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MEXICO Q&A • PHILADELPHIA Q&A • PHILADELPHIA FOODSERVICE PROFILE
IMPORTED ONIONS • PERUVIAN ASPRAGUS • MEXICAN AVOCADOS
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THIS MONTH'S WINNER



Jackie Paris
Manager
Tony Diamond's Farm Market Inc.
Camden, NJ

As Jackie Paris, manager for the single-unit, family-owned and operated Tony's Diamond Farm Market Inc., would say, "Produce is in my blood. It's what I have always done. I run the store with my brother. He buys everything and trucks it in himself. I set the store and manage the sales floor."

The family business, named after Paris's grandfather, Tony "Diamond" — "He was known for wearing a huge diamond ring," she recollects — specializes in tropicals. Everything in the store, which is nearly all produce, comes from the Philadelphia Wholesale Mar-

ket. "The new facility is incredible."

While Paris's grandfather was a mason man by trade, he sold produce on the side. "That continued with my father, and after many produce carts, he finally decided to open a brick-and-mortar store with my mom in 1950s," Paris says. "We're a neighborhood store. Customers who used to come in as children with their parents now come in with their kids."

Paris has been receiving PRODUCE BUSINESS for quite some time. "I remember it coming to the house when I was younger," she recollects. "It's very helpful and definitely puts you in touch with what's going on in the industry."

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

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QUESTIONS FOR THE NOVEMBER ISSUE

- 1) Who started Booth Ranches in 1957? _____
- 2) What is Crunch Pak's booth number at the New York Produce Show? _____
- 3) What three social networking sites does Duda Farm Fresh Foods use? _____
- 4) What is the contact number for Locus Traxx? _____
- 5) What kinds of POS does Sunlight International Sales offer for its Pretty Lady brand of grapes? _____
- 6) What is Wayne E. Bailey's fastest growing sweet potato category? _____

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

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INDUSTRY MAKES A DIFFERENCE AT 2011 WASHINGTON PUBLIC POLICY CONFERENCE

By Patrick Delaney,
communications manager,
United Fresh Produce Association

More than 500 members of the fresh produce industry joined United Fresh early last month at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill for the 2011 Washington Public Policy Conference. Here's a look at some of the highlights from this year's WPPC.

The annual conference kicked off on Monday, October 3, with the Fresh Impact Panel, an inside look at ways the industry can communicate more effectively with lawmakers in Washington. The panel provided attendees with a youthful look at lobbying and government relations, and even explored how Washington has changed with the advent of the BlackBerry.

The annual Welcome Reception followed the panel, and conference attendees took the opportunity to network and relax with stunning views of the Capitol dome.

Day two began with an address from Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee Chairman Tom Harkin (D-IA), who returned to the Washington Public Policy Conference 10 years after his landmark suggestion to provide schoolchildren a free fruit or vegetable snack each day to promote better health. Sen. Harkin was presented with the United Fresh Congressional Leadership Award for his dedication to the health of Americans, and to the health of the agriculture industry.

After breaking into United's four market segments for education sessions, attendees reconvened for a lunchtime address from Senate Committee on Agriculture Nutrition and Forestry Ranking Member Pat Roberts (R-KS), and House Administration Committee Chairman Dan Lungren (R-CA). Sen. Roberts discussed — with his trademark humor — the specialty crop landscape heading into the 2012 Farm Bill, and Rep. Lungren detailed his proposed agricultural guest worker amendment to the Legal Workforce Act currently on the floor of the House that would mandate the use of the E-Verify system.

On Tuesday afternoon, attendees split into teams and made the short walks to the House

Over 180 Congressional offices were visited by 500-plus United members.



and Senate to meet and discuss industry priorities with more than 180 congressional offices — the most in the history of the WPPC — during the March on Capitol Hill. The congressional visit teams then stayed on the Hill for what many consider to be the crown jewel of the Washington conference, the annual Fresh Festival on Capitol Hill in the Longworth House Office Building. At this year's event, members of the fresh produce industry played to a packed house of lawmakers, officials and congressional staff, showcasing the best that the produce industry has to offer.

Tuesday night wrapped up with the annual FreshPAC dinner, featuring House Agriculture Committee member and Republican Freshmen Class President Rep. Austin Scott (R-GA), who discussed the impact of new members of Congress, as well as the upcoming 2012 elections.

The final day of the Washington conference began with a discussion of the upcoming fight over the 2012 Farm Bill with House Agriculture Committee Chairman Frank Lucas (R-OK) and Subcommittee on Nutrition and Horticulture Chairwoman Jean Schmidt (R-OH). Chairman Lucas explored the issues likely to emerge as his committee begins discussions on the 2012 Farm Bill, and discussed ways the produce industry can remain involved to ensure the continued viability of produce-specific Farm Bill programs. Chairwoman

Schmidt focused her discussion on the importance of maintaining nutrition and feeding programs authorized by the legislation.

Attendees then boarded coaches bound for face-to-face meetings with industry regulators at USDA and EPA headquarters in Washington, and FDA's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition in College Park, MD. Included in those meetings was a candid discussion of nutrition programs with USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan, and a discussion of EPA pesticide and water policies with Agricultural Counselor to the Administrator Larry Elworth, as well as a meeting with FDA Deputy Director of Operations Don Kraemer for a discussion of the Food Safety Modernization Act and how businesses can adopt new practices on production, processing, handling, logistics and more to meet FDA's coming rules.

United Fresh put a bow on the 2011 WPPC with an address from *POLITICO* Co-Founder and Executive Editor Jim VandeHei, who provided a unique perspective on how politics, campaigns and the media intersect the nation and how these three pillars will influence the elections in 2012.

Next year's Washington Public Policy Conference will return to the Hyatt Regency on Capitol Hill, October 1-3. More information and photos from the conference are available at www.UnitedFresh.org.

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CANTALOUPE CRISIS REVEALS FDA'S LACK OF LEADERSHIP

By James Prevor

President & Editor-in-Chief



As we take pen to paper, there are 28 people dead and one pregnant woman who miscarried through illnesses associated with the listeriosis outbreak that has been linked to Rocky Ford brand cantaloupes from Jensen Farms in Colorado.

It is worth reading that line again because the enormity of this outbreak can hardly be overstated.

It is one thing for the industry to have food safety problems that, typically, give people stomachaches. This opens the door for discussion on the cost/benefit ratios of any food safety measures. After all, many people would gladly run the risk of getting an upset stomach in exchange for less expensive food. As a matter of public policy, it is easy to argue that resources should be focused on risks – say auto accidents – more likely to produce fatalities.

But death leaves little room for argument.

From a consumer perspective, the benefit of eating any single food item is small, so the willingness to accept much risk of mortality is very low. From a public policy perspective, the benefits of individual foods is infinitesimal, so the willingness to accept morbidity is non-existent. And from a supply chain/industry perspective, who wants to even touch a supply chain that kills people?

So how do we stop it from happening again?

The temptation in this type of event is to blame the grower or packer. Identify the particular issues that caused this outbreak and then call the producers negligent or mistaken. Fine, but that just leads to attacks on individuals. It is far wiser to look at the environment that drove the decisions.

One driver is government. The FDA will fly in, study Jensen Farms thoroughly, develop a thesis as to what contributed to the problem – say a lack of precooling on the cantaloupes – then make no policy change at all.

If the expectation is going to be that it is a regulatory apparatus that will ensure safer food, then the FDA will have to become more like the FAA. If there is a plane crash and they identify the cause – a faulty part, poorly trained pilots, pilot exhaustion, etc. – the solution the FAA will either implement or propose is not solely for the airline that crashed. It is for everyone and for all future flights. Everybody has to implement checks of their fuselage cracks on certain model planes; everyone has to start training pilots on what to do if birds fly through the engines, etc.

The shocking thing about the FDA report on Jensen Farms is not anything it found at the facility. It is how little courage of its own

convictions the FDA shows. So it gives advice that is not very helpful. For example, in its report on Jensen Farms it wrote about precooling: “After harvest, the cantaloupes were placed in cold storage. The cantaloupes were not pre-cooled to remove field heat before cold storage. Warm fruit with field heat potentially created conditions that would allow the formation of condensation, which is an environment ideal for *Listeria monocytogenes* growth.”

OK, now what is a farmer or packer supposed to make of this finding? Precooling might make safer cantaloupes. OK, but so might more trapping, fencing, better washing systems, etc. It is not useful because it is neither a requirement nor a recommendation. Obviously, the quality benefits of precooling have not been sufficient to entice this packer to build such facilities. In light of the high cost of such a facility and the short season in which it would be utilized, the packer would be hesitant to build such a facility for food safety reasons knowing that

he would be competing against other packers in its region that do not precool and thus could charge less for the melons.

So with the FDA not prepared to seize the reins on food safety, that really leaves it to the other big driver – buyers. The great haunting question of this outbreak is what led Wal-Mart to buy these cantaloupes? Wal-Mart

is widely recognized as one of the premier players in food safety. It certainly needs large volumes. So why wasn't Wal-Mart buying from one of the high volume California producers?

We don't know for sure but the best answer seems to be this: Wal-Mart required a Good Manufacturing Practices audit – which this facility had. After passing that threshold, the buyers had other priorities than trying to find the single best food safety program. Maybe this product, especially on a delivered basis, was cheaper. Or, maybe, the buyers were being true to Wal-Mart's efforts to sell more locally grown and regional produce.

In any case, the reality is that growers and packers are not able to do everything possible to achieve food safety. If they did, everything would be grown in controlled environments and each cantaloupe would cost \$100. So they have to choose what to do and what not to do.

For mainstream operators, the choice of what to spend money on for food safety will be driven either by the government – what is required by law and regulation – or by customers – what is required to make the sale. They can hardly do otherwise. If they spend money on precooling facilities, neither required by government nor valued by buyers, they will go out of business.

So in a very real sense, when the FDA team is busy investigating a packing plant in Colorado, it is looking in the wrong place for the cause of the outbreak. It needs to investigate procurement policies and its own office back in Washington, D.C.

With the FDA not prepared to seize the reins on food safety, that really leaves it to the other big driver — buyers.

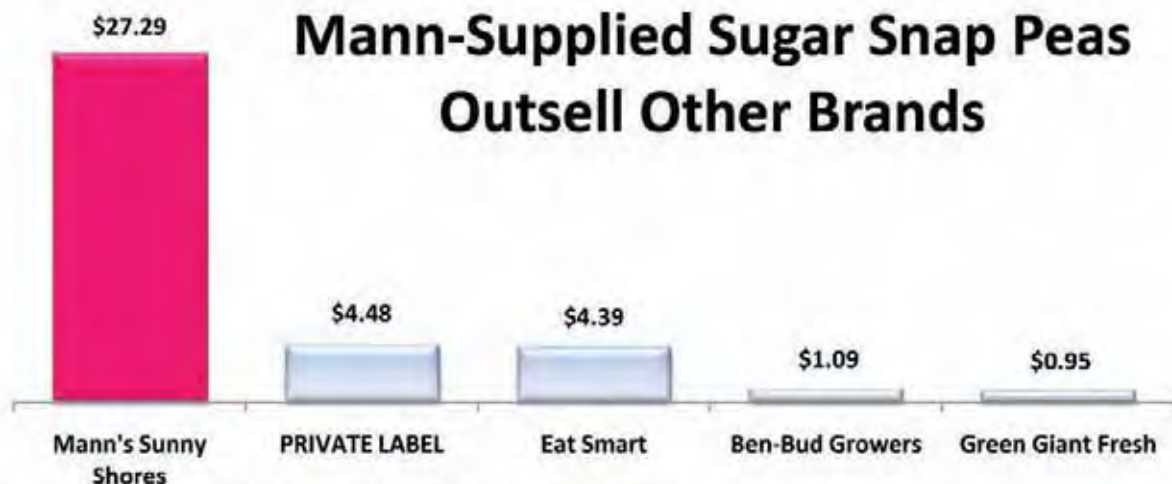
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Sustainability Means “Transportation” for California’s Flower Farms

BY KASEY CRONQUIST, IOM, CEO/AMBASSADOR, CALIFORNIA CUT FLOWER COMMISSION

A recent study by the University of Southern California commissioned by the California Cut Flower Commission (CCFC) has shown that a model of cooperating California’s flower freight can help to reduce landed cost pricing out of California. Currently, California’s flower farms’ transportation challenges are related to the Freight-On-Board (FOB) origin pricing, competitive pressures from flowers imported from South America and competition within California for outbound trucks from California. Established in 2008, the CCFC’s Transportation Committee has been working to address these challenges to provide greater nationwide access of their flowers to more people in more places across the country.

Customer Feedback: We’re Still Listening

Previous market research reports by Prince & Prince Inc., dating back to early 2000, revealed customers of California’s flowers found low shipping volumes, quality controls and costs as underlying problems and points of concern for buyers faced with decisions between California or Miami. In addition, California’s FOB origin pricing required their customers to be responsible for organizing their own transportation for their shipments out of California. An astute wholesaler interview by Prince & Prince in the 2000 study articulated the problem saying:

“...an individual wholesaler does not have a lot of clout with the trucking companies. The volume of boxes received by any one wholesaler is usually small compared to the volume of boxes from the growers. Thus, the grower has the clout with the trucking companies...All-inclusive pricing would make it easier for the wholesaler to make purchasing decisions for California product. But it would also get the grower involved in the freight side of the business — getting the grower involved in the responsibility and liability of the efficient freight transport — and drive that efficiency upward.”

While many transportation improvements for California Grown Flowers have been made during

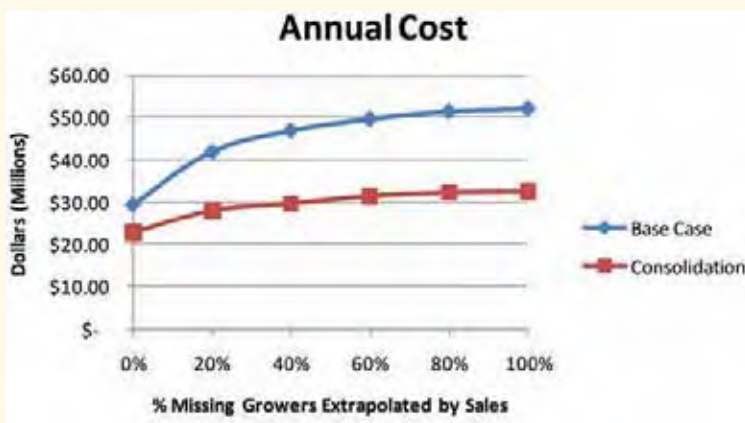
the past 10 years, the underlying issue posed by the wholesaler in 2000 has remained. With 250 California flower farms, 700 wholesalers nationwide and three primary trucking companies to work with, competition for

shipments hasn’t necessarily built the most efficient transportation model. In fact, competition appears to have actually driven costs up instead of down. As import market share and shipment volumes from South America have continued to grow over the past 20 years, high costs associated with California’s transportation into key markets have been a barrier to growth.

California’s agriculture production represents the No. 1 state in cash farm receipts in 2009. Producing far more than it consumes causes competition for outbound trucks to be fierce in California. Florida, on the other hand, offers far more competitive rates for outbound shipments. With Miami representing the primary port of entry for the majority of flowers sold in the United States, this becomes a compounding competitive challenge for our California flower farmers.

Cooperation Shouldn’t Be “Freight”-ening

To try and tackle these challenges facing the future success of its farms, the CCFC’s Transportation Committee has commissioned two studies to look at how to best address California’s transportation challenges. Both studies have since supported the suggestion offered by the wholesaler interviewed by Prince & Prince in 2000 and have found that consolidation of freight volume by cooperating farms will drive



the improved efficiencies and lower costs. The first study conducted by Tom French with the Supply Chain Coach, a Dublin, CA-based company that helps create and improve supply chain solutions, found by coordinating shipments through a point of consolidation, shipping costs were reduced between 13 - 58 percent. The recent release of the study by Daniel Epstein, in the Department of Engineering at the University of Southern California, found consolidation of California’s floral freight volumes provided for 22-34 percent in transportation-related cost savings.

California’s flower farms will now be taking a good hard look at how to best implement these recommendations of consolidation provided by the Supply Chain Coach and University of Southern California. Providing customers with the best quality product at the best possible price has always been a necessary virtue for California to maintain its competitive advantage over cheaper imports. A cooperative shipping network for California will allow our farms to ship more full truckloads and eliminate the duplicity and partial loads that currently drive up costs. A more efficient transportation system for California will allow California to offer FOB destination pricing, better compete with imports in important markets and achieve better negotiated trucking rates than any one grower or wholesaler.



The CCFC is an organization funded by cut flower and greens farmers to do for all of them what none of them could do alone. The Commission is uniquely focused on our farms and helping them survive and thrive while ensuring consumers in the United States have quick and affordable access to the freshest, highest quality flower possible. The Commission focuses on four main areas to improve the vitality of the California cut flower and greens industry: Transportation, Public Relations, Governmental Affairs and Grower Research and Economic Development.

Reduced Transportation Costs Are First Step To National Marketing

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

Some ideas make so much sense that it is impossible to argue against them. Should California shippers attempt to negotiate collectively? Should the trade investigate the possibility of pooling shipments to generate full loads? Should producers be involved in efforts to reduce freight costs and to offer simplified pricing to buyers – the answers are yes, yes and yes!

These are all intelligent efforts to drive costs out of the system and simplify the decision to purchase flowers from California. This is imperative. It is a positive effort, but the world is a competitive place, always demanding that we do more and provide better value and a stronger sales proposition.

High U.S. wages, tough environmental standards, developing concerns about sustainability – all these trends and more tend to make it expensive to grow in the United States, and California is no exception. Efforts such as those described in the study by the California Cut Flower Commission are thus not so much the solution as the ante required to compete at all. If we become lazy about costs... if we fail to innovate to bring costs down... we will certainly suffer.

Same thing with quality. An area such as California can only thrive by producing the best. So quality and cost-reduction require continual vigilance. Yet still more is required, and we would suggest some research efforts be focused on the locally grown movement and tying it in with branding.

One of the things that our own focus group series has indicated is that nationalism can be a powerful force for locally grown. It turns out that many consumers, who advocate for locally grown, don't share the locavore notions of wanting everything to come from within 50 miles or 100 miles or some other arbitrary distance. Many seem to view local in an almost tribal manner, as a way of supporting their "team" – and that "team" can be a county, a state or a country.

Another key issue in local is that consumers want to perceive that things are grown in the "right" place, that the growers are authentic, with a history that gives a legitimate claim to the attention of consumers.

The California Cut Flower Commission is aware of all this, of course, and it fills its web site with "Meet the Families behind the Flowers" promotions and similar efforts.

This is smart. Organizations such as the California Avocado Commission, with its "Hand Grown in California" slogan and prominent profiling of authentic California avocado growers in its marketing, has brilliantly developed a strategy to take a commodity grown in California and make it seem local and authentic to consumers all across the country.

Getting consumers to recognize California as an authentic growing region of flowers may be a formidable obstacle to effective marketing. Of course, necessity is the mother of invention, and the need to brand goes hand in hand with the opportunity to market. We would raise two questions:

First, is "California Grown" the right brand? The "California Grown" license plate logo is useful, but one wonders if it provides the optimal tool for this job. It may be very effective within California because consumers in-state feel affiliation with California. Perhaps, though, a "USA Grown" program would have more appeal to consumers across the country.

When one goes to the *CaliforniaGrown.org* website, one gets appeals such as this:

You can do your part to help the state's economy by looking for California grown products when you shop! From grocery stores and farmer's markets to lumber yards and wine shops there are a variety of retail outlets that carry California grown products...

Many retailers in the state show their support for the "California Grown" campaign by placing the familiar blue license plate logo in their weekly ads near products that are locally grown. In addition, some retailers are taking the same idea further by placing signage in their stores to promote their California grown products. Make sure to look for the logo and signage where you shop and remember to "Be Californian, Buy California Grown!"

This may be an effective pitch, but it hardly seems designed to persuade people in Boston that they should buy flowers from

California rather than Colombia.

A national marketing agreement or marketing order may be difficult to put together, and California growers might recoil from the thought of promoting a few flowers that are not California-grown, but they should study it because with 90% domestic market share, the growers in California might make more money with a more effective national pitch.

The second issue, once the brand is set, is how to use it. The key may be driving it at store level. How about a rack or cooler that exclusively sells "USA Grown" flowers? Then they could be more easily advertised, promoted and highlighted.

With 90% domestic market share, the growers in California might make more money with a more effective national pitch.

The California Cut Flower Commission deserves kudos for launching this transportation initiative to reduce costs. As the industry becomes more price-competitive, it opens up opportunities to compete more aggressively. Let us try to dream big and take advantage of the opportunity presented.

TRANSITION



COLORFUL HARVEST SALINAS, CA
Salinas, CA-based Colorful Harvest has hired long-time produce industry veteran

Steven Johnston as a business development manager specializing in strawberry and blueberry sales. Johnston, a fifth generation native of Salinas, has a produce career that spans over 38 years in a wide variety of commodities including berries and vegetables with companies such as Blazer Wilkinson, Pacific Gold Farms, JR. Norton and Bruce Church Company.

TRANSITION



NASH PRODUCE NASHVILLE, NC
Doug Craig has

joined the company as director of food safety. Craig has 19 years of experience in building food safety programs for companies such as Bay Valley Foods, Hardee's Food System and Sara Lee. Doug will be responsible for working toward certification of all GlobalGAP, Primus, USDA and necessary audits. In addition, he will be monitoring food safety and employee practices to help the company take all essential measures to make certain that products are supplied at the highest level of quality and safety.

Hunter Gibbs joined the Nash Produce sweet potato sales team with 10 years of previous experience in Eastern vegetable sales. He grew up in agriculture and also farms red and yellow table stock potatoes. Hunter is the president of the NC Potato Growers Association. His main focus will be on business development and new customer acquisitions.



TRANSITION



EDINBURG CITRUS ASSOCIATION EDINBURG, TX

Jeff Husfeld has recently rejoined the sales department of Edinburg Citrus Association. During his time away from ECA, Jeff owned and operated his own turf farm in South Texas. Husfeld has 14 years of experience in both produce procurement and agricultural marketing. His background includes sourcing and procuring produce from Texas, Mexico and Colorado for the Kroger Co. and as a marketing specialist for the Texas Department of Agriculture.

NEW PRODUCT

HBF INTERNATIONAL ADDS CRANBERRIES TO FALL LINEUP

Sheridan, OR-based HBF International, home of the Hurst's Berry Farm label, will be growing and shipping fresh cranberries this fall. The Oregon-grown berries will be available through December, just in time for holiday dishes and decorations. Hurst's Berry Farm offers a wide selection of fresh berries year-round. Last spring, HBF took on a new name to accommodate the continued growth of the company. Although the name has changed, the products and the commitment of the company remain the same.



NEW PRODUCT



NEW PRODUCT AND PACKAGING FOR THE TANIMURA & ANTLE ARTISAN FAMILY

This year, Tanimura & Antle's Artisan Family Lettuce product line expanded to include Artisan Romaine and most recently, Artisan Boston. The new labels for each of the Artisan leafy green products are similar in design, using color to differentiate each leaf variety. On the back of each label, consumers will find simple preparation tips, recipe ideas and usage suggestions provided by the Salinas, CA-based company.

NEW PRODUCT



CRUNCH PAK INTRODUCES DIPPERZ SINGLE-SERVE PRODUCE SNACKS

Cashmere, WA-based Crunch Pak is launching low-calorie, single-serve DipperZ in four combinations of fresh-cut produce and dip. The DipperZ are available as sweet or tart apples with caramel dip, sweet apples with chocolate dip and baby peeled carrots with ranch dip. Each DipperZ tray has 80 calories or less and an estimated 30-day shelf life.

NEW PRODUCT



MARIANI NUT OFFERS MORE RETAIL PACKAGING OPTIONS

Mariani Nut Company's line of seasoned almonds will soon be available in clear, 12-oz. bags in addition to the original 6-oz. stand-up foil pouches. By early 2012, all of the Winters, CA-based company's retail products will be available in either foil or clear bags, leaving the selection up to produce managers to decide what's best for their customers. The seasoned almond line is the company's newest addition. All bags feature convenient, consumer-friendly zip-lock closures to maintain freshness.

ANNOUNCEMENT



PINK RIBBON PRODUCE HOLDS AWARDS CEREMONY AT PMA

Pink Ribbon Produce, an in-store consumer marketing program that raises awareness and funds for local Susan G. Komen affiliates, recognized Harris Teeter, Price Chopper and Meijer stores during the ceremony for their long-term participation in the program. Wendy McManus, marketing director at the National Mango Board, and the founder behind the program, was also recognized. Through engaging POS materials visible in their produce departments, retailers highlight partner suppliers while increasing breast cancer awareness among shoppers.

ANNOUNCEMENT



DOLE "RAISE THE SALAD BAR" CONTEST

Westlake Village, CA-based Dole Food Co., in partnership with Lt. Governor Casey Cagle's Healthy Kids Georgia and Georgia 4-H, has launched a contest for Georgia high schools. The Raise the Salad Bar contest, which ends February 3, 2012, will award three salad bars to schools whose students submit the best essay or video about how their school is working to meet Georgia's health education standards. Supported by Georgia's Lt. Governor Casey Cagle, the contest is designed to help create healthier school environments in the state. Launch Event Participants included (left to right): Diane Harris, CDC; Nancy Rice, Georgia Department of Education; Larry Winter, Georgia Board of Education; Marty Ordman, Dole Foods; Georgia Lt. Governor Casey Cagle; Kirk Faruquharson, USDA; and Richie Knight, Georgia 4-H.

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

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ANNOUNCEMENTS



COLORFUL HARVEST'S NEW ADDITION

Colorful Harvest's year-round berry operation continues to expand with the addition of more than 500 new acres, 10 new ranches and a new exclusive cooler operation in Plant City, FL. The new 50,000 square-foot facility will provide growers and customers high quality multiple product cooling, service and loading, all in one location. The Salinas, CA-based company's Florida operations will include, for the first time, a vegetable program that will include seasonal red corn, green beans and squash. The company's investment in their own cooler in central Mexico (ColorMEX) has helped the company's winter strawberry program achieve a steady increase and will now build on that by introducing a new expanded blackberry operation in Central Mexico.



PRODUCE INDUSTRY LEADERS HONORED WITH LGMA GOLDEN CHECKMARK AWARD

Bill Pool, manager of ag production and research for Rochester, NY-based grocery store of Wegmans, and Mike Spinazzola (center), president and COO of Diversified Restaurant Systems, were announced as recipients of the California Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement Golden Checkmark Award at the PMA convention in Atlanta, GA. The Golden Checkmark is given to recognize individuals and organizations that support mandatory government inspection of food safety practices in the produce industry.



PFK RAISES OVER \$3.5 MILLION

Orlando, FL-based Produce for Kids raised over \$408,000 for children's hospitals across the country from its Get Healthy Give Hope 2011 spring campaign. This generous donation brings the total amount raised to help children's hospitals and other non-profit organizations that benefit kids to more than \$3.5 million since the campaign's inception in 2002. This year's spring campaign included 16 grocery store retailers nationwide. In addition, more than 40 fruit and vegetable suppliers took part in supporting the campaign.



INDUSTRY UNITES TO SUPPORT BREAST CANCER

Atpus, CA-base McDill Associates and Irving, TX-based DMA Solutions raised \$6,000 for Produce for Pink, a campaign that unites the fresh produce industry's commitment to fight against breast cancer, during the recent PMA conference in Atlanta, which acted as a launch pad for this initiative. Melissa McDill, president of McDill Associates, and Dan'l Mackey Almy, president of DMA Solutions, presented the check to Eileen Ruban, an employee of the Atlanta-based Saint Joseph's Mercy Foundation, Doug Spickler and Alice Kerber, founders of the Traci Spickler Fund.



CERTIFIED QUALITY SEAL FOR CHILEAN EARLY GRAPES

Territorial Innovation Program, a Santiago, Chile-based public-private partnership, has launched the country's first certified seal for early table grapes, highlighting quality characteristics unique to the Northern Atacama region. The new quality certification seal called, FreshAtacama, seeks to differentiate the product with a consistent season guarantee. The initiative is the first time growers, exporters and government institutions have come together to work on a quality certification of its kind for the area. It will kick off with a pilot program of 500,000 cases bound for the U.S. market this year and will likely expand to Asian export markets in the coming seasons.



VILLAGE FARMS ANNOUNCES FULFILLMENT EXPANSION IN CARIBBEAN

Vancouver, BC, Canada-based Village Farms International has commenced operations in the Caribbean region with the first of its kind packing and distribution facility in the Dominican Republic. The fulfillment expansion is in conjunction with Village Farms International Grower Relations Supply Development Division and will operate under a new subsidiary, Village Farms DR, SRL. Located in Santiago, the new facility will include computerized grading machinery, value-added packaging capabilities, cold storage and will be fully GAP-certified. The company will began packing sweet bell peppers from the Dominican Republic in October.



KINGSTON & ASSOCIATES PLANS FOR EXPANSION

Kingston & Associates Marketing LLC of Idaho Falls, ID, announced its plan for the expansion of its MD2 variety golden pineapple program -- the Kingston "Sugar Pine." Building on the recent integration of Kingston Cross Dock & Cold Storage, its Southeast Florida warehouse facility located in Pompano Beach, the expansion of Kingston's pineapple volumes is a perfect fit with the operational abilities and close proximity to South Florida ports.



NEW PROMOTIONS AND POS FROM MANN

Mann Packing is supporting its sales program with multiple promotions this fall. This month, Mann is partnering with King Arthur Flour to offer 55-cents off any King Arthur Flour product with the purchase of Mann's sweet potato and butternut squash products. The on-pack offer includes a recipe for golden sweet potato muffins. Additionally, the annual "Fall Harvest Holiday" recipe card and coupon from the Salinas, CA-based company will be placed inside 100,000 packages of Mann's Broccolini. Shoppers will save \$1 on any Mann's fresh-cut vegetable item and receive four.



AMHPAC COLLABORATES WITH BAYER CROPSCIENCE

Sinaloa, Mexico-based AMHPAC signed an agreement that aims to promote responsible and active participation with actions that will strengthen the industry. One of the main objectives of this agreement is to address the issue of food safety, which has taken on an important place for supermarkets and the public in general, who are now more careful of fruits and vegetables they consume and how they are being produced. In August, 2009, the agreement between the AMHPAC and Bayer CropScience was signed for the first time, and this time it will be valid for two years.

