchandising and signage in the stores. One of the things we do that’s been very successful is a farm stand barn display, which the advertising department designed, Grown Fresh — locally grown for ShopRite. This program is



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all locally grown. We have other signs listing 'locally grown today' and that really resonates with consumers.

Members engage with local farmers in their communities. Farmers may do store visits, and the store's customers often know them and their families.

**PB: When you highlight locally grown freshness, how do you avoid the risk of consumers interpreting other produce as less desirable?**

DJ: We really have to educate consumers. Sometimes the strawberries are peak of season and look great, and then two weeks later they're not good, but consumers may not understand why. Consumers have misconceptions that produce is grown with a lot of bad pesticides. Pesticides are extremely costly. Growers are constantly trying to figure out ways to reduce pesticide use and find safer alternatives.

**PB: Is food safety a concern with these smaller local farm programs scattered among different members?**

DJ: Food safety is the highest priority for Wakefern and all its members. We bring local farmers into our facilities for educational/training workshops on best practices, GAP certifications, regulations and guidelines for what we want through our food safety programs. The farmers are involved with our food safety initiatives and understand the issues. They all read about the criminal case against Jensen Farms linked to the cantaloupe *Listeria* outbreak, and they want to provide the safest produce possible. The risk is too high. Food safety is the biggest concern for our industry.

**PB: Do you work with your suppliers on sustainability programs as well? For instance, do you help them in creating more sustainable operations? Are there standards you require of your vendors?**

DJ: We don't mandate sustainability measures to our suppliers, as they are taking the lead on their own. The growers and shippers are looking at more sustainable packaging. Sustainability issues are much more prominent, particularly with the growers. Some are fourth and fifth generation, and they want to keep the businesses going.

They live off the land and the product. Good Agriculture Practices and sustainable farming are in their corporate DNA. We go

on field trips to visit growers, and they are very concerned about the environment, whether it's installing advanced drip irrigation systems to reduce water use or solar panels to run their packaging shed more efficiently.

**PB: How else does that DNA translate to sustainability at the corporate and member levels?**

DJ: We also support our local food banks here. When we have produce that is not suitable for the stores, the food banks come with trucks to pick it up. Wakefern has had a strong relationship with the Hillside, NJ food bank for many years. And members also have their own programs with local food banks. We don't do composting here — at least for now. I can't speak to composting programs at different member stores. Much depends on whether it's logistically and financially viable.

**PB: In weighing costs and benefits of various sustainability initiatives, are there instances where a more sustainable measure might negatively impact the produce department?**

DJ: You can see our produce departments have a lot of LED lighting. Lighting plays a vital role in merchandising, so it's a major factor when revamping fixtures to reduce energy costs. We haven't noticed any adverse effects in that regard. We use LED lighting in the cases and it really works well.

**PB: For context, could you share more about the process of collaboration between Wakefern corporate and individual members in maximizing sustainability goals? How does the structure work?**

DJ: From corporate level, we have a Produce Committee meeting on Tuesdays with members, who are also owners, where we discuss everything from competitive strategies, to the advertising and marketing division programs to inclement weather conditions impacting different members. We have buying offices that work in Florida and also in California, so there is a diverse set of issues. We use Telepresence video conferencing, and present all the issues. We discuss new initiatives, share best practices, and learn what's new in the industry. The dialogue back and forth is very good. No decisions are made in a vacuum; we come to them

collectively. Some are very strategic on a large scale, others tactical based on location.

Because of our co-op nature, our programs must be customized. What affects someone in New Jersey may not affect someone in Maryland. Grape tomatoes on sale could mean a lot in New Jersey, but vine tomatoes are preferable in Maryland. Mother Nature adds another element. It's a constantly evolving business, and I'm listening to a wide range of people, including feedback from my wife, relatives and friends if the tomatoes are green. Karen Meleta [vice president of consumer/corporate communications at Wakefern] will come back from the supermarket and call me: 'What's wrong with the strawberries today?' The job is really seven days a week 24/7.

**PB: That's a heavy schedule. How do you manage industry commitments in addition to your everyday ones?**

DJ: I'm vice chairman of PMA. We have board meetings twice a year, and many other opportunities to connect with global leaders to focus on industry-wide issues. I take off my Wakefern hat to work on solutions impacting all of us. We address sustainability, food safety and ways to increase produce consumption as an industry.

**PB: How does sustainability shape your individual sensibilities?**

DJ: It's in my head all the time. I've been doing this for a long time. I want to secure the environment for generations to come. We can do the produce business without a lot of pesticides by practicing smart pest management. We have a healthy message for consumers.

**PB: What do you consider the biggest sustainability issue confronting the produce industry?**

DJ: Water is a key concern, and a major problem down the road. The population is growing around the world. We must focus on more efficient water usage and making sure it's safe. California is really in a drought emergency and facing big problems with water this year. We take water for granted, but as the population continues to grow, and we need to feed more and more people, our water supply will be drained. We need to take action as an industry now.



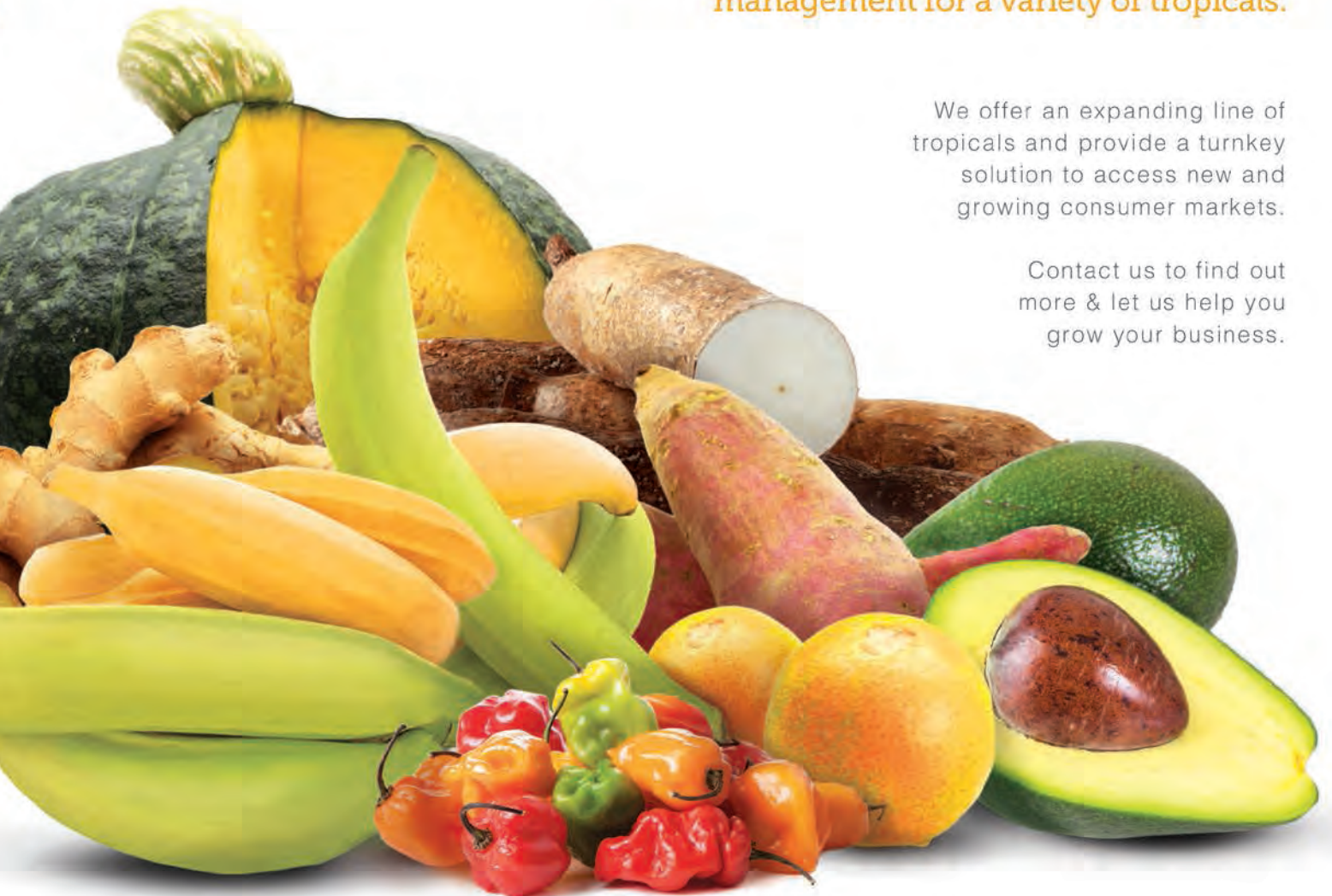


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Jeff Brown of Brown's Super Stores, works with underprivileged youth at 'Teens for Good' in a local garden at a West Philadelphia Recreation Center.

**Continued from page 30**

along with co-op goals, guidelines and tools to move forward,” she says, keen to point out, “Our members are all eager to become more sustainable organizations and at the same time get costs out of the system.”

The Sustainability Committee focuses on members, who help identify new opportunities, such as a Fair Trade initiative, sustainable packaging, or retail tool kit for measuring impacts. “We meet quarterly, and then subcommittees take action. In the past couple of years, we’ve experienced an influx of companies coming in with claims of products being eco-friendly or green,” says Forbes.

Realizing the need to discern these claims, Wakefern formed a new Category Management Training Committee to glean and disseminate basic knowledge on these products, as well as discover better ways to merchandise and promote them.

“We always believe we should begin the sustainability journey here at home before requiring such edicts from our suppliers,” says Forbes. At the same time, “We are looking to work with more sustainable companies and brands,” she says. “We will be partnering with suppliers on a fairly new initiative to start our own private label sustainable packaging.”

Wakefern runs a company-wide recycling program, where members collect all types of materials, including cardboard, wooden pallets, plastic bags, floral buckets, and food packaging across departments to



ShopRite of Flemming's, bio-digester

funnel back to Wakefern, which manages the process.

“We’ve also helped members set up food waste recovery programs, connect with vendors and assist in negotiating contracts for more favorable rates,” says Forbes.

While Wakefern and its members are invariably bonded, members remain self-determining. “Members are independent, and we don’t mandate sustainability meas-

ures,” emphasizes Forbes. Still, they want to be on board, evidenced by the fact that members not only reach goals but also often far exceed them, according to Karen Meleta, vice president of consumer and corporate communications at Wakefern.

Store owners accumulated prestigious government and industry-based sustainability awards, she explains. These include Outstanding Achievement in Food Waste Prevention and Diversion from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), multiple EPA Gold Green Chill Award Certifications, in addition to state and local recognitions for establishing smart, sustainable workplace and community programs.

**Dual Strategies And Definitions**

In certain instances, separate corporate sustainability programs complement those of its individual members and vice versa. For example, Wakefern Food Corp. undertakes a far-reaching and impactful campaign to fight hunger.

“At the corporate level, we’ve had a



**Karen Meleta**, vice president of consumer and corporate communications at Wakefern, manages the company’s communications and reputation management initiatives as well as its corporate social responsibility, philanthropy and sustainability efforts. Meleta also oversees the social media strategy for the company as well as its media and public relations including serving as corporate spokesperson for Wakefern’s member-owned ShopRite stores and its corporately owned PriceRite chain.



(L-R) In-store Earth Day display, ShopRite of Waretown; ShopRite of Cartaret, NJ, features energy efficient T5 lighting.

dedicated partnership for many years with the main food bank here,” says Jenkins of the produce department’s strong commitment to food waste recovery and diversion. “This is a larger program, but members also have their own relationships with food banks in their communities,” he says, adding, “We don’t do composting here, but various members do.”

While Wakefern has its own direct relationships for local procurement, there are limitations. “Since Wakefern has responsibility for the overwhelming procurement of products, some farming operations are too small for us, but may have a relationship with an independent ShopRite member,” says Jenkins. It could be a local corn grower, a small orchard or a farm that doesn’t have enough product to accommodate the total chain, he says, emphasizing that food safety best practices and training are a critical underpinning of all programs.

“There are quite a few of these local operations, and we find more and more small family farms growing specialty mushrooms or peppers. Customers really appreciate when their neighborhood store brings these in,” says Forbes. “We would not necessarily define local solely from a sustainability point of view, but to that degree, it reduces travel, supports local businesses, and helps to build and sustain the community. Still, there’s lots more to it in terms of land management and other



(L-R) Joe Fecsko, Thomas Cummsky and Suzanne Forbes assessing waste at Elizabeth, NJ, warehouse.

variables, says Forbes.

“We do Fair Trade flowers, and from the perspective of paying people fair wages and improving lives, this is truly a sustainability initiative, she explains, pointing out, “The organic produce area continues to grow, but we’re not necessarily saying organic equals sustainability. That’s a consumer perception.”

### A Perfect Union

“Our advantage as a co-op of 50 sepa-

rate operators is our power in product and services to compete with much larger chains, while maintaining autonomy for our associates and customers,” says Joseph Colalillo, chairman and chief executive of Wakefern Food Corp. since 2005 and member of its board of directors since 1988. He also is president of ShopRite of Hunterdon County, with three stores in New Jersey, and two more to open this year in Pennsylvania. “As members, we have certain rules and regulations we follow, but we remain local and independent,” he says.

“Joe Colalillo is definitely a champion of ours with sustainability and a very supportive ally,” says Forbes. “He was one of the first to do composting, grabbing the bull by the horns. As a store owner, he hears from his customers on a daily basis and knows what’s important to them.”

A long-tenured ShopRite member and sustainability advocate, Colalillo brings an informed perspective to the table. “As Wakefern chairman, I try to keep us focused, working hand in hand with corpo-



(L-R) Melissa Kenny of Delaware Supermarkets and Suzanne Forbes of Wakefern speak at the Food Recovery Challenge Benefit. Wakefern offers a sustainability toolkit for its 250 plus stores to support the EPA Food Recovery Challenge and additional ways to reduce food waste.



(L-R) Israel Pear, operations manager, with Angel Zamora, logistics operations senior chief supervisor, at Wakefern's 225,000 square foot distribution center in Elizabeth, NJ, which handles all produce, floral and seafood processing, supplemented by a nearby banana ripening operation. A second DC in Newark, NJ streamlines efficiency.

rate, members and customers. Our whole co-op is based on relationships. It's all about making every member successful. It's the fabric of who we are."

Growing sustainably is a part of that. "Our sustainability program enables all of us, from the associate bagging groceries or cutting vegetables to the store manager, to have a purpose. I can do something bigger that my company believes in and make a difference," he says. "We have a great foundation of associates that really believe

in volunteerism. They want to make their stores and communities better."

### Green Teams

Green Teams are part of a company-wide collaborate strategy at both the retail and corporate levels, drawing in volunteers from all departments and job positions to seek out opportunities to bring to corporate, and generate thoughtful sustainability solutions.

"Green Teams (started at Wakefern within the past five years) are a cornerstone

of Wakefern/ShopRite sustainability," says Colalillo. They represent a philosophy. It's no different than customers giving feedback," he says. "We can talk about recycling cardboard bales and larger programs that will be top-driven, but Green Teams are about those people throughout the company getting the ideas, and about how to capitalize on those ideas."

Green Teams are a mechanism to encourage participation and empower employees, he continues, noting that Green Team members are all volunteers. The Environmental Affairs Department has tools for them to use.

Colalillo has hundreds of people working for him, and Green Teams provide a way for them to have a voice. "These associates work hard; it's a labor-intensive business and not easy," he says. "Green Teams are not just contributing to the welfare of the company and customers but also to the community and the Earth."



Wakefern runs a company-wide recycling program, where members collect all types of materials, including cardboard, wooden pallets, plastic bags, floral buckets, and food packaging across departments to funnel back to Wakefern, which manages the process.



The Kinsley family of Kinsley's Market, which owns and operates ShopRite of Brodheadville, wins an EPA Green Chill Award.

### A Sustainable Outcome, Naturally

This cooperative structure has been a critical asset in propelling its members' sustainability efforts by creating an ideal balance. On one hand, members enjoy advantages that avail an independent family retailer — risk-taking agility and flexibility to change course on a dime. They also benefit from close ties with their communities and grassroots-savvy ability to adapt to their changing marketplace and tailor programs to the local customer base. Yet members can capitalize on the corporate advantages of joining forces, whether gaining efficiencies with buying power and economies of scale or participating in Wakefern's Biennial Sustainability Summit. It is here, according to Meleta, where members present their findings on various sustainability projects, meet vendors, attend workshops with experts and swap brainpower on what worked and in some cases what didn't.

It led members to highly successful food waste recovery, composting and recycling programs, drastic reductions in energy use by revamping store refrigeration and lighting systems, while experimenting with hopeful



technologies, such as solar and electric car charging stations. From Fair Trade to locally-grown to food bank partnerships and community outreach, sustainability envelops the cooperative with the produce department being an integral component.

### Honoring Members

With members at varying stages in their sustainability journeys, PRODUCE BUSINESS elicited the help of Wakefern executives to

select several storeowners to profile.

"These are members in the forefront of sustainability, taking the lead in piloting programs or doing something exceptional," says Meleta.

On the following pages, PRODUCE BUSINESS set out to tell their personal stories of investing in sustainable alternatives based on needs and circumstances within their stores and communities; as well as the role Wakefern plays in bringing their goals to fruition.



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# The Individuals Behind The Cooperative

PRODUCE BUSINESS profiles a range of ShopRite members that embody the core Wakefern principles, and embrace company-specific sustainability initiatives.

BY MIRA SLOTT

**W**hether it be a Russian immigrant or fourth generation grocer, these individuals and their families have made huge strides in the Wakefern cooperative. The next series of profiles introduces the sustainability innovation and passionate creativity behind stores that range from mom-and-pop style grocers to mega stores within the Wakefern family tree. Over the years, owners formed special kinships with their clientele, and they discuss their philosophies to successful business practices.



**RICK SAKER**, vice president of operations, Saker ShopRites, Inc.

## About Saker ShopRites, Inc.

Beginning with a small “mom and pop” store, which opened in 1916 in Freehold, NJ, the Saker family has operated grocery stores for almost 100 years. Saker ShopRites owns and operates 30 supermarkets in central New Jersey.

## Composting

Rick Saker, vice president of operations, officially started at his family business, representing the fifth generation, when he was 15, and has worked in just about every department and aspect of the business, getting a masters degree in international food marketing along the way.

There is one area of responsibility, however, which especially gets Saker excited. “Sustainability programs span my responsibilities, and we’ve been ramping up various sustainability efforts for many years.”

Composting has really evolved at Saker ShopRites during the past 10 years. Supply and demand drives some of these efforts, he explains. “Initially, that demand came from local farmers (pig farmers, specifically) coming to stores asking for our organic waste and paying for it. That’s how we began the process of segregating out waste.

“Things do change over time, and over the past five years, we only dealt with a couple of farmers in that way. Now we work with waste management companies and we actually have to pay for pickup and disposal,” he says.

Despite the extra cost on that side, “we still do it for a couple reasons. First, it’s the right thing to do, but it’s financially beneficial as well, if you look at landfill costs,” he says. “Companies come three times a week. For us, it costs \$60 per ton, and we average 300 tons of compost a month; it’s substantial, for our 29 stores. Consider the price of throwing all of this into a compactor for the

landfill,” he says.

“We pay landfill costs and a hauling fee. It costs \$60 per ton for the waste management companies to take it away versus landfill costs of \$113 per ton, plus a \$200 hauling fee every time,” he says. “It’s about half the cost for us to do composting, acknowledging that economics drive these decisions. There is the philanthropic aspect, but we’re also a business, so it’s a win/win.

More innovation in this arena is likely on the way. “We’re currently experimenting with compost liquefiers in one of our newest stores. We put the organic waste in a large stainless steel liquefier bin, which turns and breaks down the product with woodchips and bio-microorganisms, producing a clear watery liquid safe to go down the drain so you don’t need a permit for it. We lease the unit, so it’s fully serviced and we don’t have to add the bio-microorganisms needed for the process to work.

“The advantage of that from our perspective is that it really works for higher volume stores, but the lease program for those units is too high for smaller volume stores. When economies work, it seems to be a good alternative. From a sanitary perspective, you don’t need composting bins outside your store, especially in warm weather, which can lead to various issues,” says Saker.

Part of the challenge of a good composting program is getting buy-in from store management down the line, according to Saker. “We separate the responsibilities within departments, and department managers take the lead. For example, the produce manager is responsible for bringing his composting product to the warehouse receiver. Segregated blue compost bins sit outside of the store, nice and clean, waiting for the waste management company to dump into their reciprocals,” he says.

“It also really helps our department managers and store managers from a category management standpoint. By going through everything that needs to be thrown out, they are able to analyze shrink and evaluate whether they ordered too many apples, and what they need to curtail or improve on,” he says.



Team members at Woodbridge, NJ, ShopRite composting pineapple.

A large quantity of compost is coming from produce. Depending on the store and operation, other departments contribute as well but produce accounts for the greatest percentage, according to Saker.

“Initially, it’s jumping over the hurdle of teaching and training associates, getting store management all the way down to the line clerks to understand sustainability from the philanthropic benefits to the efficiencies, and to abide by a system of segregating waste; working with security receivers, ensuring it’s properly handled and recorded. Once they see it is part of a worthy cause, they want to be involved,” he explains.

“We’re also experimenting with food donation programs, collaborating with local food banks for pickups three days a week,” he says. Saker says any type of organic waste, perishable items in the perimeter of the store, various produce and bakery items, foodservice prepared foods, deli, dairy, seafood items, and frozen foods, as they expire and come out of the container, are all part of the pickups.

“It’s good for us as a company. From a financial perspective there’s labor savings and reducing composting expense, and we can be environmentally and socially responsible,” asserts Saker.

