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Twenty-Five

INNOVATIONS

THAT SHAPED THE INDUSTRY

CATEGORY MANAGEMENT • CLAMSHELL PACKAGING
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INSIDE:

PUNDIT DISSECTS MEANING OF LOCAL • WAL-MART PRICING
WHOLESALE/RETAIL RELATIONSHIPS • CONSUMER PACKAGING
BERRIES • WEST MEXICO • SALAD TIE-INS • FLORIDA FALL PRODUCE
RED RIVER VALLEY POTATOES • SAN LUIS VALLEY POTATOES • APPLES
CALIFORNIA CITRUS • ORGANIC CONSUMERS • NEW SALAD TRENDS
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COVER STORY

30 TWENTY-FIVE INNOVATIONS THAT SHAPED THE INDUSTRY

As PRODUCE BUSINESS hits a milestone, we look at innovations that shaped the past 25 years and innovations that will propel us ahead.

COMMENTARY

14 THE FRUITS OF THOUGHT
 An Election Of Significance

204 RETAIL PERSPECTIVE
 Retirement Preparations

206 EUROPEAN MARKET
 Mobile Grocery Shopping Begins To Trend In Europe

208 VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY
 Social Media — Am I Missing Anything?

FEATURES

72 WHOLESALERS STEP UP RETAIL PRESENCE
 Produce wholesalers find value in working hand-in-hand with retailers.

90 CONSUMER PACKAGING: NEW DESIGNS ON FAMILIAR THEMES
 Packages that are convenient, keep food fresh and appealing and deliver a message are a vital ingredient in produce department sales.

99 WEST MEXICAN PRODUCE REPORT: MOMENTUM GATHERS FROM LAST SEASON
 Conditions are ripe for West Mexican growers to build on their success.

108 SWEETEN SALES OF IMPORTED BERRIES IN FALL AND WINTER
 Consistent supplies from tried-and-true sources accompany crops from newly producing locales.

118 SAVORY SALAD TIE-INS ADD VERVE TO A GROWING CATEGORY
 From croutons and dressings to nuts and even meat, salad tie-ins complement the category.

126 CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM REIGNS FOR FALL FLORIDA PRODUCE
 Following this past year's record-breaking freeze, Florida growers, packers, retailers and consumers look forward to a bountiful winter season of fresh Florida fruit and vegetables.

136 RED RIVER VALLEY POTATOES: FOOD WITH A STORY
 Despite the unique characteristics of Red River Valley potatoes, national retailers must do more to promote their origin.

142 SAN LUIS VALLEY POTATOES OFFER OUTSTANDING TASTE AND VALUE
 Sustainability through freight advantages, along with smart promotions, should help market this powerhouse of a potato.



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IN EVERY ISSUE

- 6 THE QUIZ
- 8 WASHINGTON GRAPEVINE
- 12 RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES
- 13 COMMENTS AND ANALYSIS
- 16 PRODUCE WATCH
- 191 FLORAL WATCH
- 209 INFORMATION SHOWCASE
- 210 BLAST FROM THE PAST

IN THIS ISSUE

- 10 **SPECIAL NOTE**
What Is Love? by Jim Prevor
- 28 **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**
- 207 **POEM**
Something Real by Jim Prevor

SPECIAL SECTIONS

60
WAL-MART PRICING REPORT: DESPITE ONE WAL-MART SUPERCENTER IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, NEW JERSEY AND LONG ISLAND RETAILERS STAY THE COURSE
 Wal-Mart is used to pushing independents around. New York Metro may have a lesson to teach the behemoth from Bentonville.

195
FLORAL MASTERS OF MERCHANDISING



159



166

DEPARTMENTS

MERCHANDISING REVIEWS

- 148 **10 Ways To Sweeten Apple Sales Year-Round**
 With new varieties popping up every year adding to an already powerful category, retailers must stay vigilant to what works and what doesn't.
- 159 **Expectations Are High For This Year's California Citrus Crop**
 Upcoming California citrus season offers greater varietal selection.

ORGANIC PRODUCE MARKETING

- 166 **Five Ways To Reach Out To The Organic Consumer**
 Despite a burdened economy, organic sales continue to climb, proving the organic customer is here to stay.

FRESH-CUT MARKETING

- 174 **Packaged Salads Stand The Test Of Time**
 In an effort to revamp a mature category, fresh-cut processors create new blends, kits and varieties, with a keen focus on packaging and organics.
- 181 **The Fresh-cut Fruit Challenge**
 On a growth trajectory, fresh-cut fruit offers retailers opportunities to profit from newer categories and to differentiate themselves from the competition.

DRIED FRUIT AND NUTS

- 188 **Boosting Pecan Sales Is An Easy Nut To Crack**
 Savvy retailers remind consumers that whether they are cooking, baking or just snacking, pecans can be an everyday item.