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THE RISING STAR RECEPTION



On Saturday night, October 15, at the PMA Fresh Summit in Atlanta, GA, PRODUCE BUSINESS, in conjunction with sponsors, the MIXTEC Group and Ocean Mist Farms, hosted the sixth annual Rising Star Reception to celebrate this year's 40-Under-Forty* class.

In addition to the members of the Class of 2011, attendees included members of the classes of 2005-2010, as well as many movers and shakers of the produce industry. The students and faculty from U.S. and international colleges, who were participants of the Pack Family/PMA Career Pathways Fund, were also honored guests.

*40-Under-Forty, an annual feature of PRODUCE BUSINESS, honors the produce leaders of tomorrow, all of whom have been chosen by industry mentors for their industry and community accomplishments. Please see this year's winners by visiting www.producebusiness.com and clicking on our June 2011 issue. You can also nominate candidates for next year's class by clicking on the 40-under-Forty icon.

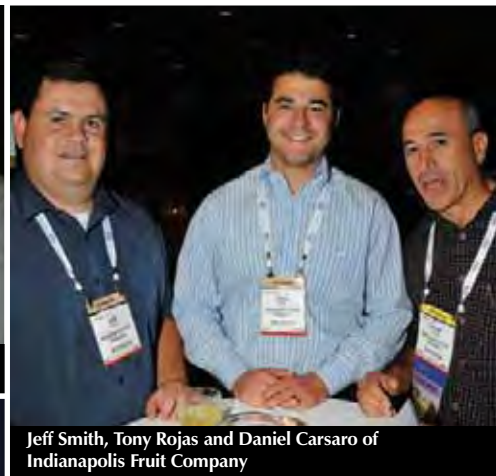


Editor-in-Chief, Jim Prevor, at podium, poses with some of this year's 40-Under-Forty recipients

PHOTOS BY DEAN BARNES AND BOB RABITO



Bruce Peterson of Bland Farms, Jim Prevor of PRODUCE BUSINESS and Troy Bland of Bland Farms



Jeff Smith, Tony Rojas and Daniel Carsaro of Indianapolis Fruit Company



Allan Dodge of Pro Citrus Network Inc.



Neil and Trish Galone of Booth Ranches LLC



Jacquie Ediger of Pro Citrus Network Inc.



Bryan Tate of Associated Wholesale Grocers



James Blowers of West Coast Distributing Inc.

THE RISING STAR RECEPTION



Jessica Harris of Earthbound Farm



Jim Prevora of PRODUCE BUSINESS



Josh Leichter of The Oppenheimer and Sean Nelson of FoodSource



Ted Kreis of Northern Plains Potatoes Growers Association and Steve Tweten of Red River Valley Potatoes



Raphael Goldberg of Interruption Fair Trade



Moses Mbuti of University of Pretoria and Spencer Drew of Arizona State University



Mike Traylor, Gretchen Kreidler, Ted Brasch and Mike Martin of Rio Queen Citrus Inc.



Ken Whitacre of PRODUCE BUSINESS and Kelly C. Krutz of Ahold USA Retail



Neil Millman of I Love Produce



Justin Bedwell of Bari Produce LLC



Patrick Killiany of Ahold USA Retail and Dan Welk of Earthbound Farm



Jamie Hillegas of Produce Marketing Association



Nibaldo Capote of J&C Tropicals



Bryan Silbermann of Produce Marketing Association

THE RISING STAR RECEPTION



Ken Whitacre of PRODUCE BUSINESS and Deb Kreider of Ahold USA Retail



Cary Rubin and Marc Rubin of Rubin Bros. Produce Corp. with Tony D'Amico of To-Jo Mushrooms Inc.



Jennifer Fancher of Green Giant Fresh and Miriam Miller Wolk of United Fresh Produce Association



Jorge Suarez, Dale Huss and Tony Boutonnet of Ocean Mist Farms



Malisa Rytting of Colorado Potato Administrative Committee



Sean Nelsen of C.H. Robinson Worldwide Inc.



Jay and Ruthie Pack of The Pack Group and Andrew Schultz of Diversified Restaurant Systems



Jerry Moran of California Giant Berry Farms and Sandra Moran



Jamie Strachan of Green Giant Fresh and Joe Pezzini of Ocean Mist Farms



Darvel Kirby, Kyle Reeves and Tommy Wilkins of United Supermarkets



Vince Ballesteros of Church Brothers



Sandy Lee of PRODUCE BUSINESS, Phillip Brooks and Nina Brooks Haq of H. Brooks & Company



Melissa Drew, Chris Drew, Rosa Boutonnet and Susie Boutonnet of Ocean Mist Farms



Tanya Mason of New Leaf Food Safety Solutions

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NOVEMBER 6 - 9, 2011

WESTERN GROWERS 85TH ANNUAL CONVENTION

Conference Venue: The Grand Del Mar, San Diego, CA
Conference Management: Western Growers Association, Newport Beach, CA
Phone: (949) 863-1000 • **Fax:** (949) 863-9028
Email: wfink-weber@wga.com
Website: www.wga.com

November 7 - 9, 2011

NEW YORK PRODUCE SHOW & CONFERENCE

The New York region's only show devoted to produce executives.
Conference Venue: New York Hilton & Towers, New York, NY
Conference Management: PRODUCE BUSINESS, Boca Raton, FL
Phone: (561) 994-1118 • **Fax:** (561) 994-1610
Email: register@nyproduceshow.com
Website: www.nyproduceshow.com

November 12 - 15, 2011

INT'L HOTEL, MOTEL & RESTAURANT SHOW

International Hotel, Motel + Restaurant Show
Conference Venue: Jacob K Javits Center, New York, NY
Conference Management: GLM, White Plains, NY
Phone: (914) 421-3249 • **Fax:** (914) 948-6197
Email: lwwhite@glmshows.com
Website: www.glmshows.com

November 14 - 15, 2011

AMERICAS FOOD AND BEVERAGE

The 15th Americas Food & Beverage Show is your opportunity to explore and sample the largest selection of foods and beverages from around the world catering to the taste of the Americas.
Conference Venue: Miami Beach Convention Center, Miami, FL
Conference Management: Americas Trade and Exhibition Company, Fairfax, VA
Phone: (703) 934-4700 • **Fax:** (305) 871-7904
Email: afb@worldtrade.org
Website: www.americasfoodandbeverage.com

November 16 - 18, 2011

FHC CHINA

The 15th International Exhibition for food, drink, hospitality, foodservice, bakery and retail industries
Conference Venue: Shanghai New Int'l Expo Centre (SNIEC), Shanghai, China
Conference Management: Oak Overseas, Ltd., Concord, NC
Phone: (704) 837-1980 • **Fax:** (704) 943-0853
Email: fhc@chinaallworld.com
Website: www.fhcchina.com

November 29 - December 1, 2011

HEALTH INGREDIENTS EUROPE

Health Ingredients Europe & Natural Ingredients is dedicated to showcasing the world's most innovative ingredients.
Conference Venue: Paris Nord Villepinte, Paris, France
Conference Management: Ingredients Network, The Netherlands
Phone: (313) 465-5944 • **Fax:** (313) 465-7381
Email: Fieurope@ubm.com
Website: hieurope.ingredientsnetwork.com

JANUARY 15 - 17, 2012

NASFT WINTER FANCY FOOD SHOW

The 37th Winter Fancy Food Show is the West Coast's largest specialty food and beverage event.
Conference Venue: Moscone Center, San Francisco, CA
Conference Management: NASFT, New York, NY
Phone: (212) 482-6440 • **Fax:** (212) 482-6459
Email: erivera@nasft.org
Website: www.fancyfoodshows.com

January 16 - 17, 2011

NJDA/VGANJ CONVENTION

The 2012 New Jersey State Agriculture Convention will be held in conjunction with the State Vegetable Growers Convention the week of January 16.
Conference Venue: Taj Mahal, Atlantic City, NJ
Conference Management: NJDA/VG
Phone: (609) 439-2038 • **Fax:** (609) 826-5254
Website: www.nj.gov/fAgriculture

January 18 - 20, 2012

TPIE — TROPICAL PLANT INDUSTRY EXPOSITION

The Tropical Plant Industry Exhibition (TPIE) is the trade event showcasing the latest trends in foliage, floral and tropicals in warm and inviting South Florida
Conference Venue: Broward Convention Center, Ft Lauderdale, FL
Conference Management: Florida Nursery Growers & Landscape Assoc, Orlando, FL
Phone: (407) 295-7994 • **Fax:** (407) 295-7994
Email: info@fn gla.org
Website: www.fn gla.org

January 18 - 20, 2012

PMA FIT LEADERSHIP SYMPOSIUM

This two-and-a-half-day program is designed for decision makers who currently drive strategy and growth in an organization. The Symposium addresses today's leadership challenges from unique global perspectives and formulates innovative strategies.
Conference Venue: Omni Dallas Park West, Dallas, TX
Conference Management: Produce Marketing Association, Newark, DE
Phone: (302) 738-7100 • **Fax:** (302) 731-2409
Email: solutionctr@pma.com
Website: www.pma.com

January 22 - 24, 2012

SWEET POTATO CONVENTION

California Sweet Potato Council, the main national organization for the promotion and marketing of sweet potatoes, hosts the 50th Annual United States Potato Convention.
Conference Venue: St. Regis Resort, Dana Point, CA
Conference Management: California Sweet Potato Council, Livingston, CA
Phone: (209) 394-7311 • **Fax:** (209) 394-4232
Email: info@cayam.com
Website: www.cayam.com

January 24 - 26, 2012

HOTEL, MOTEL & RESTAURANT SUPPLY SHOW SOUTHEAST

Conference Venue: Myrtle Beach Convention Center, Myrtle Beach, SC
Conference Management: Leisure Time Unlimited Inc., Myrtle Beach, SC
Phone: (843) 448-9483 • **Fax:** (843) 626-1513
Email: hmrss@sc.rr.com
Website: www.hmrsss.com

FEBRUARY 8-10, 2012

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Conference Management: Messe Berlin GmbH, Berlin, Germany
Phone: (493) 030-382048
Email: berlin@exhibitpro.com
Website: www.fruitlogistica.com

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Mexico's Commitment To Continued Growth

An interview with Juan Fernandez Del Valle Bickel, ASERCA Chief Director, SAGARPA, Mexico City

CONDUCTED BY JODEAN ROBBINS-DUARTE

At PMA's Fresh Summit, PRODUCE BUSINESS sat down with the new chief of Mexico's Ministry of Agriculture's division (ASERCA) that is directly involved in the development and promotion of Mexico's agriculture, to discuss the importance of this growing produce trade to those on both sides of the border.

PRODUCE BUSINESS: *What are the facts that point to Mexico's increasing importance in the produce arena, especially for the U.S.?*

Fernandez del Valle: Of the \$17.5 billion Mexico exports to the world in agricultural products, about 40 percent is in fruits and vegetables. Of that, 90 percent goes to the U.S. market. At PMA, we had 130 businesses participating and behind them are thousands of producers and other supporting entities. This alone shows the commitment of our exporters, our government and our marketing partners. Traditionally, we've seen exports from states like Sinaloa and Jalisco. However, in recent years we're seeing incredible growth from other states like Zacatecas, Michoacán and Aguascalientes.

Our expansion reflects our commitment to our future business. By developing and supporting these other production areas, we've lengthened seasonality and added new products, which help expand our business. We're also changing from a production mentality to a market-oriented mentality.

PB: *What are the biggest advantages Mexican produce offers to buyers in the U.S.?*

Fernandez del Valle: Buyers have top quality product at their easy disposal. Mexican producers are very reliable. Many of them have been working for years to provide the best quality product to U.S. importers. Most of our producers are dedicated to their quality and food safety processes and are making great strides, comparable to any U.S. grower, on food safety and traceability.

Additionally, the fact that we are right next door is a huge advantage. This permits direct access to a wealth of produce, lengthens the shelf-life because the shipping time is shorter, and lowers the cost. The shorter transit time means products can be harvested at their optimum point of

maturity. The end result is that U.S. consumers receive fresh, quality produce at a fair price.

PB: *What challenges do you face?*

Fernandez del Valle: Some of our biggest challenges are still in the areas of communication and perception. More buyers need to visit Mexico and see the product firsthand. By visiting, they can really understand the processes and what's available, and more importantly, begin to establish a relationship with the growers. Such a relationship leads to better business for all involved. We're looking to consolidate more Mexican products and to better position the products we have. Even though we're always working to develop new varieties and products to send to the market, we really want to focus on improving the prospects for what we currently have in order to open new doors.

PB: *So how can U.S. buyers who want to see Mexico first-hand find assistance?*

Fernandez del Valle: First of all, we have the Agricultural Office at the Embassy of Mexico. Our staff is available to answer questions, make contacts or provide information on our other programs. We offer an online exporters directory via our webpage. Our emphasis on trade shows provides great value to buyers and suppliers alike. We participate with Mexican pavilions in a variety of U.S. trade shows, and we encourage U.S. buyers to come to Mexico and participate in our principal shows as well.

One of our most unique and constructive programs is that of our Trade Missions. We invite buyers to come visit Mexico and let us arrange a customized tour for their specific needs.

PB: *What else do you want buyers to know about doing business with Mexico?*

Fernandez del Valle: We are committed to continuous progress and growth. We continue to invest in new technology and systems to improve our quality and food safety. We continue to look at how to improve logistics so our products arrive in prime condition. We continue to strive for better channels of marketing and promotion. And, as an entity, we are here to help those who want to do business with Mexico. We can be their No. 1 business associate. The possibilities are endless.



Pictured left to right: Hector Cortes, Mexican Embassy; Arely Flores Lopez, SAGARPA; Carlos Vazquez, Mexican Embassy; Juan Fernandez Del Valle Bickel, ASERCA; Froylan Gracia, Mexican Embassy; Gabriel Padilla, MexBest



Looking For Clarity On Immigration Policy

FROM JIM PREVOR'S PERISHABLE PUNDIT 10.04.2011

What is our country's immigration policy attempting to achieve? Well, Eugene Volokh, a law professor at UCLA and author of a blog called *The Volokh Conspiracy*, recently tried to rethink the intent of American immigration policy in a post he titled, "Immigration and the Future of the United States:"

How can the U.S. maintain its standard of living, and its position of world leadership (technological, economic, and political)? Obviously, it's getting harder, partly because we've been so successful at sharing our free enterprise economic model with the world (a model that we inherited from others, though we improved on it), so that countries that once couldn't effectively compete with us economically now can compete. And though the surge in international trade benefits us as consumers — and often as producers — as well as competing with our producers, competing with lower-wage countries has naturally gotten harder as international trade has gotten freed up.

Of course, we might be able to improve our competitiveness in various ways, such as improving our educational system, removing counterproductive regulations and taxes, and so on...

We do, however, have one huge advantage over many countries that is hard to compete with: We have a long-term history of political freedom, political stability, economic freedom, military security, and relative freedom from corruption. This is something that other countries can't reliably copy, partly because it takes a long time to establish relatively certain protections along these lines.

Moreover, I think that on balance size does matter when it comes to national influence. China and India are especially important players partly (though, of course, not solely) because they're so big, and we have long benefited from this as well. A materially larger population would obviously cause density problems, including in places like my own Los Angeles, but I suspect that it is on balance something that would help the country as a whole.

This suggests that one of the most valuable competitive advantages we have is our ability to allow immigration by people who we think are going to add to our national prosperity — whether wealthy investors, skilled knowledge workers, or industrious laborers. We've done it before, and it seems likely we can keep doing it...into the future.

Such immigration will indeed likely cause some problems for some, whether because some places get more crowded, because some occupations get more competitive, or for various other reasons. But my sense is that substantially increased immigration (albeit increased in a somewhat targeted fashion) will improve the welfare of the nation as a whole. And I'd go further and say that it is likely necessary, and not just desirable, if we want to maintain (to the extent possible) our edge over others.

One of the unfortunate things about recent illegal immigration debates, it seems to me, has been that they have distracted from the much more important debate about how we can increase — perhaps dramatically increase — legal immigration in a way to maximize net benefit for the nation. To some extent, it is inevitable that we will constantly have competitors who are close to our level of prosperity.

But to the extent that we want to stay ahead, or even keep up, for as long as possible, it seems to me that we have to use the strongest advantage we have: being a great place for productive people to live.

We thought this piece was quite interesting and followed up with a letter to Professor Volokh in which we raised some issues:

I enjoyed your thoughtful piece on immigration. Having done a fair amount of work in this area due to the need of the produce industry for immigrant labor, I think your piece brings to the fore a number of issues.

1) What if the immigration policy that will help increase the "position of world leadership" of the U.S. is not the same as the immigration policy that will help U.S. citizens maintain and improve their standard of living? This is quite possible. Unskilled Americans would benefit from restrictive immigration that will keep the supply of unskilled labor down and thus increase its price. Possibly this would result in higher per capita incomes in the U.S., but this policy would almost surely result in a smaller population, smaller economy and a diminution of American influence and leadership in the world.

2) There may well be a great conflict between the immigration policies that benefit the standard of living of different groups of Americans. Less affluent Americans benefit personally from policies that restrict less skilled immigrants, as this tends to raise wages for manual labor. More affluent Americans personally benefit if they can get their gardeners, maids, pool cleaners, etc., at lower wages to benefit from broader immigration of less skilled workers.

3) Your argument that America has a huge advantage over other countries because of our history of "political stability, economic freedom, military security, and relative freedom from corruption" and that these are cultural traits that other nations can't copy easily as "it takes a long time to establish relatively certain protections along these lines" is itself an argument for limiting immigration. I don't know the tipping point here, but these attributes reside in the people, not the bedrock, so allowing massive immigration from people who don't share these characteristics would surely undermine them.

4) The focus on density "problems" is probably misplaced. Charming places to live such as the Netherlands have a population density more than 10 times that of the U.S. Density is not even obviously a negative as it allows for the existence of specialized entities from cultural institutions to ethnic restaurants.

5) The idea of allowing immigration "by people who we think are going to add to our national prosperity" raises the question of whether we have any ability to actually know such a thing. Sure, we know who has already succeeded, but would such an evaluative scheme have let in the eastern European Jewish immigration or the Italian or Irish immigrations of the turn of the 20th century? Yet surely these have added greatly to American strength and prosperity.

6) There may be an issue as those who will contribute to economic prosperity are not necessarily the ones most likely to be committed Americans. Will those who buy citizenship feel the same sense of gratitude other immigrants did and be willing to lay down their lives to defend this country?

7) Many who object to immigration do so not because of any particular characteristic of the immigrants but because of a sense that the U.S. has changed and the culture no longer has the self-confidence to enforce a "melting pot" in America. So though you say, "we've done it before" in reference to allowing large-scale immigration, many believe it was a different America that did it — one willing to demand English, teach civics and citizenship, etc.

8) The ease of transport and proximity of major sources of immigration pose particular challenges. If the Jews came because they were fleeing a pogrom in Odessa, or the Vietnamese because they feared the Communists in Vietnam, they were not likely to go back. Other groups, such as the Italians, did go back and forth, but travel



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across the Atlantic before airplanes were common was a major commitment. So the immigrants mostly saw themselves as Americans, thought it crucial that their children become Americanized. They knew that their children would make it in America or not at all. It is not clear if immigrants today necessarily feel that way.

9) Technologies such as Skype and the Internet allow immigrants to remain in their home culture even if physically in the U.S. In earlier times, even if one yearned for one's homeland, the fact that the newspapers one read, the people one spoke to, etc., were American led to a gradual distancing from the home culture and a melding into the American milieu. The whole question of what it means to be an immigrant has to be addressed when a wealthy person who could qualify for immigration status by making a big investment can also remain very much a part of his home culture with the use of technology and quick plane rides around the world. In addition, with the U.S. increasingly cooperative on dual nationality claims, deciding to become an American does not necessarily mean one ceases to be another nationality.

10) Whatever policy might be ideal regarding immigration, it is not clear that the political constituency that is active on immigration

The challenge though is this: America is a democracy, and so each immigrant becomes a voting partner in the future of our country. We cannot be indifferent to the character of these people because they will have a vote at the table.

issues is likely to support such a policy. Ethnic groups don't want families divided by someone's criteria of who might add to our national prosperity. Industry groups have particular interests. For example, produce growers need workers to plant and harvest. Doubling or tripling of legal immigration won't address the trade's needs, as these immigrants would find other work. Other than a completely open door, the industry needs some kind of guest-worker program. Either that or we have to completely reform the welfare state, so people are compelled to take difficult work for relatively modest wages. The other alternatives are to put high tariffs on imported produce or to accept that produce will be grown in low wage countries and exported to the United States.

11) Compromise has become very difficult on immigration in large measure because of an unwillingness by both political parties to enforce the existing laws. Although the issue is portrayed as one of lawless people sneaking in over the border who are unknown and unknowable, there is a very large illegal alien population that is composed of people who entered the U.S. legally and overstayed their visas. When this happens, the response is virtually nothing. Your selected-immigration selections may be a good one, but those active in this area who might be inclined toward such a compromise have come to think that compromise is futile because any restrictions that might be imposed on immigration will not be enforced.

12) The portrayal of the issue as being primarily about a policy for the 12 million illegal immigrants who are supposedly in the U.S. right now spreads more smoke than light. Since all children born in the U.S. are American citizens, regardless of their parent's immigration status, all 12 million will either leave the country or die here leaving American children as their descendants.

There is little question that if the issue was simply what policy would increase American GDP, power and influence in the world, a more generous immigration policy would be sure to help. For all the reasons above, though, almost nobody is focused on that concern and, for better or worse, that is not likely to change.

Professor Volokh responded with some thoughts of his own:

You've likely thought about the subject more deeply than I have, but here are my quick thoughts:

(1) I think that on balance America will be richer if it is a world leader than if it isn't, simply because world leadership means more power to protect our interests...

(2) I agree that each immigration policy will have different effects on different parts of the population, though a rising tide will on balance raise most boats. But the trouble is that we aren't even seriously debating this as to legal immigration, and considering proposals that are likely to benefit the great bulk of Americans (such as opening up more immigration by businesspeople, skilled workers, and the like).

(3) It's true that some kinds of immigration might indeed weaken American political and economic stability. But again, there are others that are nearly certain not to weaken it, and past history suggests that even large waves of immigration have indeed not weakened it. So this might well be an argument against unlimited open borders, or against certain kinds of immigration schemes, but it seems to me there are lots of options that we aren't seriously considering that wouldn't pose any problems on this score.

(4) I agree that density isn't a huge problem as such. The reason I mentioned it is that sharp changes in density, especially in the large cities that do disproportionately draw immigrants, may overtax infrastructure in a way that causes substantial temporary problems (especially traffic problems).

(5) It is indeed hard to tell for sure which groups will most benefit us, and that might be reason to allow quite broad immigration without worrying about some of the things you mention in items 2 and 3. But it's not a reason to maintain the current restrictive scheme with regard to skilled workers, businesspeople, and others who are very likely to benefit the country and very unlikely to harm it.

We think that Professor Volokh touches on a key point: That the battles between different segments of American society that struggle for advantage in the reform of our immigration laws or in enforcement of existing laws may be beside the point.

The challenge is this: America is a democracy, and so each immigrant becomes a voting partner in the future of our country. We cannot be indifferent to the character of these people because they will have a vote at the table.

We do think America needs more immigration. Yet even while acknowledging that today's hodge-podge of immigration criteria and limitations makes little sense, we confess a skepticism that in 100 years, the body politic will be better off if, today, we select immigrants based on wealth or education.

In this sense, the produce industry has an opportunity to align itself with traditional American values, to proclaim itself in favor an immigration policy that rejects favoritism to those with traditional American values, to proclaim itself in favor of an immigration policy that rejects favoritism to those with credentials and money — storied pomp — and instead encourages those with ambition — yearning to breathe free — to come to America.

If we were designing an immigration policy it would emphasize most those who love this country and want to become Americans. We would ban things such as dual citizenship and set up schedules for gaining English fluency and for gaining citizenship. But we would cast our net wide joining with Eugene Volokh in believing that American power and influence in the world is important — for us, and others — and that this influence is most likely to be sustained with a growing, vibrant and youthful population and this means with immigrants.



WHO WILL TAKE A STAND

Jim Prevor's well-timed remarks about Del Monte's stance in the September issue about its cantaloupes from Guatemala and the arbitrary action by the FDA is a wake-up call to the produce industry.

Especially noteworthy are your thoughts about the trade associations' — notably Produce Marketing Association (PMA) and United Fresh Produce Association (UFPA) — lack of taking a stand with Del Monte and the industry.

Perhaps their eagerness to play ball with the federal agencies has tempered and blunted the reasons why they exist at all.

Front-and-center, the agencies need to become more proactive and firm when attacks or decisions are leveled in the industry. PMA and UFPA should remember that the federal agencies need the produce industry's cooperation and goodwill just as much as the industry needs the fed's just guidelines and standards.

It is time to stand up, speak out and take a pro-industry stance for the good of the industry and your organizations.

Thanks Jim, I hope there are more people clamoring for a change.

And lest we forget the apple growers of New York State and their difficulties with actress Meryl Streep and the no-wax-on-apple advocates. When that occurred, it was a downtime for apples and no action on behalf of the industry was taken.

The silence of the trade groups was deafening.

Good luck and let us gain some respect.

Sincerely,
Herb Strum
Marketing Specialist, USDA (retired)
Somerset, NJ

RESPONSE FROM JIM PREVOR

We appreciate the letter and the thought that went in to it. Mr. Strum is a man with long experience, and many of the points he makes are valid. The question is whether there is any obvious thing to do about it.

If you are going to expect an organization to have long term interaction with a government agency, it needs to maintain access. To maintain access, it needs to avoid being too outspoken, certainly in a

public way, against any agency or the politicians it will need to work with.

On the other hand, this dynamic works the reverse way as well. The regulatory agencies and cabinet departments need to maintain political support, and if they are dismissive of industry concerns or association priorities, they run the risk of alienating these groups sufficiently that they won't worry about maintaining access.

Distinguished Cornell Professor Theodore Lowi wrote in *The End of Liberalism* of an "iron triangle" between the congressional committee charged with an area, the regulatory agency or government bureau that executes policy in a particular area and the interest group and associations that advocate for policy in a particular area. For lots of reasons, this tripartite union winds up dominating policy in its area — partly this is because these are the people with expertise in the area, and partly because these are the people with motivation to engage in this area. In any case, Lowi argued that though special interests — the "factions" that the founding fathers acknowledged — are vital, the development of this iron triangle and "interest group liberalism" ends in bad public policy.

Lowi believed that government loses control over policy, as the interest group typically sets the agenda. It also causes real concern in the populace as to what Democracy is and how good public policy should be defined — thoughts we see both in the Tea Party movement and the Occupy Wall Street crowd. Lowi also argued that government employees, realizing they are no longer focused on the right but just the machinations of the various players in the iron triangle, become demoralized and Democratic institutions grow weaker as the populace realizes that the official government institutions get bypassed in favor of deal-making. So the senate just ratifies the deals cut by the parts of the iron triangle.

Lowi got the problem right... the solution is much more difficult. If Congress were to write more specific laws, this would weaken the administrative state, the influence of regulatory bodies and the day-to-day need of interest groups to play nicely — but it would also make the laws much less flexible. There would probably be an outcry.

Basically, as long as the government

can do almost anything, it turns the private sector into a kind of supplicant, pleading for help rather than demanding conformance with the law.

As long as this is our reality, trade associations will have to be cautious in what they say about government officials and government agencies.

The problem is not the associations; the problem is the reality of the situation.

Sincerely,
Jim Prevor

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Prepare Now For A Global Future



Across the globe, new and growing sources of fresh produce are finding their way onto North American supermarket shelves. **BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ**

Exporting fresh produce to North America is a finely choreographed operation. From vessels and reefer containers to airplanes, a virtual cornucopia of fruits and vegetables makes its way to North American shores each day from literally every corner of the world.

With advances in logistics, particularly traceability and product identification, imported produce has come to be recognized as being just as safe — if not safer — than domestic product. In particular, the emergence of initiatives such as the Produce Traceability Initiative (PTI) and Global Trade Item Numbers (GTINs) have been integral, as they provide the ability to trace product both forward and backwards in the supply chain, according to Dawn Gray, senior vice president of marketing and categories for The Oppenheimer Group, based in Coquitlam, British Columbia, Canada.

“The financial burden on growers is high, but it will continue to enhance consumer confidence in the safety of produce from all over the world,” adds Gray. “Such initiatives are enabling countries to prove themselves as reliable sources of good tasting, safe produce.”

Granted, some countries are better established as exporters than others. New Zealand continues to provide a vast supply of kiwifruit,

with companies like Zespri International Limited, in Mt. Maunganui, New Zealand, marketing five different varieties of the fruit to the North American market — Zespri Green, Zespri Organic, Sweet Green, Sun Gold and Zespri Gold. The last three are proprietary, according to David Courtney, spokesperson. Each season, Courtney says, Zespri evaluates

the packaging needs of its market and customers and develops displays and packages that make their products stand out. The company also operates a strong R&D program to develop new cultivars.

Holland continues to grow its North American exports — increasing from 16 million kg in 2007 to 25 million kg in 2010. Bell peppers account for greater than 80 percent of those exports, according to the Holland Fresh Group in The Hague.

More than 70 different fruits are imported to the United States each year from Chile, according to Tom Tjerandsen, North American managing director for the Chilean Fresh Fruit Association (CFFA) based in Sonoma, CA. This year, Tjerandsen hopes to bring 120 million boxes of Chilean fruit to North America. More than half of those imports are grapes, but Tjerandsen says fresh figs, pomegranates and blueberries have been coming on strong.

While there are certainly challenges to



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overcome — labor, water, and the Peso's close relationship to the U.S. dollar — Tjerandsen enthusiastically states that Chilean growers haven't even begun to maximize their potential in the North American market. In large part, that's because "Chileans are quick to adopt new technologies as they become available," he states, including modified atmosphere packaging to transport fruit long distances and substantial research into new varieties.

"There is a lot of research going into finding varieties that harvest early, harvest late and that have drought resistance," continues Tjerandsen. "As each of those varieties moves into cultivation, it opens opportunities for new growth."

These mature export countries may need to watch their backs, however, as a number of export countries are growing in prominence and just may be poised to give them a run for their money.

SOUTH AMERICA

Argentina has emerged as a force to be reckoned with, especially when it comes to pears and blueberries. The Argentinean blueberry industry, in particular, has grown dramatically, according to Marcos Scoffield, one of the commercial staff at Mono Azul S.A., in Rio Negro, Argentina, and a member of COPEXEU, a non-profit association of Argentinean growers exporting fresh fruits and vegetables to U.S. markets. Eighty to 90 percent of Argentina's blueberry exports are sent to the United States, with the rest going to Europe. The South American nation also ships small volumes of cherries and apples, along with "a bit of asparagus and garlic."