“From my own personal experiences when I was still working the produce departments culling the aisle and making sure there was no bruised product, it was always of concern and alarming to me the amount of perfectly edible product with a slight blemish that came off the shelves. There’s tremendous waste filling up landfills. We have a responsibility to really delve into as many sustainability efforts as possible; not only because it’s philanthropic, but also because it’s smart business. Sustainability is part of this generation’s consciousness,” he says.

**DAVID DEETS**, director of store development and sustainability, Brown’s Super Stores

**About Brown’s Super Stores, Inc.**

Brown’s Super Stores, Inc. operates 11 ShopRite supermarkets in the Delaware Valley. Jeff Brown, a fourth generation

Philadelphia grocer, is the founder, president and chief executive of the company, which employs more than 2,300 associates. Brown and his wife Sandy have been with Wakefern since 1988.

**Food Waste Diversion**

Brown’s Super Stores is making its mark on sustainability at Wakefern, according to Suzanne Forbes, environmental affairs administrator at Wakefern Food Corp.

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David Deets, director of store development and sustainability, has been with Wakefern ShopRite for 25 years, and with Brown's for 15 years. However, it was just about two years ago he embraced his role to drive sustainability at Brown's.

"It was an interesting transition, because until I took this job, I was just recycling my cans at home. It's been quite a learning curve," he says. "I didn't know much about sustainability, but it's gone very well, and we've done a lot of good things at Brown's."

Deets' conquered his learning curve rather quickly. Brown's received a 2013 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Award for Outstanding Achievement in Food Waste Prevention and Diversion. President Obama recognized owner Jeff Brown for his work in abating supermarket deserts and bringing fresh, nutritious food to impoverished areas.

"About two years ago, our owner said he wanted to take sustainability to the next level," says Deets. "Produce is a big part of our food waste program. For many years most of our produce waste ended up in the trash and landfills. In 2012, we started an aggressive program of organic waste diversion in Maryland. We partner with companies to handle all our organic materials. We're now at an 83 percent diversion rate. Our goal is to get to zero waste as a company," he says.

"We made a decision not to sell produce with defects at a marked down price because of our image. Now, instead of throwing it away, we train foodservice staff on how to use it, or it's donated."

Brown's has a training program established for associates in produce, meat, and bakery. "In produce, we used to cull product and throw it in the trash. Now we cull with two boxes in the morning; one is for rotten, non-edible trash, the other is for distressed items that are fine to eat, but not suitable for sale, which are put aside for donations, and picked up by local organizations.

"The program has had a tremendous effect on our trash costs. In 2013 we diverted 171 tons of products to local food banks. If you got everyone in the country to do something similar, imagine the impact," he says.

"We have zero tolerance for stores not following the program, but it has been an easier sell than I thought. When we do

orientations and training programs, people appreciate that they're not just saving Brown's money, but helping someone in the neighborhood that's hungry," he says. "In our urban stores, particularly, everyone knows people who are hungry. If a bag of apples is bruised, they want to give it to a child in need."

"Brown's has been at the forefront of bringing affordable and healthy food to underserved communities, creating stores in food deserts, as well as through donations," says Deets, noting that Jeff Brown was recognized for these efforts as a guest of honor in Michelle Obama's box at President Obama's State of the Union address.



**SHAWN RAVITZ,**  
vice president of  
administration,  
Supermarkets of  
Cherry Hill, Inc.

**KEN BRAHL,**  
senior director labor relations,  
Supermarkets of Cherry Hill, Inc.

### About Supermarkets of Cherry Hill, Inc.

As a Russian immigrant, Dave Ravitz came to this country looking for his American dream. And in 1901, he found it when he opened a small grocery store. His son Stanley joined him, and together they grew their business. Looking for a way to lower prices without sacrificing quality, the Ravitz family joined Wakefern/ShopRite cooperative in 1984. Today, the third and fourth generations of Ravitz grocers operate five ShopRites: three in Burlington and two in Camden counties in New Jersey, with another scheduled to open in Camden in 2014.

### Energy Conservation/Waste Diversion

"From an industry perspective, sustainability became hip, but we have never been a company doing something because it sounds good, unless it provides solutions with measured results," says Shawn Ravitz, who is responsible for construction maintenance, finance, labor relations and human resources. "Whether it's a budget cost savings initiative, extra safety or security within the operations of the store, an

environmental benefit, or maybe an efficiency benefit, it can't just be sustainability for the sake of sustainability."

"Sustainability has become a ubiquitous word easily thrown around. It comes down to dollars and has to make financial sense," adds Ken Brahl, who's worked at the company more than 21 years, covering loss prevention, shrink and quality areas.

Early on, the focus was toward energy with major initiatives geared to store lighting and refrigeration, LED and spot lighting in the produce department, as well as revamping case lighting and refrigeration (such as changing fan motors to variable speed drives, which saved energy).

"That was our early adoption, and we're continuing to watch where technology is going to take other energy conservation measures, such as water cultivation. Renewable energy is certainly being tested by some members," says Ravitz, adding, "I sit on a committee within Wakefern where we evaluate operational cost controls. That's where we share ideas and test them out, and not every member will have the same level of commitment to jump in."

In the area of food gleaning and waste, Wakefern provided education on working with food banks, composting, and organic waste diversion. "We started in 2011, partnering with an organic waste company here and a local food bank and our efforts took off," says Brahl. Eventually composting and organic waste conversions led into recycling and a co-mingling program.

In monitoring results, "we're using 2010 as our baseline, when we weren't doing anything specific with waste. Now we've reduced trash to landfills by 48 percent, 41 percent of that is going into composting — all your produce waste, food waste, everything we can find," says Ravitz.

Initially, the food-gleaning program focused a lot with bakery and frozen products, before going to produce, which was more challenging, according to Brahl. A key part of the training was bringing everyone to the food bank to experience things first hand. "It's important to see the big picture. Once there is buy in, it's part of the culture and then it's a process," he says.

That process involved delegating responsibility to the department managers to drive the program. "They were really on board. No one went in kicking and screaming. We slid into the composting



program pretty easily with the same deal. We trained everyone a store at a time," says Brahl. "The Wakefern organic team came in with us for two months.

"It takes time and resources to roll out these programs. This was not easy to do and required an ongoing commitment. One of the benefits of being part of the Wakefern cooperative is working with all the members to share best practices.

"There are so many disparate parts and hands in different departments, we have to go employee by employee, department by department and explain how to do things along with the reasons for doing them," says Ravitz. "This wasn't about saving money, although there are money savings," he says. "It feels good to be a community partner."

**HARRY GARAFALO,**  
owner, Milford Markets

**About Milford Markets**

Harry Garafalo's connection to the

ShopRite of Milford, CT goes back to 1974 when he bagged groceries in the original store. Fast forward to 2004, Harry and his wife, Ann, become the owners of the ShopRite of Milford and members of Wakefern. They added a West Haven store in 2008 and two more Connecticut locations in late 2010. Born and raised in Milford, Garafalo's kinship with his customers and community runs deep.

**Wakefern Environmental Committee Chairman**

When Harry Garafalo first purchased the Milford store, he teamed with the Connecticut Food Association for the recycled-bottle retention programs, became actively involved in state litter issues and sought community solutions to other environmental problems. "Deregulation of electricity significantly increased costs, and we looked at ways to gain savings," he says. He was keen on the advantages of Wakefern's cooperative structure for developing meaningful resolutions to a range of sustainability issues.

"I became pretty engaged with Wake-

fern's Environmental Committee. A couple of years ago, the chairman wanted to step down, and he recommended I take his place," says Garafalo, who had been vice chairman at the time. The structure has changed since. "We have two vice chairpersons now, and they represent the next generation. They seem to be more environmentally focused. They bring a lot of energy and new ideas to the committee and are eager to participate," he says.

"My role as committee chairman is to interact with Wakefern staff, Karen Meleta, consumer/corporate communications, Suzanne Forbes, environmental affairs administrator, and others, to set the agenda on diverse projects at different parts of Wakefern."

The Environmental Committee meets on a quarterly basis to facilitate ways to bring best practices to members. "Our recent agenda meeting in Philadelphia with members covered a zero-waste-reduction project. Environmental affairs people attended to update us on the recycling program and legislative initiatives, both state and federal. Engineering people

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talked technology and apprised us of different equipment,” he says.

“Wakefern has been instrumental in environmental initiatives, providing members with a number of invaluable tools,” says Garafalo. “It organizes all-day forums, where various expert speakers are present. Wakefern conducted a baseline sustainability study a couple of years ago, so all members could evaluate their progress on a couple of initiatives. It is used for both retail and corporate waste assessments.

“Once we were able to get baselines on four main areas, we could determine whether we were doing good or bad amongst ourselves, and better understand the costs and opportunities we were leaving on the table,” he says.

Some costs and benefits are straightforward, most in energy savings with quick paybacks, he explains. Others, such as food waste diversion, can be less clear.

Garafalo says the collaborative process between Wakefern and its members works well. “Wakefern helps us do store waste assessments by going through all of our garbage in the stores. Results are then brought back to our Green Teams. These teams are comprised of a group of very engaged, volunteer associates who help us find ways to reduce that waste,” he explains.

“Our biggest focus in produce is trying to maintain freshness and deal with cull. It’s the short life of the product that creates the greatest challenge in maintaining proper variety and inventory levels. Produce results in shrink faster than other items in the store. We have to find ways to use it quickly or divert it. Wakefern has helped with our analysis.”



**JOSEPH COLALILLO,**  
president, ShopRite  
of Hunterdon County

**About ShopRite  
of Hunterdon  
County, NJ**

The Colalillo family has been serving the communities of Hunterdon and southern Warren County for more than 50 years. It started with a small store in downtown

Flemington, NJ and a handful of employees. “Now we have three stores with over 1,100 associates, and we are finalizing plans to open two more stores this year in Pennsylvania,” says Joe Colalillo, second-generation president of the company he joined in 1983.

**Green Teams**

When Joe Colalillo agreed to take on the additional role of chairman and chief executive at Wakefern Food Corp. in 2006, the largest retail cooperative in the U.S. couldn’t have chosen a more dedicated sustainability backer, according to Suzanne Forbes, environmental affairs administrator at Wakefern. In fact, Forbes points to sustainability actions Colalillo took in his own stores as models for other members to follow in moving sustainability initiatives forward.

“Wakefern’s corporate teams are central points for sustainability initiatives,” says Colalillo, “but the store members/owners and their associates are churning the ideas and solutions based on their community’s needs, and passionately bringing those initiatives to fruition.

“Our philosophy at ShopRite of Hunterdon County is pretty simple,” says Colalillo. “You can do things top down or involve all your people.” To that end, Colalillo is a strong proponent of Green Teams, which were created by the cooperative to generate sustainability proposals from the grassroots up. It engages volunteer associates from all departments and job positions and communicates closely with corporate to create initiatives.

“Green Teams are a foundation of our sustainability efforts,” says Colalillo. “We have three stores, and at each store we have a Green Team,” he says. “In our stores, a retail dietitian heads up the team to look at ways to live sustainably and encourage sustainability efforts,” he says, noting that each Wakefern/ShopRite member has their own approach in developing Green Teams.

“We added sustainability as one of our corporate values for future generations. Our Green Teams include one person from every department in the store, who takes the lead to rally people in their area around the whole idea of sustainability,” he adds.

“The Green Team is really our way to get ideas flowing at the store level. For instance, we used to throw away 10-gallon

salad container drums, and now we’re recycling them. Customers are taking buckets home to wash their cars.” Composting is not a local option right now from a logistics standpoint, he says. “We brought in this biotech machine to manage food waste that breaks down anything edible. Think of all the greens, unusable fruits and vegetables. We cull our stands for produce that is blemished or non-saleable at full price and really look to see what we can use in the prepared foods department or deliver to the local food pantry,” he says.

“Green Teams drive a lot of what happens in our stores. It’s why we put out bulletins to members that these containers from the salad bar can be recycled, or significantly cut back our use of paper,” for instance.

“We also support sustainability efforts among different community groups. It’s all hyper localized and doesn’t come from big corporate programs,” he emphasizes. “Our associates know local organizations and what road, beach or river needs cleaning up.”

**ED HENNING,**  
vice president of corporate  
development, Glass Gardens

**About Glass Gardens Stores**

The Glass Gardens Family of stores began when Ben and Abe Glass started a produce business together in 1938. In 1955, they incorporated as Glass Gardens Inc., with their first store in Rochelle Park, NJ. Glass Gardens and affiliated companies have nine ShopRite stores, which are owned and operated by Abe and Ben’s sons, Irv and Terry Glass.

**Solar Panels**

“From high school I’ve been working in supermarkets, everything from A to Z,” says Ed Henning, vice president of corporate development at Glass Gardens. “My tenure at the company goes back to 1960 when Ben and Abe Glass had one 4,000 square foot store and wanted to build a larger store, but were concerned about the high energy costs. Each had a son, and they were young and interested in the supermarket business,” he says of Irv and Terry Glass, who now own and operate the

chain. “Sustainability goes back a long time with energy savings, and while we never talked much about sustainability, these measures evolved,” he says.

“Wakefern was very interested in helping me learn the business,” he says. “We have an engineering department that works closely with members and supports us with vendors, but it’s always up to the members; it’s their money and their decision,” he emphasizes, “We’ll talk to other members to share best practices and assist each other. Often times, we work with repeat vendors. We have a lot of Glass Garden Stores in New Jersey, and we can always recommend suppliers,” he adds.

Glass Garden’s venture into solar panels involved more than two years of extensive research and cost benefit analyses. “We discussed and evaluated our findings with Wakefern executives, who were involved with other solar energy projects. The sharing of information put us on the road to the best systems and how to best finance them,” he says. “In 2009, we built a system through an outside vendor solar power finance agreement,” he says, noting, “Eventually, we chose to purchase the whole system ourselves. Glass Gardens looks at solar as a long-term investment.

“Our initial program pays off in seven years; in essence, we did it with certain benefits from the New Jersey State Energy Smart Program. The state works with us, and a good portion of the cost is actually supplied by the utility companies, which are encouraged to participate.”

The state provides a tax break for using more sustainable energy sources, he explains, and the utility is obligated to pay these renewable energy certificates. “We’re into the program since April/May of 2009 (five years now), and the costs have gone down. Many more companies got into the program, and the market is saturated by the amount of energy.”

The solar system Glass Gardens installed in 2009 has 1,666 panels — one of the largest solar energy systems in New Jersey, says Henning — covering about 70 percent of the roof. It produces about 350 kilowatts, and has reduced energy in the store by about 10 percent,” he says, adding, “Everything is under warranty for more than 25 years.”

Glass Gardens partnered with a local New Jersey company to install the system. “It’s nice to work with a family business and

support the local community,” he says.

The retailer also received funds from the city and the community. “The city was interested in our solar energy project and already campaigning to reduce carbon footprints, but we had to get their approval. The town manager was working on these programs for the county, and a big part of the enterprise was informing the public,” he continues. “We put up large banners in the store, and our customers were very

interested, not only that we were doing business in town, but also helping the environment.”

From a financial aspect, solar is still very expensive. Tax benefits were reduced substantially, according to Henning. “Even for home owners, there was a time when the state of New Jersey encouraged people to get on the solar panel bandwagon,” he says, adding, “Solar is a big investment upfront and it takes along time to recoup





Solar panels at ShopRite of Clinton, NJ. Currently, 14 ShopRite stores have solar panels; all go back into the grid and save about 10 percent on energy costs.

the investment.”

As of now, 14 ShopRite stores have solar panels; all go back into the grid and save about 10 percent on energy costs, according to Henning. And one of our Wakefern facilities has 8,000 solar panels covering 330,000 square feet, accounting for a 20 percent reduction in energy costs.

“Our engineers work with each store and evaluate whether solar energy is a viable option,” he says. There are all kinds of considerations: zoning laws, financial ramifications, beautification laws, and myriad of rules and regulations.

“Glass Gardens is cognizant of the environment, and in our case, we can do something with solar panels that produces a benefit for the environment as well as a financial payoff — and it works well. Glass Gardens is always into saving money, but we’re encouraged when we can also do the right thing.”

**CHARLES CULVER**, director of energy and sustainable development, ShopRite Supermarkets, Inc.

### About ShopRite Supermarkets, Inc.

ShopRite Supermarkets, Inc. (SRS) is a wholly owned subsidiary of Wakefern Food Corporation. When established in September 1986, SRS consisted of just four stores. Currently, the SRS family consists of 33 stores in New York and New Jersey, headed by Dave Figurelli, president and chief operating officer.

As director of energy and sustainable development since 2010, Charles Culver

says he witnessed the beginning of a cultural metamorphosis, not just inside ShopRite Supermarkets, Inc. but throughout the entire cooperative, affecting associates at all levels, as well as the supermarket industry in general.

“Many companies now have full time Energy and Sustainability Departments that don’t just focus on utility procurement and environmental issues but instead pursue valuable efficiency initiatives that contribute to the corporate bottom line,” he says.

“For us, conservation and sustainable initiatives have become a staple of every remodel or new store project we do now at ShopRite. That was largely unheard of just a few years ago. Today, we choose equipment that doesn’t just satisfy our merchants’ requirements for product presentation and food safety, but that is also energy efficient.

“We design our store décor around using repurposed materials where possible and design lighting systems that make use of natural light and energy-efficient fixtures. We look to deploy distributed refrigeration systems where we can place the system closer to the cases and we began using glycol secondary systems for medium temperature applications to further that goal.

“Whether energy-efficient lighting, HVAC or refrigeration system modifications, my department is constantly looking for ways to apply new technologies to our existing stores and future stores.

The entire industry is evolving, and we want to be at the forefront of that evolution,” he says.

In that spirit, the company decided to venture into electric car charging stations

for its customers. “We chose the town of Niskayuna [NY] to launch our first car charging stations because we wanted to offer a service that we felt was lacking. The vehicle charging stations were part of a rounded approach to revitalize an existing former supermarket building and shopping center, and to transform it into a destination site.”

The two charging stations, installed near the store’s entrances, can simultaneously charge four cars. “This offers our customers the ability to charge their cars while they shop. We don’t charge for the service in Niskayuna, and there are no difficult directions to follow or payments to process. The customer simply plugs their car into the unit and it turns on,” he says.

Operating the chargers has really been maintenance-free so far, he says. Since there are no payment procedures to follow, the training is very minimal. “Also, it seems that most people who own electric vehicles are fairly tech savvy, so that has not been an issue at all,” he says.

It is difficult to say how much use the chargers get, according to Culver. “Since we do not charge for the service it becomes challenging to track our units.”

Feedback from customers has been positive, he says. “We received words of encouragement from customers that shop with us in Niskayuna because of the car chargers. We learned that although there is not a high demand for vehicle charging stations, they are still a viable customer service and a responsible investment in the future.”

Along those same lines, as more and more electric vehicles hit the roads, the cost of charging equipment should continue to fall, hopefully enticing more businesses and corporations to make the investment to bolster the infrastructure, according to Culver.

Based on the pilot program’s results in Niskayuna, “We are looking to expand our offering to two additional stores as part of an initiative funded by the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) to expand the EV charging infrastructure in New York State.”

Culver highlights a few current initiative specifics to the produce department:

We made the switch to LED track lighting in nearly all of our produce departments. By next year this time, we hope to have every store completed. We were a

leader in the co-op with track lighting conversions from largely metal halide. LED track lighting has gotten remarkably better over the last couple of years. We are now able to give our produce merchandisers the color rendering they could only get using metal halide just a few years ago and without the Ultraviolet light that was objectionable with metal halide. We have made the switch to LED lighting in our multi-deck cases as well as in all of our new case replacements.

We also began installing glass doors on some multi-deck produce cases. We have four stores that currently have the doors, and it become a standard for any new or remodeled store. The doors save energy and improve product integrity.

We have four stores with Organic Digesters that are primarily used by our produce departments. The digesters work by using microorganisms to break down and decompose the food waste into a non-toxic liquid that is safely disposed of into standard wastewater. By putting produce scraps in the digester, instead of the trash compactor, we can divert up to 800 pounds



of organic waste from reaching the landfill each week.

Lastly, we did not restrict LED lighting to just the sales floor. We use LED fixtures in the produce prep departments as well as the coolers. In addition to installing LED, we also install occupancy sensors to turn off the lights when associates are not in the

prep room or working in the cooler. Sensors are a fairly easy and an inexpensive way to save energy and are eligible for incentives from most power authorities.

There is always some apprehension to trying something new, says Culver, describing an initiative to put dairy products and now some produce products behind glass doors to reduce energy consumption. "My biggest fear was that we would hurt sales by making the department more cumbersome to shop for our customers," he says. "To my surprise, our customers fully embraced the initiative. The larger challenge was convincing our store personnel of the benefits. After explaining the ability to maintain more consistent product temperatures, they were completely won over and it has become an accepted practice now for all of our new projects," he says, adding, "I was particularly surprised how painless converting open multi-deck produce was to our customers and associates. The success of any conservation measure lies in getting everyone to work together toward the common goal." **pb**

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Nugget promotes local through signage that displays produce arrival dates and highlights limited-time-offer items.

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# Nugget Markets, A Golden Example Of Family Values

The humility of the store's founders translates years later to passionate staff, strong supplier relations and quality produce. **INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY OSCAR KATOV**

For the ninth consecutive year, Nugget Markets has ranked in *Fortune Magazine's* national listing of "100 Best Companies to Work For." In 2013, the company placed 37 out of 100. The leadership instills a family-oriented work environment with its associates, and that principle has remained strong and consistent during the company's 88 years in the grocery business.