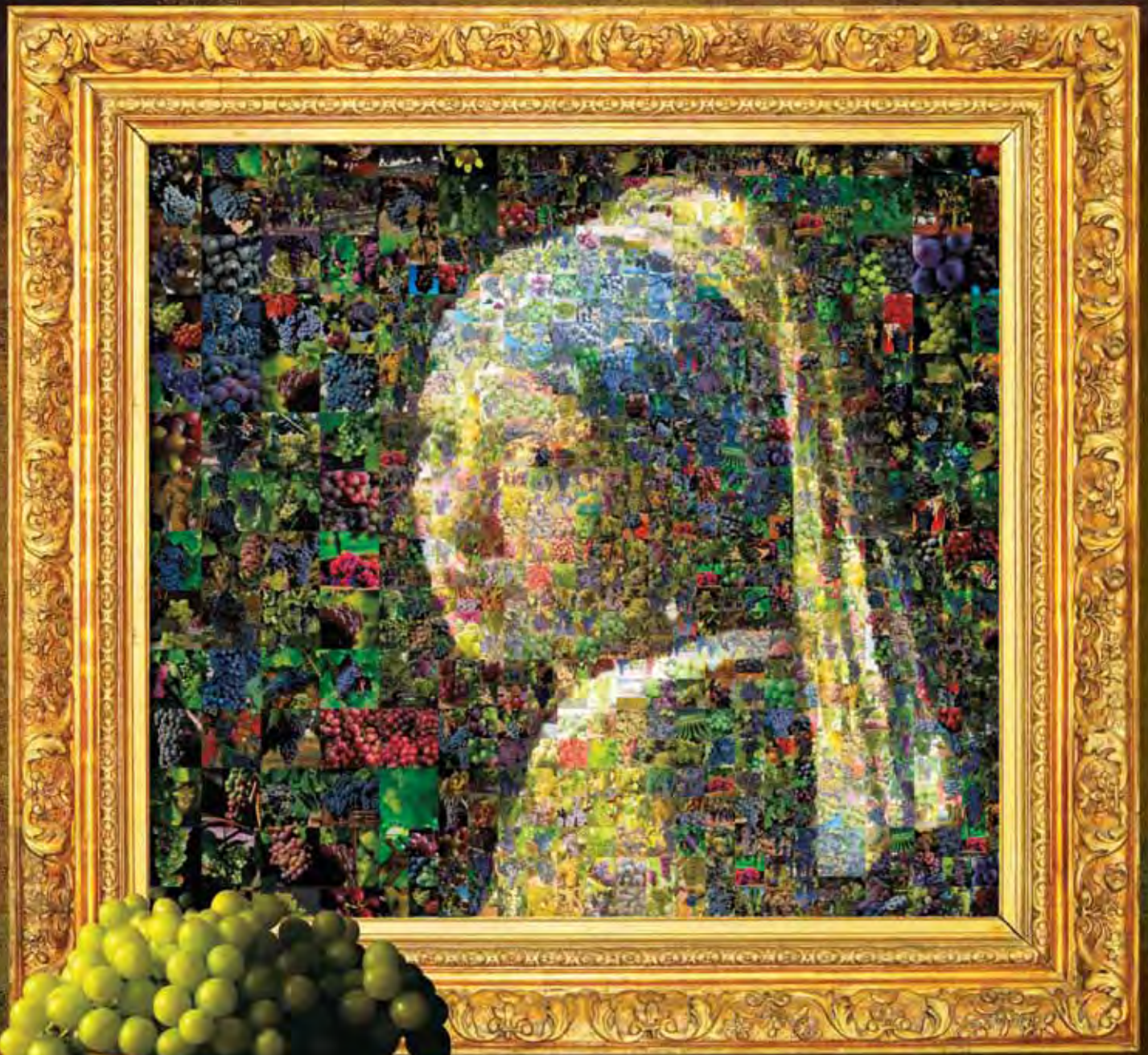
FLORAL AND FOLIAGE MARKETING

- 192 **Save Time And Money With Pre-greened Options**
 Consumers are enamored with, and encouraged by, the possibilities of green bouquets and arrangements offered by savvy retailers looking to boost floral sales while saving labor costs.

SPECIAL FEATURE

FROM THE PAGES OF THE PERISHABLE PUNDIT

- 24 **Dissecting The Meaning Of Local, Sustainable And Flavorful**



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Reader Service # 118

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THIS MONTH'S WINNER



Mir Mir
Produce Manager, Weiner Foods
Whiting, IN

While Mir refers to himself as the produce manager at this 60-year-old landmark retailer, he is really the owner and general manager of the store he is helping to rebuild from the ground up. The neighborhood favorite had recently closed its doors, but thanks to Mir's efforts and determination, have opened once again. "It's a struggle to compete with the larger retailers in the area, but the locals really love it here, so I believe we can do anything if we set our mind to it."

The first order of business? Improving

the produce department. "I've been in retail for a long time," says Mir, "but this is my first time working in the produce business. I've had some help from local buyers that we send to Chicago for the bulk of our inventory. Overall, it's been a great learning experience."

While Mir wasn't familiar with PRODUCE BUSINESS until recently, he says he has found it to be an invaluable resource. "I read it cover to cover. It has taught me so much, especially when it comes to introducing me to local distributors that I can work with. I look forward to getting it in the mail each month."

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 December 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 OCTOBER ISSUE

- 1) Sunlight International Sales is home to which brand of table grapes? _____
- 2) Name three types of fresh produce marketed by Trinity Fruit Sales. _____
- 3) How many commodities does Ocean Mist Farms provide? _____
- 4) How does The Garlic Co. package its peeled garlic? _____
- 5) Besides avocados, what other commodity does Calavo offer? _____
- 6) Who started Booth Ranches in 1957? _____

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 OCTOBER QUIZ PRODUCE BUSINESS • P.O. Box 810425 • Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425

P.O. Box 810425 • Boca Raton • FL 33481-0425
 Phone: 561-994-1118 • Fax: 561-994-1610
 producebusiness@phoenixmedianet.com

PRESIDENT & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

James E. Prevor
 JPrevor@phoenixmedianet.com

PUBLISHER/EDITORIAL DIRECTOR

Ken Whitacre
 KWhitacre@phoenixmedianet.com

SPECIAL PROJECTS EDITOR

Mira Slott
 MSlott@phoenixmedianet.com

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Amy Shannon
 AShannon@phoenixmedianet.com

ASSISTANT EDITOR

Jennifer Leslie Kramer
 JKramer@phoenixmedianet.com

CIRCULATION MANAGER

Kelly Roskin
 KRoskin@phoenixmedianet.com

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Fran Gruskin
 FGruskin@phoenixmedianet.com