"It's been fascinating to watch the growth of the berry category, which is up 5.4 percent in dollar sales over the past 52 weeks and leads the produce department in contribution at over 18 percent of total sales," reports Oppenheimer's Gray. "As blueberries and strawberries become year-round items, with increased availability from South America, we'll see continued growth in this area."

Argentina's main selling point is counter-seasonality, says Scoffield. While there is the potential for North American growers to sell product that's been maintained in cold storage, organic consumers and retailers, in particular, understand the benefits of bringing in product from another region instead. "The Northern Hemisphere consumer could be using product that is grown in the north but kept in cold storage for six to eight months, but that costs money as well and uses up energy and carbon," points out Scoffield.

"The vast majority of Argentinean produce

is sent to North America via "great vessels," although Scoffield says there has been an increased movement toward containers in recent years. Cherries, blueberries and asparagus are sent via airfreight, with 15 to 20 cargo planes specific to blueberries winging their way to the States.

While demand for blueberries is certainly on the rise, Scoffield notes the rest of the Argentinean exports have remained relatively steady. In 2007, Argentinean growers shipped roughly 40 percent more pears to the United States than normal, but ended up paying the price for their boldness, suffering low returns as a result. "If we ship too much to the U.S. market, the returns are too low and it's no good for us on this side," he acknowledges. "Even if you do a fixed price, if something cheaper hits the market, they may claim that the price is out of the market and start renegotiating prices, if not for that season then have it well in mind for the following season."

Elsewhere in South America, Peru continues sending a steady supply of asparagus, mangos, grapes, mandarins and bananas to North America. In fact, nearly 50 percent of the country's exports from 2006 to 2010 were

"With the U.S. market opening up to citrus from Chile, Argentina and Peru in recent years, we have seen significant growth. By offering the popular seedless Satsuma and Clementines, growers from these countries are taking advantage of the ubiquitous North American convenience trend."

— Dawn Gray, The Oppenheimer Group

destined for NAFTA countries, according to Fernando Albareda, trade commissioner at the Miami, FL-based Consulate General of Peru. The bulk of the interest comes from specialty retailers, although Albareda says there are some large chains in the mix as well. In an effort to expand its export business, Peru held Expoalimentaria Peru 2011, a trade show for



New Zealand provides a vast supply of kiwifruit, from companies such as Zespri.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ZESPRI INTERNATIONAL LIMITED

the food industry, at the beginning of October. According to Albareda, more than 100 American companies visited the show to learn more about the new export offerings of Peru.

Gloucester City, NJ-based Fisher Capespan USA LLC imports a wide variety of Peruvian sweet citrus, according to Mark Greenberg, chief operations officer and senior vice president of procurement. The two main products it acquires from Peru, Minneolas and Tangelos, arrive on U.S. shores from mid-July to early September. Fisher Capespan also imports Peruvian Clementines, along with small volumes of grapefruit, navel oranges and Tahitian limes.

"With the U.S. market opening up to citrus from Chile, Argentina and Peru in recent years, we have seen significant growth," remarks Oppenheimer's Gray. "By offering the popular seedless Satsuma and Clementines, growers from these countries are taking advantage of the ubiquitous North American convenience trend."

Peru is a relatively new entrant into the North American import scene, with Minneolas being admitted only about five years ago, according to Greenberg. Prior to that, Peruvian growers were shipping substantial volumes of fruit to the European market, where they remain very active. "The United States came along and offered a good market, and it has encouraged the industry to plant and produce more and better products," says Greenberg.

For a short time, the weak North American economy hampered Peruvian exports, with asparagus suffering the most in 2008. From the end of 2009 to 2010, however, exports of fresh produce recovered, pricing improved and export volume continues to grow to this day. "Some Peruvian exporters expect the demand for asparagus in the United States will continue because Peru enters in the market generally

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Eighty to 90 percent of Argentina's blueberry exports are sent to the United States.

during the winter as the only provider in this period," says Albareda, adding that the South American country expects exports of Hass avocados and organic produce to continue growing due to their seasonality.

Agriculture in Peru has grown very fast in recent years, according to Albareda, who cites increases in private investment, technology and infrastructure. He also points to improvements in transportation logistics, as well as infrastructure in ports and airports.

The primary challenges for the Peruvian export business lie in the area of U.S. regulatory laws, primarily having to do with food safety, says Albareda. However, he says there are new techniques being employed to assure the quality of Peruvian products. "There is an increase in the number of processing plants that are HACCP-certified, as well as the strengthening of the technical working groups of the exporting companies about the GlobalGAP to standardize procedures and certifications of good practices in the field," says Albareda.

Just as Argentina and Peru are committed to growing their North American export business, Brazil, too, continues building its infrastructure to encourage the importing of its products. One company alone, Itauera Agropecuaria SA, in Fortaleza, Ceara, Brazil, exported 88 containers of Canary melons, totaling 176 tons, last season. Until last year, large chains accounted for the vast majority of the interest in Brazilian melons, according to Adriana Ribeiro do Prado, international marketing and logistics manager. However, Itauera hopes that participating in trade shows such as the PMA Fresh Summit will help it meet its goal of branching out into small stores and specialty retailers who are "looking for great quality fruits for their customers."

Itauera is also looking to strengthen its business by conducting trials with new varieties of

melons and watermelons. "If everything goes well, next season we will be able to provide North America with some of the most delicious Galia and Piel de Sapo melons and mini-watermelons," says Ribeiro do Prado. He also cites Itauera's singular packaging as playing an integral role in getting the consumer to try his company's melons for the first time, after which, he says, "they are amazed with the sweet flavor and come back for more."

Itauera has also invested in improvements in infrastructure, installing new refrigerated chambers and washing equipment in its facilities and using hot water to avoid waxes and chemicals in post-harvest. The Global GAP-certified company conducts microbiological analysis of the soil, irrigation water, packing-house washing water, and the fruits themselves to ensure the safety of the product. It has also invested in traceability of the pallets and boxes and conducts recall trials to ensure that they are ready should a problem arise.

For the 2011-2012 season, Itauera is using the New York port as the main entrance for its weekly shipments, along with a New Jersey cold storage distribution center for small sales. The company is also starting to send containers of melons to ports in Florida, California and Texas. Itauera also opened an office in Florida in order to provide more personalized service to its North American customers, both large and small. "Now, we can sell small volumes of our melons by pallets, instead of full containers, enlarging the distribution through the area and to a growing number of clients," says Ribeiro do Prado. "We have a great concern about logistics because that is the key to always providing a fresh product at a fair cost."

EUROPE

The export flow from the European Union (EU) to North America has picked up in the past few months. That's the word from Luciano Trentini, director of Centro Servizi Ortofrutticoli (CSO), Bologna, Italy, speaking on behalf of European Flavors, a project financed by the EU to promote consumption of fresh and "transformed" fruit and vegetables. In North America, European Flavors is primarily targeting fresh produce such as red oranges, kiwis, pears and red radicchio of Treviso, along with the major "Made in Italy" transformed products from pureed tomatoes to canned vegetables.

"The Italian supply chain of fruit and vegetables is characterized by its great dynamics and inclination toward international competitiveness," says Trentini.

"There is an increase in the number of processing plants that are HACCP-certified, as well as the strengthening of the technical working groups of the exporting companies about the GlobalGAP to standardize procedures and certifications of good practices in the field."

— Fernando Albareda, Consulate General of Peru

Along with that come a number of innovations, including cardboard and recyclable plastic packaging with an emphasis on environmental protection. At the Fruit Logistica Trade Show 2012, European Flavors will launch "new solutions that will deal with the competitiveness of our fruit and vegetable system," Trentini teases, but he declines to divulge further details.

European technology has long been advanced, particularly in the area of fresh-cut, according to Bruce Peterson, president of Fayetteville, AK-based Peterson Insights, and the former head of Wal-Mart's perishables operations.

In Spain, meanwhile, citrus, tomatoes and green peppers are in demand from October to February in North America. The country could be exporting a lot more than it currently does, however, according to Jeffrey Shaw, marketing director for New York, NY-based Food from Spain, part of the Trade Commission of Spain. Clementines, in particular, present a wealth of opportunities, he says, but retailers need to take the initiative to promote the citrus as an ingredient, rather than merely a sweet, healthy snack. "I'm not sure if it's an issue of lack of knowledge or lack of interest in creating programs to promote Clementines when they are in season," says Shaw. "On the West Coast, in particular, there just seems to be less interest on the part of the retail community."

Spain also offers North American retailers the benefit of a continuous dedication to improving infrastructure. Even before traceability became an issue in the United States,

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Spain had instituted a strict system of traceability designed to keep tabs on where the products come from. In that regard, Shaw says it is “perfectly managed.”

SOUTH AFRICA

From the latter part of June through mid-November, South Africa serves as a major supplier of sweet citrus to the North American market. Easy Peelers, Clementines, Midnight oranges and a wide variety of Navels arrive on the East Coast of the United States, where they are predominantly marketed from the Northeast to the Midwest and into selected parts of Texas.

South Africa has been exporting to the North American market for at least 15 years, but there are a limited number of orchards that are authorized for export into the U.S., according to Fisher Capespan's Greenberg. “Essentially, the United States can only draw sweet citrus from the Western Cape and parts of the Northern Cape,” he says. “It's a well-designated area that produces for North America.”

In recent years, South Africa has become a more reliable supplier as issues like apartheid are no longer a concern and the area has become more politically stable. “There is a lot



PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBINSON PACKER CO.

From late June to mid-November, South African citrus flows into the North American market.

more stability in South Africa over the past five or six years than there has been,” says Peterson. “As companies plan how they are going to grow their business, they can rely on those areas as a dependable source of supply. That's an important thing.”

ASIA

Produce originating from the Middle East has become a highly sought-after

commodity, with trend-setting retailers seeking out fruits and vegetables from the region ever since shipping lines opened up two decades ago. Chief among them is Sharon Fruit, a special hybrid persimmon grown in the Sharon Plains of Israel. However, it doesn't end there, as a wealth of “Biblical fruit” grows in the Holy Land.

“There are many commodities that the North American market loves from the Israeli-

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Sharon Fruit, a hybrid persimmon grown in Israel, has become trendy.

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Palestinian region,” says Shaleen Heffernan, sales manager at Mor USA Inc., in Green Brook, NJ. “They have amazing capsicum, tomatoes, fresh herbs, dates and pomegranates. The land over there, with the lack of water and all the minerals from the Dead Sea and the salinated water makes everything it touches grow magically.”

The region also exports organic peppers and tomatoes, melons — including the Pomelo, which is a cross between a honeydew and a cantaloupe — and citrus crops such as the Shamuti, which is similar to a Clementine, and the Jossel Orange, a “very sweet, candy-like orange, an Easy-Peeler.” The latter is not as

common in the North American market as it once was because the vast majority of the export supply is now sent to Europe.

The Israeli-Palestinian region also boasts a year-round fresh herb program that includes mint, sage, tarragon, oregano, chives, thyme, lemon thyme, rosemary, marjoram and basil. According to Heffernan, some of the herb varieties are proprietary, such as the Peri variety of basil, which is grown in Palestine. “The seeds of the basil that we are planting are proprietary to that region of the world,” she says. “That means they are protected and are not supposed to leave that area.”

The predominantly heavy shipping season for Israeli-Palestinian exporters extends from September through May. According to Heffernan, growers have worked tirelessly to develop state-of-the-art reefer containers to provide optimal cold chain storage for their crops. “Cold chain storage on all fruit and vegetables is really important, especially coming from that far away,” she asserts. “It’s coming from half-way around the world, so you want it to be fresh when it arrives.”

Heffernan has personally spearheaded an effort to develop “American market-friendly” packaging. Growers and shippers typically ship

their products in wholesale, bulk packaging, but most consumers cannot possibly eat that much fruit while it’s still fresh. Therefore, Heffernan has devised smaller, consumer-friendly packaging. She steers clear of plastic, however, opting instead for corrugated, re-usable cardboard featuring “splashy, trendy artwork.” Not only is it more “earth-friendly,” Heffernan says, it also transports more easily than cardboard.

ON THE HORIZON

As we look to what the future holds with regard to emerging export nations, Peterson of Peterson Insights is keeping a close eye on China, India and Turkey. Currently, the impact of those countries is not being felt in North America, but he doesn’t expect it to stay that way for long. In particular, he recommends watching to see what trade pacts are passed and what global players are accordingly impacted. “The big watch-out in terms of international markets is what trade pacts develop between the U.S. and the large trading partners around the world and how fruits and vegetables are going to play in that vis-a-vis other domestic interests,” says Peterson. “It could have a significant impact on business here in the United States.” **pb**

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The Winter Season Is The Perfect Time To Heat Things Up In The Produce Department

With excellent availability and plenty of food-focused holidays, winter becomes a prime time for produce. **BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD**

Winter is a hot time to sell produce. There's excellent availability of key staples, everything from domestically grown potatoes, cranberries and citrus to imported avocados, along with a number of food-focused holidays on which to hang a promotion. Pile it high and watch it fly may be a tried-and-true tactic, but to boost your produce ring before and after the New Year, it's crucial to have a game plan.

Tie into the lifestyle of shoppers, recommends Karen Caplan, president of Frieda's Inc., in Los Alamitos, CA. "While it's important to plan ahead, don't get too far ahead. In December, consumers are focused on holiday gift-giving and entertaining."

Hanukkah and Christmas are the two big food holidays in December. Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa's/World Variety Produce Inc., headquartered in Vernon, CA, points out, "This year, both of these holidays are only five days apart. This offers retailers the opportunity to promote produce that is popular for both, such as potatoes,

onions and other root vegetables.

Caplan knows healthy eating is on everyone's mind come January. "This means lots of salad items and vegetarian products. In places where it's cold, this translates to healthy soups and soup ingredients like fresh vegetables."

There is a good spacing of holidays in January and February, Schueller adds. "Retailers can highlight three different product mixes and promote one at a time — Chinese New Year's for Asian products; Super Bowl is snack foods; and Valentine's Day is a romance theme."

In addition to a game plan, it's important to come up with a few out-of-the-box promotional plays. Here are some innovative ideas:

HANUKKAH & CHRISTMAS: December 20 & December 25

Go with the promotional theme 'traditional with a twist.' Many consumers are looking for something different than the typical green bean casserole or green peas and pearl onions, acknowledges Caplan. "Retailers should pay attention to what's on the Food Network and to what food bloggers are writing about," she

advises. "This will clue them into what their consumers will be thinking about. For example, a few years ago no one was talking about Brussels sprouts. Now, a produce director told me his sales have doubled and tripled. I predict this will be the year of Brussels sprout."

"Potatoes peak in demand during the holidays," reminds Seth Pemsler, vice president of retail/international for the Idaho Potato Commission (IPC) in Eagle, ID. "Yet consumers want more than just Russets for baking and mashing. This offers an opportunity to sell multiple varieties."

Paul Dolan, general manager of Associated Potato Growers Inc., in Grand Forks, ND, specifies, "Larger A-size red potatoes sell well in December, as do 5-lb. bagged reds."

Ted Kreis, marketing and communications director for the Northern Plains Potato Growers Association (NPPGA), in East Grand Forks, MN, warns, "Red potato supplies will be tight until March when Florida starts harvests. However, there are still plenty for promotion, albeit at higher prices. The exception is B-size. There are more small sizes this year than large,

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LAMMER'S FOOD FEST SELLS 4,000-PLUS POUNDS FOR POTATO LOVER'S MONTH

It took middle-of-the-night inspiration and a month's work of perspiration, but the effort paid off in a first place win in the 6- to 9-registers category for Dean Eide, produce manager at the single-store Lammer's Food Fest, in Menomonie, WI, in the February 2011 Idaho Potato Commission's Potato Lover's Display Contest.

Eide and his staff built the 6-sq.-ft. tower of potatoes that reached to the ceiling out of bulk russets, 5-lb. bagged russets, Green Giant-brand bags of Yukon gold and red potatoes as well as value-added potatoes, and Idahoan-brand dehydrated potatoes. Eide labeled his display, built at the produce department entrance, with homemade signage that clearly let customers know the type and usage ideas for each potato in the display.

"Customers normally take five to 10 seconds to shop a display," says Eide. "With one of this size, it stopped them for up to two minutes and we sold more of both the potatoes and tie-in items."

Both of these products were also

boosted when the supermarket's deli made seasoned baked potato wedges with two flavors of Mrs. Dash seasoning.

"We offered customers a demo of the cooked potatoes in little souffle cups with toothpicks on Friday and Saturday," Eide explains. "It was so popular that we got a call from some college kids in our town who wanted to buy us out and eat the potatoes for their dinner."

The demo, in addition to recipes included in the display from the IPC website, helped to increase potato and tie-in sales beyond the one week promotion, says Eide. "People tried potatoes they hadn't before and learned new ways to prepare them and then continued to buy."

Customers bought out the 4,000-plus-lb. display in a little under a week. A hot price helped to move the product. "We priced the bakers at 10 percent above cost," says Eide. "This was a real draw, and along with the sheer size of the display, easily allowed us to quadruple sales of potatoes over a normal week in February." **pb**

which is the reverse of what we normally see."

Maine is known for its white potatoes. But Timothy Hobbs, director of development and grower relations for the Presque Isle-based Maine Potato Board, points out, "Our growers cultivate everything from reds and yellows to blue-skinned potatoes that sell as niche varieties in specialty markets. These can make great add-on sales during the holidays when consumers are in the mood to cook and looking for something different."

Randy Shell, vice president of marketing for RPE Inc., in Bancroft, WI, notes the specialty potato segment is the category's growth vehicle. "Therefore," he says, "I would also carry Fingerling and baby potatoes and offer both basic and specialty items on promotion during the holidays. This will maximize profits and sales within the category."

Since potatoes are already on most consumers' shopping lists for the holidays, Pemsler suggests promotions, but is against deep discounts. "Do discount 10 to 20 percent, but not 50 percent," he specifies.

Shell agrees, adding, "Pick one item to be your feature at a 15 to 25 percent discount. I also recommend retailers build secondary

displays of the feature item and a specialty item such as a Fingerling or small round potato at regular retail or a small discount to capture both uses: mashed potatoes for your family and specialty potatoes for entertaining."

Recipes are key drivers for potato sales, especially for specialty potatoes. "Consumers don't buy produce; they don't know how to cook," says the IPC's Pemsler. "In addition, purchasing several ingredients for a recipe has the advantage of multiple rings." As such, the IPC offers retailers QR codes that customers can scan with their Smartphones, which link directly to the Commission's website, where shoppers can search over 500 recipes by variety and preparation style. Retailers can customize how they would like to display these QR codes. Options include on price signs, poster-type signage, channel strip tear pads or in circulars.

Christmas is second only to Thanksgiving in sweet potato sales. Sue Johnson-Langdon, executive director of the Benson-based North Carolina Sweet Potato Commission, advises promoting the flavor and versatility of sweet potatoes. "For example, cross-merchandise sweet potatoes with cheeses, dressings and spices," she says. "Instead of the usual cinnamon

and sugar, suggest rosemary and garlic as these go well with sweet potatoes, too."

Fresh cranberries are another holiday staple. Scott Simmons, general manager for produce at Ocean Spray Cranberries Inc., in Lakeville-Middleboro, MA, reports, "We will have fresh cranberries available to our customers right through December. They can be promoted with baking items, Christmas displays and in produce. Ideally, they should be in high traffic areas within produce so that consumers are aware they are in stock." Ocean Spray is offering a tie-in promotion this fall with a \$1-off coupon good on fresh cranberries with the purchase of Concord Foods Cranberry Bread Mix and Sweet Potato Mix.

December is a ripe time for customers to stock up on fresh cranberries, echoes Bob Wilson, principal partner/managing member of The Cranberry Network, in Wisconsin Rapids, WI. "Fresh cranberries should be promoted as a winter holiday favorite, but to be enjoyed year-round. Suggest customers buy them and freeze a few extra bags to have alongside off-season turkey or anytime smoothies," he states.

NEW YEAR'S DAY: January 1

Build big displays of all the favorite snack foods — fresh salsa and guacamole fixings, fruit and vegetable trays, and nuts — that customers enjoy for New Year's Day college football games, parades and parties. Then, switch right into creative ways to promote healthful eating and help customers keep their New Year's weight loss resolutions.

Set up a 'fitness station,' suggests Frieda's Caplan. "Display items such as water bottles, pedometers, yoga mats and cookbooks with healthy recipes right there in the produce department."

Pears and apples are especially ripe for promotion. Chunk Sinks, president of sales and marketing for the Sage Fruit Co. LLC, in Yakima, WA, notes, "Apple and pear sales tend to peak in November and remain strong through the end of February."

"All varieties of pears, such as the popular D'Anjou, Bosc and Bartlett, as well as specialty Comice, Concorde and Forelle, are available at this time," reports Kevin Moffitt, president and CEO of Pear Bureau Northwest (PBN), in Milwaukie, OR. "Line pricing of five or six varieties is a great merchandising technique, especially to encourage customers to try lesser known varieties."

Roger Pepperl, marketing director for Stemilt Growers LLC, in Wenatchee, WA, agrees. "We've found that pear volume increases



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SUNFLOWER FARMERS MARKET SCORES A BIG WIN FOR AVOCADO SALES DURING FOOTBALL SEASON

Football season is a potent time to sell avocados from Chile, says Scott Schuette, produce category manager for Sunflower Farmers Market, a 35-store chain based in Boulder, CO. "The college games are almost as successful as the NFL bowl games to sell avocados."

Produce managers at each store in the chain's three regions vie for bragging rights and cash gift cards in an annual sales contest supported by the Chilean Avocado Importers Association (CAIA). "Stores are judged on their percent increase in avocado sales in relation to total department sales," explains Schuette. "This gives a small or slow-volume store just as much chance to win."

Build a "salad-selling" display to effectively cross-merchandise grapefruit, suggests Fouchek. "Place the fruit next to packaged green salads, avocados and dressings. Suggest adding cooked chicken strips to make it a complete meal," she details. "Fruit kabobs are a fun way to incorporate several items such as

bananas, apples and pears. Be sure to add wooden skewers to the display." Instant access to recipes and nutrition information is something Sunkist Growers Inc., headquartered in Sherman Oaks, CA, will offer to consumers this season. Julie DeWolf, director of retail marketing, explains, "We are creating

One effective selling technique discovered through this annual sales contest is the profitability of a secondary avocado display by the cash registers. In addition to impulse sales, an added benefit is a reduction in shrink from the main display in produce because staff members continually cull out the ripest fruit to sell in the register display. Many produce managers use the CAIA's high-graphic cardboard floor standing display unit for the front of the store.

Some produce managers also put this avocado display unit in the chip or beer aisle. Schuette says, "All the department managers and store managers are working together. The benefit is bigger

displays in more areas and everyone reaps the benefits. That's also why produce represents some 30 percent of total store sales."

In 2011, the chain's Chilean avocado sales contest ran from the last week in December through the first two weeks of January. Sales in some stores that didn't price promote avocados were almost as strong as stores that sold the fruit for 2- or 3-for-\$1 due to the aggressive display, merchandising and cross-promotional techniques.

The result? "Avocado sales increased an average of nearly 32 percent chain-wide in 2011 over the year prior," says Schuette. **pb**

quite a few more mobile sites this season, and these sites, along with QR codes, will be used on our POS materials to provide consumers instant access to recipes, nutritional information and other tips for getting the most out of their citrus. We intend to have fully functioning mobile sites available for grapefruit as well as oranges,

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KINGS SUPER MARKETS PROMOTES CHINESE NEW YEAR'S

It's not just Asian customers that Kings Super Markets, a 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ, targets in its Chinese New Year's promotion, says Paul Kneeland, director of produce and floral. "We also want to attract foodies and those who like to cook. I think a lot of people get caught up in ethnic merchandising, but it's not just shoppers of a certain ethnic group who are looking for certain items," he explains. "Many other customers are interested and willing to try these foods, too."

Kings will partner with specialty food supplier, Vernon, CA-based Melissa's/World Variety Produce Inc., in the run-up to the January 23, 2012 holiday. Melissa's sells a variety of Asian-themed specialties such

as ginger, Daikon, baby bok choy, Napa cabbage, Japanese eggplant, tofu, eggroll wrappers, edamame, Yakisobo noodles, kimchee, Korean pears and rambutan.

Kneeland says, "We'll expand our displays of not only more everyday Asian items, but unique items that our customers may not have tried." These items will be showcased in a separate section one week prior to the holiday so that they are easy for shoppers to spot. This display will be decorated with a variety of POS including signage with QR codes that link customers with usage tips and recipes. In addition, Kneeland plans to price-promote both usual and unusual items in a themed ad in the chain's weekly circular. **pb**

lemons, Cara Cara Navels, Minneola Tangelos, Moro oranges, Pummelos, Satsuma Mandarins, Gold Nugget Mandarins and Pixie Tangerines."

SUPER BOWL: February 5

Super Bowl promotions are synonymous

with avocados. Nearly 70 million pounds of this green fruit sold in the run-up to this one-day holiday in 2011. Supplies will be ample. That's because the three main avocado growing regions that supply the U.S. market — California, Chile and Mexico — are all harvesting

in February. To maximize sales, retailers can tap into the creativity and resources of the California Avocado Commission (CAC), the Chilean Avocado Importers Association (CAIA) and Avocados from Mexico (APEAM).

Jan DeLyser, the vice president of marketing for the Irvine, CA-based CAC, admits, "Super Bowl is a holiday we came up with to jump-start our season." The CAC offers a variety of retail merchandising materials perfect for Super Bowl promotions such as 7x11-inch cards profiling California growers in English and Spanish, danglers, display bins and 3x5-inch tear pads with guacamole recipes.

Though it may be tempting to think outside the guacamole bowl, consumers ultimately want guacamole for the big game. Emiliano Escobedo, APEAM's Los Angeles, CA-based marketing director, says, "The question is how do we get them to eat more? One way is to promote the sale of incremental multiples such as 10-for-\$10, and time your ripe program to make sure the avocados are ready for game time. Another way is to provide creative usage ideas. There are hundreds of guacamole recipes that feature sweet, spicy and savory flavors. Retailers could promote a mango guacamole one week, then a seafood guacamole for the next week."

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“Fresh cranberries should be promoted as a winter holiday favorite, but to be enjoyed year-round. Suggest customers buy them and freeze a few extra bags...”

— Bob Wilson, *The Cranberry Network*

Guacamole is the focus of a January 2 to February 5 promotion by APEAM. Specifically, the ‘Guac Off’ social media promotion consists of a guacamole recipe contest on Facebook. Consumers visit the Avocados from Mexico Facebook page to enter the ‘Guac Off’ Recipe Contest. Prizes include iPads and \$100 grocery gift cards. Escobedo says, “Retailers can cross-promote in-store by merchandising avocados next to other ingredients such as tomatoes or onions used to make guacamole.” In addition, APEAM provides customized themed POS materials for retailers who wish to enter the concurrent display contest.

CAIA offers a diverse promotional program that includes football-themed retail promotions. New POS is available to retailers to merchandise avocados as well as to participate in CAIA’s ‘Grab Some For The Game’ display contest. Maggie Bezart, CAIA’s Aptos, CA-based marketing director, describes, “Our new bin display features a landscape of Chile with a football theme. A QR code on the bin takes consumers to a featured recipe, while those who don’t have a SmartPhone can access the same recipes via the web address on the bin. The bin can be used to display additional fruit or as a secondary display in the chip aisle, for example.” Retailers can enter a photo of their avocado display, which must show two pieces of Chilean branded POS signs to quality, for a chance to win gift cards in amounts from \$25 up to \$500.

VALENTINES DAY: February 14

Promote romantic and promote red for Valentine’s Day, suggests Melissa’s Schueller. “This means crepes with fresh fruit and dessert sauces, or red fruits and vegetables. Merchandise dried tomatoes and dried cranberries on profit strips. Or, promote fresh fruits such as strawberry papayas.

“A large display of heart-shaped Pink Lady apples,” says Sage Fruit’s Sinks, “is great for a Valentine’s Day sale.”

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THE TOP TEN

Fresh Produce Trends In New York City

In what some call the produce capital of the country, fresh fruit and vegetables are experiencing resurgence in greenmarkets, restaurants, retail outlets, and most importantly, consumers' plates.

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

A city nicknamed 'The Big Apple' sounds pretty produce-centric. Even though it was the jazz musicians of the 1920s that bestowed this moniker, New York is certainly a city where fresh produce plays both starring and supporting roles.

Karen Karp, founder and president of Karp Resources, a Manhattan-based food consulting company that provides business support to the city's Green Cart vendors, says, "The fruit and vegetable movement's time has come. People today have a new and deeper appreciation for fresh produce. New York is such a food city anyway."

1. Locally Grown Is Growing

There's a growing emphasis on fresh, local and seasonal produce, says Beverly Stephen, executive editor of *Food Arts* magazine. "This isn't new, but what is news is that it's still going on. All chefs are sourcing more and more locally. Some have formed relationships with farmers to grow specific items for them, while others have their own gardens right in or outside the city to supply their restaurants. This is a trend that will continue."

The locally-grown allure is indeed strong for Floyd Cardoz, executive chef of North End Grill, Danny Meyer's Union Square Hospitality Group's new Battery Park City restaurant that will open in late 2011. "My philosophy of fresh produce is that I believe fruits and vegetables are best when in season. They taste good, are full of nutrition and are priced right. They're also at their peak so you don't have to wait for them to ripen," Cardoz says.

According to Ron Foncello, director of fresh produce purchasing for Air Stream Foods, in Oceanside, NY, "Many city chefs will ask us where we sourced the produce so they can put the name of the farm, farmer or town where the produce was grown on their menus."

It's a smart marketing move. "It's also something New Yorkers not only appreciate, but expect," adds Joel Panagakos, executive vice president of produce for J. Kings Food Service Professionals Inc., in Holtsville, NY. "A lot of people that work in the city live out on Long Island. They want to see the same produce they buy from the farmer's market on the weekend in the restaurants they eat at for lunch. For example, Long Island grows a super sweet bi-color corn as well as Orange Sunshine



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Root vegetables, greens and specialties are big attractions to New York's discerning consumers.

cherry tomatoes."

Some chefs, such as Alex Pilas, executive chef at Mario Batali's famed Eataly, located on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, will even bring farmers into the dining room.

"Last Earth Day, we invited a local farmer to come in and showcase ramps and Heirloom potatoes in each of our restaurants," Pilas explains. "The dishes displayed the vegetables' versatility to customers familiar

with them and introduced them as a new food experience to others."