The operation consists of nine stores surrounding the greater Sacramento, CA area as well as three Food 4 Less stores, which is a warehouse-style grocer in Vallejo, Woodland and Cameron Park. The full-service grocery stores aim to offer customers large selections of quality items at low prices. Nugget's Vacaville and Davis locations even offer a marketplace-style shopping experience with expanded kitchens, European-style bakeries, in-house chefs and extensive wine selections. The company also is able to provide a unique shopping experience and quality food through its longstanding partnerships and commitments with its suppliers.

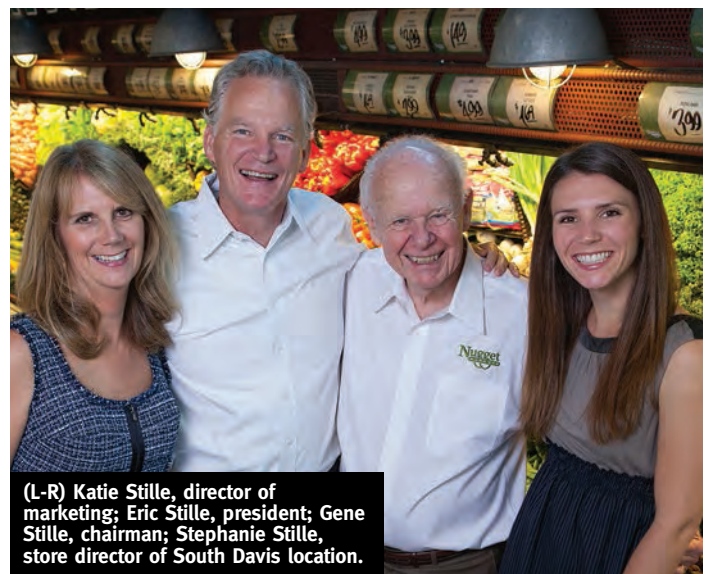
PRODUCE BUSINESS sat down with Nugget's director of marketing, Kate Stille, and director of produce and floral, Adam Bazarnik, to learn more about this intimate relationship with its suppliers and employees as well as its rich history.

**PB:** Tell me about your early history. How did the word Nugget become part of the store's name?

**Kate:** The company was started by a father and son, Mack and

William Stille, who are great grandfather and grandfather of Eric Stille, our current chief executive and president.

Since 1926, the company has been owned and operated by the Stille family. Mack's son, Gene, is 83, and chairman of the board. A few months before the first store opened in Woodland, CA, Mack and William announced a store-naming contest in the community to stim-



(L-R) Katie Stille, director of marketing; Eric Stille, president; Gene Stille, chairman; Stephanie Stille, store director of South Davis location.

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Here's what the future holds for you...

## THE PORT OF THE FUTURE IS STATE OF THE ART

The physical improvements at Mariposa are state-of-the-art and have made the port the most modern and efficient port of entry on the U.S.-Mexico border. Cutting edge information and technology systems allow for faster and more efficient processing of information and shorter wait times. Implemented new x-ray technology allows for rapid scanning of entire trucks at once.

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- 6 South bound inspection dock spaces
- dedicated bus processing lane
- 2 new z-portal low energy x-ray machines to expedite secondary and bus inspections
- SENTRI ready lanes to process passenger vehicles

## THE PORT OF THE FUTURE IS A FAST PORT

The many improvements at Mariposa lead to one crucial result – speed! From the additional lanes to the fast technology to flexible infrastructure, everything at the port is designed to increase the speed







and accuracy of processing and minimize delays. Mariposa currently boasts the shortest wait times on the U.S.-Mexico border.

More inspection lanes, inspection spaces, and inspection facilities mean increased space for processing. All lanes can be switched between expedited travel lanes or regular lanes at the flip of a switch to provide real-time increased capacity for trusted traveler and shipper programs. Additionally, the port is pleased to be receiving 120 new Customs officers (8% of the total new staff in the U.S.) to facilitate product movement.

### THE PORT OF THE FUTURE SAVES YOU MONEY

Ultimately, all the benefits of speed, accuracy and facilitated movement equal cost savings. Efficiencies in moving trucks across the border result in savings in fuel, product quality and time. So far, the new port facilities position Nogales as the best location to ensure just-in-time delivery. Did you know that on average a one hour delay can cost a loss of \$6 billion in output and \$1.4 billion in wages annually? The expedited crossing times in Nogales save each company money that would otherwise be lost to delays.

Mariposa also provides an additional benefit only Arizona is offering. Overweight permits available from the Arizona

Department of Transportation allow trucks of up to 90,800 pounds from Mexico to enter and be broken down at local warehouses after crossing the border.

### THE PORT OF THE FUTURE IS BUSINESS FRIENDLY

Mariposa is more than just brick and mortar. It is home to multi-generational businesses who have served the trade community for decades. The Nogales community is a thousand-years old trade region with world-class U.S. Customs Brokers drawing on generations of relationships to expedite trade. Facilities and services related to directly processing trade in produce and manufacturing are coupled with an experienced supporting logistics industry. Nogales is a world-class logistics and transportation hub.

### THE PORT OF THE FUTURE IS SUSTAINABLE

Mariposa was built to be friendly to both the environment and the people who use it. The structure itself is designed to dissipate noise and protect those who work at the port from noise pollution. The port is LEED certified and incorporates a number of sustainable features such as a solar domestic hot water system, rain water harvesting system, advanced lighting and building automation systems, as well as recycled content material selections and low maintenance finishes that are used throughout the

port's design. Additionally, quicker border crossing and less idle time for trucks means decreased air pollution.

### THE PORT OF THE FUTURE IS DESIGNED FOR FUTURE GROWTH

Mariposa's new design accommodates future needs as well as improving today's business. When so often the latest item is outdated only a few months after release, Mariposa intends to grow and change to embrace future growth and change. The Nogales community champions trade between Mexico, the U.S. and Canada. It is preparing its port and people to meet that future growth.

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ulate customer interest. Among the entries was “Gold Nugget,” words submitted by a young boy in the neighborhood who loved to hear “gold rush” stories. Mack and William judged “Gold Nugget” as the winner, but were enthusiastic about using only one word, Nugget, and it has remained that way.

A few months later, to further promote the gold rush theme, an icon was painted on the front of building, depicting a woman holding a pick, shovel and pan — items used in digging for gold. More recently, reflecting the changing times, a new icon was painted over the original, now depicting a beautiful goddess holding a bounty of fresh fruit and vegetables.



**PB:** That certainly signaled a new era had arrived when half of all produce consumed in America was grown in California. Now, let’s get to your operations, I know you don’t have a DC. The company depends on a wholesaler to service the stores.

**Adam:** Yes, we have been partners with Nor Cal Produce here in the Sacramento area for at least 25 years. It’s a very close partnership, and without them we wouldn’t be able to do what we do. Their ideals line up with ours, and their goals line up with ours. So if we want more local, they push for more local. If we want to push for more organics, they push organics.

**Kate:** And most importantly, they have tight quality control standards. When a product is coming in, they’re not just looking at quality. They’re doing taste testing, and they include Adam (Bazarnik) and his team. I think the other advantage of working with Nor Cal is they are family-owned and operated. The owners of the

company and the owners of our company are very close — not only in business, but with family. That’s also true in our strong bonds with local farmers. A good example is Full Belly Farm [a certified organic farm located in the beautiful Capay Valley of Northern California],



The tight-knit relationship between Nugget and its wholesaler, Nor Cal, is evident in this hanging display photo of Nor Cal’s father and son owners.

which is one of the largest organic farmers in the area. Their family and ours are currently fourth generation-owners.

**Adam:** It’s a pretty rare thing to have that tight relationship with your supplier. To walk with them daily, to look at the items coming in, to decide what’s best for the nine stores — knowing they have competing requests for products. It’s all very hands-on. The biggest asset is the quantity of items available to us, both conventional and organic. It’s huge that we can do that in one place, and know what we can procure will show up in the stores.

An example of the well-functioning relationship happened during the big push for organics several years ago, when the presidents of both companies sat down together to discuss all the aspects. In a couple of months we had this huge organic program in place.

**PB:** How do you differentiate from your competitors?

**Adam:** A lot of what we do is behind the scenes. Building trust with customers is critical, which means offering quality products day after day. You need to provide the same quality every day to be able to say that it’s true. Anyone can open a new store and look great. But the honeymoon is over when they can’t continue the quest for quality.

With us, we’re able to source and receive steady deliveries six or seven days a week — so that we can order for the day, ensuring we have the freshest products. We’re not stocking up to sit around. Nor does Nor Cal. They turn inventory (almost 90 percent) within 24 hours. If you go into the Nor Cal warehouse tonight to see product, it’s going to be empty in the morning. When you’re sourcing from the Central Valley and Salinas, the trucking time and turnaround for perishables is very fast. We’re ordering like that every day. **pb**

*Editor’s Note: We thank National Grocers Association for the recommendation of Nugget Markets for this article.*

## NUGGET’S DEFINITION OF LOCAL

**K**ate Stille, marketing director for Nugget Market, explains the company’s definition of local and the store’s process for obtaining local items:

The reality is there’s more local products in the core of the store than in Produce because there’s simply more items, and you can get them year-round, like olive oil, honey, peanut butter, coffee, jams, butter, milks, or ice cream.

Our definition of local is an item grown or produced within 100 miles of our corporate office in Woodland. One of our primary competitors says “50 miles from any given store.” Well, they’re big, with 125 stores covering a large region. We decided as a small, local company, we needed to set parameters: this is where the 100 miles begins. So we picked our buying office in Woodland.

We actually work with the university in nearby Davis to get a better understanding of how to approach the challenge more effectively in identifying products. In our planning to determine growth opportunities, we flag everything in the store

The “Fair Today - Local Love” event invites hundreds of shoppers to sample farmers’ products from within 100 miles of company headquarters in Woodland.



that we consider local. We update that list every week and make it available to our shoppers to determine interest and to learn if organic has an appeal.

In the old days, when people thought of local, it was only of produce. At our store fairs, people are aware they can get local ice cream, or chicken, or bread. You can basically fill the cupboard if you educate yourself. **pb**



PHOTO TO LEFT IS COURTESY OF NATIONAL WATERMELON BOARD. PHOTO ON RIGHT IS COURTESY OF CALIFORNIA TABLE GRAPE COMMISSION.



Experts agree, creating merchandising displays around a holiday or an event can inspire consumers and drive summer sales.

# Summer Produce Displays: Go Big And Go Bold

Hot-weather food ideas with extra sizzle for the holidays. **BY BOB JOHNSON**

**T**wo summers ago the crew at the Halifax, Nova Scotia Sobeys super-market went above and beyond building the largest retail watermelon display in history. They lined the front of their store with 200 bins containing no less than 12,000 watermelons, enough to smash the record set the previous summer at the grand opening of the new Maceys super-market on Main Street in Lehi, UT.

“Given the opportunity to build the world’s largest watermelon display, I jumped at the chance,” says Dave Bowen, produce manager at the Halifax Sobeys. “I brought my staff together, and they thought it was a terrific idea.”

Summer opens a distinctive set of produce merchandising opportunities for unique culinary traditions. The holidays from Memorial Day to Labor Day, and season-long traditions, invite taking meal preparation outside to the grill. Interesting summer cooking ideas also can translate into effective merchandising opportunities for produce retailers.

When planning promotional produce displays, many suppliers advise to go big and go bold.

## These Holidays Are Hot

The summer holidays are celebrated outside in backyards and parks, with their own special food traditions. “That is our busy season, because all the watermelon states are harvesting,” says Gordon Hunt, director of marketing and communication at the National Watermelon Promotion Board, Orlando, FL. “We really stress big displays because that moves product, especially for Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day.”

The Watermelon Promotion Board holds an annual North American retail display contest, and the 12,000-melon monument outside the Halifax Sobeys was the runaway 2012 winner.

“We’ve been running a continental display contest the month of July. It’s to generate enthusiasm in the stores,” says Hunt.

The message: it pays to make a big produce deal of these three sunny-season holidays.

“Watermelon and berries are in good supply from late May to early September, so retailers should consider larger or more creative promotions to display these items. C.H. Robinson recommends creating sizable

merchandising displays in the summer that will draw consumers into the department,” says Gina Garven, category insights manager at C.H. Robinson (CHR), Eden Prairie, MN.

Albert’s Organics adds a fourth summer holiday to the list with a special September nod to a niche market. “We have targeted four major summertime holidays or events: Memorial Day; Fourth of July; Labor Day; and National Organic Harvest month in September,” says Simcha Weinstein, director of marketing at Albert’s Organics, Charlotte, NC. “Each of these holidays represents a key opportunity for sales in any produce department.”

If you don’t have room for 12,000 watermelons, bold signage can be an effective way to announce the holiday. “What we found that can really have an impact is signage at the store level,” says Weinstein. “Just reminding people of the upcoming holiday or event, and getting them in the mood; having them connect food with the holiday. Planting an idea in their head such as going on a picnic or grilling. Sometimes it really is that simple.”

The signs must be bold and must also inform. “Signage tells the story — whether it’s



PHOTO COURTESY OF C.H. ROBINSON

the story of organic foods, or the story of a specific item, or simply the story of how to delight in the foods that help you celebrate a holiday,” says Weinstein. “Customers expect their grocery store to be information providers. Signage provides that information in a way that also makes your store visually attractive and appealing.”

Displays must also appeal to the eye, which means the produce has to be culled and protected. “I make beautiful displays and get a good price,” says Dominick Doria, produce manager at Grace’s Marketplace, Greenvale, NY. “We sell peaches out of California, and white nectarines, plums, and pluots. When California is done with the peaches, we use

product from the Rice Fruit Company out of Pennsylvania. We have melons out of Turlock, CA. People come here for that kind of stuff.”

Grace’s Marketplace has built a loyal clientele in New York in large part by offering the highest quality summer fruit. “We have all kinds of special fruits you don’t find anywhere else,” says Doria. “We opened in Long Island six years ago, so they’re just finding out about us. In Manhattan they know about us, and, yes, it has everything to do with the summer fruit.”

The display should be carefully designed to protect the fruit, while showcasing its beauty. “Do not over stack grapes,” advises Jeff Cardinale, vice president for communications at the California Table Grape Commission, Fresno,

CA. “When stacking grapes on displays, gently stack bagged grapes no more than three layers high. Two-pound clamshells can be stacked up to four layers high, and four-pound clamshells in original shipper boxes can be stacked up to six layers high.”

It pays to go the extra mile in building eye-catching displays of summer fruits and vegetables. “To go along with the signage, of course, should be some pretty powerful and dynamic displays of the key summer items being featured,” says Weinstein of Albert’s Organics. “They should not be tucked away or even be their regular size. Instead, they should be large, powerful and dynamic, and scream, ‘I’m here and ready to go in your cart.’ Add in



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our signage and your merchandising efforts are well on their way.”

The buildup can begin before the consumer reaches the store, in ads and through social media. “Produce can be promoted during the summer holidays by including recipes in ads to give consumers new ways to use fresh produce,” says Cardinale. “Promoting produce in ads also with holiday themes, such as red, white and blue, can create excitement. Social media can be used to share ideas.”

There are summer fruits that are inviting just to look at on a hot day. “Focus on creating visually inviting displays that pair fruit items together to provide quick, refreshing options. Mango, pineapple, and papaya are items to use in salsa or on top of fish or seafood for a light and healthy grilling option,” recommends CHR’s Garven.

Hot weather drives watermelon sales like clockwork. “Overall sales of watermelon will increase seven percent during weeks that are 5 degrees above average in temperature. A watermelon, containing 92 percent water, offers a refreshing option on hot summer days and is very easy to merchandise with other seasonal items throughout the store such as grills or patio furniture,” says Garven. “Typically August is a consistently hot month across the country, which makes watermelon a great way to refresh and cool off. During early August, the late-season regional supply of watermelon kicks in. Another suggestion is to merchandise citrus items like lemons and limes as a tie-in with bottled water or beer.”

Nothing says refreshing like a run-down-your-chin-juicy bite of high-quality, classic summer cool. “The first question everybody asks is ‘How do I pick a good watermelon?’ I tell the retailers to sample the product. If you’re not going to sample, at least cut a watermelon and show that red flesh,” says Hunt.

### Grillin’ and Chillin’

The summer is grilling season, and there are many innovative possibilities for promoting fruits and vegetables as complementary grill items. “You slice a peach or nectarine and put it on the grill as a complement to your meat,” says Jeff Simonian, co-owner and sales manager of Simonian Fruit Company, Fresno, CA. “It seems to be popular, and it is getting traction with the cooking shows and celebrity chefs.”

Bring grilled fruit to a new level, and even to areas of the store beyond the produce department. “To increase or include fruit in summer grilling, offer customers pre-made fruit kebobs that are ready for grilling. These

can also be cross-merchandised in the meat department and deli,” says Cardinale.

Many more vegetables than corn-on-the-cob are making their way onto the grill. “Grilling vegetables is increasingly popular. Asparagus is good on the grill, or zucchini,” says Jason Stemm, marketing representative at Padilla CRT, New York, NY, which represents Sunshine Sweet Corn farmers of Florida.

“Additional items like corn, asparagus and mangos are great items to display, as they are also summer items and offer many cross-

promotional opportunities,” says CHR’s Garven. “Cross-promoting outside of the produce department can also provide incremental sales lifts by incorporating asparagus or squash as a side item alongside meat for a quick grilling idea.”

Grilling is so popular that you can merchandise produce by putting together an entire section, complete with lawn furniture. “By the time you get to Memorial Day, grilling season is underway,” says Stemm. “A lot of times retailers will have a grilling section with

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small or portable grills, sometimes even a patio display. You can bring in squeeze butters or nicer salts that go with corn.”

Suppliers are offering value-added produce products that are natural additions to grilling events. “Merchandising value-added products for activities is great since it speaks to consumers’ needs for something easy to prepare, while on-the-go,” says Tristan Simpson, vice president for corporate communications at Ready Pac Foods, Inc., Irwindale, CA. “Prepared, diced veggies are great for quick meals or grilling outdoors as well. Display fruit platters, which can also be served as a tray option, as perfect for a healthy dessert option for any Memorial or Labor Day picnic.”

Some summer fruits lend themselves particularly well to eating on the go. “As snacking is now the No. 1 eating occasion, berries and grapes provide great on-the-go options for sports activities or picnics. By merchandising these with other value-added items like sliced apples or tray packed corn, retailers can provide an easy meal accompaniment for any outdoor activity,” says CHR’s Garven.

Summer is also the time for chilling, which means merchandising fruits that refresh in hot

weather. “Merchandise fresh fruit and vegetables with juicing recipes encouraging rehydration and refreshing drinks for summer. Remind consumers that frozen grapes are the perfect natural and refreshing alternative to sugary cool summer treats,” says Cardinale of the California Table Grape Commission.

When the store puts fruit under refrigeration in hot weather, it makes a cooling statement. “Grapes on display in refrigeration will help with an increased shelf life,” says Cardinale. “Remove any poor quality, tired and non-appealing grapes from the display. Grapes are a refreshing snack that can cool you down. Let consumers know that grapes can be rinsed, patted dry and frozen.”

Salad products also reach their peak when hot weather hits and consumers crave cooling vegetables. Ready Pac has a Bistro Bowl salad line designed to offer a variety of flavor profiles in convenient products.

In much of the country, summer brings the harvest of produce that can be effectively merchandised as local. “For us the summer means local produce; we gear up big time for the local produce in the summer,” says Dick Stiles, produce director for Redner’s Markets, Reading, PA. “We have stores in Delaware,



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Maryland and Eastern Pennsylvania, and in each state we have farmers with excellent summer crops.”

In the summer, Redner’s sources local sweet corn, tomatoes, peaches, nectarines, and, late in the season, apples. “We focus on the local farming families that we buy from; some of them are fifth generation farmers,” says Stiles. “We’ve been buying from our local farmers for 12 to 15 years. We’ve been promoting it for the last five years, and each year we pick it up a bit more. Customers are looking to buy local produce.”

### Hot Weather Go-Togethers

The ability to use price to merchandise summer produce may depend on the abun-

dance of supply at wholesale, and on the size of the supermarket. “We don’t really try to promote; it’s very hard to give special prices,” says Doria from Grace’s Marketplace.

Opportunities abound for summer produce cross promotion, and some work best if you go beyond the department. “Get the produce department out into the rest of the store, like an island cooler or a vegetable display by the meat department,” says Stemm from Sunshine Sweet Corn.

This is the season to partner produce with protein. “When promoting in the store, try pairing popular proteins like fish, chicken or beef that can be grilled and added to a bagged salad kit for a quick, delicious and healthy meal,” says Simpson, from Ready Pac. “Fresh-

cut pieces make entertaining easy, so position items together for a complete meal idea, like fresh-cut fruit as an addition or dessert to a holiday meal.”

Value-added produce can be promoted as a convenient way to bring healthy food to summer gatherings. “Fresh-cut items are perfect for the special summer holidays,” says Simpson. “Keep with the rapidly growing trend of incorporating healthy items into consumer’s diets. They are searching for good-for-you items to feed their families and friends during summer events and holidays besides the traditional burgers, hot dogs, and chips. Fresh-cut fruits, vegetables, and salads are an excellent option that can be shared for every summer occasion.”


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Many southern states are increasing farm land for kale and chards because consumer demand at retail is rapidly increasing.

# The South Sprouts A New Reputation

Demand for local vegetables prompts more production. **BY KEITH LORIA**

**T**here was a time when you could only count on flavorful vegetables from the Southwest, but thanks to savvy growers and new technology, vegetables from southeastern states north of Florida and south of Ohio are plentiful and in high demand as more consumers eat at home and are looking for quality vegetables.

Today, top-of-the-line produce is being grown in states such as Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, Kentucky, West Virginia and Virginia.