EUROPEAN BUREAU CHIEF

Robert Zwartkruis
 RZwartkruis@phoenixmedianet.com

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR

Diana Levine
 DLevine@phoenixmedianet.com

PRODUCTION LEADER

Jackie Tucker

PRODUCTION DEPARTMENT

JOANNA ARMSTRONG
 SUNSHINE GORMAN
 FREDDY PULIDO

TRADE SHOW COORDINATOR

Jackie LoMonte
 JLoMonte@phoenixmedianet.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Meredith Auerbach, Carol Bareuther,
 Julie Cook Ramirez, Bob Johnson,
 Sandy Lee, K.O. Morgan, Jodean Robbins,
 Barbara Robison, Bryant Wynes

ADVERTISING

Eric Nieman, Associate Publisher
 ENieman@phoenixmedianet.com

Sandy Lee
 SLee@phoenixmedianet.com

Bill Martin
 Martinmedia45@peoplepc.com

Colleen Morelli
 CMorelli@phoenixmedianet.com

Ellen Rosenthal
 ERosenthal@phoenixmedianet.com

FLORAL DEPARTMENT MARKETING

E. Shaunn Alderman
 SAlderman@phoenixmedianet.com

Send insertion orders, payments, press releases,
 photos, letters to the editor, etc., to
 PRODUCE BUSINESS, P.O. Box 810425
 Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425
 PH: 561.994.1118 FAX: 561.994.1610

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INDUSTRY CONVERGES ON U.S. CAPITOL

By Patrick Delaney
Communications Manager
United Fresh Produce Association

In September, the United Fresh Washington Public Policy Conference brought more than 525 attendees from 35 states to the nation's capital to further the public policy goals of the fresh produce industry in critical areas such as child nutrition, food safety, immigration, labor, sustainability, pesticide issues and more.



On Tuesday afternoon, WPPC attendees gathered at the Gaylord National Hotel for the annual welcome reception (pictured above). The reception enabled attendees to network and interact with Management Resource Center exhibitors, including solutions providers from the traceability and logistics, labor, government and academic fields, before getting down to business Wednesday morning.

Following the reception, more than 250 supporters of United's "A Salad Bar in Every School" campaign took part in a dinner cruise along the Potomac River to raise funds for the placement of salad bars in New Orleans in conjunction with United's 2011 convention and expo.



On Wednesday, before the annual March on Capitol Hill, attendees heard from Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC, pictured above), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Barbara Boxer (D-

CA). The lawmakers addressed the group on issues including child nutrition, food safety and the Farm Bill, among others. Immediately following, attendees met with more than 100 members of Congress and their staff, conveying the importance of sound, science-based food safety legislation, sensible labor policy, better child nutrition standards and more. Following the congressional visits, attendees joined lawmakers and their staff at the Fresh Festival on Capitol Hill as members showcased different commodities and products at the forefront of the produce industry.



Later that night, the United Fresh Political Action Committee, FreshPAC, held its annual fundraising dinner at Charlie Palmer Steak overlooking the U.S. Capitol. Attendees to the dinner heard from House Minority Leader John Boehner (R-OH, pictured above), who detailed the steps necessary for Republicans to take back control of Congress in the upcoming midterm elections.



Thursday morning was highlighted by addresses from USDA Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan, who spoke to attendees on USDA's "Know Your Farmer, Know Your

Attendees met with more than 100 members of Congress and their staff, conveying the importance of sound, science-based food safety legislation, sensible labor policy, better child nutrition standards and more.

Food" program and outlined the administration's efforts on locally grown food initiatives, followed by Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius (pictured lower left) who detailed United's "A Salad Bar in Every School" campaign as an effective strategy for increasing the consumption of healthful and nutritious foods by America's schoolchildren.

Following Secretary Sebelius' address, six top journalists from Reuters, Bloomberg, Gannett, Tribune Company, McClatchy Newspapers and National Public Radio (NPR) took part in a roundtable discussion on the role of the national media in produce industry issues. Finally, to cap this year's WPPC, political adviser and author, Frank Luntz, led a discussion in political messaging, including what issues and even what words carry the most weight in the greater political discourse.

For photos and highlights from this year's WPPC, visit www.unitedfresh.org/programs/wppc/wppc_daily_update, and a video recap of the conference can be found at www.unitedfresh.tv. Next up for United Fresh is the 2011 convention and expo, May 2-5 in New Orleans, LA.

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WHAT IS LOVE?

Though we launched *PRODUCE BUSINESS* at the PMA Convention in San Francisco in 1985, it is not precisely correct to say that the magazine started 25 years ago. Things never start and finish so neatly; they are built on foundations that stretch back through time and generations; they gain inspiration from people and ideas the “founders” of things never knew.

On the first day of the PMA Convention so many years ago, a small man with white hair came to our booth. He asked me if I was the grandson of Jacob Prevor. I explained that I was actually his great-grandson. The man told me that back in the Great Depression, he was penniless, and my great-grandfather was the only man who believed in him and gave him credit. Because he did so, the man said he had been able to build his business and live a good life. He wanted me to know.

As time has passed, I have come to receive phone calls and letters, even visits from people who started little wholesale or a retail shops or struck out on their own as brokers. Of all things, they said they were inspired by how we launched *PRODUCE BUSINESS* and that they drew ideas and inspiration from what we do.

Trade shows are a funny place for me. A long time ago, I got accustomed to people speaking to me as if we were best friends when the truth was we had never met. I have always written from the heart, and since I was all of 23-years-old when we launched this journey, that means I've been editor-in-chief of *PRODUCE BUSINESS* for more than half my life.

So I've shared the great moments of my adulthood, the business triumphs such as the launch of the Perishable Pundit, the personal pride in things such as my first piece in *The Wall Street Journal*, or the first time I was on the BBC or CNN or NPR. This year, my palpable enthusiasm goes to a new industry event: The New York Produce Show and Conference.

But to write only of business would be a falsehood, because when one has his own business, there is inevitable overlap. So I've written about the intimacies of adulthood: Debbie and my wedding; the birth of my two sons, William and Matthew; my longstanding friendship with Ken Whitacre, with whom I launched this venture so many years ago; the excruciating and triumphant battle to save the life of my father.