Interestingly, some of NYC's finest celebrity chefs are the ones most forgiving when it comes to the look of locally grown



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The goal of New York's Green Cart initiative is to put 1,000 fresh produce vendors on New York streets.

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produce. Michael Muzyk, president of Baldor Specialty Foods Inc., in the Bronx, NY, says, "If it's misshapen, miss-sized or even ugly — but local — they want it. Then again, if they're ordering scallions from

California, they expect them to be all the same size, color and uniformity."

Similarly, New Yorkers will pay top dollar for local produce at farmer's markets and shop the ads at the supermarket. Ira Green-



"If it's misshapen, miss-sized or even ugly — but local — they want it. Then again, if they're ordering scallions from California, they expect them to be all the same size, color and uniformity."

— Michael Muzyk, Baldor Specialty Foods Inc.

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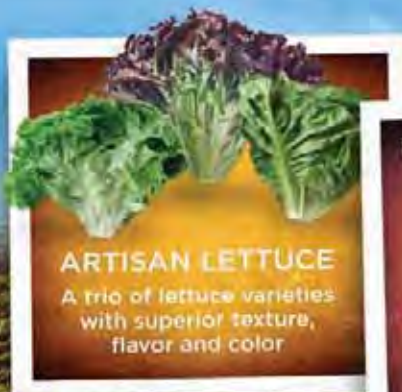
stein, president and owner of Direct Source Marketing, in Mount Kisco, NY, relays, "It's all about a desire to support the local farming community."

The city's retailers have also jumped on the locally grown bandwagon and found it profitable. Dominick Pelosi, produce and floral buyer for the Food Emporium, a 16-store chain in the NYC Metro area, says, "We'll bring in local strawberries. They're



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New Yorkers even demand locally grown produce when shopping online for home delivered groceries. Eric Stone, produce category manager for Fresh Direct Holdings LLC, a Long Island City, NY-based online grocer, says, "Our customers want fresh high quality produce delivered to their doorstep; it's 'farm-to-fork' with little hassle. FreshDirect offers a click-and-a-delivery system with no long lines, crowded

aisles and heavy shopping bags. We source our product locally. We have our own truck going out and picking up from local farms daily," he continues. "Oftentimes, product is harvested in the morning and delivered to a customer that night or the following day. It doesn't get fresher than that."

2. A Cart Or Market In Every Neighborhood

Fruit and vegetable carts are as much an institution on the streets of Manhattan as

yellow cabs. Now, a Green Cart initiative started in 2008 as a cooperative effort between the NYC Department of Health, Bronx-based non-profit Women's Housing Economic Development Corporation (WHEDco), and Karp Resources seeks to put 1,000 new fresh produce vendors on even more NYC streets. Some 493 permits for Green Carts have been activated to date, reports Karp Resource's Karp. "We help them get started, such as taking them on tours of the Hunts Point Market."

Leo Fernandez, director of the specialty and tropical divisions at Fierman Produce Exchange Inc., in the Hunts Point Terminal Market, in the Bronx, NY, says, "The proliferation of push carts has been one of the most important trends in the past few years. This has been especially so in neighborhoods in Upper Manhattan, the Bronx and Queens, where residents haven't had as easy access to fresh produce as in other parts of the city. New York has got to be one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the country, and the vendors represent this and tend to sell to neighborhood customers," he continues. "That means you'll see tropicals like *yautia*, yucca, plantains and mangos on the carts as well as apples, oranges and bananas."

The Union Square Farmer's Market has become almost as popular an attraction as Broadway and Times Square. Some 250,000 shoppers visit it and the other Greenmarkets in the city each day. Jeanne Hodesh, publicity coordinator for GrowNYC, notes, "Over the past 25 years the number of Greenmarkets in NYC has grown to 53 in all five boroughs with 22 open year-round. We have about 235 farm families that participate. Many are multi-generational. The newer generations have expanded from basics like onions, carrots and potatoes to specialty crops and even farm animals to innovate and provide what customers want. In addition, our New Farmer Development Project has helped immigrant farmers to become entrepreneurs and now, for example, Latino herbs such as *papalo*, *pipicha* and *epazote* are available."

Greenmarket's technological capability to accept Food Stamps has been a boon, with EBT (electronic benefits transfer) card purchases totaling \$131,938 in 43 markets from January to June 2011. This is up from \$38,652 during the same six months in 2010. Hodesh asserts, "Greenmarket's EBT program not only provides nutritious,



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local produce for shoppers, it also makes a big impact on farmer revenues, providing 25 to 50 percent of farmer income in some cases."

Market managers make recipes available, schedule cooking demos oftentimes with the city's famous chefs like Peter Hoffman of Savoy, and line up other activities to acquaint customers with ways to prepare fresh fruits and vegetables.

3. New Twists On Greens & Roots

Demand for locally grown produce in the cold winter months means New Yorkers have embarked on a love affair with hearty greens and root vegetables. Kale is huge, says Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral for Kings Super Markets, in Parsippany, NJ, with 24 Kings and six

RACHAEL RAY TAKES HER HEALTHY SCHOOL RECIPES FROM NYC TO THE NATION

A pilot program in New York City schools has led to healthier school lunches across the country. In October 2009, Food Network chef personality and author, Rachael Ray, and her non-profit Yum-o! foundation, teamed up with NYC Department of Education's Office of School Food to create kid-friendly and nutritious lunch recipes. The kick-off lunch served to more than 600,000 NYC public school children across all five boroughs featured a soft taco topped with southwest-style roasted chicken, sweet roasted corn, vegetarian "veg-head" beans, steamed broccoli and a southwest-style Yum-o! ranch sauce.

Ray's success in New York led her to think big with a desire to bring her healthy recipes to schools nationwide. To do this, she collaborated with the Alliance for a Healthier Generation, an organization founded by the American Heart Association and William J. Clinton Foundation in 2005, whose goal is to reduce the prevalence of childhood obesity by 2015. This proved a natural fit. The Alliance's Healthy Schools Program is one of the largest school-based childhood obesity programs in the country, supporting more than 12,000 schools in their

efforts to create healthier places for students to learn.

Ginny Ehrlich, MPH, MS, the Alliance's Portland, OR-based executive director and CEO, says, "We have worked with



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE RACHAEL RAY SHOW

Rachael for a number of years and she is a tremendous champion in the fight against childhood obesity."

Ray developed eight recipes that met the Alliance's school nutrition guidelines, which include an emphasis on fruits and vegetables. A sampling of these include: Southwestern Turkey Cobb Salad, Cheesy Mac and Trees with broccoli, and Chili con Fusilli that comes with a 'fixins



bar' where students have a chance to customize their meal. The recipes are available free to every school across the country, reaching more than 30 million students.

Beyond its work with Ray, the Alliance's Healthy Schools Program includes 45 schools in New York City and over 300 in the NYC Metro area. Many of these member schools are setting trends of their own for healthier eating. Says Erlich, "It's exciting when school administrators find ways to incorporate healthy eating and physical activity into the school day without distracting from instruction." **pb**



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Balducci's stores. "It's something we once couldn't give away."

According to Peter Romano, produce director at Fairway Markets, a 9-store chain that started on Manhattan's Upper West Side, "Chards, as well as root vegetables, like parsnips and turnips, are in demand once the weather turns cold and people start cooking again."

"Celery root is a favorite, too," says TJ Murphy, vice president at Baldor Specialty

Foods and produce department head at Eataly. "When customers learn to appreciate ingredients in season they look for novel ways to prepare these foods. We help them. For example, our celery root salad is made of shaved celery root dressed simply with a little olive oil, lemon juice, salt, pepper and fresh parmesan. We have a vegetable butcher on hand to slice, dice and cut vegetables anyway customers want for a recipe."



"Chefs will come to Hunts Point for the hardware of the business, meaning the basics, like onions and potatoes. Then, they look to dress it up. That might be local or something like pomegranate arils, kiwi berries, kumquats or golden raspberries."

— Mario Andreani, S. Katzman Produce Inc.

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4. Fresh-Cut Scores In Convenience And Cost

Fresh-cut vegetables are experiencing a rebirth as more New Yorkers are cooking at home. Kneeland remarks, "Our branded fresh-cut vegetables are a big positive trend. We'll cut three or four items, for example, mushrooms, onions and carrots, and add a spice packet and market it as a soup or stew starter. We now offer seven or eight different types of these fresh-cut vegetable mixes."

Some of New York's chefs are turning to fresh-cut vegetables in an effort to save on food costs. Bob Licker, produce category manager for U.S. Foods, headquartered in Perth Amboy, NJ. "The casual dining, mid-scale, and bar and tavern segment is more accepting of value-added produce, such as a fajita blend, or pre-cut peppers for kabobs. Their reasoning is based on food safety, traceability, consistency and above all in this economy, better cost control and less waste."

5. Good-Bye Vegetarian, Hello 'Vegivore'

"Vegetables were once a side or an



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after-thought," says Lucky Lee, vice president of sales at Lucky's Real Tomatoes, in Brooklyn, NY. "That is no longer the case. Chefs are now moving vegetables to the center of the plate."

"Vegetables are indeed a lot more popular in NYC restaurants," agrees Jenny Miller, assistant food editor at *Grub Street*, *New York Magazine's* Food & Restaurant blog. "We have a whole category devoted

to 'vegivores,' people who enjoy vegetables when dining out but may or may not be vegetarian.

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at Veritas, an upscale eatery located two blocks from the Union Square Farmer's Market. "Last night we served sweet potato with enoki and celery root puree with blue foot chanterelles and black kale," says owner and executive chef, Sam Hazen. "The kale, celery root and sweet potato were all bought fresh from the market that morning. Some selections may include dairy, cheese or egg, but never meat."

The 'small plates' trend is helping to make vegetables more popular, acknowledges Chandra Ram, the Chicago, IL-based editor of *Plate* magazine. "This spring, almost every menu featured fresh grilled asparagus topped with an egg. Another trend is vegetable cocktails. Beyond the Bloody Mary, we're seeing



PHOTO COURTESY OF VERITAS

Many of the fresh produce items served at Veritas are purchased the same day.

WHERE TO GO TO EAT, BUY AND CELEBRATE FRESH PRODUCE IN NYC

Where should you go when you want to eat, buy or celebrate fresh produce in New York City? Here are a few recommendations from those in the know:

"New Yorkers are pretty spoiled with pedigreed restaurants that are working with excellent fresh, organic produce, from Jean-George's ABC Kitchen to Telepan on the Upper West Side. I think Bobo serves some immaculate produce, much of it from Brooklyn Grange in Queens. If you want to try seasonal fruit and fresh herbs in drinks, there's no place better to do it than PDT in the East Village. Jim Meehan is a trailblazer of seasonal mixology, and it's pretty cool to see how he and the other skilled bartenders incorporate the Greenmarket haul into their cocktails."

— Chris Schonberger, associate food and drink editor, *Time Out New York*, Manhattan

"I love to go to the Union Square Farmers Market once a week. I know the farmers. I love to talk with them. They have this incredible understanding of fresh produce. I like to see it come in in waves through the season, first the strawberries, then the tomatoes and then the end-of-summer melons. It's hard to get disappointed."

— TJ Murphy, vice president, Baldor Specialty Foods Inc., Bronx

"The new concept in New York now is buying food outdoors. This has enabled specialty food markets to pop up in an area where opening a new food store can be cost-prohibitive. I like the New Amsterdam Market. I went last December and visited the stall of two Northern Vermont foragers. They go out and forage for wild vegetables, berries and nuts and dry and package them. I ended up ordering a dried mushroom subscription for my husband for Christmas."

— Lucky Lee, vice president of sales, Lucky's Real Tomatoes, Brooklyn



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Cucumber Martinis.”

Taylor, a restaurant and cocktail parlor in Soho, serves a Red Beet Sangria, Bell Pepper Margarita and Agua Verde cocktail with tomatillo, cilantro and habanero.

6. What's Hot In Produce?

When asked this question, *Grub Street's* Miller will answer, “any Heirloom variety of fruit or vegetable. People who grow produce are having fun and shoppers are

enjoying the element of discovery.”

Baldor's Muzyk points out microgreens are coming back after the economy dipped two years ago. “No one wanted to order something where the garnish was half the

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price of the center of the plate.”

Beans — fresh not dried — have caught North End Grill’s Cardoz’s attention. “We use to only cook with dried white, turtle and cranberry beans. Now

we cook with the fresh. Cooking time is a lot quicker,” he says.

“Rainbow carrots and candy cane beets are also trendy,” says Hazen, “as long as they’re in season and top notch quality.”

7. Inspired Desserts

Mom always threatened withholding dessert if you didn’t eat your veggies. Well, you can have your veggies as part of dessert in NYC. Creative pastry chefs such as Culi-

NYC’S ROOFTOPS ARE BLOOMING

“There’s a small but serious movement in New York City toward urban growing,” says Chris Schonberger, associate food and drink editor for *Time Out New York*, in Manhattan. “It’s really a blip on the radar in the grand scheme of things — I think New York is the largest agricultural market in the world — but it’s gaining momentum among the city’s chefs, sustainability advocates and diners who care about where their food comes from.”

“Greenhouse technology has improved to the point where greenhouse product can stand up to conventional product in terms of appearance and taste, and many times actually grown on city rooftops,” says Eric Stone, produce category manager for Fresh Direct Holdings LLC, a Long



“Greenhouse technology has improved to the point where greenhouse product can stand up to conventional product in terms of appearance and taste, and many times actually grown on city rooftops.”

— Eric Stone, Fresh Direct Holdings LLC



PHOTOS COURTESY OF GOTHAM GREENS

Island City, NY-based online grocer. “The low use of fossil fuels, combined with fresh great tasting product, resonates with our customer. We work with several local greenhouses to deliver this product to our customer daily.”

One of these greenhouse operations is Gotham Greens Farms LLC, in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. Viraj Puri, co-founder and CEO, says, “We have a state-of-the-art 15,000-square-foot greenhouse and plan to produce a little over 100 tons year-round. When we opened in June, we started with leafy greens like salads greens, butter head, oak, red leaf and green leaf as well as culinary herbs. Plans are in the works for a second rooftop greenhouse and focus on vine-ripe tomatoes.” Gotham Greens sells to a number of outlets such as FreshDirect, Whole Foods, D’Agostino and Eatly. Chef Michael Anthony at Gramercy Tavern even created a signature salad around the greenhouse’s butter lettuce that also has pickled eggplant and Heirloom tomatoes.

Some rooftops are now home to more typical farms, like Brooklyn Grange. The one-acre (40,000-square-foot) farm in Queens is made up of 1.2 million pounds of soil and over 20,000 feet of green roofing material that will support some 15,000 pounds of

produce. Ben Flanner, head farmer, says, “A normal growing season for us is April to November. We have hundreds of thousands of plants on the roof. Tomatoes are one of our biggest crops: we have 40 varieties planted. We are also growing salad greens, herbs, carrots, fennel, beets, radishes, beans and much more. We’ve also experimented with Shungiku or Edible Chrysanthemum, Opal basil, and an Aji Dulce pepper.” Brooklyn Grange’s produce is sold through a thrice weekly farmer’s market, CSA program and restaurant delivery.

Chefs themselves are also farming on rooftops. *Time Out’s* Schonberger explains, “One of the most interesting is Bell, Book & Candle in the West Village, where Chef John Mooney has created a little aeroponic garden on the roof. It looks almost like a space station, all white with towers that anchor his crops. He says he can grow up to 60 percent of the produce that he uses in the restaurant during peak months.”

“While rooftop farming is blossoming, it’s not poised to put a dent in New Yorkers’ produce needs anytime soon,” says Mario Andreani, manager at Katzman Produce, on the Hunts Point Market, in the Bronx, NY. “It’s like feeding a tic-tac to a whale.” **pb**

nary Institute of America-trained Emily Wallendjack, who got into the farmer's markets habit working for celebrity chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten and who now works at Hazen's Veritas, spins herbs and veggies into fanciful and flavorful desserts. "I'll take basil fresh from the market, blanch it and shock it to maintain the bright green color of the leaves, and then blend them into sugar syrup to make a sorbet," she explains. "No other colorings or flavorings

are needed."

Some of Wallendjack's other seasonal desserts include a roasted kabocha squash *chiboust* (pastry cream) fashioned into a free-standing soufflé and a carrot-pineapple cake garnished with macadamia nut ice cream and micro-cilantro greens.

8. Comfort Food Goes Upscale

Lately, there's a back-to-basics trend where celebrity chefs are opening burger



"My philosophy of fresh produce is that I believe fruits and vegetables are best when in season. They taste good, are full of nutrition and are priced right. They're also at their peak so you don't have to wait for them to ripen."

— Floyd Cardoz, North End Grill

joints, remarks Mario Andreani, general manager at S. Katzman Produce Inc., on the Hunts Point Market, in the Bronx, NY. "They're high-end and you'll likely see Heirloom tomatoes and hydroponic-grown Bibb lettuce as toppings, but the emphasis is still on comfort food."

What's driving this is restaurateurs who are looking for ways to reach the masses and do more business, maintains Lucky's Lee. "They're doing it with approachable rather than 5-star cuisine. Just look, there's Danny Meyer's Shake Shack in Madison Square Garden, Floyd Cardoz's taqueria at Citi Field, and Daniel Boulud's DBGB Kitchen & Bar that serves gourmet sandwiches. Eating out is no longer all about dressing up and spending a few hundred dollars."

9. Global Is Still In

The emphasis on local isn't dampening New Yorkers' desire for their favorite produce from around the world. Baldor's Murphy says, "There are some items we've

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tried to duplicate in the United States that aren't as good as the original. For example, radicchio Castillo Franco and puntarella are two super high-end Italian ingredients that are best grown in Italy and flown in. Indian mangos and New Zealand kiwi are other produce items that taste best where they were born. Products like these definitely still have a place on the menu."

New Yorkers are willing to pay anything to get what they want. Lee contends, "Chefs and retailers shouldn't be afraid to move away from local, especially if it's fresh, high quality and smartly merchandised. For example, I like shopping at a chain called Garden of Eden in the City for Lebanese cucumbers and North African citrus."

Yet many of New York's restaurateurs follow a 'best-of-both-worlds' philosophy. "Chefs will come to Hunts Point for the hardware of the business, meaning the basics, like onions and potatoes," Katzman's Andreani explains. "Then, they look to dress it up. That might be local or something like pomegranate arils, kiwi berries, kumquats or golden raspberries."

Sylvain Delpique, executive chef at Fish-tail by David Burke on Park Avenue in Manhattan, agrees about the global nature of the NYC food scene. "We get produce from Europe, Central and South America

— the whole world. There's not enough local produce available year-round here due to the New York climate."

10. Fresh Produce As Recreation

Shopping for fresh produce has become great fun in New York. Lucky's Lee says, "Over the past five years we've seen a proliferation of outdoor markets such as the New Amsterdam Market in the old Fulton

Fish Market, which has vendors selling fresh and prepared produce and other foods like coffees and teas."

Other examples include Brooklyn Flea and Dekalb Market. Smorgasburg, on the Williamsburg Waterfront, is the Flea's food market. Every Saturday there's a Greenmarket with five to 10 farmers, as well as 100-plus vendors selling prepared foods. These include small batch artisan items such as pickles, pies and preserves made



"Over the past 25 years, the number of Greenmarkets in NYC has grown to 53 in all five boroughs with 22 open year-round. We have about 235 farm families that participate."

— Jeanne Hodesh, GrowNYC

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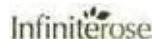
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The Dekalb Market in downtown Brooklyn is housed in a collection of salvaged shipping containers where the borough's entrepreneurs sell fresh produce from an incubator farm, prepared produce products and even offer produce-based hands-on classes. For example in October, Chef Nicola Maurello of Pasticcio, a trattoria with locations in Manhattan and Queens, and students from the Hospitality program at the New York City College of Technology taught how to make homemade tomato sauce from fresh tomatoes and farm-harvested Genovese basil and oregano.

Farm dinners like the one put on by 'Outstanding in the Field, says *Plate Magazine's* Ram, "sell out within hours just like a rock concert. They start early, like 4:30 or 5 p.m., include a tour of the farm and then dinner is served simply on one long table set up on the farm." One of the latest dinners hosted by this business that runs farm-to-table dinners right at the source of a local farm was at Brooklyn



Grange, a commercial organic farm that grows over 30 types of produce from a rooftop in Queens. The menu included Roasted Eggplant and Bell Pepper Toasts, Heirloom Tomato Salad with Basil and Chilies, and Grilled Broccoli Rabe with Ginger and Scallions.

Finally, New Yorkers are also leaving the city for farm vacations, says Ram. "There's upscale farm-stays hosted by Feather Down Farms, which has two farms in update New York. It gives Manhattanites an opportunity to pick produce, collect eggs and even milk cows." **pb**

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A Youthful Approach To The PWPM

A Q&A with Tad Thompson, business development manager of the Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market (PWPM).

CONDUCTED BY JODEAN ROBBINS

PRODUCE BUSINESS: *What is it about the new Philly market that attracted you to take this position?*

Tad Thompson: I first stepped onto the old Philadelphia market in March, 1977. I've been friends with Philadelphia wholesalers since numerous retail chain buyers "walked the street" on a daily basis and the Philadelphia Fruit Auction still existed. Now, the owners are generally "youthful" like me, which makes it fun. Over the past decade, I reported on the roller coaster of politics, nesting eagles and real estate issues that finally gave way to the opening of the Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market on June 5, 2011. Given my experience — in a number of different roles — with all facets of the national and international produce industry and my understanding of the benefits of an ultra-modern produce market, how could I resist the opportunity to help build business here?

PRODUCE BUSINESS: *What is your principal goal and where will you focus your energy first?*

Tad Thompson: To increase produce sales for the 26 merchants of the PWPM. Having spent my first few weeks here noodling with the merchants and helping with the groundwork on a variety of marketing matters, I'm increasingly focused on contacting the trade. If buyers come to see this market, they will want to source here.

PRODUCE BUSINESS: *Can you share the basic pillars of your marketing strategy for the new market?*

Thompson: A whole staff is needed for the marketing tools that ideally would be applied to promote this market. I must help the distributors increase sales before the promotion budget increases. With the marketing committee, we are quietly brewing very exciting new service ideas, but a salesman's shoe leather is initially my primary marketing tool.

PRODUCE BUSINESS: *What are the main selling points the market has to offer and how will those fit into your marketing strategy?*

Tad Thompson: Foremost, the PWPM is cold-chain-protected. This is the industry's key catch phrase, and no other market can so adeptly meet that expectation. Our produce comes with longer shelf-life and greater freshness and quality for our customers. Sealing the market against the elements also serves as a very strong first line of defense from living threats to the safety of our food. There are very good reasons that the "market" concept has long-served humanity. Whether it is a town square in Spain, Guatemala, or the PWPM, customers have always been drawn by the convenience of multiple

suppliers in one location, with the great pull of those sellers competing with each other on quality, variety and value. Competition is very good business.

PRODUCE BUSINESS: *What do you most want the industry to know about the new Philly market?*

Tad Thompson: You have to see this facility to believe its vastness and sophistication. It is bright, cheerful, colorful and simply a fun place to be. Please come visit. You'll be glad you came and you'll certainly want to do business here.

PRODUCE BUSINESS: *Where do you see the PWPM in five years?*

Tad Thompson: This market will attract more and more business as buyers are increasingly concerned about cold chain protection, food safety, produce quality and buying from a competitive environment. Our merchants will be widening their product lines and gain market share through expanded services.

PRODUCE BUSINESS: *What is your biggest asset in accomplishing your goals for PWPM?*

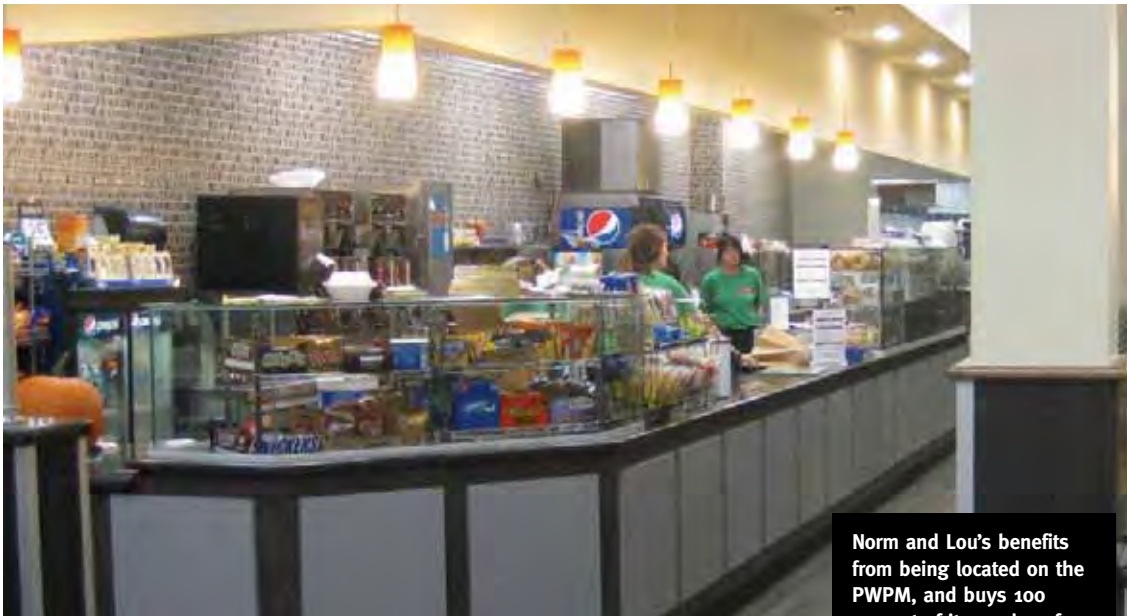
Tad Thompson: I work in a brand new facility designed specifically to meet the industry needs of this century. My distributors built it — I just need to assure the industry knows about it. Then, they will come. This market sells itself, I'm just the messenger. In this case, that's a pretty safe job. **pb**



Tad Thompson, business development manager at the PWPM.

A Longtime Family Restaurant Benefits From The New PWPM

The recently opened foodservice establishment at the Philadelphia's new wholesale produce market, Norm & Lou's Café, attempts to balance history and progress. **BY JODEAN ROBBINS**



Norm and Lou's benefits from being located on the PWPM, and buys 100 percent of its produce from the market.

Norm and Lou's opened in 1986 at the old Galloway facility of the terminal market. Over the past two decades, the restaurant became a fundamental part of market life. Just like the Philadelphia market merchants, for many years, Norm & Lou's faced the challenge of conducting business in outdated facilities, but no more. The opening of the new, state-of-the-art Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market (PWPM) has yielded a redesigned and re-purposed Norm & Lou's.

"My objective here was to take the best of the old place and meld it into even better things," says Tom Stefanopoulos, owner of Norm & Lou's. "Our signature items remain as good as ever, but we can now really expand our item offering because we're not limited by our facility anymore. We aim for a more convenient and more fresh-focused dining experience."

The ambience of the restaurant captures perfectly the balance Stefanopoulos is trying

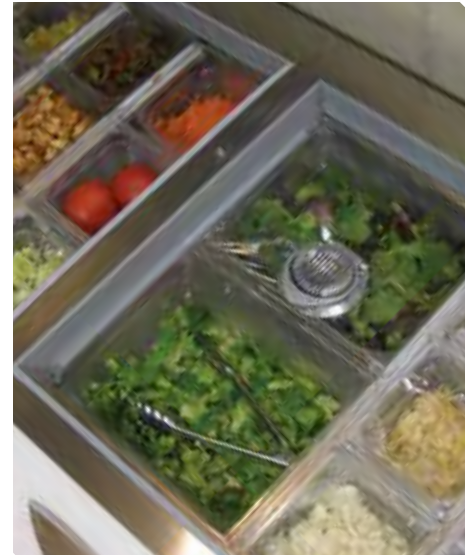
to achieve between past and future. The open, airy feel and impeccable cleanliness speaks to health and well-being, yet the comfortable booths and counter-seating still reflect its traditional diner roots. The new operation

boasts 4,200 square feet, compared to the 1,400 square feet it had in the Galloway facility. Two-thirds of the space is front area with 96 seats. The other one-third encompasses the kitchen, coolers, storage area and





Kristina and Tom Stefanopoulos, the owner of Norm & Lou's



personnel space. Norm & Lou's also now provides catering services.

One of the defining factors of the new Norm & Lou's is an increased focus on produce. "With our new and expanded menu here, I've really placed emphasis on produce," says Stefanopoulos. "I want to push the healthier side of eating and promote more of the products the market sells." As such, produce is now 25 to 35 percent of the new menu. Stefanopoulos hired a manager from one of the local Salad Works restaurants to incorporate more fresh produce and make-your-own salads into the offerings. He also brought on a local chef to add new items like pasta dishes and Ciabatta sandwiches to the menu.

As a foodservice operator, Stefanopoulos has a tremendous advantage in that he is right next to his major suppliers. "I buy 100 percent of my produce from the market right here," he notes. "I can get the freshest, best quality product here, so why would I go anywhere else?"

According to Stefanopoulos, any foodservice operator in the Philly area grasps a great business advantage by sourcing from the market directly. "When you order something from off the market, you're buying it sight

unseen," he states. "If you come down here and walk the market, you're picking and choosing exactly the price and quality combination you need. You can't get that anywhere else."

"In a foodservice operation, sourcing is critical because what goes on the plate is representative of the quality you started with," he continues. "No matter how good your chef is, he's not a magician. I think that's why we

he says. "Now I'm at the helm. After so many years of being here, I absolutely feel like I'm a part of this produce industry. I love coming to work each day to interact with everyone at the market."

His short-term goal is for everyone who does business at the new PWPM to try the new Norm & Lou's. "I want everybody to come and see for themselves what we can accomplish now with our new facility and our new menu," he says proudly. "There is so much improvement in what I can offer now compared to my limitations at the old place. I'm sure many of the merchants on the market are experiencing the same thing with their operations."

The move has been a long time coming and with significant investment, but Stefanopoulos remains enthusiastic. "I'm really excited, even though the increased costs of the new operation add a challenge," he admits. "But you have to do what you have to do in order to grow and continue to serve your customers. We've all had our difficulties in the move, but after all is said and done, we ended up with a remarkable facility. In the long run, this new market will benefit everybody."

There is so much improvement in what I can offer now compared to my limitations at the old place. I'm sure many of the merchants on the market are experiencing the same thing with their operations.

— Tom Stefanopoulos

continue to see such iconic chefs like Susana Foo and Georges Perrier shopping here on a weekly basis."