“The latest buzz is opportunity. As demand continues to increase for local products, producers are diversifying lines and seeking ways to meet market opportunities,” says Martin Eubanks, assistant commissioner agricultural services for the South Carolina Department of Agriculture based in Columbia, SC. “We see growth in key commodities, demand for organics, and opportunities throughout the produce category.”

A 2013 report by CropLife Foundation, the Washington DC-based research and stewardship arm of CropLife America, in the seven

southeastern states (Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia), shows there are 121,000 acres of squash, pepper, cucumber, cantaloupe, watermelon, cabbage and tomato with an annual production of 2.5 billion pounds and value to growers of \$700 million. This production accounts for nearly 25 percent of the total U.S. fresh market production of these crops.

Charles Wingard, director of field operations at Walter P. Rawl & Sons, Inc., based in Pelion, SC, says southeastern producers are continuing to grow some of the best produce around. “We are exploring different varieties of items that are easily grown in the Southeast so that we have more options at home rather than having to source those from the west or import,” he says. “With this, we are able to adapt different varieties to different climates, and see what works for us here in the Southeast.”

Nick Augustini, marketing specialist for the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (NCDA & CS), based in Raleigh, NC, says the state’s agribusiness industry brings in around \$5.77 billion and farmers grow everything from apples to

zucchini, with its sweet potato acreage increasing in 2014.

“North Carolina State University worked on developing different varieties to plant in our state that will allow us to grow what traditionally comes from the West,” he says. “High tunnels helped extend the season, letting us stay in the market longer.”

Charles Hall, executive director of the LaGrange, GA-based Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Grower’s Association, says production levels stayed steady for the past five years, though some varieties, such as bell peppers, have gone down in total acreage.

“A large number of people are interested in getting fruits and vegetables closer to their home, so offering products from your region is a distinct advantage over those coming in from the West Coast,” he says. “Here in Georgia, broccoli is fairly new and kale is coming along.”

## Produce Power

These southern states grow a full line of typical southern fruits and vegetables such as tomatoes, sweet corn, peaches, watermelon, cantaloupe, squash, leafy greens, blueberries,



**“It is important for us to have local as close as we can, so we can service the East Coast and get things to stores quicker and fresher; plus transportation costs are far less for the stores.”**

— Lee Anne Oxford, L&M Farms

strawberries, and the list goes on.

“Growth in crops such as asparagus, broccoli, herbs, greenhouse varieties, mushrooms, and others have seen excellent growth in recent years,” says Eubanks. “The future is bright in the South as science and producer ingenuity combine to advance production capabilities throughout the region.”

According to Wingard, kale has been hot lately, and it’s a trend that has longevity. Chards are also getting buzz because consumers are requesting them.

“The greens trend just keeps growing. Although some greens, such as collards, were seen as a ‘traditional’ southern vegetable, they are quickly becoming more mainstream,” he

says. “They are being featured in restaurants nationwide, getting the buzz online and in print; therefore, consumers are buying them more. The overall category keeps growing because consumers want them.”

Lee Anne Oxford marketing director of Raleigh, NC-based L&M Farms, says the company expanded varieties on a lot of its farms in the Southeast over the past couple of years, harvesting more bell peppers, cucumbers, squash, eggplant, cabbage, red potatoes, broccoli, chili peppers and kale.

“It is important for us to have local as close as we can, so we can service the East Coast and get things to stores quicker and fresher; plus transportation costs are far less for the stores,”

she says. “Stores are wanting as much local product as they can because consumer demand has grown for these items.”

### Weather Comes Into Play

Weather plays a huge role in all production regions in some form or another as growers can’t control the weather, they can only make allowances for it.

“We can only move forward in developing production systems and strategies to help us manage crop potential when nature is uncooperative,” says Eubanks. “Technology and science can impact climatic conditions that impact production but not the freak occurrences that the weather can throw one’s way.”

Weather obviously plays an important role in the different production techniques. According to Hall, there’s much more rain than they get in California or Arizona, and southeastern growers must deal with a different kind of pest and more bacteria because of it.

Growing greens, like any vegetable, can be tricky. You need to select the best varieties, have adequate irrigation and monitor your crops closely to be successful. The Southeast presents unique challenges because of the humid

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climate. This humidity affords a better breeding ground for some pests as well as crop diseases.

"A grower's cultural practices are critical to be successful over the long term. Overly wet summers affect us negatively because too much water kills the products. And on the other end of the spectrum, if we don't get enough water, our crops don't produce like we would like them," says Wingard. "We are always hoping for that perfect medium just like every other grower out there. Even without factoring in the rain, cold damage and ice can break the stalks and hinder their growth. They also don't grow as fast as they should in less than ideal weather conditions."

### A Benefit for Retailers

When it comes to highlighting the southern-grown vegetables, most agree that retailers should emphasize the nutritional value and the diversity of the products to create a winning strategy.

Jonathan Raduns is founder of Merchandise Food, a visual foodservice merchandising consulting company located in Somerdale, NJ. He suggests retailers highlight the offerings with signs akin to something like, "The freshest produce available during the time of year of a particular commodity."

"Many customers may not be in-tune with when a particular growing season is, in relationship to others. For instance, with year-round produce available from our global produce sourcing, folks are often disassociated with the fact it might be the moment for the best eating of a particular crop in Florida, Georgia, etc.," he says. "Others may decide that

focusing on signage to highlight domestic products may outsell imports from Mexico or Chile. In my experience, folks prefer U.S. product when given a choice in store."

The NCDA & CS is bringing its campaign, "Got to be NC Agriculture" to retail stores, with produce managers adding stickers to its state-grown vegetables and highlighting the fact they are grown local.

"Some of the stores show pictures of the growers and tell their story, to help with sales," says North Carolina Department of Ag's Augustini. "Local is a big catchword right now and we are trying to take it as far as we can."

Demand for local products throughout the southern region is creating opportunities for growth. According to South Carolina Department of Ag's Eubanks, retailers indicate that southern products, and local products, are growing in demand. As retailers look at carbon footprints and transportation costs, options from the South play a larger role and may offer a competitive advantage at several levels.

Oxford says L&M works closely with the retailers to offer support and promotion for the local vegetables. "We offer in-store signage, in-store displays and we try to help them find the best time to bring in local products and help promote them," she says. "We let our retail customers know when we change growing areas and when new things are coming in. It requires a lot of communication between our farms, our sales team and the retailers."

Identifying local products as such is important to consumers who want to support the local economy. Retailers have the opportunity to deal with many state logo programs that help consumers identify products grown in a partic-

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## TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

Of course, none of the positives associated with southern-grown vegetables would be possible without technological items that were developed to enable them to grow crops traditionally shipped from the West Coast.

Martin Eubanks, assistant commissioner agricultural services for the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, says growers in the Southeast have made tremendous capital investments in systems that manage production incorporating cutting-edge technology.

"This has been a trend for many years as we continue to provide the highest quality products to the marketplace in consistent volume," he says. "As the product category continues to evolve and diversify, producers will need to continue to explore new growing systems to manage production of new crops, or crops not traditionally grown in the region."

Fumigation has also greatly increased the production of vegetables in the Southeast. A 2013 report by CroLife Foundation reveals that because of the climate, southeastern growers have the ability to produce multiple crops from a single fumigation and tarping. For example, growers may fumigate once in the spring for a pepper crop, which is followed by a summer cucurbit (squash, cucumber, cantaloupe, watermelon) crop and a late fall or winter cabbage crop before removing the plastic tarp to begin the next fumigation cycle. Tomatoes, pepper, cantaloupe and watermelon are usually the initial crop following fumigation. Squash, cucumber and cabbage are a second or third crop in the production

cycle following fumigation.

Scientists in both the public and private arena are hard at work developing fruit and vegetable varieties that flourish in the southeastern climate. In addition, protocols for disease and pest management in new crops are being developed as growers continue to diversify production in hot, humid growing conditions.

"Post-harvest and packing technology continue to provide sound systems that exceed food safety protocols and improve shelf life in highly perishable commodities," says Eubanks. "Technological advances will continue to drive growth throughout the category."

Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association's executive director Charles Hall says the plastic culture helped in the long run from a technological standpoint, and more precision-type applications for fertilizer and pesticides have come along.

He's also heard rumors of a sensor being developed at the university level that could identify when a plant is diseased earlier than one can see with the naked eye. This would greatly help southeast growers as well.

Charles Wingard, director of field operations at Walter P. Rawl & Sons, Inc., based in Pelion, SC says developing new growing methods allows the company to profit in the long run, remain competitive in the market and increase overall efficiency.

"The future is bright due to sustainability obstacles that we are able to overcome such as continuing to explore new vegetables we can grow here," he says. "In the end this means less miles traveled from the farm to your table." **pb**

ular state. They can even combine programs to maximize exposure across the region.

"In South Carolina, we offer retailers the opportunity to work with our agency to merchandise stores to highlight our Certified SC Grown Brand," says Eubanks. "We develop generic programs as well as tie in's with a retailer's local program to help them help consumers understand where their food is coming from. We also develop promotional

programs with our grower led associations and sales agents to highlight local crops in-season."

Local produce options are increasing, and retailers can help consumers embrace the "green factor" by highlighting these items support the local economy while lowering the carbon footprint. This is good for everyone, and the quality and flavor of the products will continue to create demand for all the good things grown in the region. **pb**

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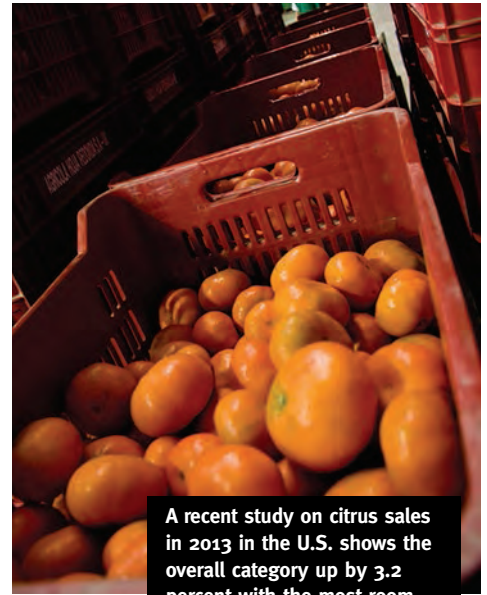
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A recent study on citrus sales in 2013 in the U.S. shows the overall category up by 3.2 percent with the most room and strongest potential for growth in the summer months.

# Five Tips To Build Southern Hemisphere Citrus Sales

Imported fruit provides continuing opportunity for building sales. **BY JODEAN ROBBINS**

Citrus exports from Southern Hemisphere countries during the North American summer have grown to occupy a significant space in the market. “Southern Hemisphere citrus continues to increase in the U.S. as consumers become more accustomed to purchasing citrus year round,” says Kathy Hearl, marketing promotions manager for DNE World Fruit LLC in Fort Pierce, FL. “Southern Hemisphere citrus has expanded by offering an assortment of citrus varieties in several packaging options to meet the consumer’s needs.”

For retailers, the imported fruit stretches out the selling season. “Southern Hemisphere citrus keeps sales going during the summer months,” says Karen Brux, managing director for the Chilean Fresh Fruit Association (CFFA) in Santiago, Chile. “The continued growth in summer citrus sales has proven citrus is a great commodity to promote year-round.”

And the category is growing as well. “Summer Citrus is an expanding category in the U.S.,” says Suhanra Conradie, chief executive of the Western Cape Citrus Producers Forum (WCCPF) in Citrusdal, South Africa. “As export volumes continue to increase with

each year to date, consumer demand has absorbed it. This is an indicator that consumers expect citrus to be available throughout the year and accept imported citrus as an option when domestic citrus is out of season.”

Summer citrus supply is increasingly important to consumers. “Southern Hemisphere citrus adds to the year-round availability of fresh citrus,” says Rick Rutte, produce/floral director for North State Grocery Inc. in Cottonwood, CA, with 20 stores. “We benefit by increased citrus sales over what we would have normally, and the freshness of new crop is much more appealing to my customers.”

“We buy from all over the world to satisfy our customers, because they want citrus year-round,” says Dick Stiles, director of produce and floral for Redner’s Markets Inc. in Reading, PA, with 60 stores. “Having Navels in the summer is just as important as in the winter. Summer citrus increases sales because it’s a staple item. And, citrus is something people will buy in addition to other summer fruit — it doesn’t take sales away.”

“Consumers have grown accustomed to having high-quality citrus throughout the summer,” says Mark A. Greenberg, president and chief executive for Capespan North

America in Quebec, Canada. “With South African, Chilean and Peruvian citrus available from May through November, there is no gap in supply.”

Effective focus on summer citrus promises rewards. “There is a lot of growth potential in summer citrus,” says Luke Sears, president with LGS Specialty Sales in New Rochelle, NY. “In this window, the volume has doubled in the past three years; there is still a lot of demand and room to promote.”

Despite growth trends, industry insiders still see more room for added sales. “There is still room for category growth with summer citrus,” says Kim Flores, director of marketing for Seald Sweet in Vero Beach, FL. “A recent study on citrus sales in 2013 in the U.S. shows the overall category up by 3.2 percent with the most room and strongest potential for growth in the summer months. We see this first-hand each year as we continue to grow programs and expand into untapped markets.”

## 1. Understand The Deal

Knowing what is available from where is the beginning of a successful program. “The key to quality is to ensure you’re sourcing the right varieties at the right times,” says Sears. “All the



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## QUALITY FOCUS FOR SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE CITRUS

BY JODEAN ROBBINS

Citrus suppliers from the Southern Hemisphere work diligently to ensure top quality products as evidenced by growing consumer demand. “Consumers will find a consistent eating experience when they move from Northern Hemisphere to Southern Hemisphere citrus,” says Karen Brux, managing director for the Chilean Fresh Fruit Association (CFFA) in Santiago, Chile. “The exponential growth of Southern Hemisphere Citrus supports this — consumers are buying it, enjoying it and coming back for more.”

“Summer citrus has come a long way and the quality now from most sources is very good,” says Dick Stiles, director of produce and floral for Redner’s Markets Inc. in Reading, PA. “We never think twice when it comes to purchasing summer citrus.”

Southern Hemisphere citrus is picked, packed and shipped with the same high standards as citrus grown in the U.S. “The citrus is examined by USDA inspectors before leaving the individual country and also at the U.S. port of arrival,” says Tom Cowan, South African Citrus Sales Manager for DNE World Fruit LLC in Fort Pierce, FL. “For example, citrus from the Western Cape of South Africa must pass Global Gap food safety inspections both in the grove and at the packinghouse to be certified to ship to the U.S.”

Producers and exporters utilize technology for harvest and shipping to attain optimum quality. “We do brix and acid tests on every lot before it goes anywhere and we have people on the ground in each country,” reports Luke Sears, president with LGS Specialty Sales in New York, NY. “Generally, all the bigger importers use this model.”

“In South Africa, quality begins in the groves with the finest of the plantings cared for daily with advanced farming techniques, irrigation and cultivation,” says Suhanra Conradie, chief executive of the Western Cape Citrus Producers Forum (WCCPF) in Citrusdal, South Africa. “Aggressive management of pest control

has significantly reduced incidents of FCM [False Codling Moths]. Citrus in the groves and in the pack houses are inspected before loading of vessels and once again on arrival in the U.S.”

Maintenance of the cold chain is a crucial element. “Summer citrus is shipped on refrigerated charter vessels or container vessels where temperatures are closely controlled with the latest technology,” says Cowan. “As much as possible, DNE’s Southern citrus is packed, shipped and handled under continuous cold chain starting at the packing house, maintained on the shipping vessel and continued at the port of arrival.”

Logistics also provide other benefits. “During the summer, vessels arrive in the U.S. from South Africa about every 10 days,” says Conradie. “During transport, the fruit is kept at about 32 degrees. While the fruit does not freeze at this temperature, the cold is the alternative to chemical treatment on arrival. The 10-day arrival schedule is also reflective of a commitment to maintain volumes at a level the market can accommodate. If too much fruit arrives at once, and it can’t be moved immediately into the marketplace, it might sit in cold rooms until the market can accept more fruit. It has always been the South African way to not ship too much fruit for this reason.”

Packaging at destination ports adds to quality enhancement. “Most of the Clementines imported are repacked into bags here in the U.S. allowing importers an additional opportunity to grade out the fruit,” explains Cowan.

“A significant portion of the imported Southern Hemisphere fruit is reconfigured in the market into consumer or fixed-weight packages,” says Mark A. Greenberg, president and chief executive for Capespan North America in Quebec, Canada. “This process offers the opportunity to ensure the reconfigured fruit also meets the highest standards of quality and condition when it gets to its chain store destination.” **pb**

**“The key to quality is to ensure you’re sourcing the right varieties at the right times. All the source countries have good easy peelers, but like any product, it may not be optimum if too early or at the very end of the season.”**

— Luke Sears, LGS Specialty Sales

source countries have good easy peelers, but like any product, it may not be optimum if too early or at the very end of the season. Navels can be harder because each country has good and bad growing areas — true of Navels in the Northern Hemisphere as well. However, with more Navels available, it gives us the best options to select the best quality.”

According to Tom Cowan, South African citrus sales manager for DNE World Fruit, “Citrus is available from Australia, South Africa, Chile and Peru between June and October with a wide variety of citrus such as Navels, Clementines, Minneolas, Mandarins, Midknights and Cara Cara Oranges.”

“We import from Chile, South Africa, and Peru, and this year we’ll have fruit from Uruguay,” says Sears. “Uruguay finally got approval last year at the end of the season. They sent a little bit of Valencia then but this really is their first full season in the U.S.”

While the general “summer” season is considered May through October, specific dates vary by variety, country and weather. “The easy-peeler season is June 1 through October 31,” reports Sears. “It starts with the main variety of Clementines (Clemenules), then switches to W. Murcott at the end of August through October. The timing varies a little by country.”

“Navels are available from South Africa and Chile from late June through October, and Midnight oranges come from South Africa late-August through October,” says Capespan’s Greenberg.

“Traditionally there are Navels from California through June and into July, so we don’t really see Navels from the Southern Hemisphere until mid-July,” explains Sears.



“However, this year California will likely finish early because of the freeze, so there will be demand for Southern Hemisphere product earlier than in past years.”

WCCPF’s Conradie agrees, “Market conditions will be ready for our fruit this season. Domestic fruit is projected to finish early, and South African fruit will likely be available in U.S. markets by late June.”

South Africa’s season begins in late June and continues through October. “The products available from South Africa include easy peelers such as Clementines June through September, Clemlate from August through September, and ClemenOr, ClemenGold and Tambor from August to October,” says Conradie. “Navel Oranges include Newhall from May to June, Palmer from June to August, Washington from June to September and Robyn and Lane Late from August to October. Midknights run from September to November. In grapefruit we have Star Ruby from June to August and Cara Cara from July to September.”

According to the CFFA, Chilean citrus export volume to the U.S. increased by 7 percent from 2012 to 2013, with substantial growth of 48 percent in Mandarin volume and

14 percent growth in Navels. Brux explains the key sales windows for Chilean citrus. “May through August for Clementines, June through October for Navels and August through November for Mandarins,” she says. “This may vary slightly from year to year. In 2013, we saw the most promotional opportunities for Chilean citrus from mid-August all the way through Halloween.”

Procitrus, the Peruvian citrus association, reports exports of oranges, limes and Mandarins have steadily increased during past years. Statistics show in 2012, Peru produced 416,259 metric tons (MT) of oranges, 221,406 MT of limes and 280,057 MT of Mandarins.

Most of the Peruvian citrus is grown on Peru’s coast. “The Peruvian coast is an extensive, arid desert with unique weather characteristics,” says Sergio del Castillo, general manager of Procitrus in Lima, Peru. “It provides the best growing conditions for citrus and together with our use of modern technology has resulted in sustained growth of citrus exports.”

Peru’s season ranges from February to September/October depending on the variety. “We produce as early as February with Satsumas,” says del Castillo. “Our principal

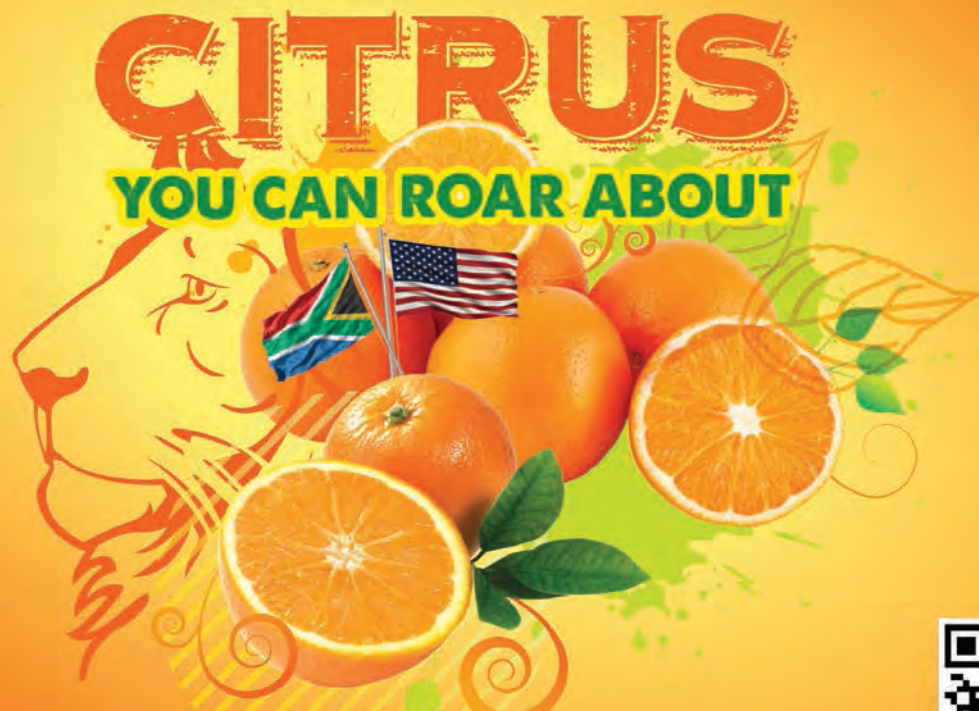
season is April through September with Navels, Clementines, Murcotts, Mineolas and other varieties.”