Back when Bruce Peterson worked at Wal-Mart, I asked him, on exactly one occasion, to make a phone call to an industry member. He

did it almost instantly, and when I tried to thank him, he silenced me and said that I had “earned my bones” in the industry and if he could help, he did so gladly. I've been fortunate to have won lots of awards, been given lots of accolades, but Bruce's line still resonates.

What is the correct relationship between a writer, an editor, a magazine and an industry? In *Fiddler on the Roof*, there is a wonderful scene and a beautiful song that is a kind of brief meditation on the nature of love. The story goes that Tevye, the husband and father of the household, has acquiesced in allowing his first two daughters to marry the men they loved, rather than submit, as was the custom, to an arranged marriage based on money and family reputation.

As Tevye contemplates the new world in which love, rather than prudence, becomes the standard for marriage, it occurs to him that he and his wife of 25 years had an arranged marriage:

After 25 years... why talk about love?

Tevye: Golde, I'm asking you a question... Do you love me?

Golde: Do I love you? For 25 years, I've washed your clothes, Cooked your meals, Cleaned your house, Given you children, milked the cow.

After 25 years, why talk about love?

Tevye: Golde, The first time I met you Was on our wedding day...

But my father and my mother Said we'd learn to love each other And now I'm asking, Golde Do you love me?

Golde: I'm your wife

Tevye: I know... But do you love me?

Golde: Do I love him?

For 25 years I've lived with him, Fought with him, starved with him. Twenty-five years my bed is his... If that's not love, what is?

They wind up acknowledging that they do love each other and in so doing suggest that love is not so much a romantic fantasy but is expressed through the day-to-day reality of engaging and caring. I think that is what Bruce was saying in the expression, “earned my bones”.

So many have earned their bones with me. My brilliant college fraternity brother Ken Whitacre has had 30 years and many causes to

deck me. Yet we are still in this together. Not too many friends can say that, and I am indiscernibly fortunate that I can.

An incredible team at work: Diana Levine typeset the first issue of *PRODUCE BUSINESS* 25 years ago and still works beyond all reason to make us look great.

Twenty-three years with Eric Nieman has taught me the power of his tenacity; 15 years with Ellen Rosenthal has let me see how caring transcends almost everything.

Twenty-one years with Fran Gruskin as my executive assistant has meant 21 years of knowing what trust and loyalty is all about.

Plus the design duo of Jackie Tucker, 10 years, and Freddy Pulido, 13 years, has always managed to make us look beautiful

Jackie LoMonte, 11 years, has kept us all going where we needed to be.

Amy Shannon has taken on our newest project: *PerishableNews.com*; Jennifer Kramer has come to understand produce as assistant editor; and Colleen Morelli has finally found a home at *PRODUCE BUSINESS* after learning each division in our company.

Of course, I couldn't have the job I do, always flying off to some corner of the world to give a speech, if I didn't have a wife like Debbie, who was willing to take on so much. My children, William and Matthew, are a source of constant inspiration and unspeakable joy.

Then, of course, I was born lucky. I was born in America and that is a substantial advantage to anyone. I also was born the son of Michael and Roslyn Prevor. Twenty-five years ago, I already knew I had great parents who had supported me in every venture I had ever proposed and whose unconditional love gave me the courage to believe I could start with a dream and build a business. Twenty-five years later, they are still my biggest fans and strongest supporters, and I only hope I can show my own children the love they have always shown me.

I thought of that *Fiddler on the Roof* song as I sat down to write this because I asked myself what I really thought about this industry after 25 years. And I realized, like Golde, after 25 years of thinking through each issue that has come along, 25 years of trying to help the industry find the right decision, 25 years of identifying leaders and hoping — as our slogan adopted so many years ago demanded, to “initiate industry improvement” — well, as Golde would have said, if that is not love, what is?

Thanks for the opportunity. We've got big plans for the next 25. **pb**

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Success of the Fruits & Veggies — More Matters Initiative

BY ELIZABETH PIVONKA, PH.D., R.D., PRESIDENT AND CEO OF PRODUCE FOR BETTER HEALTH FOUNDATION

Launched in 2007, the Fruits & Veggies — More Matters health initiative replaced the long-standing 5 A Day campaign. With a particular focus on moms, Fruits & Veggies — More Matters is disseminated through consumer influencers, including industry, educators and health professionals. PBH also provides insight to the industry about fruits and vegetables through various surveys.

Our studies indicate a huge opportunity for growth at restaurants.

To date, the Fruits & Veggies — More Matters effort has resulted in:

- 167 million media impressions (no multipliers)
- 5.78 billion retail impressions
- 68,000 average monthly Web site visitors
- 1,900 qualified products carrying the Fruits & Veggies — More Matters logo
- 45 percent of mothers who say they are more likely to purchase a product with the Fruits & Veggies — More Matters logo on it
- 66 percent of mothers who say they intend to serve their family more fruits and veggies

Ultimately, success is measured by changes in attitudes about, and consumption of, fruits and vegetables. To monitor change, PBH has new data obtained from two fruit and vegetable related surveys. PBH's annual Moms survey is fielded by OnResearch annually, while PBH's State of the Plate research is conducted by NPD Foodworld Group Research once every five years. Survey results are outlined below.