Akin to many produce stories, Stefanopoulos started in his family's business making deliveries. "I worked in just about every aspect of the business, from dishwasher to sandwich-maker to manager,"

pb

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Imported Sweet Onions: Handle And Merchandise With Care

While many American sweet onion growers have a fond place in their hearts for Vidalias, imported sweets from countries south of the Equator provide a year-round sweet onion supply.

BY BOB JOHNSON

When the harvest in the narrow area of Southeast Georgia — the only area that produce onions that can be called “Vidalia” under a federal marketing order — winds down in late August or September, sweet onions become available from key growing regions farther south in the world. These sweet onions from Peru, Chile and Mexico have created both opportunities and challenges for retailers. The development of a year-round supply has helped to grow the sweet onion category, but it has also complicated the job of ensuring consumers are getting high quality sweet onions.

“The sweet onion category is absolutely growing,” asserts Ira Greenstein, owner and president of Direct Source Marketing, based in Mount Kisco, NY. “But one of the things retailers and consumers alike have to be wary of is the misrepresentation of specific varieties. There are so many varieties of onions being grown and sold as sweet onions when they shouldn’t be.”

Peru, Chile and Mexico have emerged as

key sources that make it possible to put together a 12-month sweet onion program, and even growers from Vidalia count on these imports to offer year-round supply. “Our major sources of sweet onions during the winter months are Peru and Chile, with secondary sources from Mexico,” acknowledges John Shuman, president and director of sales for Shuman Produce Inc., in Reidsville, GA. “The Peruvian sweet onion season began this year in late August and will finish out sometime in February while we begin importing from Chile in January and finish the season in March. We import sweet onions from Mexico throughout the month of February and into March.”

There are new opportunities in year-round sweet onions, but they must be merchandised well, and it begins with selling only high quality product. “Unfortunately, there are some growers who are exploiting the sweet-onion market, and risking the viability of the category as a whole in order to exact higher prices for their Spanish yellow onions,” laments Teri Gibson, marketing and customer relations manager at Peri & Sons

Farms Inc., based in Yerington, NV. “The practice of placing ‘sweet’ stickers on onions that do not meet the criteria for a sweet onion creates skepticism and a lack of confidence and trust in the onion-buying community and down the line for the consumer.” Trust and reliability are the keys to benefiting from the growing sweet onion market.

According to Dave Brossart, produce general manager at Jungle Jim’s International Market, the largest independent store in the United States, based in Fairfield, OH, “Sweet onions are becoming more popular. They are more plentiful and people are getting used to them. People used to be afraid they would be hot, but now they trust us,” he says.

Certified Sweet Onions

The easiest and best way to cut through the claims and know the quality of onions being sold as sweet is to take a look at the test results from the National Onion Laboratory (NOL), a Collins, GA-based facility where suppliers take their sweet onions for certification. “Our program involves testing at an independent

lab,” says Dave DeBerry, director of onion category management at Edinburg, TX-based Frontera Produce Ltd. Frontera ships sweet onions from Texas and Mexico from January through July, and its onions are certified by National Onion Labs. “They have a pretty comprehensive program. It’s not just Brix and acid; they do a full flavor profile,” he adds.

These test results are essential. It is not worth saving pennies on onions that are not really sweet, because they will cost you dollars in lost sales. “It’s important right now for retailers to have quality sweet onions,” asserts Brian Kastick, president of OSO Sweet Onion, in Charleston, WV. “There’s a temptation to have cheap onions that are only ‘sweet’ because they have a sticker on them says it. It hurts the category because customers won’t come back to sweet onions.” OSO specializes in winter sweet onions from Chile and the Andes region of Peru, and also has sweet onions from the United States during the season.

Location, Location, Location

There are different claims about how geographic origin affects the quality of sweet onions. “There are two regions in the world where genuinely sweet onions are grown: the Vidalia region of Georgia and the Ica region in Peru. That’s it,” Greenstein says.

Most suppliers, and virtually all suppliers from Georgia, say the best sweet onions in the world come from that small strip of ground that produces Vidalia onions. “The onions from Peru are the closest thing to Vidalias you can find during the winter, but the Vidalias are sweeter,” explains Kevin Hendrix, vice president of Hendrix Produce Inc., in Metter, GA. Hendrix Produce offers sweet onions, including organic sweet onions, from all the major growing regions.

Even growers from Georgia, however, have come to respect the sweet onions coming out of Peru. “The Peruvians are almost as good as the Vidalias,” admits Danny Bowen, onion operations manager at Four Corners Farms, headquartered in Register, GA. “You won’t get me to say they’re as good; I can’t get that out of my mouth. But they’re better than the sweet onion pretenders out there. It’s a good quality onion and it has a lot of sweetness.” Four Corners Produce is based in the narrow area of Southeast Georgia that produces the only onions that can be called Vidalia.



Other industry sources emphasize variety is the key to a truly sweet onion. “In Peru, we grow the same seed as we grow in Georgia — the Century seed,” details Derek Rodgers, director of sales at Sweet Onion Trading Corp., in Melbourne, FL. “We’ve had tremendous success with the Century in Georgia, Peru, California and Nevada. In Chile, we grow the Arthur variety.” Sweet Onion Trading is an eight-year-old firm that specializes in providing sweet onions year-round from Peru, Chile and Mexico, as well as the United States. It is the flat onion variety that many producers, and more than a few consumers, consider to be the only quality sweet onion. “That’s why we try to use

sweetest are the Vidalias and the Peruvians, adds Bland. “They use identical seeds and grow them with identical methods.”

Variety alone, however, is no guarantee that the onions will be flavorful and of high quality. “You can have a true-sweet seed variety that’s being grown by an inexperienced grower or being grown in less-than-favorable conditions and the end result will be onions that don’t have the right combination of a pleasant flavor intensity and sweetness,” says Gibson of Peri & Sons.

The good stuff results from a fortuitous combination of region, variety and growing practices. “An onion’s taste, whether it’s sweet, mild, or hot is determined by a combination of factors including

variety, location and grower management. It’s not necessarily the case that even a single variety of onion planted in the same geographic area, but by managed by different growers, will all taste

“The Peruvians are almost as good as the Vidalias. You won’t get me to say they’re as good; I can’t get that out of my mouth. But they’re better than the sweet onion pretenders out there.”

— Danny Bowen, Four Corners Farms.

the flat onion as much as we can, because people think the flat onion is the sweet onion,” Rodgers continues. “As far as quality is concerned, we have everything certified sweet,” Retailers must be sure to differentiate the sweet onions.”

There is a difference between the globe and the flat onions in both taste and texture. “The globe are crisper and tougher, while the flat onions are tender and flavorful,” explains Delbert Bland, owner of Bland Farms LLC, in Glennville, GA. “There’s an ongoing debate about which is best. It depends on what your taste is. I’ve had people tell me the globe onions are just as sweet, but at the same time, I’ve heard other people taste them and say the globe aren’t as sweet.”

The flat onions are the trademark of Vidalia and Peru. “The sweet onions that are the

the same,” Gibson continues.

While growing region, variety and farming practices can all have an impact on quality, the bottom line is found in the laboratory test results. “That is the biggest difference in whether the onion is truly sweet or not,” says Matt Curry, president of Curry & Co., in Brooks, OR, and exactly why the company has all their onions certified by the National Onion Laboratory. “This is true for both domestics and imports, and it’s important that we deliver on our promise of a sweet onion,” adds Curry. “We work hard to have consistent flavor and quality from all of our growing regions.”

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be merchandised differently. “It is my ongoing mantra that you can’t take sweet onions for granted,” asserts Curry. “There is some seasonal excitement to them, and when you help build that excitement through effective merchandising you definitely see category increases. If retailers have sweet onions simply next to yellow onions, it can be hard for consumers to realize there are two different products being offered,” he maintains. “If sweet onions are highlighted, it is easier for consumers to realize it’s a different product, retailers should see

category growth.”

The first step in a merchandising program is to offer quality all through the year, and to use signage to let customers know that you always have sweet onions. “It’s crucial to avoid any tricks,” states Curry. “You can’t fool a consumer with onions that aren’t sweet. Delivering a year-round, consistent sweet onion, regardless of growing region, is the best strategy for successful merchandising. Retailers also must make sure consumers know the sweets are available.”

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“If you want to sell more sweet onions, we think it always makes sense to highlight the region and the onion...A strong year-round sweet onion program utilizing a carefully planned strategy of domestic and imported sweet onions will keep customer coming back.”

— Matt Curry, Curry & Co. Inc.

The sweet onions should be visible and promoted in a range of bulk and bagged products. According to OSO's Kastick, merchandising sweet onions is the same, regardless of whether they are imports or domestics. “Use mass displays using POS material, and have both bulk and 3- to 5-lb. bags,” he suggests.

Promotional materials including recipes can help differentiate sweet onion displays. “I can put recipes out there, or I can put out the material that came with them,” says Brossart from Jungle Jim's.

The key here is expanding the number of customers who have tried sweet onions, and know the difference. “The important thing is to get a person to try them the first time,” says Bland of Bland Farms. “That's the challenge to get them to try sweet onions, because if they do they'll come back. You need graphic packages and graphic stickers.”

One visually attractive way to present sweet onions is to have them in proximity to tomatoes. “Some people market sweet onions next to tomatoes, and the color contrast looks really good,” Rodgers of Sweet Onion Trading says.

“When it comes to merchandising premium sweet onions, we recommend calling special attention to their flavor profile, shape and color,” notes Shuman Produce's Shuman. “Merchandising round western onions with darker skin as sweet onions only confuses consumers, and will ultimately compromise the sweet onion category.”

Another helpful tool is to offer information on how sweet onions are used and stored, because they are not the same as your conventional yellow onions. “Offering recipes and information about what makes a sweet onion different from other onions and providing helpful tips about storing sweet onions will make it easier for consumers to try them for the first time and/or continue to use them throughout the season,” Peri & Sons' Gibson says.

Origin Matters

The origin of the sweet onions matters, and

there is no getting around the fact that the Vidalia onions available in the spring and summer have earned a tremendous brand identity. “With the Vidalias, the name is more prominent,” Hendrix of Hendrix Produce says.

Plus, Vidalias have the additional advantage of contributing to the U.S. farmers and workforce. “Everybody promotes the Vidalia name. We try to keep with onions from the United States as long as we can, from mid-April to October or later, if the weather is right,” Sweet Onion's Rodgers says.

Suppliers who source sweet onions in both Vidalia, GA, and South America — and there are many of them — advise emphasizing that the onions are similar. “Research has shown that an overwhelming percentage of consumers identify a sweet onion by its flat, Granex shape and bright yellow skin color,” reports Shuman of Shuman Produce. Both Vidalia onions and our Peruvian sweet onions share these traits. The same consumer research also shows that a very low percentage of consumers are concerned with where a sweet onion is grown. They also understand a lot of produce items are imported and accept the concept. Most are simply interested in quality and flavor,” he adds.

Retailers should not shy away from telling the stories of their imported sweet onions. “If you don't tell someone where it comes from, you don't differentiate yourself,” asserts Bland of Bland Farms.

The shipping boxes can be used as promotional tools that highlight the origin of the imported sweet onions. “We try to merchandise the imported sweet onions in the boxes or containers they came in,” shares Jungle Jim's Brossart. “It makes it a specialty item. We get a premium for them. It doesn't matter what brand label it is; it is a novelty item and people look for that.”

The different origin of the onions also can be used as a positive merchandising device. “We have a separate display and point out that they're Peruvian or OSO Sweet,” says a produce specialist for a large mainstream supermarket chain who chose to remain anonymous. “It

gives people the idea that they're just different. They are more popular, but you have to call out that they're sweet."

Letting consumers know where the product came from is not only legally required, it is a service that many consumers appreciate. "We think the country of origin is important information that should be prominently noted on the signage for every produce item in the marketplace," maintains Peri & Sons' Gibson. "Now more than ever, when it comes to food, consumers want to know who, what, when and where. Knowing who the grower is and where the produce is grown is important to them."

An important part of this story is information about the conditions of the workers who produce the onions in South America. "The movement for buying locally/domestically grown produce continues to grow, and consumers want to know the produce they purchase for themselves and their families is grown using certified clean, safe and traceable practices," adds Gibson. "Reports indicate that savvy consumers are even concerned about fair labor and sustainability practices."

OSO Sweet works to personalize the farmers who grow their sweet onions in the Southern Hemisphere. "We've done features on the Chilean family farmers that grow for us and included that in POS materials," describes Kastick. "People like to know where their food comes from."

Kastick believes that imported sweet onions may actually be of higher quality than the domestic product. "All of our packaging features the country of origin labeling, and we did that before it was required," he points out. "I think the imports are better quality. If you're going to the trouble and expense of shipping all that distance you're going to make sure you're only going to pack good-looking onions."

Retailers who have a year-round sweet onion program need to be prepared with a series of stories as the origin of their onions shifts during the year. "When you offer both domestic and imports as we do, you take advantage of the strengths of all your programs," contends Curry & Co.'s Curry. "For instance, in the Northwest, we are able to market our Hermiston Sweets as local/regional onions. In the Southeast, it often makes sense — from a logistics standpoint — to utilize our import onions, which are shipped out of Statesboro, GA, facility. Another difference is the fact that our import onions have the flatter shape often associated with sweet onions, whereas our

Hermiston Sweet onion variety is bulb-shaped," Curry says.

The key to merchandising the origin of the products is, again, being able to document the quality and sweetness of your onions from all regions. "If you want to sell more sweet onions, we think it always makes sense to highlight the region and the onion," continues Curry. "The sweet onion category continues to grow, but there is some confusion with onions that wouldn't qualify as sweet if tested. If you have onions that are certified sweet and will deliver

that sweet flavor to consumers, we think they should definitely be highlighted. A strong, year-round sweet onion program utilizing a carefully planned strategy of domestic and import sweet onions will keep customers coming back," he concludes.

Sweet onions have already grown in popularity, but the category needs continuous effort to reach its full potential. "Even though the sweet onion category has grown tremendously, we've got to continue to reinvent the wheel every day," Bland says. **pb**

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Per-capita consumption of asparagus has consistently increased since 2001.

Eight “Tips” To Merchandising Peruvian Asparagus

Adding a little creativity when merchandising Peruvian asparagus can lead to a profitable win. **BY JODEAN ROBBINS**

Peruvian continues as a major source for fresh asparagus, complementing U.S. production and providing year-round availability for U.S. consumers. “In 2010, the U.S. imported more than 377 million pounds of fresh-market asparagus, of which Peruvian asparagus represented over 51 percent,” reports Priscilla Lleras, the Keller, TX-based coordinator of the Peruvian Asparagus Importers Association (PAIA). “In 2010, Peruvian asparagus represented 47 percent of the total U.S. Import Dollar Value. Peru takes its commitment to maintaining and building a successful asparagus market very seriously.”

“With production in many areas of the U.S. diminishing, wholesalers and retailers can take advantage of the excellent quality product from Peru to offer a consistent, fresh product year-round,” says Jeff Schroeder, manager of the Southern California produce division for Unified Grocers Inc., the largest independent grocery co-op on the West Coast, headquartered in Phoenix, AZ. “Product from Peru is outstanding. With it,

we’ve been able to extend the season and gain incremental asparagus dollars.”

“Having a year-round asparagus program is essential, and Peruvian product plays a key role,” agrees Dick Stiles, director of produce and floral operations for Redner’s Markets Inc., a 39-unit chain based in Reading, PA. “Asparagus generates dollars for the whole store because you’re not just selling asparagus, you’re selling a whole meal.”

The explosion in growth and availability of Peruvian asparagus allows retailers more opportunity than ever to build consistent sales in this category.

“According to industry surveys, asparagus ranks among the Top 20 best-selling vegetables,” reports Lleras. “Per-capita consumption of asparagus has consistently increased since 2001 and is now at 1.6 pounds per person.”

“Behind broccoli, asparagus is the second most important green vegetable in consumption,” states Walter Yager, CEO of Alpine Fresh Inc., located in Miami, FL. “Couple this with the fact that it is available 52 weeks a year and you have a steady moneymaker. The demo-

graphics show consumption has spread across a wide range of ages and income levels with a higher percentage of consumers coming from the middle-upper class. These are great customers to draw into the store.”

However, maximizing asparagus sales is still hindered by lingering misconceptions in the marketplace. By focusing on eight simple strategies, retailers can find even greater profitability with Peruvian asparagus.

1) Cross Merchandising Increases Ring

Asparagus is a conduit to sales of many other items. “Asparagus is something you can cross-merchandise with so many other items,” maintains Stiles. “We partner it with a number of different meat, chicken and dairy items. It kicks up any meal that you’d like to prepare. It’s easy to display in other departments and takes the whole meal to the next level.”

“There is great opportunity in pairing asparagus with products from other departments in a Meal Solutions display,” agrees Gary Meadows, asparagus buyer at Progressive Produce Corp., in Los Angeles, CA. “Asparagus

HEALTH CLAIMS TO USE IN PROMOTING ASPARAGUS

According to the Produce Marketing Association, following are some suggested claims to use in promoting the nutritional benefits of asparagus.

Produce And Cancer

Claim Example: Low-fat diets rich in fruits and vegetables (foods that are low in fat and may contain dietary fiber, vitamin A, or vitamin C) may reduce the risk of some types of cancer, a disease associated with many factors. Asparagus is fat-free and a good source of vitamins A and C.

Fat And Cancer

Claim Example: Development of cancer depends on many factors. A diet low in total fat may reduce the risk of some cancers. Asparagus is fat-free.

Saturated Fat/Cholesterol And Coronary Heart Disease

Claim Example: Although many factors affect heart disease, diets low in saturated fat and cholesterol may reduce the risk of this disease. Asparagus contains no cholesterol, and is a fat-free vegetable.

Sodium And Hypertension

Claim Example: Diets low in sodium may reduce the risk of high blood pressure, a disease affected by many factors. Asparagus is sodium-free.



Merchandising asparagus near other high end products, such as specialty potatoes, offers consumers meal solutions.

is so easy to prepare and it fits well into any quick and easy meal.”

Promoting with produce and non-produce items adds ring. Unified’s Schroeder explains, “For example, a cold asparagus salad gives you a tremendous variety of produce items to pair, such as Heirloom or grape tomatoes, onions and different fresh herbs. It’s also advantageous to cross-merchandise with non-produce items,” he adds. “Roasted asparagus can team up with olive oil and sea salt. More and more retailers are doing really well tying in asparagus with non-produce related items.”

“We recommend merchandising asparagus near other more expensive vegetables like colored bell peppers or artichokes,” suggests Julia Inestroza, marketing and merchandising manager at Los Angeles, CA-based Gourmet Trading Co. “Cross-merchandising asparagus with butter, olive oils and sauce packets can increase sales while giving the consumer ideas for meal solutions.”

2) Packaging Options Increase Value

Offering some of the growing options in value-added asparagus can hit key consumer needs. “The benefit to value-added programs is the convenience they provide for both consumer and retailer,” says Lleras of the PAIA. “Options currently include packs focusing on convenience, savings, microwaveable and ready-to-eat options.”

“Bagged asparagus comes in different sizes for convenience,” reports Yager of Alpine Fresh. “The shelf-life is better in the bag and

“With production in many areas of the U.S. diminishing, wholesalers and retailers can take advantage of the excellent quality product from Peru to offer a consistent, fresh product year-round,”

— Jeff Schroeder, Unified Grocers Inc.

it makes for easier storage at home. Retailers can avoid having to weigh the asparagus at checkout and there are also food safety advantages,” he explains.

Packaged product allows retailers to focus on specific customer demands. “We offer tips in some of our stores,” remarks Redner’s Stiles. “There is value in this because customers prefer the tender end of the asparagus.”

3) Consumers Want Information

Educating consumers on the nutritional benefits of asparagus is a key way to increase sales. “Nutrition is an important piece to promote,” acknowledges Unified’s Schroeder.

“Families with young children want to understand the health benefits of the particular commodity and that they’re buying product with good food safety standards. However health benefits are promoted, it will encourage asparagus sales, just like anything else in produce. As retailers, we have to tell that story more often.”

“Nutrition should be promoted all the time,” agrees Stiles. “It’s important to the consumer to know the nutritional value of the product. It is an additional attribute to help sell the product.”

Nutrition information can be easy and concise. According to the PAIA’s Lleras,



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“A row of white asparagus in a sea of green asparagus adds a great dimension to the display and draws a lot more attention. The purple asparagus — in high end stores or as part of a mixed color bag of asparagus — can also drive sales.”

— Julia Inestroza, Gourmet Trading Co.

“Nutrient content descriptors allowed for asparagus include ‘fat-free,’ ‘saturated fat free,’ ‘sodium-free,’ ‘cholesterol-free,’ ‘low calorie,’ ‘good source of vitamin C,’ ‘high in folate,’ and a ‘good source of vitamin A.’ Asparagus has 230 mg of potassium or seven percent of the recommended daily value and one gram of soluble fiber.”

Providing usage information is another way to help consumers take the product home. “Asparagus is super easy to prepare and incorporate into meals and recipes,” reports Inestroza of Gourmet Trading.

“Store signage always helps to communicate how easy and convenient asparagus is,” adds Alpine Fresh’s Yager. “Online recipes offered by suppliers are sure to generate more cooking options for consumers.”

Linking online information with simple signage is an easy tool for stores. “Retailers can look for ways to link POS info to certain TV programs or social media sites,” suggests Schroeder of Unified Grocers. “For example, include a sign instructing shoppers to check out a particular link for recipe or usage information.”

The PAIA has created and distributed a Category Management Plan Outline for Peruvian Asparagus to equip retailers and the industry with the type of information necessary to sell more Peruvian fresh-market asparagus. “Specifically included within the outline are merchandising goals that encompass display ideas, promotional and advertising plans,” explains Lleras. “Many importers utilize the outline as a tool to distribute to their merchandisers to employ these promotional suggestions for spotlighting Peruvian asparagus on their shelves.”

4) Use Water Carefully

While there has been debate over how to properly hydrate asparagus in a retail display, the necessity of it remains. “The freshness factor in asparagus is important, and dehydration is the No. 1 issue affecting freshness,” says Progressive’s Meadows. “Proper rotation and hydration is important for the quality of asparagus.”

“Asparagus should be displayed in a shallow pool of water if at all possible,” states Inestroza. “This helps prevent dehydration. However, misting asparagus can lead to tip decay,” she warns.

Displaying on wet racks or in water can be both helpful and tricky. “Based on regular sales, we do put it on the wet rack,” reports Schroeder. “If it’s moving quickly, then the issue of wet tips doesn’t cause problems. However, you must pay close attention to rotation if it doesn’t turn daily. If there is a feature ad and we’re doing an end display then we put water in the bottom of the display,” he adds.

“The difficulty with wet racks is maintenance,” says Alpine’s Yager. “Water can be your friend, but if not cared for properly it can be your enemy. The best is a high-humidity environment. If you have a high rotation, a dry display will work.”

5) Display Big


Retailers and suppliers agree: bigger displays yield bigger profits. “It has to be a big display to get the impact and the sales results,” says Redner’s Stiles. “You don’t see a lot of shrink with a big display because you’re moving and rotating the product continually. What you think you might have really isn’t there. The shrink you do have is good shrink because the size of the display is selling the product for you.”

“Larger displays draw more attention to the product, and thus, increase sales,” agrees Gourmet’s Inestroza. “If the asparagus is priced right and the display is large, sales will be through the roof.”

“Asparagus always realizes exceptional dollars, so bigger displays with sharp price points yield more dollars,” adds Unified’s Schroeder.

Implementing attention-getting displays encourages sales. “The better the exposure, the more opportunity for sales,” says Meadows. “Things like bigger displays, end cap displays, intercom announcements and POS material can all be beneficial in increasing sales.”

“You can take an item like asparagus even at regular retail and get good sales by putting it




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Consumers are curious about white asparagus, and when they are merchandised with their green partners, there is better movement.

at the front of the department,” encourages Redner’s Stiles. “Don’t be afraid to put it up front and make a nice display because it will encourage impulse sales.”

“Dare to double your profits by doubling your shelf space for asparagus,” challenges PAIA’s Lleras.

6) Promote As A Good Value

The availability of year-round asparagus has led to more affordable retail pricing for the consumer. “Asparagus is a great value,” says Inestroza. “It’s easy to prepare, high in nutritional value and can make an ordinary meal seem special. It appeals to a more diverse demographic each and every year due to its year-round availability, as well as promotions in the foodservice sector.”

“Although the winter price point is higher it’s still affordable for consumers to buy,” says Schroeder of Unified Grocers. “Asparagus dollars are always good rings in the produce department, regardless of season or source.”

Promoting a good value on asparagus can be a real draw for a store. “While it is perceived at times as an expensive product, retailers can change this via program promotions at peak production times when the product is relatively inexpensive,” explains Alpine’s Yager.

“Sharp asparagus features are very attractive to consumers,” concurs Schroeder. “Asparagus with a good price point is a great lead item. It serves as a great draw to encourage folks to come into the store.”

“With the tight economy, people are eating at home more,” says Stiles. “If you can tie

asparagus into a meal for a family of four, customers will see the value of what they’re getting. We sell a lot of asparagus when we promote it, regardless of demographic.”

7) Promote All Year

The offshore asparagus deal provides stores with tremendous opportunity to promote year-round. Progressive’s Meadows contends, “There are many marketing opportunities to take advantage of at different times of the year, when price and availability make it an attractive promotable item. Tying asparagus to regional or seasonal events can help ad sales at any time of year.”

“Peak business varies for asparagus and is highly related to the holiday,” says Schroeder. “But, there are other great opportunities, like when you’ve got nice hot summer days and you can promote roasting or grilling asparagus. You can suggest stir frying, making a cold salad with asparagus or marinating it with vinaigrette. There is greater application today than the standard way we used to eat asparagus. Retailers can get consumers thinking about new uses all year long.”

Retailers who are creative and promote throughout the year will

reap rewards. “We have had very successful ads at all times during the year,” says Yager. “In the past, retailers were hesitant to promote in the summer, but since people have learned to barbecue asparagus, summer promotions work well.”

“Advertising is a huge part of stimulating sales during off times,” maintains Gourmet Trading’s Inestroza. “There are many households that shop from the ads each week and putting the green and white asparagus in the ad encourages sales tremendously.”

“We provide usage suggestions in our ads,” reports Stiles. “For example, we did a very successful Night at the Oscars theme where we featured Filet mignon, asparagus and hollandaise sauce with other items. We also do something similar for Valentine’s Day with lobster and asparagus.”

8) Provide Variety In Color

While the majority of asparagus sold is green, other colors can add profit to the category. “Retailers should carry white asparagus all the time and the purple when available,” states Inestroza. “A row of white asparagus in a sea of green asparagus adds a great dimension to the display and draws a lot more attention. The purple asparagus — in high-end stores or as part of a mixed color bag of asparagus — can also drive sales. Customers are already curious about the different colors, so when they are all together, they entice the purchase of all three colors.”

“It’s good to have a variety of colors,” says Stiles. “There is a good market out there for white asparagus. It should always be displayed with green asparagus. I like the idea of doing a tri-color pack to encourage consumers to try the other colors.”

Departments can use color and POS to encourage sales. “We like to see green grass framed with the white and purple,” suggests

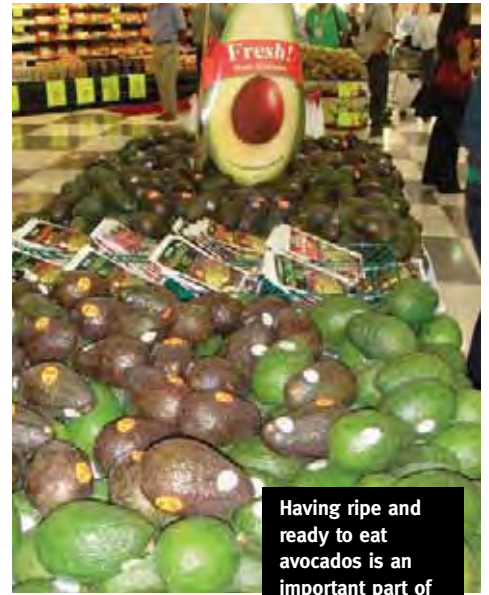
Yager. “When it’s on ad, all colors should be priced the same to avoid confusion and encourage consumption.”

“People are curious in general about white asparagus,” says Inestroza. “The fact that it grows underground and comes from the same plant as the green is very intriguing. We have POS materials available to help retailers convey this type of information to their customers.”

pb



PHOTO COURTESY OF GOURMET TRADING CO.



Mexican Avocados: Stores And Customers Rely On A Solid Supply

Mexico offers a dependable climate and high standards for providing a consistently good avocado, but moving more avocados doesn't rely on geography — just knowledge.

BY TRISHA J. WOOLDRIDGE

In food retail, there's a growing trend to eat local and to support local — be they regional or simply domestic — growers and farmers. However, some fruits grow best in specific conditions. While there are states in the United States that grow avocados, the majority of avocados come from Mexico. Furthermore, due to the climate, avocados have a longer time to mature on trees in Mexico, so they can build up a better texture and more flavorful and healthful oils, according to industry insiders.

The key to selling Mexican avocados are tricks that work for the fruit as a category as a whole, regardless of its origins. Make it easy for consumers to buy based on ripeness and size; keep the fruits visible in multiple places; and have fun creating promotions.

As they are coming into their maturity, now is a good time to review and refresh your plan for Mexican avocados. As Dan Bates, director of merchandising of Eden Prairie, MN-based Supervalu, points out, "The avocado market continues to grow exponentially, and unless you live in California or

Florida, there are few other areas that can grow avocados in the United States."

David Fausset, retail sales manager of Oxnard, CA's Mission Produce Inc., adds, "Look forward to a successful year with a lot of fruit available. It's an 8 percent larger crop than last year, so there is plenty of supply."

"Hass avocados, the majority of which come into the United States from Mexico, have increased in dollar sales by 8.5 percent over the past 12 months," cites Jackie Bohmer, marketing director of the Mexican Hass Avocado Importers Association (MHAIA) located in Coral Gables, FL. These numbers are based on the Perishables Group's Fresh Facts Category Management System for the 52 weeks ending July 30, 2011 versus the prior 52 weeks. "Organic avocado dollar sales increased 16.7 percent during the same period," Bohmer adds. "Of the top 20 produce department items, avocados were also the second fastest-growing item in terms of dollar growth — up 8.6 percent during the 52 weeks ending July 30th."

As the Mexican avocado season gets into full swing, and the California season wraps up, it's

important to realize Mexican avocados become the most local, points out Rob Wedin, vice president of fresh sales for Calavo Growers Inc., based in Santa Paula, CA. "People are looking for avocados in peak season. Mexico has the full peak season."