## 2. Create New Opportunity

Creating excitement around summer citrus will yield lucrative results. “With citrus being one of the top promoted items in the winter, there are great opportunities for retailers to build on this momentum in the summer,” advises Brux. “Kids who’ve been taking Clementines as part of their school lunch can now take them to their summer camps or baseball games. Families can take them on trips to the beach or the park as an easy, healthy snack.”

“Retailers who promote citrus during peak taste, advertise weekly, build colorful displays with an assortment of color, and offer in-store sampling have successful programs and grow their summer citrus sales,” agrees DNE’s Hearl.

Conjure up summer flavors and recipes to increase purchases. “Promoting summer citrus salsas, salads and grilled options all focus more attention on citrus and give consumers more reasons to add it to their shopping carts,” says Brux. “As part of our social media outreach to retailers in the summer of 2013, we sent out an image/recipe of a salad with Chilean citrus,



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quinoa, kale and feta. It was a huge hit because we found an easy, tasty way of incorporating citrus into a salad with two very on-trend foods, quinoa and kale.”

“We see increasing demand with juicing fruit and cross-merchandising it with smoothies,” says Redner’s Stiles. “It’s also advantageous to tie summer citrus in with other summer fruit. It’s a great color break and makes the whole display really stand out.”

“Citrus can tie in with many of the summer items,” agrees Rutte of North State. “I usually cross-merchandise with fruit salad items such as pineapple, melons or grapes.”

Offering different options presents more sales potential. “During summer, more retailers use the 3-pound bag rather than the 5-pound boxes,” reports LGS’s Sears. “It’s working well to raise consumption during this time.”

“This year we are expecting to have good sizing on fruit for bagging programs,” says Seald



PHOTO COURTESY OF SEALD SWEET, MPG & DECA

Sweet’s Flores. “Retailers can expect and plan to run promotions or ads on bagged oranges and Clementines.”

“Offer both bulk and bagged citrus at

multiple prices to increase sales,” suggests Hearl.

### 3. Make It Visible

A prominent display sells. “Similar to any other commodity, you have to give it a prominent position within the produce department so consumers are drawn to it,” says Brux. “That could mean building a large display with mountains of citrus, displaying some POS cards with easy citrus ideas, or adding a small display by the checkout stand.”

“Like anything else, displays need to be prominent so consumers know about it,” says Sears. “It can be an every week purchase for customers even in the summer if made accessible.”

Visibility encourages impulse buys. “A high traffic location will build sales due to impulse purchases,” says North State’s Rutte.

“Building large displays in a high traffic area raises awareness of shoppers and drives sales,” says Flores.

Success means giving citrus ample space and attention all summer long. “The most significant aspect of summer citrus display is to ensure it gets its fair share of retail real estate throughout the summer,” says Capespan’s Greenberg.

“Many retailers focus on citrus in June because they don’t have a lot of stone fruit or other things, but once other fruit comes in, they’ll forget about citrus,” offers Sears. “Southern Hemisphere citrus is in peak flavor and volume in July so that’s when it should be most promoted. One good promotion in July can boost the whole category for the summer. Fall presents another good focus opportunity with new varieties coming in.”

### 4. Educate

Educating the customer will lead to sales growth. “Retailers should educate consumers

## SOUTH AFRICAN FAIR TRADE CITRUS BENEFITS SOURCE AND MARKET

BY JODEAN ROBBINS

The owners and workers at one of South Africa’s leading citrus estates in the Citrusdal Valley continue to reap benefits from a significant program of transformation and social development started decades ago. Proceeds derived from premiums earned from an innovative marketing program under the Fair Trade certification in the U.S. have resulted in a new Community Centre for workers in the citrus industry at ALG Estates.

Two American companies play a key role in the Fair Trade program. Whole Foods Market provides infrastructure, and in doing so, puts the fruit on its shelves and conveys vital information to consumers about the way the fruit is produced as well as the needs of the local community. The other company is Capespan North America, a leading importer and service provider to ALG.

“The success of this initiative is a result of the positive approach of the people who live on our farms and who work for us,” says Gerrit van der Merwe, chairman of the family-owned ALG Estates. “This led to the development of strong relationships, healthy labor prac-

tices and assisted us in gaining Fair Trade Certification a few years ago.”

ALG’s program also directly benefits employee involvement in the citrus business. “Today we can proudly say 36 of our employees have become landowners on a profitable citrus farm, Cedar Citrus, which we started together,” says van der Merwe. “This successful partnership has now reached the stage where the farm can be expanded to empower another ten shareholders. This value chain includes pack house facilities, as well as marketing and logistic companies. This really puts them in the mainstream of the citrus industry in South Africa.”

The acquisition of a Fair Trade certification was a key development, resulting in exciting marketing opportunities in the United States. “American consumers have opened their arms to the citrus fruit from ALG and Cedar Citrus,” says van der Merwe. “We are grateful to the American consumers who buy our fruit and are prepared to pay a premium which is returned to us here on the farm to create facilities like the Community Centre we are opening. This increases the quality of life of our people.”

pb

on imported varieties by using effective point-of-sale material and conducting in-store sampling for each citrus variety during its peak flavor,” says DNE’s Hearl. “Make consumers comfortable with the product by educating them and letting them sample before purchasing.”

“Our job is to inform the customers and get them to try the different varieties of products out there,” concurs Stiles.

Reach consumers through POS and secondary displays. “Create an inviting shopping environment while attracting the customer’s attention with graphic bins and waterfall cascades,” says Hearl. “Designate a colorful citrus section in the produce department and have the same product in a secondary location of the produce section. Consumers may not go through the entire produce section so it is beneficial to have multiple locations.”

South African providers work closely with importers and retailers to define educational and promotional programs for stores and shoppers. “For example, Fair Trade is very important in that it has enabled the benefits of the export program from South Africa to accrue to farm workers,” says Conradie. “U.S. consumers care deeply about the supply chain of their food and want information about how their purchase helps those all along that chain.” [See “South African Fair Trade Citrus Benefits Source And Market” to learn more.]

### 5. Have Consistent Promotion

Regular promotion throughout the season adds to sales. “We do many in-store promotions such as sampling, weekend specials and regular weekly ads,” reports North State’s Rutte. “Navels are a good feature item in the weekly ad just like during winter.”

“Retailers should advertise citrus regularly and create themed ads promoting the variety in season,” says DNE’s Hearl.

“When you’re in the heart of the citrus season, and you have excellent quality, putting it on ad gives customers another option,” says Stiles. “Throughout the summer months, we’ll always have some citrus on promotion.”

Promotions should coincide with peak volume and taste. “During the months of June through September, the competition is heavy from other varieties such as stone fruit, grapes, melons, and apples, so retailers must be well informed when promotional opportunities are available for summer citrus,” says Hearl.

“Promotional opportunities for Navel oranges exist from mid-July through late-October,” reports Greenberg. “Promotions for easy peelers exist for Clementines in mid-July

through early August, and then again in early autumn when the late-Mandarins from Chile and South Africa are available.”

Retailers can utilize promotional tools from suppliers to connect with consumers. “Successful merchandising and promotion is all about making your product relevant,” says CFFA’s Brux. “The Chilean Citrus Committee has developed a number of new recipes to do just that and retail response has been very enthusiastic. We’ve had in-store demos with these recipes, and many retailers have posted

them on their websites and Facebook pages.”

The Chilean Citrus Committee will be offering POS cards, new citrus recipes for social media outreach, and promotion support. “These items can be customized to fit the needs of different retailers,” says Brux. “We have a team of merchandisers that will be working with retailers across the U.S. and Canada to successfully merchandise and promote Chilean citrus. We also hope to partner again with seasonings from Tajin on joint demos targeting the Hispanic community.” **pb**

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# Cherry Merchandising Needs To Cater To Impulse Shoppers

New US and Chilean varieties prolong the profitable promotion period. **BY BOB JOHNSON**



Experts agree, cherries are a high dollar and high volume ring, and during key weeks can reach 10 percent of produce department sales.

**C**herries, those tasty harbingers of late spring and early summer, are keeping consumers satisfied in the winter too. And adding to their sweetness, nothing brings in more cash for the space allotted than cherries.

“Cherries rank No. 1 in dollars per square foot in produce departments and they generally double the dollars per square foot in comparison to other fruit,” says Chuck Sinks, president for sales and marketing at Sage Fruit Co., Yakima, WA. “To take full advantage of this, stores need to give the proper amount of space to cherries when they are in season as well as use secondary display bins.”

There are really two short cherry seasons, because the Chilean fruit is counter-seasonal and arrives in the winter. Both of these seasons are being extended because growers are investing heavily in varieties that will bear fruit both earlier and later, and that means the opportunity seasons are getting longer.

“Cherries are a high dollar and high volume ring, and during key weeks can reach 10 percent of a produce department sales. Merchandising is key for cherry category success,” asserts Brianna Shales, communications manager at Stemilt Growers, Wenatchee, WA. “We recom-

mend using pop-up units for added display space during key promotions.”

## Harness Impulse Sales

Most cherry purchases are spontaneous. Consequently, aggressive promotion will maximize these transactions.

“As soon as the cherries come in from Washington, they are in my ad until the end of the season,” says Vince Mastromauro, produce director at Sunset Foods, a five-store grocery chain throughout Illinois headquartered in Highland Park, IL. “Even if the Washington season is only six weeks, it’s such a high ring and high impulse product I want it in the ad.”

Mastromauro carries all the cherry varieties as they come out of Washington, but pays particular homage to the Rainiers. “We do promote Rainier throughout the season and on National Rainier Day, which is July 11,” he says.

Eye-catching displays of high quality fruit seal the deal on most cherry purchases. “More than half of all cherry purchase decisions take place on impulse. Retailers need to establish displays in visible, high traffic locations within the store to boost sales. The No. 1 factor affecting consumer impulse decisions to buy are fruit quality and appearance,” says Suzanne

Wolter, director of marketing at Rainier Fruit Co., Selah, WA.

Cherries can be effectively promoted multiple times over their short season. “Retailers need to promote cherries up to five times per cherry season, with deep discounts on one or two promotions to maximize sales and profitability,” says Sage Fruit’s Sinks. “Some of the best results come when they carry a smaller sized cherry for a value purchase and then larger cherries for the higher end consumer. Examples would be: Carry more than one cherry SKU. Carry canning sizes, dark sweets and Rainiers when available.”

Promotions work well the entire season. “Make sure to promote in June, July and August, all the way through the end of the season to maximize sales and dollars,” says Howard Nager, vice president for marketing at Domex Superfresh Growers, Yakima, WA. “Keep displays full, clean and attractive, and make sure to cull display every day.”

When early season cherries beat latecomer summer fruits to the store, finding space for cherries is easy. But insiders caution against reducing cherry footage when peaches and grapes arrive. “Research conducted by the Northwest Cherry Growers confirmed there is



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a direct correlation between display space allocation and profitability in the produce department. No summer fruit returns more dollars for each additional square foot of shelf space during the month of July than cherries,” says Wolter. “Initial space allocation at the start of the season is relatively easy to garner. However, retailers should keep cherries front and center for the entire season. Increased space equals increased sales for cherries. Display space allocation and placement are crucial.”

One key reason cherry consumption is up is because more people know that cherries are healthful. “Health benefits play a big role in the marketing of cherries. It is less common for a consumer to know all of the health benefits of cherries, and that is why we include them in our POS materials,” says Sinks.

The antioxidant message, in particular, helps in merchandising this fruit. “Cherries are benefiting from the overall antioxidant health message. Consumers are becoming aware of the benefits of eating red and other dark-colored fruits and vegetables,” says Dovey Plain, marketing coordinator for Family Tree Farms, Reedley, CA.

This campaign can be so effective it makes sense to move displays beyond the produce



Cherries are a high dollar and high volume ring. Experts say that during key weeks, the category can reach 10 percent of a produce department's sales.

department.

“Heavily signed secondary displays located outside of the produce department boost sales for both dark sweet and Rainier varieties with a more significant lift for Rainier variety cherries,” says Rainier Fruit’s Wolter.

Put simply, few produce items ring the register like well-priced, good-looking cherries displayed in high-traffic areas. “Have your cherries priced right and display them prominently,” says Mac Riggan, director of marketing at Chelan Fresh Marketing, Chelan, WA.

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**New Varieties Extend The Season**

Most of the current breeding aims to extend seasons rather than developing a fruit that is significantly different. Staying on top of these developments makes sense because longer seasons mean greater opportunities for promoting cherries. There is already a three month counter season when fresh cherries are available from Chile.

“Chilean cherries are available from November to January, so they offer numerous opportunities to retailers for holiday promotions and even healthy ideas for the New Year,” says Karen Brux, managing director North America for the Chilean Fresh Fruit Association, Santiago, Chile. “We developed POS cards for retailers to promote Chilean cherries, as well as a few new recipes, including a cherry, wild rice and quinoa salad, and cherry chocolate chip muffins. Retailers like to promote new usage ideas, so we’ve put these onto recipe cards that are handed out at in-store demos, and have also sent them to retailers to post on their Facebook pages and websites.”

The market for mid-winter fresh cherries shows no sign of slowing down.

“We expect Chilean cherry supplies to grow 15 to 20 percent each year, so the volumes

**“It’s also important to have the right product mix. Random weight dark, sweet cherries should always be in the department with ties to Rainier cherries in late June and all of July.”**

— Brianna Shales, Stemilt Growers

shipped to North America will definitely increase, as will the marketing support we offer to retailers,” says Brux.

Breeders are burning the midnight oil developing varieties to extend the Chilean cherry harvest another month, or even more. “We’re working on later varieties with longer post-harvest so that someday we’ll hopefully be able to extend the season into February or even March,” says Brux.

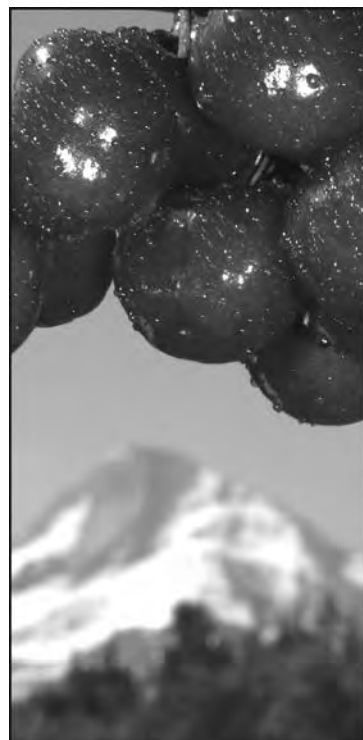
Because they are counter seasonal, Chilean fresh cherries do not compete with the U.S. fruit. “Sage Fruit does not import Chilean cher-


ries, and they have not had any impact on us,” says Sinks.

Most of the U.S. breeding also focuses on developing varieties that are either earlier or later. “We’re looking at lines that start earlier, eat better, travel better or take us to later in the season. But we’re still marketing and promoting red or Rainier,” says Bob Mast, president of Columbia Marketing International, Wenatchee, WA.

As production moves into the warmer areas of California, the first U.S. sweet cherries should be available a little earlier than before. “Our area of California near Fresno is a rapidly expanding early cherry region. “Most of these are new varieties — or at least varieties that consumers are not familiar with. Our varieties include: Brooks, Tulare, Coral Champagne, Bing, Royal Lynn, Royal Rainier, Jubilee, Prelude, Minnie Royal, King and MC9,” says Plain from Family Tree Farms. “Most consumers probably assume all cherries are Bings. The brilliant red color on many of these early varieties differs from the deep mahogany of a Bing, and that requires some marketing and consumer education. The good news is that consumers just love cherries — in any color.”

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different fruit is a Rainier-type, which is larger and sweeter. “We have a new variety called Orondo Ruby that is exclusive to Chelan. It came out of a Rainier tree, but it has a lot more color, it’s larger and it’s crunchier. It has 20 percent more sugar, and more acid, too,” says Riggan.

Chelan charges about a 10 percent premium for 15-pound boxes of this new Rainier type cherry. “Last year we sold 27,000 boxes, so a lot of people don’t know about it, but I think people who’ve tried it are looking for it. This year, we’re going to sell 54,000 boxes,” says Riggan. “The goal is to get to 125,000 boxes and see how the supply and demand balance. That should take another two-and-a-half years.”

Most producers market either dark sweet or Rainier type cherries, and do not try to distinguish their individual varieties. “We offer all of the dark sweet varieties, both conventional and organic as well as both conventional and organic Rainiers. We are looking for the season to start around June 7, which is about the five-year average,” says Nager from Domex.

Cherries grown at higher elevations are produced by Stemilt in a limited edition package. “We reserve the best cherry varieties, largest sizes, with great firmness and sugars for Kyle’s Pick bags, which are available in July



PHOTO COURTESY OF COLUMBIA MARKETING INTERNATIONAL

**Pouch displays can be powerful purchase influencers because consumers can see the product and learn about brand information.**

and August,” says Shales from Stemilt. “Our second bag in the Kyle’s Pick series is called Half Mile Closer to the Moon and packs from mid-August until the end of Stemilt’s long cherry season, right around Labor Day. These premium cherries are grown between 2,500 and 3,200 feet above sea level – literally a half mile closer to the moon.”

There may be limited varieties, but there is

still a significant number of important cherry SKUs. “It’s also important to have the right product mix. Random weight dark, sweet cherries should always be in the department with tie-ins to Rainier cherries in late June and all of July. Organic cherries, when they are available, and a large 3# or 4# clamshell of dark-sweets during the peak season from mid to late July should also be included,” says Shales. “Position cherries where people see them — lead tables are deserving of this high ring item. Grapes can cannibalize cherry sales, so it’s best to keep these items separate.”

Most Pacific Northwest growers expect to rebound this year after weather woes limited the 2013 crop. “Sage Fruit is looking forward to this cherry season. Our volume will be up this year compared to last year as we have added new growers with great quality cherries,” says Sinks.

Some growers have expanded acreage and should, if the weather cooperates, enjoy impressive production increases this year. “Domex Superfresh Growers is looking for approximately a 40 percent increase in volume over last year so there should be very promotable volumes for July 4th, National Rainier Day and into August,” says Nager. “We do have a late cherry program that ships the end of July out of Flathead Lake, Montana. This region produces some excellent fruit and developed a cachet and following around the country.”

Add it all up, and the Pacific Northwest is looking at a record harvest in 2014. “This year we’re looking at a good crop. We’re looking at maybe 22 million boxes for Washington, Oregon, Montana and Idaho,” says Chelan Fresh Marketing’s Riggan. **pb**

## Attractive Packaging

Cherries may look the same, but they are coming in a new style package. “This year, we will be offering our cherries in a new gusseted, zippered bag. We introduced this last year with great success for our dark sweet cherries and will expand the packaging this season to include Rainiers,” says Nager.

The pouch can display more powerful graphics on the package, which is a definite plus. “The colorful graphics and stand-up bag design were well received at retail. The bag looks great on the retail display and the graphics draw consumers’ attention, which is important as cherry purchases are made on impulse,” says Rainier Fruit’s Wolter. “Last year we introduced two new high graphic pouch bags, adding to the premium pouch introduced on a trial basis in 2012. Fruit size dictates the packaging we use, as only our 11-row and larger are packed in the gusseted



PHOTO COURTESY OF RAINIER FRUIT

pouch bag.”

One shipper is introducing a double-duty package that not only holds the cherries but also has a separate section to stash seeds. “We’re rolling out a cup of cherries with two compartments, probably in July. There is one compartment for stemless cherries, and a second compartment for the seeds,” says Riggan.

Another packer offers an easy-to-assemble produce department display. “We’ve got a 2-box shipper that takes less than 30 seconds to put the display together,” says Columbia Marketing International’s Mast. **pb**



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# Mango Mystique

How to merchandise mangos in both familiar and untapped markets. **BY LIZZ SCHUMER**



While Mexico makes up nearly 67 percent of the volume of mangos sold in the U.S., sources say imports from countries such as Peru and Ecuador continue to increase with jumps of 21 and 53 percent since 2012, respectively.

**M**angos are one of the most-eaten fruits in the world, and a bestseller within tropicals, so why are Americans still behind the rest of the world in consumption? Here's how to stock, promote and sell the fruit many Americans still fear.

America is a melting pot of different cultures, and with those, come an equally wide variety of culinary tastes. Mangos, like other exotics, can present marketing challenges to retailers trying to get skittish shoppers to throw one of the fruits into the cart, but mango distributors have a host of solutions to get the world's top-seller to rise in American sales.

While Mexico makes up nearly 67 percent of the volume of mangos sold in the United States, according to the National Mango Board (NMB), imports from countries such as Peru and Ecuador continue to increase with jumps of 21 and 53 percent since 2012, respectively.

According to Bill Vogel, president of Vision

Produce Co., in Los Angeles, CA, and chairman of the NMB, the mango market is strong. In 2013, mango sales increased 14 percent, to \$214 per store per week. In addition, from 2008-2012, volume has increased 29 percent, while price per box has increased 16 percent.

This fat-free, sodium-free and cholesterol-free fruit has fewer than 100 calories per cup, and contains more than 20 different vitamins and minerals. Mangos are having a moment, and many retailers are learning how to overcome challenges to get the superfruit to really take off.