Fruit And Vegetable Consumption On The Rise In Younger Children

Children under the age of 12 appear to be eating more fruits and vegetables over the past 5 years. In fact, children less than 6 years old increased their fruit consumption by 11 percent, and those children ages 6-12 increased

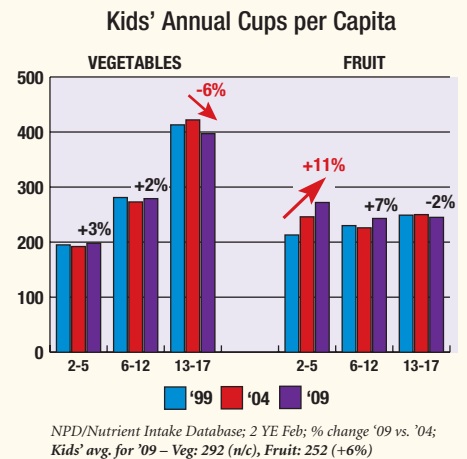
their consumption by 7 percent. The vegetable trend was a bit less positive, with those under age 6 consuming 3 percent more and those 6-12 consuming 2 percent more vegetables. So basically, children of mothers who are targeted by the Fruits & Veggies — More Matters campaign efforts are eating more fruits and vegetables than they were 5 years ago. Conversely, in populations where More Matters has NOT been focused, such as in the elderly, consumption has decreased. Of course, this does not imply cause and effect, but it is an interesting correlation, especially since consumers typically eat more fruits and vegetables as they age.

Moms Are Finding It Easier To Feed Their Family Fruits And Vegetables When Eating Out, Yet Only 11 Percent Of All Fruits And Vegetables Are Consumed At Restaurants

Moms' three largest reported barriers to getting their families to eat more fruits and vegetables include members of their families having different fruit and vegetable likes and dislikes, needing new ideas about ways to prepare fruits and vegetables, and not having a good range of fruits and vegetables available in restaurants.

Moms reported ease in getting their families to eat fruits and vegetables when eating out has grown. In 2010, mothers reported it easy to eat fruit (25 percent) and vegetables (17 percent) at a fast-food establishment, up from 19 percent in 2008 for fruit and 8 percent for vegetables. Thirty-seven percent of moms reported it easy to get their families to eat fruit at restaurants generally, vs. 29 percent in 2008. Moms reported ease in getting vegetables at restaurants declined, however, from 45 percent to 43 percent between 2008 and 2010.

Despite the significant increases in moms reporting ease of getting families to eat more fruit in restaurants, only 8.8 percent of all menu items include fruit, and only 3 percent of overall fruit consumption comes from restaurants. Regarding vegetables, 44.8 per-



cent of all menu items include at least one vegetable, and 15 percent of all vegetable consumption is consumed in restaurants. Together, only 11 percent of fruits and vegetables are consumed at restaurants.

Here again, I'm pleased to see positive movement, especially in quick service restaurants. I believe that the addition of sliced apples and new salad options at McDonald's, for example, is one of the reasons moms can report that fruits and vegetables are easier to find on menus. Obviously, with only 11 percent of all fruits and vegetables consumed at restaurants, there is a huge opportunity for growth in this venue.

Simply telling people to eat more fruits and vegetables is not enough to change behavior. Consumers have to want to eat fruits and vegetables. In our case, we want to motivate mothers to serve more to their families. Providing information about how to use fruits and vegetables and why it's important to eat them is critical. Equally important, however, is changing what is available where people eat — on restaurant menus, at school and in worksites. It is a culmination of all of these efforts — and many others — that ultimately will be needed to increase America's fruit and vegetable consumption.

pb



Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH) is the consumer's "go-to-source" for reliable information about fruits and vegetables. PBH also helps focus industry marketing efforts and nutrition education resources by offering a single unifying message: Fruits & Veggies — More Matters.

One Point Of Light

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

All of the activity Dr. Pivonka accounts is surely virtuous. To teach the truth...To attempt to make the righteous choice become the easy choice... To believe that once people understand, they will want to do the right thing...This is all reflective of a vision of society that combines the most elevated thoughts of the ancient Greeks with that of the Enlightenment.

PBH has taken a two-track approach to increase consumption. First, it acts to educate and inform so people will know what they ought to do; and, second, it acts to influence the industry and its menu-planning and merchandising so that it is easier for consumers to do the right thing.

All of its activities are noble, but any rational analyst of these types of programs will always ask: Do they work?

This is one of those public policy questions that are almost impossible to answer because it is very difficult to run controlled experiments. There is no definitive way to say that consumption is higher today than it would have been had the Produce for Better Health Foundation never been created or its programs been designed differently.

It is indeed inspiring to read that parents of young children report that their children have increased consumption of fruits and vegetables. However, these kinds of results have to be carefully studied for many years before we know how to assess them. One possibility, for example, is that the efforts of PBH are highly effective at changing attitudes. So young mothers learn what their children ought to eat and, feeling shame that they fall short of this ideal, gild the lily a bit when they speak to surveyors. In other words, real human beings sometimes fall short of the Aristotelean ideal of "knowing equals doing."

Of course, even if the statistics are fully accurate, making a causal link to any particular program is difficult because there are too many variables. So the past 10 years, for example, has seen an explosion of imports of seedless citrus from South Africa, Chile and Australia — making Navel

oranges and various easy-peelers available when they had not been available before. This has also been a decade when Wal-Mart Supercenters spread across the country. There is good data indicating that the presence of Wal-Mart Supercenters in a region exerts strong downward pressure on prices, thus making produce, in all its forms, less expensive. There is no way to specifically determine if these types of changes in the supply base changed consumption patterns or if PBH did; or if it was growing enthusiasm over Alice Waters' Chez Panisse Foundation's Edible Schoolyard project; or if it was public policy changes that made produce more accessible for mothers on food stamps or WIC.

We find the research regarding foodservice to be especially interesting, and it points to a critique we have made of the PMA/NRA/IFDA goal to double fresh produce consumption over a 10-year period: We need a good starting benchmark for this initiative. Whether 11 percent of produce consumption happening at restaurants is good, bad or indifferent depends on what percentage of which meal-eating occasions are included in the meals eaten at restaurants. Roberta Cook of UC Davis often reports the USDA says that roughly 10 percent of fresh fruit and 20 percent of fresh vegetables are used in foodservice. This is just fresh, though, and foodservice, which includes everything from prisons to nursing homes to cruise ships, is much broader than restaurants.