Where The Fruit Grows Best

The climate of Mexico is ideal for growing avocados. Without the fear of frost that even the southern U.S. states have, the fruit has a longer, safer maturation period on the tree, making it easier to get ripe fruit from Mexico. "The tree is the best place to store an avocado, as it provides more oil and flavor," explains Allison Moore, communications director of Fresh Produce Association of the Americas (FPAA), based in Nogales, AZ.

Bill Tarleton, director of marketing and communications for Mission, agrees. "What makes [an avocado] better is the lateness of the season," he maintains. "Late in season means a higher oil content and maturity. If any fruit is treated with care and ripened to customer specs, it's hard to tell the difference [in where

México

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LIMITLESS POSSIBILITIES WITH MEXICAN PRODUCE

More than 130 Mexican exporters attended PMA's Fresh Summit Exposition, showcasing a variety of the expanding opportunities for business with Mexico. Here we profile a few of the growing and limitless possibilities.

PAPAYA



Interview with: Luis Anguiano of Chulavista Papayas and treasurer of the Papaya Exporters Association; and, Nazario Rodriguez Guerra with Red Starr and president of the Comité Estatal Sanidad Vegetal de Colima.

Mexico grows around 15,000 hectares of papaya in 13 different states; the main producers are Veracruz, Colima, Oaxaca, Michoacán and Chiapas accounting for about 70% of the National Production. Mexico has been exporting papayas to the U.S. for many years (at least since 1990) as a reliable source. Unfortu-

nately in July 2011, the FDA published an import alert for all papayas coming from Mexico due to possible Salmonella contamination.

In the last months, the Mexican papaya industry supported by SENASICA (National Service for Plant and Animal Health, Food Safety and Quality) and in agreement with the FDA, has implemented an Action Plan which defines the technical measures that should be adopted to prevent contamination risks associated to the presence of Salmonella in the field, packing facilities, warehouses and distribution centers. These measures have been published in the form of guidelines which provide technical assistance to the companies involved. SENASICA is implementing at Federal and state level, a training program to ensure the correct application of the guidelines.

As of today, SENASICA has identified 7 companies which have complied with the minimum requirements and will be submitted to the FDA in order to release them from the import alert. Mexico has exported about 4000 tons a week of papaya to the U.S. Our product is what the majority of papaya consumers want and it will continue to be a solid product for the U.S. market. Our producers are committed to doing everything that needs to be done to comply with all regulations. We want to show the marketplace that we are doing things right and ensure buyers know that our produce complies with the strictest food safety standards. Our proximity to the U.S. and the value of our product remain compelling reasons for buyers to look to Mexico for their papayas.

CHAYOTE



Interview with: Lucio B. Valle Varela of Agrocosco and a representative of the Comité Sistema Producto Chayote.

The Mexican state of Veracruz boasts four regions of chayote production which allows for year-round availability, alternating between two high altitude zones and two low altitude zones. Each zone has about 1500 hectares and produces

about 60 exportable tons per hectare of product. Production season for the high zones is June through December and the season for the low zones is December through May. Exports to the U.S. began over 20 years ago via intermediaries and the producers have been exporting directly to the U.S. for almost eight years now.

Mexican chayote growers are committed to quality and safety of the product. We are investing in improving the seed to ensure the integrity of the product and eliminate any disease which might affect the quality. We are also in the process of certifying all the packing and production areas under the norms of the government

and the Mexico Supreme Quality (MSQ), as well as the requirements of the buyers.

We invite buyers to get to know the chayote of Mexico. They'll find it's a quality, fresh, safe product. We are closer to the market than any other supplier and that gives our product the advantage of getting to the market faster. We can be in McAllen in 18 hours compared to 62 hours for Central American sources. We're working to provide a better product and better service to buyers so that we can work together to open the doors of the American consumer.

PRICKLY PEAR FRUIT & NOPAL



Interview with: Omar Carpío Flores and Edmundo Aguilar of LfV Group and a member of the Comité Nacional Sistema Producto Nopal y Tuna.

Mexico produces 50,000 hectares of prickly pear fruit and 12,000 hectares of cactus leaves ("Nopal" in Spanish). About five percent of the production of prickly pear (called "Tuna" in Spanish) is exported and about 10 percent of nopal (cactus leaves) production is exported. Export markets include the U.S., Canada, Europe and South America. Production of prickly pear supports 20,000 families and production of

nopal supports 5,000 families. Production is currently from May through November, but conditions exist for year round production if demanded.

The Northern zone production area for prickly pear includes Zacatecas, San Luis Potosí, Guanajuato, Jalisco and Tamaulipas. Central zone prickly pear production is concentrated in Hidalgo, Estado de México, Puebla and Tlaxcala, and the Southern zone production is in Oaxaca. Nopal production in the Northern zone includes Zacatecas, Tamaulipas, Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, and San Luis Potosí. The Central region production of nopal is in Estado de México, Hidalgo, Puebla, Milpa Alta, Distrito Federal and Morelos. The Southern zone production encompasses Oaxaca and Guerrero.

Prickly pear is an interesting looking product and is available in

green/white, red, pink and yellow colors. Nopal is sold fresh, powdered and dehydrated. Prickly pear and nopal have amazing medicinal and health implications and are products that the mainstream market has yet to capitalize on. The nopal is medically recognized as reducing cholesterol, regulating blood pressure and is recommended for diabetics. The prickly pear is an antioxidant, has anti-inflammatory properties, helps with cardiovascular, and is good for diabetics.

Our industry body (the Comité Sistema Nacional Producto) has put together a program plan to be completely implemented by the year 2030, encompassing issues of food safety, quality and competitiveness. While our industry is already committed to quality and food safety in current production, this plan demonstrates our dedication to the future. We are organized and have a long-term vision.

BANANAS AND PLANTAINS



Interview with: Juan Carlos Velazquez Feito of AgroVeracruz Produce and member of the Comité Sistema Producto Plátano Nacional.

Mexico began exporting bananas and plantains to the U.S. around the year 2000 and

has seen business grow each year — now about 40 containers per month. The principal production areas of bananas and plantains are Chiapas, Tabasco, and Veracruz. We began exporting leaves around 2002 from the Veracruz region and are sending about 4 containers a week.

Our market continues to grow year after year, due mainly to the increase in hispanic consumers in the U.S. We see small but consistent growth. Our product offers buyers advantages in quality and the fact that we're so close to the U.S., a positive in terms of

both freight cost and freshness.

We support over 10,000 producers of bananas and plantains and most of them live directly on the selling of these bananas and plantains products. Our producers are serious about their commitment to bringing a quality, safe product to the market and the majority is working to ensure compliance with market standards. We are certifying our packing plants for both quality and food safety standards.

PINEAPPLE



Interview with: Victor Vazquez of TabaFresh and a member of the Mexican Pineapple Exporters Association.

We currently have around 10 exporters and more than 10,000 hectares of pineapple of different varieties. The main variety for export is the MD-2 or Golden super-

sweet pineapple. Our major production areas are Isla Veracruz and Tabasco. We've been exporting for about 10 years but have seen exceptional growth and consistency of exports in the last five years.

We are dedicated to providing a high quality pineapple to the market and we work to ensure our pineapples have a consistent brix of at least 13 or higher. We are also committed to the safety of our product and the majority of our producers work with GMP, Primus and other certifications as the market demands. We take seriously our responsibility to our community. We know our com-

pany is based on our employees and we invest in educating them on their role in the production chain. We also offer scholarships to encourage children to attend school.

Our proximity to the marketplace is a major benefit. Buyers get a fresher, better product because we can cut the pineapple at a riper grade. Pineapple is a product that doesn't get any sweeter once it's cut so leaving it on the tree as long as possible makes a big difference.

ORCHIDS



Interview with: Rogelio Zuniga Hernandez and Rosa Isela Silvia Nino of El Faro Orchids.

Mexico is a quality supplier of dendrobium orchids and currently has 200,000 plants under greenhouse in the Tamaulipas area of the

country. From these plants, we are able to export about 500,000 stems per year, with availability all year long. We have been producing for about six years and have been exporting to the U.S. for one year. There are currently three growers of these orchids in Mexico.

The quality of our product is esteemed in the marketplace. Our proximity to the U.S. market gives tremendous advantage in shelf life. Our product currently has a shelf life of 20 to 40 days. We are also very adept at being able to manage the special and

customized needs of our clients, for example whether they want long stems or just buttons. We ship now to clients in Dallas, Brownsville and McAllen, TX and San Diego, CA.

We are a socially responsible industry and the fact that we produce under greenhouse conditions allows us to be very environmentally responsible as well. Though our production system is well established we also have room to grow. We look forward to establishing even closer relationships with the market.

GUAVA



Interview with: Isaias Rivalcaba with Guaya Fina and member of ASOFIMEX (the Mexican guava exporters association).

Guava exports from Mexico began in 2008 and production takes place in the regions of Zacatecas, Michoacán, Estado de Mexico and Aguascalientes. Exports start to build around the second week of Novem-

ber with about eight to nine loads a week and by the end of November build to 20 plus loads a week. Export demand peaks in December and early January at about 30 loads per week. The Mexican guava industry has tremendous production potential. Current export volumes are not even a quarter of what can be produced. However, volumes are cautious because producers want to ensure a market for what is sent.

Guava's color shade can be customized, allowing buyers to request a greener or more yellow color depending on specific market requirements. About 90 percent of guava shipments pass

through McAllen, TX. One of the major benefits of Mexican guava is our proximity to the market. From the tree to our warehouse on the border takes only three days.

Buyers can focus on promoting the nutritional benefits of guava. It's high in vitamin C — more than a lemon. The flavor of guava makes it very versatile and it can easily be promoted in many recipes including drinks, smoothies and baking. Though the main market for guava right now is the Hispanic consumer, there is tremendous opportunity with the mainstream American consumer if promoted.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Please contact the Agricultural Office at the Embassy of Mexico:

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“Our quality programs and proximity to the market assure that avocados from Mexico are always fresh, and their eating quality exceeds customers’ expectations. Soil and climate conditions in Mexico are ideal for growing avocados and our growers take great care when harvesting and shipping avocados to the United States.”

— Emiliano Escobedo, APEAM

it’s grown.]”

According to Emiliano Escobedo, marketing director for APEAM, in Los Angeles, CA, “Our quality programs and proximity to the market assure that avocados from Mexico are always fresh, and their eating quality exceeds customers’ expectations. Soil and climate conditions in Mexico are ideal for growing avocados, and our growers take great care when harvesting and shipping avocados to the United States.”

Steve Taft, president of Eco Farms Avocados Inc., in Temecula, CA, adds that one of the benefits of Mexico is that the closeness to the border makes it easy to move it more quickly into the United States, as opposed to having to travel from other more distant countries. In fact, some states are closer to the Mexican border than domestic growing regions. With shorter travel time, the fruit can be harvested later to ensure proper maturity.

High Standards

Mexico adheres to high levels of standards in all stages of its avocado industry. Demands from customers, the USDA, and the country’s own desire to provide a consistently

good product have created a culture of quality. Calavo’s Wedin details, “All of our avocados come from certain growers. When the USDA approved the fruit from Mexico, they enforced strict regulations. The packinghouses that work with our operation do a really good job with stringent and exact importing. Mexico’s operations fit well into the food safety concerns. They are top flight for traceability, hygiene and cleanliness.”

“Most mainstream packers have done a good job with California packers,” says Taft. “They have the same standards as California. Many shippers in Mexico train in what they need to do to work in this business.”

Moore adds, “Retailers like Wal-Mart, Safeway and Costco say, ‘You must do this for us to sell your product.’ They have more audits and safety inspectors than you can imagine. There’s a culture in the company through consistent training and documentation because they want the product to look good, taste good and create confidence of a healthy experience.”

“Anyone who has ever toured growing areas and packing facilities in Mexico knows that the quality and safety standards of the good Mexican growers are on par with their American counterparts,” says Bates, who also adds that during times of crop overlap between U.S. and Mexican avocados, Supervalu will send out a “field intelligence team” to identify the best product. “The reason a Mexican avocado might be chosen over its domestic cousin is due to maturity levels and oil content,” he notes. “Quality sells and builds repeat shoppers, so we try to identify where the best product is and buy from that area.”



Display What People Want To See

Regardless of where the fruit is from, for customers to buy the fruit, they need to not only see it, but also see the things they are looking for, such as ripeness and health benefits. On top of that, one display is usually not enough to address these things. When it comes to avocados, knowing what customers want to see requires retailers knowing their stores’ demographic.

“There are two distinct groups of consumers when it comes to avocados, and the two groups’ purchasing habits can be completely different,” explains Supervalu’s Bates. “The average Hispanic shoppers view avocados as a mainstream item in their diet. They understand how to select the appropriate quality and ripeness. The other group of shoppers view avocados as a celebration food and may be more intimidated on how to choose one that is ripe and ready to eat. If you have a customer base that has both of these segments in it, then it is important to offer pre-conditioned avocados along with the traditional offering.”

“Additionally, retailers tell us that secondary displays in produce will generate significant sales lifts,” adds MHAIA’s Bohmer. Secondary displays also work well if used to promote the bagged avocados, or avocados of a different size, to appeal to the various demographics.

Ripeness Trumps

In creating displays, one factor stands out the most. Make sure there are ripe avocados, and make sure it is easy for the consumer to know they are ripe. “Without a doubt, far and a way, display them ripe,” says Calavo’s Wedin. “It doesn’t matter if they are Mexican or otherwise. Have them ready-to-eat for same- and next-day purchases, and label them with a ‘ready to eat’ sticker.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF AVOCADOS FROM MEXICO

“Anyone who has ever toured growing areas and packing facilities in Mexico knows that the quality and safety standards of the good Mexican growers are on par with their American counterparts.”

— Dan Bates, *Supervalu*

Mission’s Tarleton agrees, noting how important it is for consumers to be able to purchase avocados for same-day consumption. Bohmer adds the detail that ripe avocados displayed and identified as such outsell other stages by a 2-to-1 margin. “Most avocado importers also offer retailers a ripe program,” she continues. “A ripe avocado that is labeled as such is especially motivating to Eastern U.S. and Midwest shoppers. The many light and new users in these regions are still learning how to discern if an avocado is ripe.”

Health Trends Favor Avocados

The health trend in food is here for the long run, and avocados are a heavyweight in meeting that demand, so promoting them as healthy food choices puts them on the radar of consumers looking to eat nutritiously. Bohmer reports that shoppers will purchase more avocados when exposed to its health benefits. “For example, avocados add nearly 20 vitamins and minerals to food,” she notes.

“Consumers are definitely becoming more health-conscious and aware of what they eat,” says APEAM’s Escobedo. “But, one thing they don’t want to sacrifice is great taste and flavor. It comes down to educating consumers on better choices. Avocados are a great substitute for foods that are higher in saturated fat. With their mono- and poly-unsaturated good fats, avocados give consumers the same rich creamy texture, but with less saturated fat and calories.”

Creative Education

More and more consumers want to know about their food options, and with each piece of fruit, there is a learning curve. FPAA’s Moore acknowledges the importance of retailers investing in the educational component with

their front lines. “You can have a celebrity chef on TV show you recipes, but the driving force is at the store level when dealing with the consumer,” she says. She suggests stores train their department on how to answer questions, such as how to tell when the avocado is ripe and how to ripen it. More consumers are beginning to know about the fruit, but it’s key to educate them on how to use the fruit.

While knowledgeable staff is important, more passive educational measures and promotions also can be taken. Industry insiders all suggest having photos of avocados used in a variety of ways: in recipes, paired with salads, in soups, on sandwiches, etc. When possible, take it a step further and use cross-promotional

displays, such as placing avocados with items like tomatoes, lettuce, jalapeños, limes and other salad, sandwich or guacamole fixings.

As more Mexican avocados arrive in stores — many in the peak of their maturity — remember the power of knowledge. Know that the Mexican avocados come from a microclimate perfect for the fruit and that the Mexican avocado industry adheres to standards that may even be stricter than both U.S. and Mexican governments require. Also know your customer demographic and what they want. Then use your knowledge to show how your store’s supplies meet their desires. With that little bit of sense, stores can continue to ride the wave of growing demand and sales of avocados. **pb**



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Banana Basics

Focusing on a few merchandising basics promises an increase in banana sales. **BY JODEAN ROBBINS**



PHOTO COURTESY OF DEL MONTE FRESH NORTH AMERICA

Communicating with customers through POS signage offering nutritional benefits and recipe cards will boost sales.

While most customers seek out bananas, a good banana display lays a foundation for incremental sales and a store's produce reputation.

"Bananas pretty much sell themselves, but a little extra effort can provide a lift to the category," says Dick Rissman, produce director with Dahl's Food Stores in Des Moines, IA, an upscale independent chain with 13 stores.

"As the single most-purchased item in U.S. supermarkets, the banana often gets taken for granted," states Bil Goldfield, communications manager for Dole Fresh Fruit in Westlake Village, CA. "But research has shown how many produce departments, and even the store as a whole, are judged on the quality of the banana display."

"Stores with a good banana program set a quality precedent in the minds of customers," agrees Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral for Kings Super Markets, headquartered in Parsippany, NJ, with 24 Kings and 6 Balducci's stores. "Bananas are a gateway to many other sales. It gives the store a good reputation to have quality and excitement in the banana category."

Bananas remain one of the most affordable fresh fruits and are a favorite among all age groups. "Bananas are unique in that 89 percent of all consumers tend to purchase this item

throughout the year," reports Dionysios Christou, vice president marketing of Del Monte Fresh Produce, based in Coral Gables, FL. "As the No. 1 healthy fruit snack, bananas account for a considerable amount of total sales in a produce department and a well merchandised banana program can make a great impact."

There is more potential in banana sales if a retailer merchandises and displays in a proper way. "Retailers should put effort into their banana displays because they are the No. 1 selling fruit in the U.S.," says Tracie Levin, general manager for M. Levin & Co. Inc., headquartered in Philadelphia, PA. "This means adequate shelf space, proper color and a focus on quality focus."

David Byrne, vice president of sales for Thermal Technologies Inc., in Blythewood, SC, adds, "Even small differences in quality and appearance can have a huge impact on profit, so don't be afraid to sweat the details and invest in them. Few items possess the ability to reward your efforts to improve quality the way bananas do."

Ensure An Appealing Display

An ample, quality display is the first step to ensuring consistent sales and encouraging additional ones. "Larger displays translate into larger sales," says Mike Potts, vice president of

sales for Turbana Corp., in Miami, FL.

"Banana displays should be clean and visually appealing," states Christou. "To keep bananas at their best in-store, they should be placed on clean, tiered and padded displays to avoid bruising and scarring. Bananas should only be stacked one layer high to discourage consumer rummaging and decrease damage."

Shelf space for bananas can vary depending on the store. "An optimum display can be anywhere from four to 12 feet, depending on the size of store," reports Dahl's Rissman. "Our display size is pretty constant during the course of the year."

"An eight-foot display is optimum if you've got the room," suggests King's Kneeland. "Bananas generally run about six percent of sales, but to maximize profits you don't necessarily need to have six percent of space. You can go five percent or less and really profit from that square footage."

Experimenting with placement of displays will help maximize sales. Levin explains, "Some supermarkets put bananas in the front because they are high volume items, while others believe by moving bananas to the middle of aisles it forces consumers to travel down aisles to make impulse purchases along the way."

Secondary displays encourage impulse buys and offer convenience to the customer. Kneeland affirms, "If you put a secondary display



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“One often missed opportunity is communicating directly to consumers at the display. Stores can provide new usage ideas, complementary cross-merchandised products, and nutritional benefits through signage, recipe cards and POS literature.”

— *Bill Goldfield, Dole Fresh Fruit Co.*

after the produce department, like at the last register or over by the milk, I guarantee you'll sell more bananas.”

“Auxiliary displays are effective at increasing sales to consumers who may not make it to the produce section or forgot to purchase bananas while there,” explains Dole’s Goldfield. “Dole has found these are quite effective when placed in the cereal aisle and dairy sections. The most important factors to successfully implement a secondary banana display program are to place the units in high traffic areas and ensure the fixture is full and merchandised with fresh bananas several times throughout the day.”

“We have additional displays toward checkout,” adds Dahl’s Rissman. “We use roll-around towers that hold about three cases, and we definitely catch some extra sales this way. It’s the old adage: encourage the impulse and they will buy.”

Add Color And Variety

Offering customers additional options in the banana category increases category profitability. “Most retailers like having a two-color program,” states Turbana’s Potts. “Providing both ready-to-eat and greener fruit encourages additional sales.”

“Displaying two color stages provides consumers with the choice to purchase the ready-to-eat product and some for the following days,” suggests Christou. “It also allows for good product rotation at store level. Nothing can hurt a retailer’s sales more than not having color. Separate the product by ripeness stage to facilitate different consumer choices.”

THE RIPENING REPORT

The importance of a good ripening program is well established in today’s industry and has led to advances for both suppliers and retailers. “Banana ripening programs are crucial to the marketing of bananas because most of today’s consumers want bananas ripe and ready-to-eat,” explains Karen-Ann Christenbery, manager of American Ripener LLC, headquartered in Charlotte, NC. “We have seen an increase in companies expanding their ripening programs and those starting up new ripening programs. A good ripening program allows retailers to reduce the handling of the bananas and manage the quality of the product.”

“We see consistent growth in ripening capacity across the board with our retail ripening room clients,” concurs David Byrne, vice president of sales and marketing for Thermal Technologies Inc., headquartered in Blythewood, SC. “Many retailers have taken control of the process by building rooms and have been rewarded with significant sales increases and a strong return on investment. Best results are obtained when banana movement is three loads per week or more. Volumes less than this can be challenging to manage.”

Suppliers provide invaluable service to a variety of customers who do not have their own ripening rooms. “The ability to offer ripening services to all of our customers allows for customizable programs depending on their needs,” states Dionysios Christou, vice president marketing of Del Monte Fresh Produce, headquartered in Coral Gables, FL. “Our goal is to both provide retailers with new sales opportunities and to help them generate profit. Our distribution centers, with modern, pressurized ripening rooms, guard against moisture loss and ensure box weight can provide a seamless alternative. This process also maintains the bananas’ ideal color on the shelf longer to improve cosmetic appeal and minimize shrink.”

For retailers, operating their own ripening rooms yields positives and negatives. “Some retailers find it profitable, while others live to regret it,” says Tracie Levin, general manager for M. Levin & Co. Inc., of Philadelphia, PA, which provides ripening services. “Ripening

requires time and plenty of attentiveness to the fruit. Retailers ripening their own fruit must salvage themselves any over-ripe product. If they’re using someone else’s ripening services, the ripening services company helps absorb these issues and replace the fruit without an added cost and/or loss.”

“When retailers have their own ripening rooms, they can be very successful depending on their resources and the quality of personnel managing the room,” states Christou. “However, having a supplier like Del Monte manage a retailer’s ripening services frees up the retailer’s time, allows them to have superior quality fruit and lowers the risk of shrink among many other benefits. Our resources and personnel provide added value that is unmatched by any.”

While technology provides for easier ripening, it is still an art form. “With our products, ethylene application becomes the easiest part of the banana-ripening process,” says Greg Akins, president and CEO of Catalytic Generators Inc., in Norfolk, VA. “There is no danger of ethylene-explosion and ripening is simplified with our system of uniform and timed ethylene release. This allows the ripener to concentrate on the more difficult part of the process: scheduling, to ensure banana color and quantity matches store demand. Scheduling is where the skill of a ripener will show; the ability to control the process by making adjustments to temperatures based on the way the fruit is ripening and the orders are coming in is truly an art.”

“The industry continues to innovate ripening with computer and sensor systems providing better tools to monitor the ripening progress of the fruit,” says Bill Goldfield, communications manager for Dole Fresh Fruit in Westlake Village, CA. “Of course, there is no substitute to periodic physical inspections of fruit during the ripening cycle and proper handling of the fruit in staging areas all the way through delivery to the retail backroom. All of the care and effort spent to ensure the highest possible quality product through outturn of fruit from ripening will collapse if proper temperature and handling procedures are not maintained all the way through the retail display.” **pb**



.Cross-merchandising bananas with cereal and other items outside the produce department will create additional rings.

Most bananas are sold at color four, but percentages vary depending on store demographic. “Color four bananas sell the best for us,” reports Kneeland. “We advise our stores to order 80 percent color four and then 20 percent green.”

“The trend is to have 60/40 or 70/30 ripe to green, but the primary objective is to ship bananas at a consistent color stage,” notes Christou.

“Not everybody wants only a ripe or a green banana so you need to have a mixture,” agrees Rissman. “Even though it can be awkward for us when consumers pull bunches apart, we do encourage our customers to mix and match ripeness to promote more sales.”

Daily purchases are one way retailers can better manage a color program. “Retailers who order on a daily basis ensure they have the proper color they are looking for,” suggests Levin. “Ordering daily also ensures they have fresh bananas to display each and every day and avoids bruising or discoloration that may occur from the display being touched by consumers the previous day.”

Cater To The Customer

Retailers who customize the category to customer needs will enjoy higher sales. “Successful retailers focus on addressing the preferences and tastes of consumers in their particular market,” explains Christou. “Retailers should understand their customer demographics in order to stock the banana varieties in demand in their region and showcase products effectively. For example, it would benefit a retailer to promote plantains and *manzanos* in an area where there is a high concentration of Hispanic consumers. We use sophisticated category management tools to help retailers ensure optimal product mix and to make customized recommendations that fit each individual store’s consumer profile.”

“Retailers should understand their customer demographics in order to stock the banana varieties in demand in their region and showcase products effectively. For example, it would benefit a retailer to promote plantains and *manzanos* in an area where there is a high concentration of Hispanic consumers.”

— Dionysios Christou, , Del Monte Fresh Produce

“Understanding and engaging the various audiences as to how they live, see and interact with the product is critical in determining the best way to appeal to needs in the market,” says Dole’s Goldfield. “One theme that continues to surface throughout our ‘Go Bananas’ promotion is the banana’s appeal as an everyday food. Through our constant conversations with our nearly half-million Facebook fans, we know the banana is one of the few foods they eat every day — a dietary constant. This is a theme we are very excited to hear and we’re looking into ways to address it moving forward.”

A store might customize products appealing to children or seniors to boost sales, for example. “Family units are shrinking and the North American population is aging,” explains Turbana’s Potts. “Baby Boomers are a powerful purchasing group and may be looking for smaller sales units. In response, we have developed a ‘junior’ program to meet that demand.”

“Stores can take advantage of retail promotions by banana brands, which include stickers with popular cartoon characters for kids,” says Levin of M. Levin & Co. “To market toward seniors, a store could promote the fact that the fruit contains high levels of potassium.”

Specialty bananas add distinctive choices to

any banana program. “Specialty bananas are a great way to grow your banana category sales,” advises Christou. “The colors, unique tastes and interesting sizes of specialty bananas (red, *manzanos* and baby) are appealing to kids and offer tremendous opportunities to increase consumption among younger consumers and adults who seek variety.”

“Display specialty bananas along with the regular variety of bananas to inform people about these different varieties and make them curious about trying a new item,” suggests Levin. “Stores can also display them with other tropical items.”

POS materials continue to be a valuable tool, even though bananas are so well known. “One often missed opportunity is communicating

directly to consumers at the display,” asserts Dole’s Goldfield. “Stores can provide new usage ideas, complementary cross-merchandised products and nutritional benefits through signage, recipe cards and POS literature. Organized POS materials are a tremendous customer communication opportunity.”

“Materials such as healthy lifestyle display cards showing nutritional value and benefits, recipe cards and props attract the consumer’s attention,” explains Del Monte’s Christou. “Adults and seniors are more interested in nutritional facts, convenience and pricing, so it is important to include this information when communicating with these groups.”

Think “Outside The Bunch”

By cross-merchandising, retailers have the opportunity to increase banana sales and sales of related products as well. “Bananas can be the foundation for selling many other items,” states Kings’ Kneeland. “Yogurt, granola and other fruits are just a few of the items a retailer can merchandise with bananas.”

Christou suggests, “Cross-merchandising ideas include pairing bananas with ice cream, strawberries, salads, chocolate dips and peanut butter. It can be especially beneficial to pair



“Not everybody wants only a ripe or green banana so you need to have a mixture. Even though it can be awkward for us when consumers pull bunches apart, we do encourage our customers to mix and match ripeness to promote more sales.”

— Dick Rissman, Dahl's Food Stores

bananas with other fruits for smoothie purposes — a large part of the healthy lifestyle trend. Ripe and green plantains can be promoted with cheeses and other typical Hispanic foods like guacamole or rice and beans to create additional sales opportunities.”

Looking for partners outside the department keeps promotions fresh. “Retailers can utilize many items commonly thought of as going with bananas to boost sales,” says Levin of M. Levin & Co. “In addition to cereal, retailers can cross-merchandise bananas with products in the baking aisle under the concept

of banana breads and muffins.”

Bananas are one of the best values in the produce department and retailers can capitalize on that message. “They provide the best value for the largest range of consumers,” explains Christou.

“Bananas are pretty stable price-wise and are still probably the cheapest fruit we have out there,” says Dahl's Rissman. “It's good for the consumer, even if they may not realize how good a value it is.”

“Aggressive marketing on bananas has fallen off in past years,” adds Kneeland.

“Bananas are rarely on ad now and pretty much run around the same price point. It's a competitive disadvantage for a retailer if you're overpriced. But all that means it's a great value for the customer. If you think of what it takes to get bananas here from Latin America, and you still pay \$.79 per pound, it's a real bargain.” **pb**

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10 Ways To Sweeten Citrus Sales

With a year-round supply thanks to a strong domestic program and plenty of imports, retailers can take advantage of plentiful fruit with big, bold displays and smart marketing techniques.

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD



Selling both bulk and bagged citrus appeals to a wide variety of consumers.

Gapless supply and greater selection have given citrus a deep-rooted year-round home in the produce department. This destination category of sweet juicy fruits is a profitable one. Citrus contributed 5 percent to total produce department sales for the 52 weeks ending July 30, 2011, according to Perishables Group FreshFacts Powered by Nielsen.

Alfonso Cano, assistant produce director for Northgate Markets, a 32-store chain based in Anaheim, CA, that takes its citrus merchandising seriously, says, "Citrus is an important category for us. It's something customers expect to find all the time. That's why we promote it in a variety of ways."