Ronnie Cohen, vice president of sales and one of the founding partners for Vision Import Group, based in River Edge, NJ, says generally, mangos have "a huge market that hasn't even been touched.

"They're the most consumed fruit in the world," he notes. "But in this country, we're spoiled. We buy with our eyes more than anywhere else. Americans want something that looks like it was made on a machine. People

don't realize that, often, a fruit that presents some mechanical imperfection is a better-eating fruit."

## Barriers To Entry

Megan McKenna, director of marketing for



PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIONAL MANGO BOARD



*One of the 2013 winning displays, built by Garrett Fowden at Payson Marketplace in Payson, UT.*

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**“Our consumer research tells us that most shoppers like the taste of mangos. The key barriers to purchase are they don’t think about mangos (it’s an impulse purchase) and they are not confident in their ability to select, ripen and cut the mango in their kitchen.”**

— Megan McKenna, National Mango Board

the NMB, says many consumers still don’t know when mangos are ripe, so they shy away from fruits with variant colors.

Mangos, with their range of color and shape potential, can often look “unripe” to some consumers, but Larry Nienkerk, owner and general manager of Splendid Products of Burlingame, CA, warns against “buying” with your eyes.

“You don’t want to judge a mango by its color. That would be like judging an apple by its color,” he says. “Think of apples. Different people have different preferences, depending on what flavors they like. They may have the same basic texture, but some will be sweeter, some will be more acidic. It’s the same with mangos.”

As a mango specialist for one of the top mango importers for 37 years, Nienkerk knows his mangos. He says there are six predominant cultivars of mangos in common distribution; but just like the wild, there are infinite possibilities. All of the mangos that are cultivated in the United States were developed from family stock, which is why many mango varieties still bear those names, today. Tommy Atkins, Van Dyke, Young, Torbert, Sophie Fry and Kent are a few examples.

Part of the challenge of moving mangos comes from their prices, which have risen because of higher transportation costs. Nienkerk points out there have been shipping issues including transportation through customs and rising fuel costs, as well as other costs associated with shipping. Currently there is a shortage of sea freight, and the journeys are taking longer because the barges that carry the fruit are too large for the Panama Canal, which necessitates unloading at drop-off points into cedar boats that can make it through, and ultimately, higher prices.

The “green” movement hasn’t helped the industry either. “Clean air standards mean there are fewer truckers,” Nienkerk explains. “It’s a very expensive part of the proposition; the percentage (of the cost) is much higher than it was in the past. We can’t absorb all of those

costs.”

Nienkerk says his shipping costs, due in part to those challenges, have increased by 25 percent, which means that, due to inflation and other aspects, the fruit can cost 30 to 25 percent more. That just makes it harder for merchandisers to move the fruit, since consumers have to be convinced they’re getting enough bang for those extra bucks.

### Overcoming Challenges

So how does a retailer overcome these challenges? McKenna says the NMB is working to do just that, in a variety of areas. The best-

selling varietal is Tommy Atkins, with Ataulfos and Kents growing, each year. The board looks at barriers like how to select, ripen and cut a mango and suggests a combination of “big displays, sampling and consumer education,” as strategies for overcoming them.

“We have the most opportunity with those who are not currently eating mangos, so we tend to target white, females the most, keeping in mind they are usually the main grocery shopper in the family, as well,” explains McKenna. “Our consumer research tells us most shoppers like the taste of mangos. The key barriers to purchase are that they don’t think about mangos (it’s an impulse purchase), and they are not confident in their ability to select, ripen and cut the mango in their kitchen.”

Matt Newman, retail sales manager for Charlie’s Produce, based in Seattle, WA, says that he considers Ataulfo mangos, his current favorite, the “best fruit on the planet. On average, many consumers are not in tune with the fruit, but if you get people to try it, they’ll like it — whether through actively sampling with a demo or a sample tray. That will help

## Versatile Value-Added Options For Retailers

**F**or many consumers, one of the challenges with mangos is how to properly cut one. Value-added options such as fresh-cut fruit can alleviate those concerns. While no retailer recommends going with solely value-added mango products, all say it often helps, and certainly can’t hurt, to remove that piece of the puzzle for customers.

Matt Newman, retail sales manager of Charlie’s Produce out of Portland, OR, says he views any solution that gets the fruit into the cart as a positive. He researched mangos and found there are “hundreds of varieties” worldwide, of which the United States only receives six. He also found that mangos, particularly the Ataulfo or Champagne mango, are “the best fruits on the planet and certainly the best in our produce section, right now.” So how do retailers get those fruits off the shelves? In a word: Options.

“Create a display that includes piles of fruit as well as cut fruit,” he says. “Give it that ‘wow’ factor.”

Megan McKenna, who is director of

marketing for the National Mango Board, says half of current mango buyers do so on impulse, and whatever the retailer can do to promote the fruit as “part of their weekly menu” is going to help sales.

The convenience of cut fruit will also help, since, according to Larry Nienkerk, owner and general manager of Splendid Products, based in Burlingame, CA, “mangos are not an exotic anymore. Now they’re more mainstream.”

He notes that mangos are especially mainstreamed in areas like South Florida, where a larger Hispanic population has been used to eating mangos. In those places, marketing the fruit as a novelty isn’t going to work, but making the fruit easier to eat for consumers will.

“You have to do different approaches for different groups of people,” notes Nienkerk.

If one of those approaches includes value-added products, consensus opinion is the fruit will only move that much faster, getting mangos off the shelves and onto the bottom line. **pb**



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the consumer gain confidence and ultimately, purchase the fruit.”

Vision Import’s Cohen also says sampling is “the best selling tactic there is,” for mangos. “If you give the consumer the opportunity to taste and experience the mango, that’s the best marketing you can do.”

It’s that experience Cohen has found makes the best sales motivator of all, especially in what he calls the “untouched” markets of the mid-Atlantic and Midwest.

“Consumption continues to rise, and there are groups that just haven’t been exposed,” he says. “We’re a huge melting pot of people from India, Mexico, China, who know what they’re eating, with mangos. As that population grows, hence grows consumption.”

To help with that exposure, Nienkerk says he uses different approaches for different areas. In areas where mangos are already selling well, he pushes new and different recipes, to keep the interest high. In areas he refers to as “mid-America,” he suggests offering ways to adapt recipes that use peaches or plums to include mangos, instead. He offers recipe tear sheets to customers, and says it’s important that people know not only how to select a mango, but how to use it.

“A mango is best at room temperature,” says Nienkerk. “You don’t want it below 50 or 54 degrees Fahrenheit unless it’s ripe. You wouldn’t put a tomato in the refrigerator. Mangos are the same way. But if you want to stop them ripening, put them in the warmest spot in the fridge. If they get too cold, they turn black. That’s chill damage.”

### Mainstreaming Mangos

In addition to temperature, where the

**“Consumption continues to rise, and there are groups that just haven’t been exposed. We’re a huge melting pot of people from India, Mexico, China, who know what they’re eating, with mangos. As that population grows, hence grows consumption.”**

— Ronnie Cohen, Vision Import Group

mangos live in the stores is also important, Cohen notes.

“In most retail stores, you walk in and run right into produce,” he says. “You have to put mangos right out in front, so people trip into them.”

“It’s all in how you stack them,” says Newman. “If you’ve got a few of them lying there together, that’s not going to make an impact. Most people buy with their eyes. You have to use the boxes, pile them up, give it that ‘wow’ factor that a couple of pieces just don’t.”

McKenna says that the NMB thinks it’s “time to move mangos out of the exotic section and into the mainstream of the produce display. When mangos are placed with other high-volume, mainstream fruits, it sends a message to consumers that mangos are familiar, easy to use and should be part of their weekly meal plan,” she notes. “Half of current

mango purchasers buy mangos on impulse. By placing mangos in the mainstream flow of the produce department, retailers can tap into that impulse and take their mango sales to the next level.”

In combination with that, the NMB recommends education with things like recipe tear pads and educating the consumer on the health benefits of the fruit. McKenna notes that most retailers are having the best success in the fall and winter months, although the fruit can be promoted year-round.

The NMB’s website also recommends grouping mangos by size, variety and ripeness level, and to avoid stacking too high, to avoid bruising. A mango selection will also help boost sales, as will building secondary displays at the front-of-store when on special or when volumes are highest.

“In the middle of the winter, you might not be thinking mangos,” says Cohen. “But when it’s snowing, I like to think of them as an escape to the tropics.”

Whole Foods Market is pushing the sweeter, creamy Ataulfo mangos as “perfect for a spring fiesta,” riding on the peak Mexico season, which runs from March to June. The Whole Foods team uses Twitter, one of its main social media platforms, to hype mango recipes before consumers hit the stores, and is using the “Got Muchos Mangos?” tagline, as well as recipes, ripening tips and demos to showcase the fruit.

According to Newman, “the more info, the better. “The biggest challenge, I think, is lack of understanding. Once the retailer and, by extension, the customer, understands the fruit — how to tell if it’s ripe, how to cut it, how to eat it — retailers will see results in sales.” **pb**





ABOVE PHOTO COURTESY OF GO TEXAN. PHOTO ON RIGHT COURTESY OF IDAHO PREFERRED



More than three-fourths (87.2 percent) of consumers in a recent study believe the availability of locally grown produce and other locally produced foods are 'very/somewhat important' influences on their supermarket shopping decisions.

# State Departments Of Ag Marketing Programs Focus On Retail and Foodservice

We consult with seven states to showcase how each support local produce in retail and foodservice. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**

**R**etailers who want to sell more produce need to source and sell locally-grown fruits and vegetables. If you have any doubts about the veracity of that statement consider the results of a 2014 National Grocers Association Consumer Panel as presented in the USDA's March 2 released *Why Local Food Matters: The Rising Importance Of Locally-Grown Foods In The U.S. Food System – A National Perspective*.

More than three-fourths (87.2 percent) of consumers surveyed believe the availability of locally grown produce and other locally produced foods are 'very/somewhat important' influences on their supermarket shopping decisions, which is up from 79 percent in 2009. A prime partner to help retailers in promoting local is state department of agriculture marketing programs.

"Ten years ago, when our program started, we would go and timidly knock on our



PHOTO COURTESY OF FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

retailers' doors," says Leah Clark, program manager for the Boise, ID-based Idaho Department of Agriculture's (IDA) Idaho Preferred Program. "Today, it's a very different environment. Retailers actively seek products

from Idaho. The consumer drives this difference in attitude. Retailers are saying to themselves, 'if I want to keep my produce business in-store, rather than have customers go elsewhere, I need to do this.' Our job is to make

## 'FRESH FROM FLORIDA' ON THE MENU

Locally grown produce ranked second among hot menu trends identified by nearly 1,300 chefs in the National Restaurant Association's 'What's Hot in 2014' culinary forecast. It's no wonder then that state departments of agriculture have the foodservice sector on their marketing radar. In late 2013, the Tallahassee, FL-based Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) launched its 'Fresh From Florida: On the Menu' program. This program encourages restaurants to serve fresh fruits and vegetables as well as seafood and other commodities produced in the state. One of the first restaurant groups to step up to the plate is the Boca Raton, FL-headquartered Rapoport's Restaurant Group, which flies five banners including Bogart's Bar & Grill, Henry's and Deck 84.

Jon Greening, executive chef of Deck 84, explains, "It's a pretty easy program for us to take part in because we already use a lot of seasonal Florida-grown produce on our menus."

Deck 84 imprints the Fresh From

Florida logo next to each of its menu selections that are prepared with three or more Florida-grown or produced ingredients. In March, these items numbered more than a dozen. These choices included Thai Lettuce Wraps, Southwest Chicken Salad, Roasted Vegetable Flatbread, Grilled Portobella Sandwich, Deck Burger and best-selling Jumbo Lump Crab Cake served with a citrus and arugula salad, sweet corn-avocado salsa and chipotle remoulade. Greening sources the majority of his Florida produce from national foodservice distributor, FreshPoint, Florida-based wholesaler, Oceanside Produce, and a Palm Beach, FL-based broker called Localecopia that picks up produce from southwest Florida farmers and delivers it twice a week to the restaurant.

Notoriety gained by its participation in the FDACS' "Fresh From Florida: On the Menu" program landed four of the Rapoport's Group executive chefs an opportunity to prepare a multi-course Fresh from Florida tasting menu at the



PHOTO COURTESY OF FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

prestigious James Beard House in New York City on May 22.

### WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

Greening says, "There will be Tuna Sashimi Tacos, Snapper Ceviche and Black Grouper Paella. For dessert there's a Florida Citrus Mousse Trio made with lemon, lime and orange juices. A Mango Mojito is the cocktail." **pb**

it easier for them to source and promote Idaho grown and produced products, and we do this in a number of ways."

### Building Brand Awareness

By working with state agriculture departments, retailers can increase brand awareness. Using the logo of a state marketing program can also drive an enormous amount of consumer recognition.

A great example is the New Jersey Department of Agriculture's (NJDA) Jersey Fresh logo, which celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. The Jersey Fresh logo generated 78 percent brand awareness in the New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania tri-state area in 2012, according to an NJDA February 19, 2013-released report: *Project Designed To Maximize the Effectiveness of the Jersey Fresh Product Branding and Advertising Program*.

"Among those surveyed who were familiar with the logo, Jersey Fresh was rated by 81 percent as having an excellent/very good brand image," says Al Murray, assistant secretary of agriculture for the Trenton, NJ-located NJDA. "This ranked us second to produce giant Chiquita at 83 percent and tied with Dole. We're in a pretty advantageous position, in terms of

**"During the peak of the season we'll run a big Jersey Fresh ad with lead items like watermelon, corn and blueberries. We'll also use the logo when spotlighting an individual grower."**

— Victor Savanello, Allegiance Retail Services

awareness and purchase, to compete with national brands when our promotional campaign is reintroduced each season."

Recognition of a department of agriculture marketing program's logo is also high in states around the country. "Awareness of the Colorado Proud logo among the state's consumers was 80 percent in 2013, which is up from 59 percent in 2008," says Wendy Lee White, marketing specialist for the Lakewood, CO-based Colorado Department of Agriculture (CDA).

The "Fresh From Florida" logo has a 60 percent plus recognition level in-state, says Dan Sleep, supervisor/senior analyst for the Tallahassee, FL-based Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' (FDACS) Division of Marketing and Development. "We believe the multi-layered marketing activities

FDACS conducts annually has measurable value as it relates to brand/logo recognition."

Some 40 percent of Idaho residents surveyed in 2012 said they saw the Idaho Preferred logo in a supermarket in 2012, according to IDA's Clark. "This is up from only 18 percent in 2007."

Many retailers are leveraging the recognition of state brand logos to let customers know they carry local in an effort to boost sales.

"Adding the GO TEXAN mark to their signature promotions provides retailers with an opportunity to reinforce their message, as the GO TEXAN symbol is a registered certification mark designed to identify Texas products," says Bryan Black, director of communications for the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), in Austin, TX. "It's very similar to the USDA's organic certification



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Last summer, the CDA launched its first Choose Colorado tour. The tour designated Colorado Proud month, celebrated products grown, raised or processed in the state with ag employees driving a car painted with the Colorado Proud logo across about 66-million acres that comprise Colorado's agricultural landscape.



ABOVE PHOTO COURTESY OF COLORADO PROUD

symbol, which identifies organic products.”

The Jersey Fresh logo is featured prominently on New Jersey-grown fruits and vegetables in-store and in ads at Foodtown and Super Foodtown stores serviced by Allegiance Retail Services, LLC, an Iselin,

NJ-headquartered company that also serves the Foodtown Express, Freshtown, La Bella and D’Agostino banners.

“I always use the Jersey Fresh logo in our Foodtown ads,” says Victor Savanello, director of produce and floral. “During the peak of the

season we’ll run a big Jersey Fresh ad with lead items like watermelon, corn and blueberries. We’ll also use the logo when spotlighting an individual grower. Last year, we ran ads for Top Crop blueberries and called out their freshness and quality by saying that the grower was named the 2012 Blueberry Grower of the Year by the NJ Vegetable Growers Association.”

Many retailers today have developed their own signature chain-wide, locally grown programs. Yet, several continue to use state brand logos. One of these is Publix Super Markets, a 1,069-store chain based in Lakeland, FL, with stores in six southeastern states. The retailer launched its “At Season’s Peak” program in 2008 to assist customers in knowing when their produce was in season, at its peak for taste and flavor profile.

“We used the individual state department logos and promotional materials for years,” says Maria Brous, director of media and community relations. “Each state’s approach is a little different of course, but we support the states and the suppliers in the communities we serve. We have been doing it for a very long time, before it became ‘fashionable.’ We have always known it is good business to support those businesses who support our stores.”

This best-of-both-worlds branding approach is also something practiced at Kings Super Markets, a 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ. Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce, floral and seafood explains, “Our large umbrella program is Fresh 24/7. Within these displays and 24-hours later when local product is moved into its regular display, we’ll use the Jersey Fresh or Pride of New York logo to call out where the product was specifically grown. It’s an integrated program.”

## Side Note NEW YORK RESTAURATEURS TAKE THE PRIDE OF NEW YORK PLEDGE



(L-R) PHOTOS COURTESY OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE & MARKETS



**M**ore than 100 restaurants throughout New York have taken the Pride of New York Pledge to increase use of state-sourced produce and products by 10 percent or more on their menus. These include well-known eateries such as An American Brasserie in Albany, Tribeca Grill in New York City, and Lake Placid Pub & Brewery.

“This new program is growing steadily,” says Joe Morrissey, public information officer for the Albany, NY-headquartered New York Department of Agriculture & Markets. “It started down state in the city, then expanded to Long Island, and it is now being embraced upstate.”

Additional requirements for the pledge include introducing new New York-themed dishes made with locally sourced, seasonal products, communicating their commitment with suppliers, peers and the public to encourage more support of New York State food and beverages, and educating staff and maintaining knowledge of New York State’s locally grown and made products.

The Pride of New York Pledge is a key new component of the Governor’s Taste NY program, which seeks to promote and expand the state’s food and beverage industry.

**pb**

**“It’s important for retailers to get out in the field. It let’s them not only see a particular commodity, but also the food safety measures and capital improvements that create the quality.”**

— Martin Eubanks,

South Carolina Department of Agriculture

Similarly, says Martin Eubanks, senior marketing specialist for the Columbia, SC-based South Carolina Department of Agriculture (SCDA), “Retailers will use our Certified SC Grown logo either in a generic way or to enhance their own local programs. For example, we have retailers that have stores in three or four states. They will use the Certified SC Grown logo to dial it down to exactly where a particular product is grown.”

The impact of this has been significant, Eubanks adds. “In a 2008 statewide study we conducted, only 38 percent of those surveyed said they could easily find state-grown fruits and vegetables in-store. This number doubled to 79 percent in 2013 when we repeated the study. It tells me that more retailers are reaching out one way or the other to make sure their shoppers know they sell South Carolina products in-store.”

In Idaho, some retailers use the Idaho Preferred logo while others opt not to but instead identify individual growers by name, picture, story and location, says the IDA’s Clark. “We have retailers who want to set themselves apart and own their local programs. We’re good with that. The whole purpose of our program is to encourage sourcing of Idaho products and identify these products to customers.”

**A Complete Toolbox**

More than just a logo, department of agriculture marketing programs offer several ways to help retailers sell more of the state’s fruits and vegetables.

**Seasonal Availability.** The SCDA is working with its retail partners to build programs that promote a commodity multiple times throughout its season rather than generate single loss leader ads to general store traffic. In order to do this, says Eubanks, “timing is crucial. So many variables can

impact a crop. That’s where we come in. We communicate regularly with our retailers to keep them informed about start dates and the overall volume of a commodity out there during the season.”

The NJDA emails its Jersey Fresh Availability & Forecast Report to retailers weekly throughout its spring to fall season. This information provides retailers with current availability of more than 40 categories of state-grown crops and likewise its availability two to four weeks in the future.

**Sourcing.** State agriculture department personnel are great matchmakers. They put growers in touch with retailers and vice versa. “We have a great relationship with the NJDA. They will recommend growers to come see us,”

says Kings Super Markets’ Kneeland. “We have a pretty extensive network of growers we already work with, but we’re always open to talking to new growers.”

Kris Staaf, director of public affairs for the Denver division of Safeway, Inc., a 1,300-store plus chain headquartered in Pleasanton, CA, wholeheartedly agrees. “Safeway has been involved with the CDA’s Colorado Proud program since its inception 15 years ago. We have many long-standing relationships with local growers that exceed 50-plus years in Colorado, and we are always looking to add new growers to the mix. Over the years, we’ve added nearly 100 specific items in Colorado within 20 different categories — items such as corn, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, lettuce, mush-



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rooms, potatoes as well as many organic items.”  
 The IDA annually hosts informal one-day seminars that teach producers how to become retail vendors in the morning followed by one-on-one meetings between retailers and producers in the afternoon. The latest of these, held in late February, included 50

producers and retail buyers from the Boise Co-Op, Whole Foods, Wal-Mart and Albertsons. “It opens the door for some of our smaller producers who wouldn’t have easily otherwise received an audience with a retail buyer,” Clark explains. “We’ve seen some positive results come out of this.”

“Farm tours for retail buying teams are something the SDA organizes,” says Eubanks. “It’s important for retailers to get out in the field. It let’s them not only see a particular commodity, but also the food safety measures and capital improvements that create the quality. You just can’t understand this by sitting



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**“The biggest disadvantage we have as a state is that we don’t have a 12-month growing season. That’s why it’s important to get out there each spring and get back in retail buyers’ minds.”**

— Al Murray,  
New Jersey Department of Agriculture

behind a computer.”