Still, any effort that serves to encourage more produce availability is good for both the industry and the country. The problem, once again, is that it is simply impossible to know the degree to which McDonald's updated salads or apple slice offerings were motivated by PBH contacts. After all, it could just as well have been new technology creating better product options or a national wave of concern over obesity that made McDonald's executives fear the government would blame it for causing obesity.

PBH depends, of course, not only on industry donations but industry cooperation

— displaying the More Matters logo, etc. With a miniscule annual budget compared to McDonald's and Coca-Cola, and with more than 300 million Americans to influence, even if PBH is highly effective at spending money, it will be difficult for its efforts to stand out in national statistics.

That the nature of the beast doesn't allow for direct connections between PBH's efforts and changes in consumption does not argue against the program. It argues for humility in expectations.

Any effort that serves to encourage more produce availability is good for both the industry and the country.

Just as the President's Council on Physical Fitness has not made us a nation of Adonises, so PBH cannot be expected to radically change eating habits. It is, as President George H.W. Bush liked to say, just one of many points of light that tries to make things better. When industry members support PBH, they are helping to make that one point of light burn brighter.

When one considers the research result that 45 percent of mothers respond to the survey by saying that they are more likely to purchase product with the Fruits & Veggies — More Matters logo, it might be best to think of all the pressure on mothers today. Most work...Children and school are demanding...Husbands and significant others are demanding...And most Moms want to do the right thing, yet find they often fall short. So the More Matters logo can be like a high-five to Mom, a little point of light in a tough day that says she is trying to do what is best for her family.

AN ELECTION OF SIGNIFICANCE

By James Prevor
President & Editor-in-Chief



It is quite likely that Barack Obama will go down in history as one of the most consequential Presidents the nation has ever had. Depending on how this current election falls, however, it might be that the reason he turns out to be so significant makes it an honor on which he would have rather passed.

Whatever one thinks about the President or his policies, one notes in the country a great awakening. There has been a sense in which the President has accomplished a great deal. He saw enacted a giant, trillion-dollar Stimulus Bill that changed forever the baseline on which federal expenditures are calculated; against enormous opposition, he spearheaded his signature Health Care Bill.

Yet, for each action in politics, there is a reaction and the very magnitude of President Obama's success has brought forth an enormous reaction, some of it from an inchoate group called "The Tea Party." What is interesting about the Tea Party is that most of its "members" have never participated in a protest march or rally before. The overwhelming majority have jobs. They even clean up after themselves and leave the march sites clean. It is the political awakening of the bourgeoisie.

In America, politics were traditionally less ideological than in many other countries. The Democratic Party controlled the South, the most conservative region of the country. In contrast, the northeast was a Republican bastion, but these Republicans – Nelson Rockefeller, Jacob Javits, Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr. — if not precisely liberals, certainly added a moderate, internationalist weight to the Republican party. As a result, Americans could watch elections, if not precisely with disinterest, with the knowledge that, generally speaking, little would radically change even if the control of Congress switched hands.

This situation no longer applies. The Stimulus Bill, for example, was a warning flag. Such a substantial piece of legislation was passed with not a single Republican vote in the House and only three Republicans in the Senate. Then came the Health Care Reform Bill, and this enormous piece of legislation was passed without a single Republican vote.

Not only was Health Care passed without any Republican support, national polls indicated it was – and remains – unpopular legislation. Although one can sometimes pass legislation the public objects to, politics is mostly about persuasion, and if one fails to persuade the people but simply overrides their wishes, a lot of resentment will ensue.

It is easy to identify specific issues with the President's programs that are of great concern to the produce industry. Congress adjourned without passing a budget, for the very first time since the budget process was adopted in 1974 – thus depriving businesses and the mar-

kets of the reassurance of a properly adopted budget, which enables year-out projections to be done.

On January 1, 2011, the Bush tax cuts expire. There is a great consensus in Congress that now is not a good time to raise anyone's taxes, so a two-year extension would pass easily with substantial bi-partisan support. President Obama and the Democratic leadership in Congress want to avoid any bill that could provide any benefit to "the rich" and so won't even bring up a bill for fear Democrats would amend it to vote the mood of the country.

The impact on the industry – and the country – will be substantial. There are many different increases but, as an example, the tax on dividends will go from a maximum of 15 percent to 39.6 percent, an increase of 164 percent. In 2013, when the health care law kicks in, an additional tax of 3.8 percent will go into effect. So the tax on dividends will almost triple in 24 months.

The impact on business is two-fold. On one side it will make it harder for businesses to raise equity. After all, the purpose of investing in a business is to either receive dividends or capital gains. The boost in taxes on both – the top capital gains rate will increase by a third – lowers the value of every share of stock.

There is another impact, though, and that is the consumer side. The higher the taxes are, the more likely are consumers to do things for themselves. If there are

no taxes, then a \$50 dinner costs \$50. If you are buying dinner with your dividend income next year and have to pay city and state taxes, plus the new higher Federal levy, you may need \$100 in income to go to the restaurant. Don't be surprised to see people stay home.

Many see President Obama as seeking a "Europeanization" of America, with an expectation that the government will take care of the people and manage the economy. A lot of Americans recoil; they believe in American exceptionalism – they see the United States as distinct from the European ethos – where rewards are mostly market-determined, where entrepreneurs are national heroes, where those who achieve are praised, not demonized.

Arthur C. Brooks, the president of the Washington, DC-based American Enterprise Institute, argues that approximately 70 percent of Americans favor this vision of the country. The other 30 percent, however, are ensconced in highly influential posts in universities, journalism, entertainment, etc., and have had substantial influence, especially on the young. So it is not clear precisely how the battle over the future of America will come out.

President Obama has led us down a path, but his efforts have aroused opposition, whether by leading America on his proposed journey or by arousing a "Tea Party" that fights back the effort and moves the country in the opposite direction. President Obama will be seen to future generations as influential indeed.

pb

It is easy to identify specific issues with the President's programs that are of great concern to the produce industry.