1. Lose The Winter-Only Mindset

Domestic production in Florida, Texas and California, plus imports from South Africa, Chile, Australia and Mexico, equals a continuous supply of citrus for U.S. customers. As a result, the citrus category's contribution to total produce department sales ranged from a low, yet significant, 4.7 percent and 3.4 percent in Quarters 2 and 3, respectively, to highs of 5.4 percent and 6.6 percent in Quarters 4 and 1, respectively, during the 52 weeks ending July 30, 2011, according to Perishables Group Fresh-

Facts Powered by Nielsen.

According to Mike O'Brien, vice president of produce for Schnuck Markets, based in St. Louis, MO, "Because of imports there is really no gap when it comes to Navel oranges. Much like grapes, apples and berries, our customers have come to regard them as a staple and expect them in our stores."

"This globalization of citrus availability requires a change in merchandising mindset," acknowledges Mark Bassetti, senior vice president of Duda Farm Fresh Foods Inc., headquartered in Oviedo, FL. "We've seen a tremendous growth in winter production. Just look at the thousands of acres of Mandarins planted in California that are coming into production. At the same time, imports have expanded in the summer. This proves consumers want an alternative to summer stone fruit and grapes. Therefore, merchandising should be under the citrus banner as a whole, not just 'summer' or 'winter' citrus."

David Mixon, senior vice president and chief marketing officer at Seald-Sweet International, headquartered in Vero Beach, FL, agrees. "Citrus is a true year-round destination category. Last year, for example, the industry accepted over 1 million cases of Navels from Chile, in addition to the same volume of

imports from other countries. This demonstrates what the market is capable of, even in the non-domestic season."

Not only are there no gaps in citrus supply, there are overlaps that allow retailers to choose exactly what variety and what country of origin they source product for their consumers. For example, says Suhanra Conradie, CEO of the Western Cape Citrus Producers Forum (WCCPF) in Wellington, South Africa, "One large chain has said it would rather sell our South African fruit instead of early domestic fruit because the quality is superior. This has great promise for our Midnight oranges, which offer exceptional quality. The demand for these is high and the growth year over year has been phenomenal."

2. Offer Oranges — All Types!

Oranges are the foundation of the citrus category. Sales represented 38.4 percent of category dollars for the 52-week period ending July 30, 2011, according to Perishables Group FreshFacts Powered by Nielsen.

Neil Galone, vice president of sales and marketing for Booth Ranches, in Orange Cove, CA, points out, "In spite of the growth interest in easy peelers, there is still a loyal base of consumers who continue to look for oranges

year-round.”

“Navel oranges are the driver at retail,” maintains Bassetti.

The first domestic Navels begin in Florida and Texas in October and run through January, followed by California Navels, which start harvest in November, with late varieties lasting until imports arrive in June. Chile, South Africa, and to some extent, Australia and Peru, export their Navels into the U.S. until mid-October.

Mixon suggests, “Since the domestic and import seasons can overlap, especially in the fall, we suggest promoting U.S. fruit in 3-, 4- or 5-lb. bags and then selling the imports in bulk

due to their larger size and better appearance.”

“Selling both bulk and bagged oranges appeals to various economic groups and family sizes,” acknowledges Paula Fouchek, marketing director for the Edinburg Citrus Association, in Edinburg, TX.

According to Al Finch, vice president of sales and marketing for Lake Hamilton, FL-based Florida Classic Growers Inc., “This season fruit size will be up on Florida Navels. This means good promotional opportunities on 8-lb. bags with 64-ct fruit.”

Navels use to be the winter orange and Valencia's the summer. But as Galone explains, “Competition from imported Navels has

meant marginally producing Valencia's that have produced a lot of green or excessively seedy fruit have fallen by the wayside and what is left is higher quality fruit.”

“Valencia oranges definitely have their place on the shelf,” adds Galone. “Because they are grown domestically, the freight is considerably less, leading to a lower delivered cost at retail and thus, a less expensive price for consumers. This makes Valencia's a lower-priced alternative to the high priced Southern Hemisphere Navel.”

Cara Cara Navels are gaining in popularity with consumers at Martin's Super Markets, a 20-store chain based in South Bend, IN, says Ed Osowski, director of produce and floral. “They have a good flavor profile, and this is what customers are looking for — anything that delivers more flavor,” he notes.

Schnuck's O'Brien agrees, adding, “I see the red Navel Cara Cara orange catching on with customers with its deep orange flavor with hint of cherry.”

Availability and distribution of Cara Caras, a pink-fleshed Navel variety, is rapidly expanding, according to Claire Smith, public relations manager for Sherman Oaks, CA-based Sunkist Growers Inc. “While crop estimates are for a lighter set, the smaller volume will be offset by the increasing number of acres coming into production. Because about half that acreage is still young, we expect to see strong growth in the availability of Cara Caras for five to six years. We promote them as the ‘Power Orange’ because of their inherent nutritive value, their lower acidity and lycopene content.”

Early Cara Caras grown in Florida don't tend to eat as well until mid-November, says Darrell Genthner, director of marketing and business development for Noble Worldwide Florida Citrus Sales, in Winter Haven, FL. “Don't break the market on these,” he warns. “Retailers can gain greater sales and repeat sales by waiting until the fruit eats well.”

Organic oranges are a small slice of the business. However, Peter Ohsol, Sunkist Grower's organics project manager, reports, “Sunkist offers organic Navels that run from November into June, organic Cara Caras in December and organic Valencia's in the spring and summer months.”

3. Go For Grapefruit

Grapefruit sales have lost ground to other types of citrus, yet the fruit still represented 8.2 percent of category dollar sales for the 52 weeks ending July 30, 2011, according to Perishables Group FreshFacts.

Five Hot New Specialty Citrus

Varietal development in the citrus category is booming. Here's a sampling of some of the newest varieties:

Spring Navels: Seedless with medium-large fruit with a deep reddish-orange rind, this late mid-season variety has excellent flavor with a good sugar-acid ratio. “It is at its peak beginning late January and is available into April,” says Neil Galone, vice president of sales and marketing for Booth Ranches, in Orange Cove, CA. “We have been packing this variety very successfully into export to Korea and Japan for the past couple of years and have a strong following in those markets. It will be available in the domestic market this year, but only in very limited supplies.

Gold Nugget Mandarins: High Brix and 100-percent seedless, these pebbly-rinded fruit have great flavor, are very juicy and peel easily, according to Claire Smith, public relations manager for Sunkist Growers Inc., in Sherman Oaks, CA. “While there is not a large volume yet available, they are claiming a growing niche in the citrus category and distribution is increasing in both domestic and export markets. Theirs is a short season, generally March to May or even into mid-June.”

Sugar Belle: A Mandarin hybrid of the Clementine and Minneola, this unique piece of fruit ripens in the December to January time frame, says J. Peter Chaires, executive director of the New Varieties Development & Management Corporation, a Lakeland, FL-based organization dedicated to the sustainability of Florida

citrus. “There's only about 110 to 120 acres state-wide, but it has fantastic flavor and comes in a full four to six weeks ahead of the Honeybell, effectively filling this niche.”

Tango: A seedless version of a W. Mercott with a traditional Tangerine look, commercial plantings of this sweet-eating fruit are going into the ground now, says Chaires. “The fruit harvests before Thanksgiving in the far southern part of the state. Otherwise, production comes in during the first to second week of January. It's a fruit with great potential, and we expect commercial volumes by 2014.”

Finger Limes: Native to Australia, a handful of growers in California are cultivating this crop dubbed by chefs as ‘citrus caviar’ for its interior that looks like a mass of tiny eggs that each offer an explosive tartness. “Last year was the first we brought finger limes to market,” says Megan Shanley, in marketing and sales at Shanley Farms, in San Luis Obispo, CA. “The season will run from mid-August until January with peak volumes in October.” The main barrier to selling finger limes is price. They sell for some \$40 per pound, which is why retailers have introduced them in 25- to 35-piece packs with an easier \$15 price point. “We're looking at an even smaller 1- to 2-oz. pack like garlic,” says Shanley. How popular are finger limes? “An article about them ran recently in the *Food Network* magazine and we had 11 orders in three hours. Before that we'd only get about three orders a week.” **pb**

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“White-fleshed grapefruit has declined in production and consumption,” details Duda’s Bassetti. “Ruby red is the category driver.”

Color sells, agrees Edinburg Citrus Association’s Fouchek. “The interior color of our Texas Rio Star is seven to 10 times darker than the popular Ruby Red,” she boasts. “Show off the beautiful red interior by cutting it, wrapping it and placing it on the display. The color will attract customers’ attention and lead to the initial sale, but the sweet taste will keep them coming back for more. This variety has a superior sugar-to-acid ratio, without a strong bitterness. Peak supplies are in January and February.”

However, the trend for consumers to perceive red-fleshed grapefruit as ‘ripe’ and therefore better tasting than fruit with a lighter hue is not a positive one, counters Seald-Sweet’s Mixon. “This means we, as an industry, are not supplying consumers with the best eating fruit due to this theory. White-fleshed grapefruit actually eats better than that with a red blush. This is because the pectin that colors the fruit can decrease the flavor. For this reason, we’ve found that active demos can grow sales of white grapefruit, especially to sophisticated buyers who appre-

ciate the flavor.”

There may be opportunities in the future for both colorful and flavorful fruit. Mixon adds, “There is a new variety of grapefruit in South Africa that has red flesh and tastes very good.” South Africa supplies grapefruit to the United States from June to August, while domestic supplies come from California, Texas and Florida.

The Bartow-based Florida Department of Citrus, will make it easier for consumers to eat grapefruit this season by offering a free grapefruit knife with purchase. The knife offer will be available through fresh grapefruit bag inserts, tear-off pads at supermarkets and other venues.

4. Market Easy-Peelers

Clementines are the best-selling SKU of citrus at Martin’s Super Markets, reports Osowski. “They sell in greater volume than even oranges.”

Paul Marier, senior vice president of sales and marketing for Fisher Capespan USA LLC, based in Gloucester City, NJ, says, “There’s no question that the number of easy-peel fruit is increasing. They’ve become a staple in the citrus category and are gaining a larger share

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of citrus dollars.”

Mandarins, which include Clementines, represented 23.4 percent of citrus category dollar sales for the 52 weeks ending July 30, 2011, according to Perishables Group Fresh-Facts. Sales of Tangerines contributed 4.7 percent of dollar sales during the same time period, leading these easy-peelers to represent 28.1, or over one-quarter, of category dollar sales.

Some industry executives, such as Mixon,

“One large chain has said it would rather sell our South African fruit instead of early domestic fruit because the quality is superior. This has great promise for our Midnight oranges, which offer exceptional quality. The demand for these is high and the growth year over year has been phenomenal.”

— Suhanra Conradie, *Western Cape Citrus Producers Forum*



Together, lemons and lime totaled 25 percent of category dollar sales for the 52-week period ending July 30, 2011.

feel it's best to market Clementines as their own category. “Clementines from Spain introduced the North American customer to the category years ago. Since then, production has increased both in the United States as well as offshore to fill growing year-round demand.”

Others, such as Duda's Bassetti, recommend retailers market all Mandarins together. “The real key is to educate consumers through packaging, POS material and taste trials about everything that fits the sweet and easy-peel category, even if it doesn't say ‘clementine.’ Consumer research conducted over the past decade tells us that it's these attributes that are driving sales,” he reports.

Tangerines are also a group of citrus fruit that are expanding by variety and availability, and thus in need of a sound marketing plan. Noble's Genthner says, “We will start delivering new exclusive varieties of Tangerines here in Florida within the next five years. This will dramatically change the Tangerine category, adding a segment that will target the quality-conscious consumer with better peeling, less seeds, larger sizes and an improved eating experience with juicier, and in some cases, crunchier texture.”

Genthner predicts that varieties such as Fallglo and Sunburst Tangerines will become

the price drivers, while another seven or eight varieties harvested successively in three-week windows over a four- to five-month period will be marketed as the gourmet trendy items.

5. Give Lemons And Limes Their Due

Lemons represented 15.1 percent of citrus category dollar sales for the 52 weeks ending July 30, 2011, while lime sales added another 10.1 percent of dollars for the same time period, according to Perishables Group Fresh-Facts. This adds up to a total contribution that nearly rivals the easy-peelers and Navels.

Lemons are available year-round out of California, Mexico and Chile. “Meyer lemons are an exciting varietal,” says Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa's/World Variety Produce Inc., in Vernon, CA. “It's a favorite of chefs for its mild, sweet and juicy characteristics. June and July is the only remaining gap in supply. We've started to bring fruit in from New Zealand to fill the August and September timeframe, and domestic fruit is available from mid-October to May.”

Another newer hybrid is the seedless lemon. Karen Caplan, president of Frieda's Inc., in Los Alamitos, CA asserts, “Chefs love it. We package it for retail in convenient 1-lb. bags that differentiate it from regular lemons.”

Eddie Caram, general manager of New Limeco LLC, in Princeton, FL, says, “On the lime front, in the winter months we look more at South America to cover the gaps we can't fill from Mexico. In addition, we are sourcing and joint venturing in Central America as well, and expect to increase our current lime sales by 25 percent.”

Caram adds, “We suggest that chain stores carry a lime count 200 or larger so that customers can get the most juice out of them.”

6. Choose Packaging That Sells

“There's a trend toward more bagged citrus,” reports Kathy Hearl, marketing promotions manager for DNE World Fruit Sales, headquartered in Fort Pierce, FL. “This seems to be an area of growth for the industry for several reasons. Consumers are leaning toward smaller packages due to smaller households. The economy has changed consumers purchasing behavior to buy smaller volumes and make more frequent trips to the supermarket to avoid any waste, and smaller bags also allow retailers to target a more attractive price point that falls into the consumer's budget,” she explains.

Luke Sears, president of LGS Specialty Sales Ltd., in the Bronx, NY, agrees. “Two- and 3-lb. bags of Clementines, especially in the summer, dominate market share.”

Bagged citrus represented 49 percent of category dollar sales during the 52 weeks ending July 30, 2011, according to the Perishables Group.

“Graphics that allow for direct communication with the customer is another positive for bags,” says Duda's Bassetti. “High graphic poly and net bags allow us to include recipes and usage tips, provide QR codes that link to web-based recipes and tie into social media. This all helps to educate the consumer about the product.”

Sunkist Growers has introduced a number of new pack styles. “One of these,” details Dean Troxell, director of packaging, “is a stand-up

grab bag for our small fruit, such as our Sunkist Smiles Mandarins. It's poly with two net panels on the side with finger holes in the top for easy carrying."

"The real key is to educate consumers through packaging, POS material and taste trials about everything that fits the sweet and easy-peel category, even if it doesn't say 'clementine.' Consumer research conducted over the past decade tells us that it's these attributes that are driving sales."

— Mark Bassetti, Duda Farm Fresh Foods Inc.

Another of the company's new packages is a value-size 10-lb. Navel carton. Troxell says, "We customized the graphics on the outside of this carton for a hockey promotion at a Canadian retailer. Inside, we most commonly pack 72 and 88 size Navels, but we can pack anything from 56s to 163s — whatever a retailer would like. The carton offers a lot of versatility."

Noble has introduced a 5-lb. carton for Tangerines. Genthner remarks, "It can be sold from full pallet displays located in the front of the store or produce department. Our Master Pack Carton, which holds eight 5-lb. cartons, can be displayed as a stack or wing display, which will trigger more sales within the produce department."

7. Build Selling Displays

A broad base assortment of citrus is featured on display at Martin's Super Markets," says Osowski. "This includes oranges, grapefruit, all the varieties like Cara Caras, and Tangerines as well as lemons and limes."

"To determine assortment," Genthner details, "it really starts with retailers' assessment of the marketplace, along with their strategic plan. To develop item selection, they must determine how many customer segments pertain to the category, along with creating different value propositions for each of the



segments within the category."

"Large displays create interest and sell product," says Scott Owens, vice president of sales and marketing for Paramount Citrus Association, headquartered in Delano, CA. "Sixty percent of Cuties are sold off display." Cuties are a cross between a sweet orange and Chinese Mandarin that are marketed in a joint venture between Paramount Citrus and Sun Pacific.

According to Booth Ranches' Galone, "Bins can help increase display space. This season, we'll introduce a dramatic high-graphic bin. Additionally, we have a high-graphic shroud that can be used for waterfall or secondary displays, and a high-graphic carton, which many retailers use for building dramatic displays."

Some varieties of packaged citrus, due to their size and durability, are better suited for building different types of displays, notes DNE's Hearl. "For example, graphic bins can display both bagged and bulk citrus and can be displayed in various locations in the store. A waterfall cascade display works with bulk citrus, such as oranges or grapefruit, and can be piled strategically to look attractive without damaging the fruit. Specialty citrus, such as Clementines, should be displayed at a shallow depth to avoid damaging rows on the bottom. End caps can display either bagged or bulk citrus and offer multiple varieties for a colorful and inviting display."

Make sure signage on displays is clear. To assist with this, the FDOC offers retailers 5x7-inch display cards for Florida Tangerines, oranges and grapefruit. The organization also offers 3x5-inch folded brochures with product and nutrition information, as well as recipes for the same types of fruit.

8. Demo And Cross-Merchandise

Taste demos and cross-merchandising citrus with other items can be an effective way to sell more fruit. In the summer, the Western Cape Citrus Producers Forum runs promotions with retailers where consumers can sample product at the point-of-sale. "This year," says Conradie, "we have brought growers to the retail outlets, offering consumers the chance to meet those responsible for growing the citrus and bringing it here. We recognize the fact that consumers are very interested in knowing the source of their food products, so this is something we want to do as much of as we can."

Sampling can be as simple as setting out wedges or sections of grapefruit where consumers can access them, says Edinburg Citrus Association's Fouchek. "More sophisticated demos, using grapefruit in appetizer, salad or dessert ideas, opens up the realms of preparation possibilities. Sales can increase substantially by sampling. Up to 80 percent of consumers will purchase the ingredients if provided a recipe."

"Key limes cross-merchandise well with other key lime pie ingredients," says Doria Potts-Blonder, sales and marketing director for New Limeco, "especially if you offer a recipe right there as well."

Recipes are definitely a great cross-merchandising tool. Western Cape Citrus' Conradie remarks, "For example, our orange black bean salsa is a healthy and delicious recipe that could be cross-merchandised with black beans. The same could be said for some of our beef or chicken recipes."

"In the produce department, cross-merchandise limes with green peppers, avocados, tomatoes and lemons," suggest Potts-

Blonder. "This makes the limes really stand out."

"At Martin's Super Markets, we cross-merchandise lemons over in the seafood department," reports Osowski.

Julie DeWolf, director of retail marketing for Sunkist Growers, shares, "We will be creating a lemon case cling for the seafood department to remind consumers to pick up their lemons when they buy their seafood. Along with the cling, we will be working on a tabletop display that holds lemons so consumers are able to grab lemons while they

are top of mind."

Other cross-merchandising ideas are fresh oranges in the cereal aisle with a juicer, suggests Booth Ranches Galone, or fruit-cutting tools such as peelers, zesters or graters with any varieties of citrus," advises Hearl.

9. Sell By The Pound Or Piece?

Both pricing methods have their place in the produce department, acknowledges Fouchek. "But pricing per piece can add excitement for the consumer when there is a

possibility of getting several pieces for a dollar," she adds. "This is effective during the peak of the season when there is ample availability of fruit."

"Limes sold by the each in multiples will sell faster than when priced per pound," cites New Limeco's Potts-Blonder.

"A second advantage of by-the-each pricing," adds Frieda's Caplan, "is that consumers know just what they are paying for without having to get their produce weighed."

"Unit pricing is what customers like about buying bagged citrus," maintains Florida Classic Grower's Finch.

Region can dictate pricing method. "In certain areas of the country, consumers are accustomed to pricing by the pound, and in others they are more familiar with pricing by the piece," points out Galone.

10. Promote Not By Price Alone

Ads are one way Osowski promotes citrus at Martin's Super Markets. "We'll run a citrus item in the ad every week in peak season," he remarks. "Clementines dominate the ads followed by oranges."

Advertise bulk and bagged oranges and grapefruit, suggests Fouchek. "Mix it up with feature and sub-features," she adds.

According to Finch, "There will be a good opportunity to cross-promote 4-lb. bags of oranges and 3-lb. bags of tangerines this winter. Rather than selling each item for \$2.99 each, for example, greater success comes from promoting 2-for-\$6."

Finally, encouraging the creativity of produce staff with sales' contests, complete with cash prizes, is a potent way to sell citrus. That's what Cano at Northgate Markets discovered during a promotion with Chilean Navels during the first two weeks of September. "Some of the best performing stores put a secondary display of Navels up by the check-out stand," he details. "Staff also encouraged the checkers themselves to upsell the fruit. Navels are a great impulse item."

Another successful technique was active demos of fruit in high traffic areas of the store on the weekends. The Navels were also price-promoted in the chain's weekly circular. "Cash prizes were awarded to winning produce managers, store directors and regional merchandisers," says Cano. "We found that the more people and more departments who were involved, the more successful the Chilean Navel promotion. This way, you don't just end up with a 3x6-foot display in produce and that's it. You need something extra and that is whole store and chain involvement."

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'Tis The Season For Dried Fruits And Nuts

Increased variety helps build holiday sales of dried fruit and nuts. **BY BARBARA ROBISON**



PHOTO COURTESY OF SUNSWEET GROWERS INC.

Sunsweet has recently released its Sunsweet Ones and D'Noir Prunes in an effort to attract a wider, and more varied, demographic.

Dried fruit and nuts are a time-honored holiday tradition enjoyed by consumers everywhere. Whether served as an appetizer, a dessert, tossed in a salad, or included in baked goods, dried fruit and nuts are an important part of holiday menus. Suppliers and retailers are continually working to offer customers a greater variety and supply of the items for their holiday festivities.

Dried Fruit Continues To Be Popular Holiday Fare

“Cooking and baking with raisins and other dried fruits help make memories out of holiday gatherings,” states Joe Tamble, vice president sales for Sun-Maid Growers of California, based in Kingsburg, CA, a marketing cooperative for dried fruit. “Some of the more popular dried fruit uses during the holidays are in pies, cobblers, cookies, breads, fruit bars and more. Recipe ideas are available on Sun-Maid’s website and Facebook page. Our feature on *100 Years of Recipes* with downloadable recipe books from prior years is a popular website item.”

Sun-Maid Growers is in the process of

introducing two new items at retail: Vanilla Yogurt Mini Raisins and Vanilla Yogurt Cherries. The company has taken two popular current items — Mini Raisins and Cherries — and added a creamy, vanilla yogurt coating to provide consumers with more alternatives for enjoying dried fruit.

“Dried fruit is gaining in popularity year-round, but is especially important during the holiday period,” recognizes Andrew Stillman, president of Minneapolis, MN-based Ampport Foods/American Importing Co. Inc., an importer and distributor of dried fruit and nuts. “We get calls all the time wanting to know where the dried fruits is, especially dates. Most retailers are aware of the increased consumer interest and major ones, such as Wal-Mart, have plans for expanding customer selection and availability of the fruit.”

The date is a popular fruit for holiday entertaining and gift giving. Lorrie Cooper, manager of the Indio-based California Date Administrative Committee, notes, “We are pushing to have more displays of dates in produce because the date is actually a fresh fruit. It’s just that it has a less than 30 percent moisture factor. Consumers assume they’ve been especially dried. On the contrary, we are putting mois-

ture back into dates when the content is too low,” she explains.

Dried figs are also gaining popularity with many consumers. “People are enjoying the unique flavor and learning to use dried figs in more ways,” says Linda Cain, vice president of retail sales and marketing for Valley Fig Growers, headquartered in Fresno, CA.

“We expect prices of California figs to be a little higher this year, and Turkish prices should be about the same as last year,” reports Sal Vacca, president of A.J. Trucco Inc., an importer and distributor of dried fruit and nuts in the Bronx, NY. “With Greek figs, there are problems with the Euro. We are counting on Turkey to provide fig value and some decent prices for this season.”

Jeff McLemore, product manager of dried fruit at Sunsweet Growers Inc., a marketing cooperative for dried fruit based in Yuba City, CA, shares, “One of our key products for the holidays is Sunsweet Ones — individually wrapped dried plums that are bringing the new, younger users to the category. D’Noir Prunes are one of our newest innovations that people are calling the best tasting prune yet, while the new Plum Amazines target key ingredient usage for the holidays. Plum Amazines



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“Sun-Maid Growers always has promotions and advertising going on during the holidays to keep raisins and dried fruit top-of-the-mind for consumers’ holiday baking and snacking needs.”

— Joe Tamble, Sun-Maid Growers of California

taste great and are more nutritious than raisins and cranberries, with more fiber, half the sugar, and 19 percent fewer calories,” he details.

Supplier Marketing Support Helps Increase Register Rings

To help retailers build their dried fruit sales, suppliers are providing in-store support as well as social networking, national advertising and publicity. “Sun-Maid Growers always has promotions and advertising going on during the holidays to keep raisins and dried fruit top-of-the-mind for consumers’ holiday baking and snacking needs,” notes Tamble. “In fact, it’s rare that you walk into a store in November and December and do not see a display of our items in the produce section.”

In addition to in-store displays and retail feature ads, Sun-Maid will be advertising on national TV during the holiday period. The company’s print ads with recipes will appear in *Fitness* and *Parents* magazines during that time. In early November, Sun-Maid Growers is running a national FSI (free-standing insert) focused on holiday baking, with a coupon for \$1-off on the purchase of two Sun-Maid items.

Stillman of Ampport Foods points out, “We can provide a clear, plastic stand-alone rack for our Fresh Pack line of dried fruit and nuts. It is attractive, eye-catching, and when strategically placed, always results in higher rings in produce.”

Valley Fig Growers will sponsor two cooking shows on PBS. The company also plans to emphasize tie-ins with cheese and will run a food publicity tie-in with Jarlsberg cheese in a Family Features release. The growers’ firm will be focusing on hand-packed trays and cups and will have display-ready, stackable cases available for their customers.

“This holiday season we are excited to offer great shipper options to create impulse sales at the store,” comments SunSweet’s McLemore. “In addition, we will be running a national consumer TV advertising program this fall. The shippers are key. They generate increased visibility and consumer product trial during the major selling time for dried fruit. We have found that retailers who utilize shippers for

displays generate more than a 20 percent lift in dried fruit sales.”

The California Date Administrative Committee is in the process of generating new educational materials for consumers. The focus will be on the fact that the American Heart Association has certified dates with the Heart-Check mark, a nationally recognized nutrition icon certifying a heart-healthy food. “People are looking for foods with natural sugars and getting away from the processed sugars,” states the Committee’s Cooper. “Dates are naturally sweet, and make an ideal choice for inclusion in holiday menus.”

Wide Nut Selection Adds To Holiday Enjoyment

Nuts seem to go hand-in-hand with dried fruit in the produce department. They complement each other well, and both combine beautifully with many other produce items, whether it is in a salad, a vegetable dish, a fresh fruit or other dessert. Nuts and dried fruit also provide ideal holiday snacks, acting as a quick pick-me-up or an appetizer for entertaining.

“Our customers really like the dried fruit and nut platters we get already made up for us,” acknowledges Randy Sabatino, produce manager at Palm Beach Gardens, FL-based Carmine’s Gourmet Market, a single-unit specialty food store. “The platters come from California and the apricots, peaches and other dried fruit is so attractive. We also buy the 50-lb. bags of almonds and walnuts for bulk displays during the holiday period. Another item that is popular is the Italian chestnut. Although it is expensive, it is a great item, especially among our upscale customers.”

This season, all the new nuts will be late, according to Vacca of A.J. Trucco. “As far as price goes, we expect the new almond crop should not be too bad, but walnuts will be high and Brazil nuts will be very expensive,” he adds. “Our promotional plans for nuts will depend on how the season progresses.”

The Virginia-type peanut is expected to be a good crop for the 2011 holiday period. The majority of bulk and packaging formats available in produce will be in-shells and shelled



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raw peanuts, according to Marianne Copelan, executive director of the Nashville, NC-based Virginia Carolinas Peanut Promotions. “The Peanut Promotions organization will be conducting social media contests on our Facebook, Twitter and blogger sites. Giveaways will increase awareness of gourmet peanuts and guide consumers to the promotions’ website,” she says. “Promotional ads will appear in the *North Carolina Our State* magazine, *Virginia Living* magazine and *South Carolina Sandler* magazine to promote in-shells and gourmet peanuts.”

“Stand-alone shipper displays can be an effective sales builder for nuts, as well as dried fruit, especially during the holidays,” reminds Stillman of Amport Foods. “Revolving recipe displays located next to nut displays can spur consumers to purchase nuts and other produce ingredients for their holiday entertaining and gift-giving.”

More commonly raw shelled walnuts are found in the produce department, but during the holidays, many markets have large displays of in-shell walnuts. Showing a bowl with in-shell walnuts and a nutcracker as part of the display suggests an easy way for the customer to treat their holiday guests.

The California Walnut Board is working on a nation-wide cross promotion with Concord Foods’ Chiquita Banana Bread Mix, running October through December. The bread mix will be sold exclusively in the produce departments next to bananas. The Walnut Board is conducting promotions to include walnuts, as well. Six unique recipes using the mix and walnuts will be promoted through recipe cards and on a custom website for the promotion. Displays of the banana bread mix will have custom header cards and stickers will be placed on each box to drive customers to the promotional website, according to Jennifer Getz, director of domestic marketing for the Folsom-based California Walnut Board and California Walnut Commission.

Piggly Wiggly LLC, based in Keene, N.H., reports the highly graphic bins of in-shell walnuts, hazelnut and almonds supplied by Diamond Foods, of Stockton, CA, work well during the holidays. “Sometimes, the bins have recipes or there are tear off-pads with recipes that our customers like and use during the holidays,” says Jeff Stewart, produce manager of the Bonifay, FL, location.

Packaging Enhances Market Sales

Packaging of dried fruit and nuts can help build retail sales. Sunsweet just completed a full

redesign of its packaging that was introduced last June. The company shared the packaging with consumers prior to launching and found extremely high purchase intent for the new, modern look. “In addition, Plum Amazins are available in a sleek new canister with a shrink sleeve,” reports Sunsweet’s McLemore.

“One thing we’ve noticed more recently is the packaging of peanuts in stand-up bags, which provide better stability and improved shelf space,” comments Copelan of Virginia Carolina Peanut Promotions.

New packaging introduced for its products is gaining wide acceptance by many retailers, according to Stillman of Amport Foods.