A broader way to link retailers with state-grown produce is through food hubs. South Carolina’s first local food hub, GrowFood Carolina, opened in Charleston in 2011. It aggregates produce from more than 20 farms within a 120-mile radius and distributes to nearly 50 customers including retail grocers and restaurants. The SCDA is following up on this success by having commissioned a study in December 2013 to look at the possibility of setting up three or four more food hubs across the state.

The Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA), headquartered in Atlanta, is in the second phase of its new Georgia Grown rebranding program. “We found that many retailers and restaurateurs are buying Georgia-grown produce and don’t know it and thus aren’t letting their customers know,” says Matthew Kulinski, director of markets. “We’re about half way through an initiative to get Georgia-grown products labeled as such throughout the supply chain.”

**Point-of-Purchase (POP) Materials.** Each spring, says Allegiance Retail Services Savanello, “All of our stores receive a packet of POP materials from the Jersey Fresh folks. It’s something we look forward to.”

The NJDA’s Murray says promotions are key. “The biggest disadvantage we have as a state is that we don’t have a 12-month growing season. That’s why it’s important to get out there each spring and get back in retail buyers’ minds. We hire college agriculture interns, give them a map, and put the POP packets in their hands to deliver personally. The packets have logo stickers, banners, pennants, bin wrap, aprons, T-shirts, ball caps and price cards.”

Colorado Proud stickers are placed on many products at Safeway’s Denver division



# GARLIC SHOWCASE

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stores, says Staaf. “Plus, Colorado Proud POP signage is displayed throughout the store.”

The SCDA continues to innovate where its POP is concerned. “Last year we came up with stand-alone POP signage to put in front of the supermarkets to catch customers on their way inside,” says Eubanks.

“Requests for generic POP have been replaced by customized signage by retailers in Idaho,” says Clark. “The money we saved from printing logo materials was put into four-color logo bins. We produced 75 the first year. The retailers have really liked them. That’s why we ordered 50 more last year.”

**Support For In-store Events And Promotions.** “The TDA offers specialty crop retail promotional opportunities as a way to increase

the value, sales and availability of Texas-grown fruits, vegetables, honey and tree nuts, among others,” says Black. “This program offers small and large retailers and specialty crop producers the opportunity to partner with GO TEXAN to promote their specialty crops through multiple options, such as in-store promotions and retail demonstrations. It also provides participants with the option to customize their level of participation based on the needs of their market. Results vary from promotion to promotion. In our experience, retail sales have increased anywhere from 15 to 200 percent in specific cases.

Last summer, the CDA launched its first Choose Colorado tour. The tour, which took place over three weeks in August, designated

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Colorado Proud month. The program celebrated products grown, raised or processed in the state with ag employees driving a car painted with the Colorado Proud logo across about 66-million acres that comprise Colorado's agricultural landscape. Safeway hosted eight of the stops. One included the tour's kick-off at a Denver store attended by the CDA's commissioner of agriculture, Safeway executives, 4-H (the nation's largest youth development and empowerment organization) representatives, local growers and customers.

Safeway built a 'produce' stage and local growers talked about the economic importance of buying locally," says Staaf. "Customers sampled more than a dozen local products and

the events were very well received. Each of the other store stops on the tour was unique and gave our store team the opportunity to create events specific to each community. One store in Grand Junction filled an antique truck with produce and displayed the truck within the front entrance of the store. Based on feedback from our customers and the energy and excitement the tour brought to our stores, we are planning to support the program again."

**Advertising.** Several department of agriculture marketing programs promote the state's seasonal bounty in radio and television commercials. New this year, the FDACS expanded its TV commercial reach to areas outside of Florida, specifically Michigan. This first foray of out-of-state advertising was in

partnership with SpartanNash, a 172-store grocery chain headquartered in Grand Rapids, MI.

Susan Nardizzi, the FDACS's director of the marketing and development division, explains, "The two retailer-tagged 30-second spots showed how to quickly and easily make dinner for a family of four using Fresh Florida produce such as tomatoes, bell peppers, zucchini, summer squash, snap beans and strawberries as ingredients. In April and May, we expand into markets in Raleigh, Indianapolis and Buffalo. This introduction of television ads in different markets of the U.S. as well as continuing our ads in-state will certainly provide another positive advertising platform to reach consumers." **pb**

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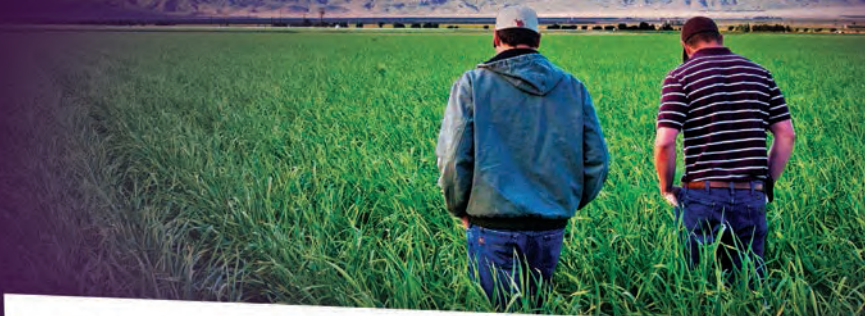
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Through years of experience, Sambrailo has accumulated unparalleled knowledge of both our customers and their products. When this savvy is combined with our ingenuity and ability to stay in front of trends, the results are beneficial for all. For example, we foresaw the effects that the larger strawberry varieties would have on the clamshell capacity needs and have proactively come to the market with a MIXIM LV (large volume) 1-pound clamshell.

Similarly, Sambrailo created the RunRite family of clamshells. Designed for packaging of blueberries and grape tomatoes on high-speed equipment, the RunRite denests, fills, closes, stacks and cools more efficiently and with less down-time than any other currently on the market. The RunRites are available in 4.4oz, 6.0 oz and 1-dry pint sizes.

Sambrailo and its thermo-former partners continue to expand clamshell production to facilities throughout Mexico and the U.S. This addition allows Sambrailo to make clamshells in the heart of the major berry and vegetable growing regions. The result is a shorter travel time, quicker service turn-around and better relative prices.

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In response to customer demand for environmentally friendly, sustainable packaging, Inline Plastics has converted its entire line of containers to polyethylene terephthalate (PET), the same recyclable material used to make water and soda bottles. In fact, Inline's PET material is produced using a patented, new super-low energy efficient process that reduces the carbon footprint of the material to match that of material containing 50 percent post-consumer recycled bottles, but without the loss of clarity and resiliency commonly found in recycled PET containers. For every ton of Inline PET material used, enough CO2 equivalents are saved to drive an average passenger car over 2,700 miles!

One of Inline's most well-known innovations in packaging design has been the development of the first thermoformed clamshell containers that are resistant to in-store tampering without the addition of a wrap-

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Supporting Inline Plastics' line of containers is a group of packaging automation systems tailored to handle and process the packing of the containers. Experienced engineering staff are happy to assist customers in the integration of the automation systems into their current processes and facilities. From container filling and locking to top, bottom, or wrap-around labeling, Inline Plastics is the only company in the industry that provides in-house developed automation solutions that will help their customers reduce costs while increasing throughput and operating efficiencies.



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# Developments In Fresh-Cut Packaging

Progress in presentation, protection and preservation transforms the category. **BY JODEAN ROBBINS**



PHOTO COURTESY OF INLINE PLASTICS

New technologies meet the expanding needs of consumers by providing a way to deliver high quality, flavorful fruits and vegetables.

**N**ew technologies in fresh-cut packaging allow retailers to bring convenience and freshness to the produce consumer and increase sales. “Huge strides have been made in recent years in shelf-life extension, including barrier technology and moisture control, helping to drive fresh-cut’s larger role,” says David Steele, president of ACC Coatings LLC in Middlesex, NJ. “Last century’s convenience foods were canned and microwaveable frozen foods. Today’s consumers want freshness without sacrificing quality.”

“New technologies meet the expanding needs of consumers by providing a way to deliver high quality, flavorful fruits and vegetables,” says Steve Bitler, vice president corporate technology for Landec in Menlo Park, CA, parent company of Apio and developer of the BreatheWay modified atmosphere-packaging technology commercialized through Apio.

“Technologies include new packaging types and varying packaging materials extending the shelf life or improving and expanding the consumer’s eating experience,” says Kim St George, director of marketing and innovation for Mann Packing Co. Inc. in Salinas, CA.

Greater awareness of packaging technology, and its role at retail, helps stores best utilize new advances. “This category continues to be a

growing trend,” says Raul Gallegos, senior director of produce and floral for Bristol Farms in Carson, CA, which operates 13 retail stores under the Bristol Farms banner and two under the Lazy Acres banner. “Education about any product in our produce departments is critical. Customers see produce staff as the experts.”

“Retail education on the latest packaging options is very important,” asserts Steele. “We have found an educational gap between the packaging manufacturers, distributors, and end users, and we want to help our ultimate customer profit from our experience.”

“Produce companies should work directly with retailer partners to create promotional and merchandising programs — not only highlighting products, but educating consumers and retailers on important attributes such as improvements in packaging technologies,” says St George. “Creating specific planograms and merchandising programs for a retailer will assist in best placement for fresh-cut produce.”

## Benefits Of New Technology

Motivators for fresh-cut packaging innovation encompass various areas. “Fresh-cut profitability requires proving freshness to the consumer, presentation, while minimizing handling damage, protection, and maintaining or increasing profitability, preservation,” says

Steele of ACC Coatings.

“The fresh-cut category has been primarily driven by the convenience aspect due to continued consumer time constraints,” says Gallegos. “I would also include demand related to nutritional benefits and associated with ingredients, growing practices, etc.”

Increased shelf life is one major benefit of packaging advancement. “Everyone is looking for packaging to increase the shelf life, reduce shrink and provide a fresh, high-quality product to their customers,” says Jack Tilley, market research manager for Inline Plastics Corp. in Shelton, CT.

“Packaging technologies extend product shelf life, or the number of days a retailer can sell and merchandise fresh-cut product, benefits both for the consumer and retailer,” says Mann’s St George. “Fresher product on the shelf equates to less shrink and waste for the retailer and increased produce turns, resulting in fresher experiences throughout the entire produce chain.”

Safety is another packaging focus. “Having a tamper-resistant container to prevent food contamination remains high among retailer priorities,” says Tilley.

Convenience-oriented packaging continues to make inroads. “Bagged salads and greens, pre-cut fruits and vegetables, and store-to-table

**“Retailers can create destination sections within the produce department to merchandise like-items together making it easier for consumers to shop for the product, packaging type and convenience they are looking for.”**

— Kim St George, Mann Packing

offerings packed in easy to handle, properly portioned containers make it easy for on-the-go families and small-unit households to make a purchasing choice,” says ACC Coatings’ Steele.

“Inline developed a line of grab-and-go packaging ranging from containers for car cup holders to our line of hangable containers with a built-in hang tab allowing it to be merchandised on pegboards and racks,” reports Tilley.

Convenience is a driver in packaging for Elizabethtown, PA’s Darrenkamp’s with four stores. Bob Zimmerman, produce coordinator for Darrenkamp’s, explains, “We do extremely well with our in-house fresh fruit cups. We have small packages for the grab-n-go lunch. We also do round containers we call ‘wheels’ with separated spots for various kinds of fruit.”

St George suggests, “Retailers can create destination sections within the produce department to merchandise like-items together making it easier for consumers to shop for the product, packaging type and convenience they are looking for.”

### Preserving The Product

Technology continues to help extend shelf life. “New combinations of polymer structures allow for moisture transmission rates helping move free moisture out of the package and reduce incidence of mold,” explains Landec’s Bitler. “Combining this feature with temperature switch technology, such as BreatheWay, adds tremendous benefit to quality shelf life extension, and also extends color and texture of produce when packaged in a well-designed container.”

“Perimeter seal rigid plastic containers, such as in our Crystal Fresh and Visibly Fresh container lines, are an increasing trend,” reports Tilley. “Because the lids are sealed completely

around the container to the base, it provides improved shelf-life of the contents.”

Other advancements have come in reseal technology. “There are many different options from the traditional zipper, to tape closure, peel/reseal and even Velcro closures,” reports St George. “Most commonly, reseal technology is found on family size packages and also multi-

use occasion packages. Finding ways to extend shelf life and meal occasion uses for fresh fruit and vegetables increase consumption and varying usages for produce.”

Advancements in modified atmosphere help preserve product. “Modified atmosphere has been around for a long time and helped build the industry,” says St George. “Applying



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## Sustainability and Collaboration On Horizon For Packaging

BY JODEAN ROBBINS

The future promises an even greater opportunity for thinking outside-the-box in packaging. “Fresh-cut fruit and vegetable packaging is continually improving and produce suppliers are innovating with new packaging types, package materials, produce varieties, unique cuts and various ways of differentiating product,” says Kim St George, director of marketing and innovation for Mann Packing Co. Inc. in Salinas, CA.

“We need to look at new innovative concepts applicable to current and future demands by our customers,” says Raul Gallegos, senior director of produce and floral for Bristol Farms in Carson, CA, which operates 13 retail stores under the Bristol Farms banner and two under the Lazy Acres banner.

The future bodes well for sustainability efforts. “Sustainability and recycling are continuous areas of increasingly greater concern as population and demands continue to grow,” reports Gallegos.

“Sustainability continues to be an important part of the total package in

our industry,” explains David Steele, president of ACC Coatings LLC in Middlesex, NJ. “Recycle-ability of our coatings combined with the substrate is a major focus of our testing in-house, and obviously an important part of merchandising when it comes to disposable packaging.”

Packaging innovation is also leading to unique collaborations and consolidations. Use of the BreatheWay technology is being expanded outside the vegetable products packaged at Apio. “These include an initial focus on packaging bananas with Chiquita to avocado packaging with Agroexport and to cocktail cucumber and pepper packaging with Windset Farms,” explains Steve Bitler, vice president corporate technology for Landec in Menlo Park, CA, Apio’s parent company. “Additionally, for larger quantity packaging like pallet scale packages, Apio is working with Transfresh on combining the BreatheWay technology with Transfresh’s Tectrol Technology, particularly on pallets of blueberries and raspberries.” **pb**

this technology to fresh-cut fruits and vegetables changes distribution, processing, shelf life and quality.”

“From ACC’s side of the packaging aisle, the most exciting innovation has been the introduction of our ACC CLEAR line for modified-atmosphere packaging,” says Steele. “Demand for moisture control and oxygen barrier coatings has increased tremendously in the past year, and our significant investment in analytical equipment helps us develop cutting-edge protective coating technology for our customers.”

Apio’s BreatheWay temperature-switch polymer technology naturally controls the internal fresh produce package atmospheres without additional chemicals or ingredients. Bitler explains, “It involves the placement of a membrane over a specifically sized and located hole in the specified package. The membrane becomes a kind of window to control the ingress and egress of oxygen and carbon dioxide. This allows fresh produce to naturally generate its own target atmosphere

inside the package to extend shelf life and deliver a high quality, attractive fresh product.”

### Creative Concepts

Innovative fresh-cut concepts, such as combination packaging of salad greens, croutons, and dressing, are pushing technology. “Various technologies are being combined for optimum benefit,” says Bitler.

Mann’s new Veggie and Hummus Tray is an example. “It utilizes our top film technology where each cut veg cell is individually sealed and customized for specific vegetable respiration rates,” says St George.

“The main advantage in topical coatings is our ability to engineer more than one performance criteria,” says ACC’s Steele. “Moisture barrier, seal-ability and anti-fog capabilities can be built into one flexible coating package, for example. On the rigid side, anti-fog, barrier properties, and de-nesting or ‘slip’ properties can be incorporated together.”

Steam-able or microwaveable packaging

**“Eye appeal equals buy appeal. Appearance is important and fresh-cut has come a long way with see-through packaging.”**

— Bob Zimmerman, Darrenkamp’s

options continue to grow. “Steamable demand is growing,” reports Darrenkamp’s Zimmerman. “We do great with the steamable potatoes. The graphics on the bag catch consumers’ eyes.”

“Many of the newest polymer film technologies are microwaveable as is BreatheWay technology,” says Bitler.

“Packaging companies are developing different technologies to provide consistent steaming,” reports St George. “Consumers are looking for fast and healthy ways to prepare vegetables. Steaming technologies provide this convenience in a healthy and quick way.”

### Importance Of Appearance

Package appearance is crucial to the final purchase decision. “Product visibility is important,” says Gallegos of Bristol Farms. “Customers want to see what they are buying. If it looks good, customers are more apt to purchase.”

“Eye appeal equals buy appeal,” asserts Zimmerman. “Appearance is important and fresh-cut has come a long way with see-through packaging.”

Fresh-cut packaging continues to address this crucial merchandising aspect. “Consumer research tells us consumers want to see the product, and anti-fog technology allows this to happen in an effective way,” says St George. “Using anti-fog technology enhances the consumer’s ability to see the freshness, color and quality of the produce inside the packaging.”

Companies continue to work on ways to make packaging more attractive for consumers. “Another trend is to reduce the ribbing in clear plastic containers,” says Inline’s Tilley. “A straight wall container provides more attractive product merchandising, promoting the quality of the contents and increasing impulse sales.”

“Ideally, packaging will go from the refrigerator to the table and back to the refrigerator while maintaining its freshness and good looks,” says Steele. “We’re convinced this is a driving force behind the increase in fresh and deli sales, and it will continue driving this increase.” **pb**

# Portable Snack Options For Produce

Unique flavor profiles and prominent displays fuel impulse and repeat sales. **BY MICHELE SOTALLARO**



According to a recent Nielsen report, snack mixes were the second largest contributor to total dried fruit and snack mix sales.

**A**s consumers increasingly reach for healthier to-go snacking options and seek tasty dried fruit or nuts to liven up meals, it's important for retailers to give consumers access to these items in Produce.

Unfortunately, Produce is still a small piece of the dried-fruit and portable-snack pie. According to reports from the New York, NY-based Nielsen Perishables Group's Fresh Coverage Area (FCA), dried fruits and snack mixes accounted for 1 percent of produce department sales during the latest 52 weeks ending February 22, 2014. The category did, however, maintain steady sales compared to the previous year.

The highest contributor to category sales was dried cranberries. However, the sub-category decreased average dollar sales 2.6 percent compared to the previous year. Snack mixes were the second largest contributor to total dried fruit and snack mix sales, and increased average dollar sales 11.5 percent compared to the previous year.

Much variety in the category exists for consumers, and value-added options are bountiful for retailers. According to a global report from San Jose, CA-based Global Industry Analysts, Inc. (GIA) titled, *Dried Fruits and Edible Nuts: A Global Strategic Busi-*

*ness Report*, global consumption of these items is forecasted to reach 4.0 million tons and 61.4 million tons, respectively, by 2020, driven by a growing focus on rising health consciousness among other reasons.

The report reveals a variety of dried fruits and nuts — such as prunes, almonds, Brazil nuts, raisins, pine nuts, walnuts, hazelnuts, dried figs and apricots, pecans, and peanuts among others — is consumed regularly.

## Why Produce Is Ideal For Promotion

The good news for retailers and the produce industry is that the removal of water content during the drying process makes dried fruits less perishable, easier to handle and cheaper to transport, informs the GIA report.

Dried fruits are especially popular as an effective and nutritionally rich alternative in areas where fresh fruits are not readily available.

“One of the easiest ways for retailers to encourage dried fruit purchases is to get it up on display,” says Joe Tamble, vice president retail sales - North America for Kingsburg, CA-based Sun-Maid. “As health and wellness becomes more of a focus for many adults and children, dried fruit provides a snacking option that makes them feel good about their snacking choices.

“Sun-Maid Growers offers many different

types of raisins and dried fruit shipper and pallet displays to generate impulse purchases. These displays are pre-filled and assembled when delivered to retailers,” says Tamble.

“With our experience, we noticed that most people go to Produce looking for any type of nuts, so our main focus was to put our product where consumers would go to look for it,” says Jennifer Machiavello, communications and marketing director for Fairborn, OH-based House of Nuts, a wholesaler that produces and packages its own product.

“Sahale Snacks are well-suited for the produce section, not only because they are popular additions to salad, yogurt, oatmeal and more, but also because of the audience,” says Erika Cottrell, vice president of marketing for the Seattle, WA-based Sahale Snacks. “Our snacks and fresh produce are often found on the same shopping lists of consumers looking for exciting ways to maintain a wholesome diet. The produce department is also a great place for new shoppers to discover the product as a first-time buyer.”

## Exceptional Category Variety

Visibility in Produce may be crucial for garnering attention to dried fruit and nut portable snacks, but marketers are exploring flavor profiles and taste textures to stay inno-

vative and hook consumers.

“One of the fastest growing segments in the dried fruit category is yogurt-coated fruit, which is up more than 13 percent versus last year in dollars (IRI data, 52 weeks ending February 23, 2014),” says Sun-Maid’s Tamble.

“Sun-Maid recently introduced four new items in the yogurt-coated segment: Strawberry Greek Yogurt Raisins 5-ounce bag, Cherry Chocolate Yogurt Raisins 6-ounce bag, Orange Cream Yogurt Raisins 5-ounce minis and Dark Chocolate Yogurt Raisins in a

6-pack, and these items are contributing to the segment’s growth.”

“Trail mix is a category that has grown steadily over the years, but people are craving more flavor and variety than traditional GORP (good old raisins and peanuts),” says Sahale’s Cottrell. “We have outpaced trail mix category growth by as much as 10 times by introducing innovative ingredients in our blends, like chili-lime infused dried mango and pomegranate infused dried apple, and on-trend ingredients, like toasted coconut in the latest line of Nut +

Fruit Mixes.”

House of Nuts’ Machiavello says cinnamon roasted almonds are the company’s most popular item for portable snacks.