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Reader Service # 53

TRANSITIONS

GLOBAL ORGANIC SPECIALTY SOURCE INC. SARASOTA, FL

Carl Ream was appointed to director of business development. With more than 35 years of experience in the produce industry, he has worked with both retailers and growers.



Deborah Bloomquist was appointed to director of sales. She has more than 20 years of sales experience, including eight years in a leadership role.



SUN PACIFIC MARKETING LOS ANGELES, CA

Robin Osterhues is the new director of marketing. She will be responsible for developing and coordinating the company's marketing and promotional activities. She previously worked as director of business development with Kingsburg Orchards in Kingsburg, CA, and director of corporate marketing with Calavo Growers Inc., in Santa Paula, CA.



DATEPAC LLC YUMA, AZ

Edward O'Malley was named president and CEO. He has more than 30 years of global experience in marketing, operations and supply chain management with fresh produce and packaged foods. He previously held the position of vice president of supply chain for Albert's Organics as well as other executive positions with Dole Fresh Vegetables, Fresh Express and Paramount Farms.



FIRSTFRUITS MARKETING YAKIMA, WA

Amie Raubolt was added to the sales team. He will be responsible for new and existing domestic retail, wholesale and foodservice accounts. He has more than 30 years of retail experience, including sales, merchandising and procurement. He most recently was the field buyer for apples, pears and cherries at Albertson's Supervalu field-buying office.



MOR USA INC. GREEN BROOK, NJ

Shaleen Heffernan was hired as a sales manager. She will be handling the Israeli/Palestinian/Nicaraguan herb program as well as handling all upcoming sales of Israeli varieties of mixed bell peppers grown in Mexico, Colombian fresh gooseberries and Israeli variety Kirby cucumbers from Mexico. She will work out of the company's New York office.



RPE BANCROFT, WI

Darren White has joined the sales staff of RPE's newly opened Colorado branch in Monte Vista, CO. He previously spent nine years with Farm Fresh, where he helped earn the 2009 Colorado Governor's Award for Excellence in Exporting after establishing a potato export program into Mexico.



John Kennicker was hired as research technician to assist senior agronomist, Michael Copas, in crop research. He received his Master's Degree in plant breeding and genetics at North Dakota State University and most recently worked at the Iowa State University Extension Office, where he performed a variety of research and educational duties.



Roland Rieflin has joined the transportation department. He joins RPE from G&P Distributing where he spent the last year as operations manager. He also has 13 years of previous experience with McDermid Transportation as a freight manager.



MAMAMIA PRODUCE EAST RUTHERFORD, NJ

Joseph Sferazza has joined the company as sales manager. He previously worked as regional sales manager at Supreme Cuts LLC. He has nearly 20 years of experience in produce sales and he has worked with several major produce growers, processors and distributors. Since joining MamaMia in mid-July, he has visited chain stores and major distributors in the United States and Canada.



NOVELLE CONSULTING INC. LAGUNA BEACH, CA

Erich Hinrichs has joined the company as a consultant. He has many years of experience as an expert consultant in Europe, Scandinavia and Russia fresh produce operations. He previously worked as general sales manager of a major global produce company in Europe where he directed sales and marketing, and coordinated shipping and discharge programs to meet customer requirements.



John Musser has joined the company as a consultant. He has 30 years of experience in fresh produce in supply chain management, including logistics, distribution and production operations, grower relations and finance. He has expertise in structuring and refining complex multifunctional organizations and in transferring hands-on experience to advisory and interim situations.



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NEW PRODUCTS

RECIPE-READY PEELLED GARLIC

The Garlic Co., Bakersfield, CA, has introduced California-grown peeled garlic in vacuum-packed, recipe-ready pouches that extend shelf-life. Six individual pouches are packaged in a 3-oz., recyclable, resealable plastic master bags. Both are available in organic and conventional varieties.

Reader Service Number 300



VALUE-LINE PRODUCE

Misionero Vegetables, Gonzalez, CA, has added a new and innovative value line of fresh vegetables designed with a price point targeting consumers with less disposable income. Premium Shreds is an innovative salad mix blended for optimum flavor, while Petite Hearts work well as a topper on tacos, enchiladas, wraps and sandwiches.

Reader Service Number 301



ECO-FRIENDLY JUICE

Noble Juice, Winter Haven, FL, has introduced Tree to Bottle, a new line of citrus juices bottled in an innovative plastic material called Inego, which is made from plants instead of oil. Noble packages its Bottle Orange and Grapefruit juice in eco-friendly packaging, which is 100 percent compostable and recyclable. The bottle and label use 75 percent less greenhouse gasses compared to oil-based plastics.

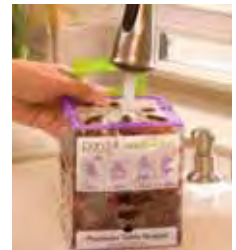
Reader Service Number 302



RINSE-AND-SERVE GRAPE CONTAINER

Pandol Bros. Inc., Delano, CA, has launched its new rinse-and-serve packaging nationwide. The patent-pending package is a clear plastic container designed to be held directly under a kitchen faucet to allow for thorough rinsing of grapes. The packaging features step-by-step instructions and Wash-n-Go graphics communicating the rinse-and-serve feature.

Reader Service Number 303



PREMIUM PERUVIAN SWEET ONIONS

Direct Source Marketing, Mount Kisco, NY, has introduced premium Peruvian sweet onions, which are certified and lab-tested for sweetness. They are available now through January.

Reader Service Number 304



BABY CARROTS

BRANDING CAMPAIGN

Bolthouse Farms, Bakersfield, CA, along with a new alliance of carrot growers dubbed "A Bunch of Carrot Farmers" have launched an advertising and marketing campaign that satires infamous junk-food marketing. The "Eat 'em Like Junk Food" campaign includes new packaging and television spots.