Many of Sun-Maid’s raisin items have QR codes on the packaging, linking consumers to interactive content related to Sun-Maid and/or current promotional tie-ins. During the holiday season, consumers will see promotional packages of Sun-Maid six-pack raisins and mini-raisins featuring the *Puss In Boots* movie character and information on a video game giveaway contest.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS



FLORAL COMPANY NAME CHANGE

The Mavuno Group, Nairobi, Kenya, announces its business relationship with BloomQuest LLC, formerly known as World Flowers LLC. Joe Farrell remains president of BloomQuest LLC, the same position he held at World Flowers LLC, in Englewood, NJ. The Mavuno Group is a group of companies involved for more than 30 years in the producing, sourcing, supplying and trading in fresh-cut flowers. The group's production operation is Oserian Farm.

NELL NAMED PMA FLORAL MARKETER OF THE YEAR

The Produce Marketing Association, Newark, DE, named Dr. Terril Nell (above right) the 2011 Floral Marketer of the Year during PMA's Fresh Summit International Convention and Exposition held in Atlanta, GA, October 14-17. Nell is professor and chairman of University of Florida's Environmental Horticulture Department in Gainesville. Presented since 1981, the award recognizes an outstanding floral professional who has served the mass-market floral industry with dedication and distinction. The award was presented by the 2010 recipient, Bill Byland (left), business manager of Micky's Minis Flora Express, in St. Louis, MO.

ANNOUNCEMENTS



TPIE SET FOR JANUARY IN FORT LAUDERDALE

Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association, Orlando, FL, will host the 2012 Tropical Plant Industry Exhibition (TPIE) January 18-20 at the Broward County Convention Center in Fort Lauderdale, FL. TPIE is the trade event offering the latest trends in foliage, florals and tropicals on the show floor and in the educational seminars.



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HPP Worldwide, Amsterdam, Netherlands, announces the 2012 World Floral Expo is moving from Miami and will be held March 14-16 at the Jacob K. Javitz Convention Center, New York, NY. The event is promoted as the International Floriculture Trade Fair for U.S. flower buyers.

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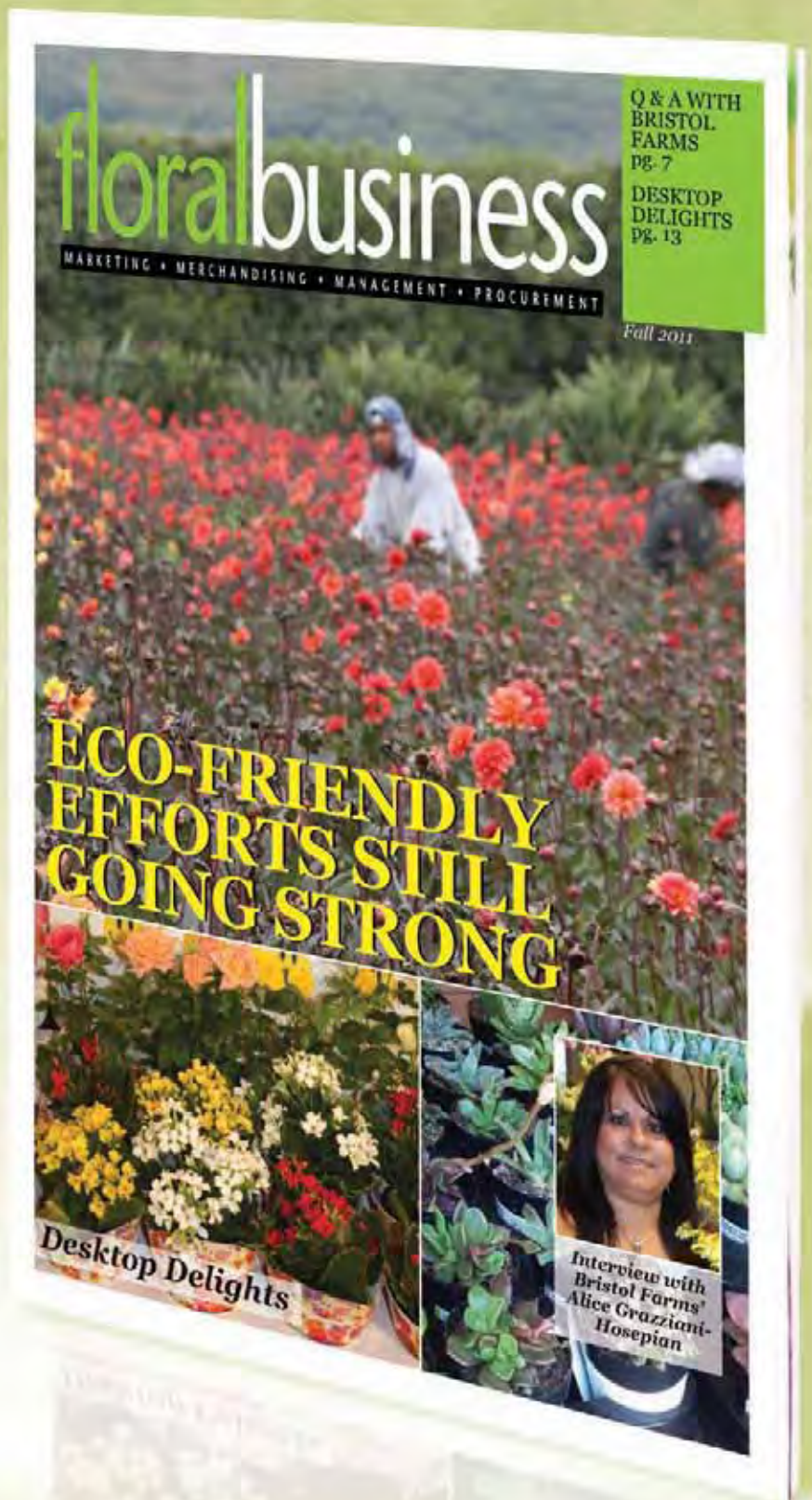
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Right now, and on through June 4, 2012, we're taking entries for the **24th Annual Marketing Excellence Awards Program**, presented by **PRODUCE BUSINESS**. The awards recognize excellence in marketing in each of six categories: retailers, restaurants, wholesalers, shippers, commodity organizations and allied service/product providers. Print, broadcast and other media are eligible to win.

To participate, send us the following for each entry:

1. Your name, company, address and phone.

2. Type of business.

3. Names and dates of promotion (must have taken place between June 1, 2011 and June 1, 2012).

4. Promotion objectives.

5. Description of promotion.

6. Promotion results (sales or traffic increases, media attention). What made this program a success?

7. All support materials used in the promotion – such as POP, ads, posters, TV commercials.

High-resolution images to illustrate the promotion are encouraged. (Please do not send any produce)

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For additional information, call: 561-994-1118, Ext. 101

ALL ABOUT CUSTOMERS



Living less than a hundred miles from the heart of the Vidalia, Georgia onion producing area, one becomes especially loyal to the excellent eating product. In mid-August, I was hopeful of being able to replenish my sweet onion supply when I visited a major chain supermarket. Observing 3-lb. packages, the only identification I could find was a small label stating

the onions were packed for the chain headquarters location. No country of origin; no variety; no packing date code, all of which might have been important to various consumers

Suddenly, this lack of information brought back all of the discussion and pushback about country-of-origin identification. Too frequently, many connected with the industry, including retailers, take a position based on keeping costs to a minimum, rather than looking for the advantages to be gained from marketing details relevant to stimulating consumer interest.

Imagine the potential from utilizing the availability of today's information technology to educate the consumer about the dynamic factors affecting fresh fruit and vegetable consumption. Explain the varietal characteristics, the respective harvest seasons, preparation, portions and balancing the diet, among others. The list goes on and on of factors increasing consumer perception for various items.

Especially in the current economy, one size does not fit everyone all the time, although in theory, it may sell more products to fewer customers. Granted, warehouse clubs sell larger package sizes than conventional supermarkets but that's the nature of their business. A two-tier customer base — part small businesses purchasing for resale and larger family consumers looking for bargains — provide the majority of sales.

For example, the average purchase of two pounds or more of early and late season grapes or cherries may be an economic stretch and may result in at-home spoilage. To be fair, a few shippers did modify their unit sizes during the initial high-priced portion of the respective shipping seasons. On the other hand, marketers of strawberries regularly offer multiple size units, and blueberry shippers adjust package sizes to varying supply and price levels.

Recently, a Nutrisystem TV ad spot caught my attention. Whether it is this weight loss company or another similar to Weight Watchers, there has to be potential to develop tie-in advertising and promotional programs for produce utilizing their promotional activity. The recent

governmental My Plate initiative illustrating ideal food portions is a step forward, but little has been seen in retail stores or media advertising other than sectioned serving plates implying the desired quantity to balance the food groups.

The industry has great conventions basically designed for various elements of the distribution chain to communicate with each other, as well as among those within each of the individual segments. The question is: When will there be as much emphasis on communicating directly with the consumer? The systems are available now and more are being developed almost daily to allow inexpensive messaging provided for the consumer that can stimulate increased purchasing decisions. A prime opportunity may be an outgrowth of the Eastern broccoli project. Will this become just an effort to produce and distribute more regionally grown product, or will it include developing a directed consumer marketing campaign emphasizing the advantages of not only

new broccoli varieties, but also stimulating interest for additional cooking vegetables?

Renowned management guru, Peter F. Drucker, suggested the function of business was to create a client. A business is defined by the want the customers satisfy when they purchase a product that is of value in relation to their needs. Satisfying the customer is the mission and purpose of every business. What the customer sees, thinks, believes and wants at any

given time must be accepted as an objective fact.

Drucker's recommendation is to talk to one customer every day of the week. Find out what the customer defines as "value." Too often, management believes they know the answer. It is what, in their business, they define as quality. Instead, customers buy satisfaction of a want. They buy value. What is value to one is not value to another. And for subsections of consumers, value often changes with trends in the overall economy, as well as the individual's economic circumstances. Add to that ever-changing lifestyle influences, and value is not as easily categorized as the marketer would like.

Another method of measuring the value quotation is understanding the level of consumer confidence. Tracing the growth of fresh fruit and vegetable sales penetration during the last half-century, one would believe the results have been outstanding. But when the gap between reality and this objective is measured in terms of servings-per-individual, the conclusion is different.

Informative programs often resonate throughout the produce distribution chain, but miss improving consumer perception. Now is the time to begin developing and implementing increased emphasis on an all-about-the-consumer focus.

pb

Too frequently, many connected with the industry, including retailers, take a position based on keeping costs to a minimum, rather than looking for the advantages to be gained from marketing details relevant to stimulating consumer interest.

By Dave Diver

Dave Diver is the former vice president of produce at Hannaford, and a regular columnist for PRODUCE BUSINESS.

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SPOTLIGHT ON THE PORT OF ANTWERP



The Port of Antwerp was proud to be this year's host Port for the fourth edition of the Cool Logistics Global Conference, which welcomed some 200 representatives from blue-chip organizations from 26 countries around the world. Under the main theme, "Collaborative Planning — Managing The Upswing," participants were given the opportunity to attend different workshops, listen to an impressive number

of informative presentations by high-level speakers and share market- and supply-chains topics with each other. Additionally, there were ample networking opportunities and events to encourage development and cooperation along the supply chain, and to secure the flow of fresh products from producer to end customer.

Perishables: A Growth Sector With Specific Challenges And Opportunities

The global trade of fruit and perishable cargo is expected to continue to grow on the short-, medium- and long-term, driven by an impressive growth in world population, changing diets (especially in Asia and Middle East due to increased income resulting in more sophisticated menus) and the logistic ability to meet this increased demand. Specifically, the seaborne trade of fruit and perishables is expected to increase nearly 30 percent in the coming five years, despite growing pressure for local sourcing and the necessity to substantially reduce global carbon footprint. This trend, combined with stricter regulations to control and safeguard the food chain has its consequences, and in a world that seems to become more and more complex, the importance of engineering the optimal supply chains to secure steady, efficient and sustainable flows cannot be overestimated.

With a closer investigation, it becomes clear that Antwerp is well suited for this purpose. Historically, Antwerp has always been an important European gateway for fruit and perishable cargos of all nature, and can boast to be the leading banana port of the world. It has a proven track record in inbound and outbound cool logistics and is an excellent one-stop-shop for all types of products, including not only fresh fruit and vegetables, but also meat and poultry, fish and seafood, dairy products and chocolates.

Apart from being the first conventional port, it is the second largest container-port in all of Europe, and can handle both specialized reefer vessels and container-vessels at state-of-the-art — and often automated — terminals with the highest performance.

Furthermore, Antwerp's strategic location makes it the perfect gateway to the European hinterland. All types of fresh cargo can arrive quickly and in good condition to the end customer thanks to the extensive road, rail and barge network. Other key factors of success are the numerous operators and service providers; extensive warehouse and efficient distribution capacity; highly skilled labor force and specialists



Specifically, the seaborne trade of fruit and perishables is expected to increase nearly 30 percent in the coming five years.

know-how; and finally a wide range of added value services, not only the self-evident logistic services, but also those such as quality control, sorting, ripening, order-picking, re-packaging, etc.

Antwerp is motivated to further increase its market share in fruit and perishables, especially in light of the aforementioned future growth of seaborne trade. Ports play a crucial role in bringing perishables to customers the reliable way, every day, and the Port of Antwerp has taken a number of specific actions to improve its position:

- The creation of APCS (Antwerp Port Communication System) earlier this year further improves electronic communication in the Port and allows the alignment of the information flow with the physical flow, which is crucial to excellent supply chain management
- An integrated border inspection at one single location was recently implemented, leading to higher efficiency, reduced lead-times and avoidance of multi-stops. The resulting cost-savings will allow the Port Authority to decrease the inspection costs by 25 percent in favor of the shippers.
- The recent appointment of three new regional representatives in South America to target perishable cargos to the European Union
- The creation of an Expertise Centre Fruit & Perishables that combines the expertise and efforts of the Antwerp Port Community and will focus on new trades, challenges and opportunities in order to attract new business through our port.

Cool Logistics 2011 turned out to be a great event, and the Port of Antwerp is already looking forward to next year's edition, which will take place from September 24 to 26th at the Antwerp Crowne Plaza Hotel. See you there!

By Wim Dillen

Senior business development manager, Antwerp Port Authority, based in Antwerp, Belgium



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Stories "Just In"

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The screenshot shows the PerishableNews.com website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'PerishableNews.com' and a search box. Below that, a 'Produce' section features a featured article: 'Yakima & Apple Artisan Lettuce Featured On TV Show'. The article includes a photo of a field and text about the lettuce's quality. Below the article are navigation tabs for 'Bakery', 'Dairy', 'Deli', 'Floral', 'Meat & Poultry', 'Produce', 'Seafood', and 'Retail & Foodservice'. There are also several promotional banners for brands like REAL SWISS, Del Monte, and Giumarra. A sidebar on the right contains a 'Reader's Digest' section with links to various articles.

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

Bakery, Dairy, Deli, Floral, Meat & Poultry, Produce, Seafood

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&A Organic Marketing, Inc.	85	831-768-0300	www.aaorganic.com
Albert's Organics	86	800-899-5944	www.albertsorganics.com
Anthony Vineyards, Inc.	102	661-858-8300	www.anthonylvineyards.com
Associated Potato Growers, Inc.	38	800-437-4685	www.apgsprod.com
Babe Farms, Inc.	46	800-648-6772	www.babefarms.com
Baero North America, Inc.	115	314-692-2270	www.baerousa.com
Wayne E. Bailey Produce Co.	51	800-845-6149	www.sweetpotatoes.com
Bard Valley Medjool Date Growers	35	928-726-9191	www.naturaldelights.com
Blue Book Services	41	630-668-3500	www.producebluebook.com
Booth Ranches, LLC	95	559-626-7653	www.boothranches.com
California Sun Dry Foods	53	800-995-7753	www.calsundrytomatoes.com
Califresh of California	60	559-875-1602	www.califruit.net
Canadian Produce Marketing Association	66	613-226-4187	www.cpma.ca
Capital City Fruit Co., Inc.	96	515-981-5111	www.capitalcityfruit.com
Christopher Ranch	85	408-847-1100	www.christopheranch.com
The Cranberry Network LLC	37	715-422-0410	www.thecranberrynetwork.com
Crowley Maritime Corp.	5	800-CROWLEY	www.customizedbrokers.net
CrunchPak	59	509-782-7753	www.crunchpak.com
Curry & Company	73	800-929-1073	www.curryandco.com
D'Arrigo Bros. Co. of New York	45	800-223-8080	www.darrigony.com
DeBruyn Produce Co.	72	800-733-9177	www.debruynderproduce.com
Del Monte Fresh Produce	116	800-950-3683	www.delmontefresh.com
DiMare Fresh	46	209-862-2872	www.dimarefresh.com
Dole Fresh Fruit Company	2	818-879-6600	www.dole.com
Double D Farms	85	559-884-0107	www.doubledfarms.com
dProduce Man Software	46	888-PRODMAN	www.dproduceman.com
Duda Family Farms	97	561-804-1477	www.dudafresh.com
Earthbound Farm	87	888-624-1004	www.earthboundfarm.com
Edinburg Citrus Association	96	956-383-6619	www.txcitrus.com
Florida Department of Agriculture	39	850-488-4303	www.freshfromflorida.com
Fresh Produce & Floral Council	100	714-739-0177	www.freshproduceandfloral.com
Fruit Logistica	30	540-372-3777	www.fruitlogistica.de/en/
Giorgio Fresh Co.	56	800-330-5711	www.giorgiofoods.com
Global Organic Specialty Source, Inc.	86	877-952-1198	www.globalorganics.ws
GPOD of Idaho	54	208-357-7691	www.gpodpotatoes.com
Greenhouse Produce Company, LLC	48	888-492-1492	www.greenhouseproduce.net
Growers Express	13	831-751-1379	www.growersexpress.com

COMPANY	PAGE #	PHONE	WEBSITE
Growers Union LLC	42	646-673-8674	www.growersunion.net
High Point Marketing, Inc.	40	201-447-9008	www.highpointmarketing.com
I Love Produce LLC	21	610-869-4664	www.iloveproduce.com
Idaho Potato Commission	57	208-334-2350	www.idahopotato.com/retail
Inline Plastics Corp.	63	800-826-5567	www.inlineplastics.com
Kern Ridge Growers, LLC	86	661-854-3156	www.kernridge.com
Keystone Fruit Marketing, Inc.	75	717-597-2112	www.keystonefruit.com
Kroeker Farms Ltd.	87	204-325-4333	www.kroekerfarms.com
LGS Specialty Sales, Ltd.	29	800-796-2349	www.lgssales.com
Locus Traxx	31	561-575-7600	www.locustraxx.com
M&M Farms, Inc.	42	800-634-7898	www.mmtropicals.com
Maine Potato Board	40	207-769-5061	www.maine potatoes.com
Mann Packing Company, Inc.	9	800-884-6266	www.veggiesmadeeasy.com
Melissa's/World Variety Produce, Inc.	86	800-468-7111	www.melissas.com
MIXTEC Group	56	626-440-7077	www.mixtec.net
Mooney Farms	58	530-899-2661	www.moneyfarms.com
Nathel & Nathel	7	718-991-6050	www.nyapplecountry.com
New Jersey Department of Agriculture	55	609-292-8853	www.state.nj.us/agriculture
New York Apple Association, Inc.	47	585-924-2171	www.nyapplecountry.com
OsoSweet Onion Co.	74	304-545-6470	www.ososweetonions.com
Peri & Sons Farms	74	775-463-4444	www.periandsons.com
Produce for Better Health Foundation	109	302-235-2329	www.pbhfoundation.org
Produce Marketing Association	78-79	302-738-7100	www.pma.com
SAGARPA - Embassy of Mexico	82-83	202-728-1727	www.sagarpa.gob.mx
South Tex Organics, L.C.	87	956-585-1040	www.storganics.com
Sun-Maid Figs	103	925-463-7565	www.valleyfig.com
Sunlight Intl. Sales/Jakov P Dulcich & Sons	27	661-792-6360	www.dulcich.com
Sweet Onion Trading Company	72	800-699-3727	www.sweetoniontrading.com
Tanimura & Antle, Inc.	49	800-772-4542	www.taproduce.com
Texas Citrus Exchange	96	956-383-6619	www.txcitrus.com
Thermal Technologies, Incorporated	89	803-691-8000	www.gotarpless.com
Trinity Fruit Sales	33	559-433-3777	www.trinityfruit.com
A.J. Trucco, Inc.	25	866-AJTRUCCO	www.truccodirect.com
United Fresh Produce Association	112	202-303-3400	www.unitedfresh.org
United Fresh Produce Association	32	202-303-3400	www.unitedfresh.org
The USA Bouquet Co.	104	786-437-6502	www.usabq.com
Valley Fig Growers	103	925-463-7565	www.valleyfig.com
Village Farms	62	888-377-3213	www.villagefarms.com

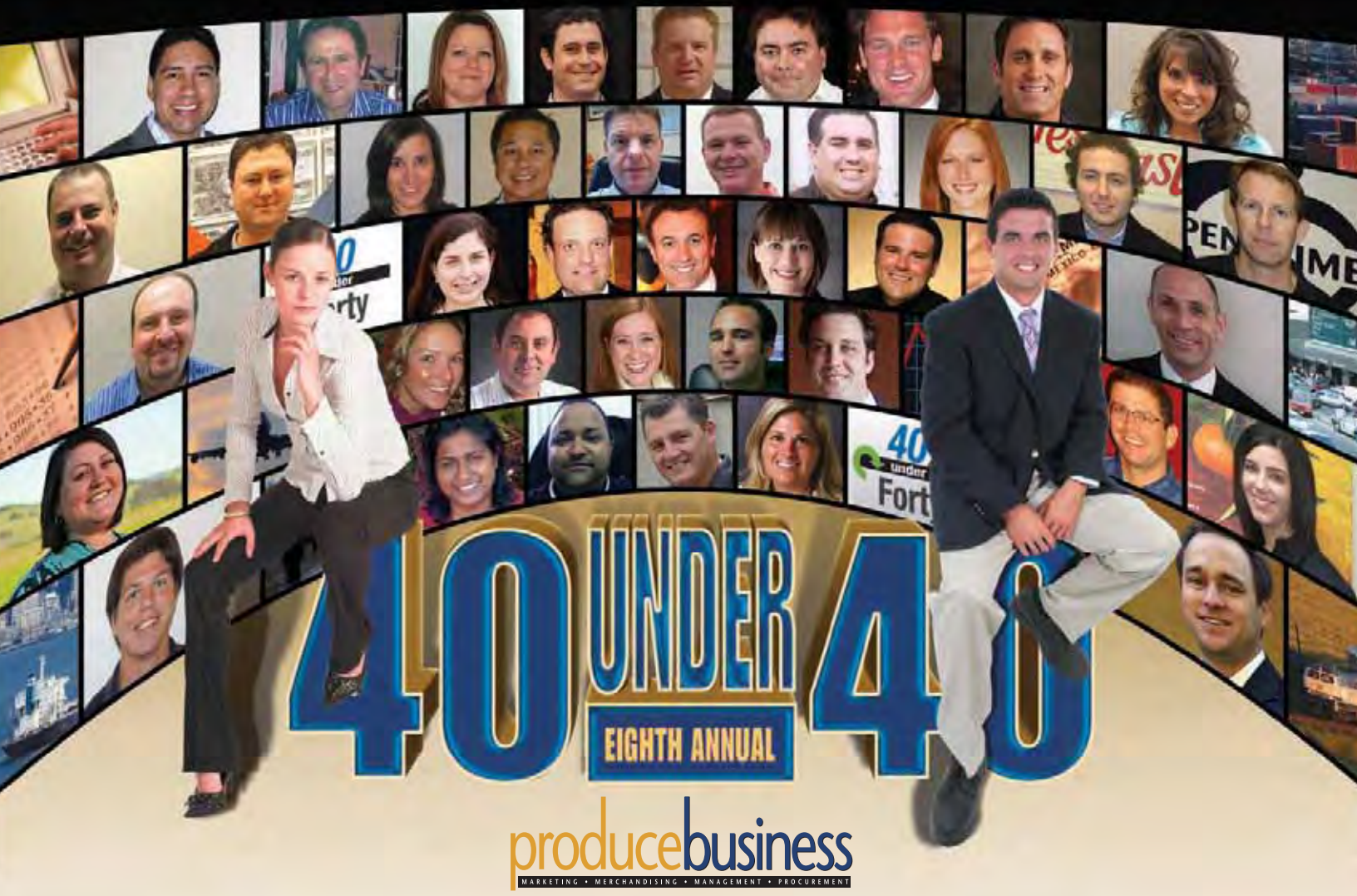
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PRODUCE BUSINESS is accepting nominations for its Eighth Annual 40-Under-Forty Project, which recognizes the produce industry's top young leaders.

Honorees will be selected based on their professional accomplishments, demonstrated leadership and industry/community contributions. To be eligible, nominees must be under the age of 40 as of January 1 (People born after January 1, 1972).

To nominate someone, please fill out this form by March 1, 2012, and fax back to 561-994-1610.

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

ABOUT THE NOMINEE:

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

Nominee's Professional Achievements:

Nominee's Industry/Community/Charitable Activities:

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

ABOUT THE NOMINATOR:

First Name _____ Last Name _____
 Company _____
 Position _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Postal Code _____
 Country _____
 Phone _____ Fax _____
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Nominator information is for our use only and will not be shared with candidate or have a bearing on selection.

For more information email: info@producebusiness.com

BEYOND LADY LIBERTY: ONE FAMILY'S HISTORY IN NEW YORK FOODSERVICE

While it can be said that most visitors to Liberty Island have their sights set upon Lady Liberty herself, Evelyn Hill Inc., one of the oldest family-owned and operated concessionaires in the country, is making them rethink their priorities after debarking the ferry. This year marks the company's 80th year in business. Not only is Evelyn Hill a member of the Green Restaurant Association, it also comprises two of the three (both the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island locations) National Park Service foodservice operations that have earned a three-star rating.

The family history on Liberty Island, once known as Bedloe's Island, began with Aaron Hill, who served as a medic in the U.S. Army during World War I. Following the War, Hill was stationed at Fort Wood, a garrison post that existed on about 10 acres surrounding the Statue of Liberty. He was later transferred from medical duties to the Post Exchange on Bedloe's Island. There, he and his wife, Evelyn, had two children, Charlotte and James.

Around 1931, the U.S. Army decided it would no longer sell items to civilian visitors coming to the island for a glimpse of Lady Liberty. Demonstrating the business acumen that would carry his family for nearly a century, Hill seized the opportunity, retired from the U.S. Army and formed his new company, Evelyn Hill Inc.. Named after his wife, the souvenir stand, located on the pier, sold a variety of goods to visitors arriving on the island. Aaron continued to run his concession with his wife until his untimely death in 1943, at the age of 46. Upon hearing the news, their son, James (pictured at right), who was overseas in the U.S. Air Force at the time, came home to help his mother, creating a second-generation business.

Evelyn K. Hill, a Polish immigrant who came to the United States in 1916, was a brilliant businesswoman way ahead of her time. She spoke nine languages fluently and understood the importance of satisfying her customers. One of her favorite jobs was working behind the sales counter,

which she did at the Statue of Liberty until her death in 1990, at the age of 88.

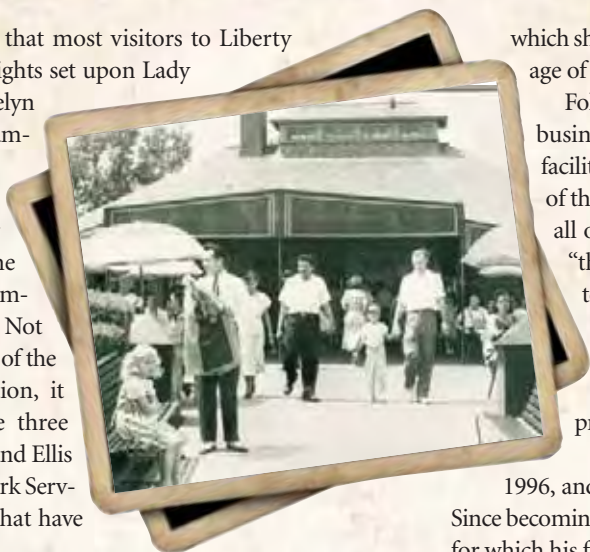
Following in his mother's footsteps, James incorporated the business under her name in 1949. His ability to redesign the facilities so it never looked worn out or distressed at the hands of the millions of visitors put the concession in the forefront of all others. Without taking any credit, he essentially defined "thematic retailing" by only carrying items directly related to the purpose of being in the national park.

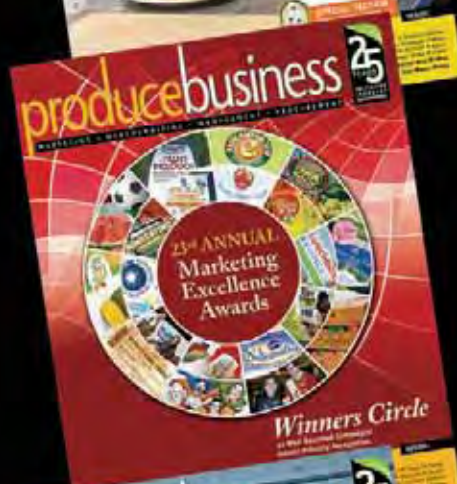
James was well respected in his profession and understood that similar to the produce industry — a handshake meant a contract — or more importantly, a promise.

After 46 years of leading Evelyn Hill, James retired in 1996, and passed the reigns of the company to his son, Bradford. Since becoming president, Brad has maintained the same leadership style for which his family became known. In recent history, Brad has focused on the environment and healthy dining and living in changing the company's way of doing business. The company soon became the leader in concessionaire recycling methods, recycling more than 75 percent of the solid waste produced by its operations, the national park and the ferry-boat operator.

In 2001, realizing that visitors had higher expectations of the quality of food that was being served in their national parks, plans were underway to revamp the look and feel of Evelyn Hill, along with the type of food it offered. However, the events of 9/11 put everything on hold until 2005. In 2006, a new menu was introduced, which included healthy organic salads and sandwiches, 6-oz. Angus burgers and high-end fisherman platters, crab cake sandwiches and lobster rolls. The days of "truck-stop" food were gone, and in its place are plenty of locally raised and grown foods. Moreover, all of the produce used at Evelyn Hill is organic, much of it coming from Baldor Specialty Foods, located on the Hunts Point Market.

The legacy and enduring success of Evelyn Hill Inc. has not been without bumps in the road. The business has survived through food rationing during World War II, takeovers during the Vietnam war, complete closures during the Centennial refurbishing of the Statue of Liberty, and most recently, the closure of the Statue following the tragedy of 9/11. Despite the numerous challenge, this third-generation foodservice business has continued to thrive and is an example of the dedication and tenacity of the New York foodservice industry.





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