“The Seneca apple chips are really popular and have creative flavors,” says Marc Welsh, produce supervisor for the New Orleans, LA-based Breaux Mart, which has five stores throughout Louisiana. Welsh says the company’s consumer base is primarily health-conscious customers who look for almonds and pistachios for portable snacks.

Larry Griffith, Midwest business manager for Winters, CA-based Mariani Nut Company, says the company looks at IRI data to take the pulse of what’s selling. Consumer research led Mariani to expand its portable snack category in Produce with four additional new flavors. “Smoked [flavoring] was in the Top 10 and Cajun (the very hot kind) was popular as well,” says Griffith.

The four new almond flavors are Smoked, Cajun, Honey-Barbeque, and Vanilla. “They come in 6-ounce pouch bags that stand up,” says Griffith.

Rick Hogan, produce education director for the Grand Forks, ND-based Hugo’s Family Market, says the stores carry an array of portable snacks in Produce. They even offer gallon-size, zip-close bags of peanuts from the store’s bulk section to entice shoppers.

### Merchandising Flexibility

Portable snacks in Produce are not only great as value-added options and creative ways for consumers to snack, but they are easy to merchandise throughout the department.

“Most on-the-go dried fruit consumers want packaging that is simple, easy to carry and portion controlled,” says Sun-Maid’s Tamble.

“We feel the retail stand-up pouch, re-sealable bag works best,” says Mariani’s Griffith. “These items are mostly displayed on racks (with value-added items, such as jar garlic and croutons), which are provided by the stores.”

“We offer flexible display options that leverage our cases themselves as stackable, small-footprint off-shelf displays,” says Cottrell. “When placed next to complementary items, such as bagged salad, we know they can drive incremental purchases that lead to a higher basket ring.”

“Sun-Maid raisins and dried fruits are commonly cross-promoted by retailers with other snacks such as nuts and salads, which help to increase consumer basket size. We partner with many retailers in the produce department to successfully promote raisins and dried fruit as healthy impulse snacks. **pb**

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# MERGER MANIA



One phenomenon that has occurred with increasing frequency during the past 20 years is the merger. It is no coincidence the rise in the number of mergers corresponds almost directly with the rise in the number of executives of grocery firms having financial or accounting backgrounds. I have had the good, or bad, fortune to be involved with a number of mergers both as the initiating party as well as the one being absorbed. A common theme

throughout all the meetings that I attended pertaining to the mergers was most of management only sees the financial and cost control value of merging two companies. This is their sole focus ignoring other factors and, “they just don’t get it.”

Mergers began when retail organizations consolidated into larger companies creating mega-size retailers. These unions set precedent for additional retail mergers and the beginning of mergers on the supplier side as well as foodservice. One common theme with these transactions — on the supply and retail side — was the benefits involved with “economies of scale” gained by combining the two entities. This illustrates the preoccupation of senior management with financial measures as the major benefits of any merger. This type of focus also results in staff reductions, store closings, and ultimately reductions in labor hours and the number of suppliers.

The merger result is evaluated to determine if it was fully successful. Many of the deals benefit from the “economy of scale” by combining two companies and the subsequent reduction of labor force, facilities, and labor hours. Some of the mega mergers require approval by the Federal Trade Commission and also require the closing of stores located near or in the same competitive area as the new mega store. This results in less retail choices for the loyal consumers and less options for the general public. In some cases, the merger results in a combination of two entities with serious flaws. In these cases, the result is a weaker total entity combined than the weakness in each of the parts. In other words,  $1+1 = -1$ .

While the jury is still out on the success of mergers, there is one

area of substantial difference among the retail, foodservice and supplier mergers. It’s all in the attitude taken by the company that will have the superior position in the merger.

On the foodservice side, along with the supplier side, these types of mergers generally tend to be more successful since “economies of scale” has the benefits of better utilization of facilities, additional production, and expansion of customer base, etc. But the key aspect is the friendly, civil attitude toward the company being absorbed and the positive, proactive manner toward moving forward.

In terms of retail mergers, all of the “economies of scale” are in play; however, the one aspect of most retail mergers that often complicates the process, as well as weakens the fabric of the bonds that tie the companies together, is the ego of the superior, or acquiring, company executives. Some of the things caused by this ego are: changing of store

names, discontinuing local brands and replacing them with private labels, alienation of incoming employees, and a superior attitude toward suppliers.

I once attended a public meeting concerning a merger by one large company of a very popular local company. One question from the floor was, “Why are you changing the name on the store?” The answer from the chief executive of the acquiring company was, “Simple, who bought who?” This is a typical illustration of what happens during retail mergers

when ego drives the financial and cost-cutting benefits.

This phenomenon does not seem to show any sign of decreasing in the next few years. Ultimately, if allowed to continue, the result will be an industry with fewer consumer choices and a marketplace dominated by the mega retailers. In turn, the supply and foodservice industries will also need to “size up” in order to compete with the larger retailers in the marketplace.

There is one encouraging sign in retail merger history. One of the largest retailers managed to merge with a number of smaller companies and maintained not only their identities but also their success. It is certainly no coincidence that this particular retailer is managed by merchants as opposed to financial types and accountants. Perhaps the success of this retailer will encourage others to examine their mergers differently and revise strategies. If so, in the long run, the industry will benefit as will the consumer.

**pb**

**While the jury is still out on the success of mergers, there is one area of substantial difference among the retail, foodservice and supplier mergers. It’s all in the attitude taken by the company that will have the superior position in the merger.**

**By Don Harris**

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. Comments can be directed to [editor@producebusiness.com](mailto:editor@producebusiness.com)



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# THE EXPORT OUTLOOK OF TOTAL PRODUCE'S DENIS PUNTER



Since its creation in 2006, following the demerger from Fyffes, Ireland-based Total Produce has emerged as one of Europe's leading fresh produce suppliers, marketing more than 200 lines of fresh fruits, vegetables and flowers every year. Globally, including North America, the company distributes more than 300 million cartons of fresh products to retailers, wholesalers and foodservice annually.

Although an accountant by profession, Denis Punter's career took him from food manufacturing to 35 years in the fresh produce sector — 25 of those years were dedicated to produce businesses.

After leading a management buyout of importer Redbridge in 1994, Punter subsequently led the company to sales of nearly £300m before selling the business to Total Produce in 2007.

**Q: How significant a part of Total Produce's business is imports from the U.S.?**

A: Total Produce imports significant quantities of cherries from North America; historically, Total Produce has been very strong in Florida grapefruit — particularly into mainland Europe. There are also those opportunities for seasonal business such as red apples into certain markets.

**Q: What products could offer potential growth opportunities for North American fresh produce exporters in Europe, and what pitfalls do they need to be aware of when approaching this market?**

A: The potential for expansion in Europe for U.S. producers in products like cherries is significant, but it will need to be focused. There is no room in the market today for the speculative trading that there was in the past.

**Q: Are there any special rules and requirements that exporters should keep in mind when exploring European export possibilities?**

A: The protocols in Europe are well known to U.S. exporters, so they are aware of what they need to do. But most export markets are requiring similar approaches, so if your organization is geared for export, there are a few hurdles to address.

U.S. companies need to be realistic when looking at Europe. It's a big market, but it's not a single market. The size and specifications in one country can be different from another country.

You also need to focus on what you are competing against. Freight costs from the U.S. are significant, and if the product is available from a more local source, then it will be tough to compete.

Certain products — cherries are a good example — have a natural window of opportunity and these provide a sustainable market.

The main competitor to the U.S. in Europe is Europe itself. Increasingly, customers are focusing on local for local, which makes sense because it drives out cost, it reduces carbon footprint and, of course, customers want it.

ingly, customers are focusing on local for local, which makes sense because it drives out cost, it reduces carbon footprint and, of course, customers want it.

**Q: How difficult a hurdle is airfreight for short shelf-life products to access the European market?**

A: The cost of airfreight is a significant issue as is currency in general. There will always be niche opportunities where the product can carry the cost into the market, but realistically, to provide the growers with an adequate return, sea freight offers a more sustainable solution. Even here though, export decisions need to be focused.

**Q: Could the recent changes to the organic rules make a difference, given there is still quite a significant market for organic products in countries such as Germany?**

A: The harmonization of the regulations on organics between the U.S. and the European Union is good news. Organics in Europe still have potential, and the market is growing; but of course, the domestic market for U.S. growers will also increase. The organic opportunities in Europe will come down to the same dynamic as in conventional product focus; in other words, "products that provide a return to the grower."

**Q: What opportunities does Total Produce see in the U.S. market for expansion?**

A: Because of what appears to be more erratic weather conditions, I can see more customers looking to create contingency against supply disruption.

Total Produce exports to virtually every market in the world. Certainly our involvement

with The Oppenheimer Group (Oppy) has opened a whole world of new ideas and opportunities. We are very excited about creating better customer opportunities from extending our global reach.

**Q. How significant a partnership is this to Total Produce?**

A. Total Produce carried out a very detailed review of the North American market. It was felt that opportunity existed for Total to extend its reach into the market. Oppy was seen as a very important first step in our broader understanding of the market. Oppy has an outstanding management team and the CEO, John Anderson, is a respected leader in the industry. Oppy continues to grow and develop and we see that there is significant opportunity for further growth.

**Q. Would it be possible to provide any insight about future plans for the two companies in terms of U.S. exports to Europe?**

A. Exports from the U.S. to Europe file into three categories: opportunistic, contingency and sustainable products.

The Oppy platform and relationship with Total gives opportunity in all three areas. Total has long-term relationships with key growers and exporters in North America, and we want this to continue. But as our business grows, and with the closer relationship between Oppy and Total, there are increasing prospects for the marketing of products from North America into Europe and visa versa.

pb

**U.S. companies need to be realistic when looking at Europe. It's a big market, but it's not a single market. The size and specifications in one country can be different from another country.**

**Interview by Steven Maxwell**

Denis Punter is executive chairman for Total Produce, a grower, importer, packer, distributor and marketer for over 200 lines of fresh fruits, vegetables and flowers in the U.K. The company services 300 million cartons of fresh produce to the retail, wholesale, foodservice and processing sectors across Europe and North America annually. In addition to being chairman, Punter now sits on the board of many Total Produce businesses in Europe and North America, with his focus increasingly on supporting the group's global strategy.

# HOW PRODUCE BRANDS CAN COMPETE WITH PRIVATE LABEL PRODUCTS



Let's remember what a brand is — brands have become a cultural belief system in our society. So, you may be wondering how to create a belief system for your brand.

You start with the development process:

- Brand persona
- Identify target audiences
- Create a brand position/promise
- Develop a business and communication strategy

- Apply the appropriate communication tactics/tools
- Implement a flawless execution

Brand positioning — it's all about positioning.

Creating a position means understanding how you stack up against your competition using the following criteria:

1. **Reputation:** What's the word in the industry? What's the word on the street?
2. **Product Offerings:** Are they retail/foodservice/consumer relevant?
3. **Innovation:** Packaging, category extension, and Six Sigma Lean practices
4. **Workplace:** Do your employees speak highly of you?
5. **Citizenship:** Do you speak proudly about where you come from?
6. **Governance:** What is your food safety, traceability and crisis preparedness policy?
7. **Leadership:** Do you set the pace or fall behind? Are you involved in the industry creating better products, service, and industry standards, etc.?
8. **Performance:** What is your financial track record?

Interestingly, there are no rules for positioning — only logical consistent approaches. It's a process.

No rules — except for one: Positions must be earned, and positions are challenges. The position you take is a challenge to the marketplace — a challenge to prove that you earned that position. In the food business, you can count on the fact that no matter what you say, your marketplace is going to find out whether you deserve to hold the position you claim based on the criteria above.

If you claim to be one of the “best new products,” the marketplace is going to investigate. If you claim “best new innovation,” people will take a look. If you decide that you want to be one of the dozens of companies that claim to be the “healthiest new product,” the marketplace will scrutinize accordingly.

When they're done with their [albeit primitive/anecdotal] research, when they looked intensively into who, what, why, when, where and

how you compare with your competitors, what other consumers think, what newsgroups/Twitter feed/Facebook and reviewers and analysts say, one of two things will happen:

1. The marketplace is going to find that you are what you positioned yourself/products to be, and they agree. Good news: you've earned your place. And now you have an advocacy group.

2. Or the marketplace is going to discover that you are not what you claim. Not good news.

In the latter scenerio, the only position you'll occupy in the marketplace is the most heavily populated one of them all: the “Full of Hot Air” position.

So when crafting your key messages, make sure you keep in mind the importance of position. How should we position ourselves based on the brand persona and target audience? What is the brand promise?

If positions are promises you make, then the real effort behind positioning is not “what kind of position should we take in the marketplace,” but “what kind of product do we want to be to the marketplace?” It's not about your specific product. It's about the features and benefits that resonate with the target audience. Whether that is a profit benefit to a retailer or a health benefit to a consumer, you must ask: what does my product/company mean to them?

At the end of the day, as we think about positioning, this is what must be foremost in our mind. Not slogans. Not tag lines. Not logos. Not tactics.

It's key to have a real understanding that a position is a promise. Promises you make to your marketplace that you are a certain kind of product/company; you are a leader, an innovator, and a lifesaver — whatever it might be.

When you position your product/company with deserving key messages, backed by proof statements, you are saying to your marketplace, “We promise that the more you get to know us, the more you'll learn that we really are this kind of product, we deserve the position we've taken, and you will endorse us for that.”

After all, it's the marketplace that drives everything. It's the marketplace that creates positions. It's the marketplace that allows companies and products to own them. And in the consumer marketplace, once you've made a promise, you have to keep it.

So what promises will your company/product make?

When I say Volvo, what is the first word you think of? Safety.

When I say Mercedes, what is the first word you think of? Luxury.

In one word a promise is made. If I buy either one of those vehicles I will feel safe or I will feel luxurious. The perception is in the mind, and the promise is the follow-through. Key messages can certainly be longer than one word, but remember they are messages that can be easily adopted/reiterated by the audience for which they are crafted.

pb

## VIRGINIA ZIMM, PRESIDENT OF FAYE CLACK COMMUNICATIONS INC.

With more than 25 years in the industry, Virginia (Ginny) is the architect of the company's growth and is personally connected to every facet of the food industry. Whether it's with the trade, the complex network of foreign and Canadian government agencies or the media, she understands each segment's needs. Zimm is a board member of the Ontario Produce Marketing Association, a member of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association, the Produce Marketing Association, the Canadian Retail Council, the Canadian Culinary Federation, the International Association Of Culinary Professionals, the Canadian Restaurant And Food Association, and is a founding member of Les Dames d'Escoffier, Toronto chapter.

# TWO FAMILIES, ONE TREE

**J**. Marchini Farms of Le Grand, CA, may be synonymous today with radicchio, but the company's roots are in tomatoes.

Carlo Giampaoli and Florindo Marchini were the two co-founders of the Giampaoli-Marchini company. In the late 1920's the two families of farmers stood together for this photo. From left to right is Carlo Giampaoli (co-founder and farmer), Decimo Marchini (packing house manager), Marino Giampaoli (irrigation manager), and Florindo Marchini (co-founder and field labor manager).

Carlo and Florindo met in 1925 and started farming tomatoes. For many of the early years, the tomatoes were grown on old-fashion stakes using no tractors, only horses.

"Staked tomato plants make the best eating fresh tomatoes," says Marc Marchini, sales coordinator for the company and fourth generation Marchini. "By hanging on the plant, they get stronger and sweeter and are better slicing tomatoes. You can also pick the plant 5-6 times."

The Live Oak Farms' brand tomatoes were grown, packed and shipped in Le Grand. The brand of tomatoes was named after the shady oak tree under which the tomatoes were originally packed; the same tree still stands today, just as magnificent as it was 80 years ago.

"The soil in the area is very good," says Marc. "It is a very heavy dirt, and since live oak trees like heavy soil, it was by nature that they developed large groves in the Le Grand area. Also, the live oak tree symbolizes longevity and sturdiness, which marries well with our company values."

Over the years, the Giampaoli and Marchini business grew to involve many family members. Eventually, everyone found their niches and established different companies. The Giampaoli's continued with toma-



atoes, growing green, ripened and Roma tomatoes as well as bell peppers under the Live Oak Farms company. The Marchini family began experimenting with a new lettuce seed from Italy. Joe Marchini (one of Florindo's three son's) put J. Marchini Farms on the map with his passion for unique vegetable varieties and by becoming one of the first original radicchio farmers in the U.S.

The *Blast from the Past* is a regular feature of *PRODUCE BUSINESS*. We welcome submissions of your old photos, labels or advertisements along with suggested captions. Please send materials to: Editor, *PRODUCE BUSINESS*, P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425, or e-mail [info@producebusiness.com](mailto:info@producebusiness.com)

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| Harris Consulting Solutions                           | 58     | 269-903-7481 |                                  |
| Hood River Cherry Company                             | 72     | 541-386-2183 | www.hrcherrycompany.com          |
| House Foods America Corporation                       | 39     | 714-901-4350 | www.house-foods.com              |
| I Love Produce LLC                                    | 88     | 610-869-4664 | www.iloveproduce.com             |
| Idaho Potato Commission                               | 29     | 208-334-2350 | www.idahopotato.com/retail       |
| Inline Plastics Corp.                                 | 91     | 800-826-5567 | www.inlineplastics.com           |

| COMPANY                                | PAGE # | PHONE        | WEBSITE                     |
|--|--------|--------------|-----------------------------|
| Kerry's Kitchen Gardens Inc.           | 60     | 305-247-7096 |                             |
| Keystone Fruit Marketing, Inc.         | 54     | 717-597-2112 | www.keystonefruit.com       |
| Lambeth Groves                         | 54     | 843-235-2081 | www.unitedjuice.com         |
| LGS Specialty Sales, Ltd.              | 63     | 800-796-2349 | www.lgssales.com            |
| Mann Packing Company, Inc.             | 9      | 800-884-6266 | www.veggiesmadeeasy.com     |
| Mariani Packing Co.                    | 96     | 707-452-2800 | www.mariani.com             |
| McKay Transcold LLC                    | 45     | 612-308-8493 | www.mckaytranscold.com      |
| Melissa's/World Variety Produce, Inc.  | 41     | 800-468-7111 | www.melissas.com            |
| MIXTEC Group                           | 57     | 626-440-7077 | www.mixtec.net              |
| National Mango Board                   | 77     | 877-MANGOS-1 | www.mango.org               |
| New England Produce Council            | 67     | 781-273-0444 | www.newenglandproduce.com   |
| New Jersey Department of Agriculture   | 83     | 609-292-8853 | www.state.nj.us/agriculture |
| Nickey Gregory Company, LLC            | 59     | 404-366-7410 | www.nickeygregory.com       |
| Pacific Tomato Growers                 | 55     | 209-450-9810 | www.sunripeproduce.com      |
| Paramount Citrus Association           | 5      | 213-612-9957 | www.paramountcitrus.com     |
| Peri & Sons Farms                      | 37     | 775-463-4444 | www.periandsons.com         |
| Prime Time                             | 52     | 760-399-4166 | www.primetimeproduce.com    |
| Produce for Better Health Foundation   | 97     | 302-235-2329 | www.pbhfoundation.org       |
| Produce Marketing Association          | 79     | 302-738-7100 | www.pma.com                 |
| Red Blossom Farms                      | 52     | 805-981-1839 | www.redblossom.com          |
| Sambraio Packaging                     | 90     | 800-563-4467 | www.sambraio.com            |
| Spice World, Inc.                      | 87     | 800-433-4979 | www.spiceworldinc.com       |
| Tanimura & Antle, Inc.                 | 31     | 800-772-4542 | www.taproduce.com           |
| Turbana Banana Corp                    | 33     | 800-TURBANA  | www.turbana.com             |
| United Juice Companies of America Inc. | 54     | 843-235-2081 | www.unitedjuice.com         |
| The USA Bouquet Co.                    | 22     | 800-433-1071 | www.usabq.com               |
| Village Farms                          | 43     | 888-377-3213 | www.villagefarms.com        |
| Watsonville Berry Co-op                | 85     | 831-724-5601 |                             |
| Western Cape Citrus Producers Forum    | 63     | 610-688-3164 | www.summercitrus.com        |
| Yakima Fresh LLC                       | 71     | 800-541-0394 | www.yakimafresh.com         |

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Fri Jul 27 14:42:44 2012

### Natural Delights Introduces Country's First Pitted Medjool Dates

by Bard Valley Natural Delights™ Medjool Dates  
Posted: Friday, July 27, 2012 at 8:38AM EDT

BARD VALLEY, CA-- Bard Valley Natural Delights, the nation's top Medjool date brand, offers consumers a convenient new way to enjoy the lusciousness and all-around snackability of Medjools with the introduction of Natural Delights Pitted Medjool Dates, the country's first pitted Medjool date product. Launching this fall, the 12-ounce package will sell for the Suggested Retail Price (SRP) of \$6.99.

"The introduction of Natural Delights Pitted Medjool Dates makes it easier than ever for Americans to indulge in the sweetness of one of the world's most mysterious fruits," said David Anderson, head of marketing for the Bard Valley Medjool Date Growers Association (BVMdGA).

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### The Time Is Ripe For Fresh BC Blueberries This Season

by British Columbia Blueberry Council  
Posted: Friday, July 27, 2012 at 6:58AM EDT

Beginning with a trickle and turning into a torrent, consumers can now find the first of the 2012 season's fresh BC blueberries at their local supermarkets, produce departments, farmers' markets and farm gates. More than 800 British Columbia blueberry farmers are now out in the fields picking what looks like a very strong crop of the antioxidant-rich, sweet

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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.



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- A depth and breadth of inventory and resources across categories to support major promotional initiatives
  - An extensive consumer database to assist in making fact-based decisions