Reader Service Number 305



VITAMIN D MUSHROOMS

Highline Mushrooms, Leamington, Ontario, Canada, has introduced a new lineup of Vitamin D-enhanced mushrooms available in two delicious formats: 6-oz. Sliced Portabella and 6-oz. Grill Caps. A 3-oz. serving provides more than 100 percent of the daily Vitamin D requirements. Highline Mushrooms is the first Canadian mushroom company to introduce Vitamin D mushrooms to its product lineup.

Reader Service Number 306



POTATO LINES WITH EYE-CATCHING PACKAGING

Huntsinger Farms, Hegins, PA, has launched three new products lines: Dinner Delights, Supper Supremes and Petitatoes. Designed to suit the needs of today's consumers, the innovative packaging includes an example of what each variety is "especially good for," such as baking, mashing with skins on and roasting and mashing.

Reader Service Number 307



ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRPM UNVEILS NEW NAME, LOGO

The Philadelphia Regional Produce Market (PRPM), Philadelphia, PA, has introduced a new name and logo preceding the move from the market's current location to a new, state-of-the-art facility, now planned for January 2011. The name was developed to position the new facility as a wholesale produce market capable of servicing customers within a 500-mile radius.

Reader Service Number 308



MARZETTI LAUNCHES SWEEPSTAKES

Marzetti, Columbus, OH, is promoting Marzetti Caramel Dip with the launch of its uDip Sweepstakes, a collection of creative caramel-themed contests and games. Consumers can enter the package design, photo and recipe contests for a chance to win a variety of artistic prizes, including \$5,000 for their local school's art program and Canon digital cameras.

Reader Service Number 309



CRUNCH PAK MARKS 10 YEARS

Crunch Pak, Cashmere, WA, celebrated 10 years of business. Founded in 2000, Crunch Pak began as an idea with a group of apple growers in Washington State who believed that people would eat more apples if they were easier to eat. It developed technology to treat the apples and maintain freshness after slicing, as well as breathable packaging to ensure optimum quality.

Reader Service Number 310



BROETJE ORCHARDS HONORED BY NCSI AMERICAS

Broetje Orchards, Yakima, WA, was honored with the 2010 Chairman's Award from NCSI Americas, a Seattle, WA-based global certification body and registrar. Broetje Orchards was nominated and selected based on its commitment and leadership in the areas of food safety and social responsibility.

Reader Service Number 311



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

TASTEFUL SELECTIONS LAUNCHES RETAIL CAMPAIGN

Tasteful Selections, Minneapolis, MN, showcased its specialty potatoes in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metro area in all Lund's and Beyerly's stores when it kicked off its "Create Ooh Ahh Moments" campaign. The company highlighted consumer reactions to the new line in a YouTube video. Tasteful Selections is one of RPE's many brands.

Reader Service Number 312



USAPPLE DEBUTS APPLE-INSPIRED RECIPES

U.S. Apple Association, Vienna, VA, introduced seven new video segments on its new YouTube page, highlighting five apple-inspired dishes, including apple-cilantro salsa, apple-halibut kabobs and cheddar and apple paninis. The segments discuss how to enjoy apples and apple products as part of a healthful lifestyle.

Reader Service Number 313



FAIR TRADE CITRUS FROM SOUTH AFRICA COMES TO MANHATTAN

Fair Trade-certified summer citrus from South Africa was recently sold at an upscale supermarket in Manhattan. The Navel oranges were produced on a farm about two hours northwest of Cape Town that is co-owned by a citrus producer and his employees. Fair Trade aims to help producers in developing countries obtain better trading conditions and promote sustainability.

Reader Service Number 314



ALSUM FARMS & PRODUCE CELEBRATES NEW NAME

Alsum Farms & Produce Inc., Friesland, WI, celebrated the introduction of its new corporate name and logo. A leading grower/repacker of potatoes and onions and full-line fruit and vegetable distributor, Alsum changed its name to better reflect its long-term growth plans and commitment to locally grown produce.

Reader Service Number 315



WHOLLY GUACAMOLE, ABC TELEVISION PRESENT \$10 REBATE

Wholly Guacamole, Fort Worth, TX, teamed up with ABC TV on DVD to present "Stay In, Tune In, Dip In," a \$10 rebate offer focusing on "a night in" with fun, healthful food and top television entertainment from ABC TV on DVD. From now until the end of October, boxes of Wholly Guacamole Classic will sport the \$10 ABC TV on DVD rebate design.

Reader Service Number 316



CAC SPREADS NUTRITIONAL MESSAGE ABOUT AVOCADOS

The California Avocado Commission, Irvine, CA, is encouraging shopper demand for California avocados by spreading nutrition messages through consumer media and retailer outreach. Key messages include information about the use of avocados as a fat replacement in baking and avocados as a first food for babies and toddlers.

Reader Service Number 317



OLIVIA'S ORGANICS PROMOTE SALADS AS HEALTHFUL LUNCH

Olivia's Organics, Chelsea, MA, are encouraging parents to expand their children's minds and palates by creating Olivia's Organics healthful recipes that include crispy romaine, arugula or spinach. Available on the company's Web site, the recipes include Olivia's Pesto Chicken Salad or Asian Salad with Ginger Dressing.

Reader Service Number 318



HARVILL'S PRODUCE JOINS PRO*ACT

Harvill's Produce, Orlando, FL, has joined Monterey, CA-based Pro*Act's national distribution network. Harvill services customers in a 70-mile radius of Orlando, and plans to begin construction in late 2010/early 2011 on a new distribution facility. Becoming part of Pro*Act will allow Harvill to increase the benefits it provides its customers.

Reader Service Number 319



COLORFUL HARVEST HARVESTS RUBY JEWEL SWEET RED CORN

Colorful Harvest, Salinas, CA, is harvesting its new crop of Ruby Jewel Sweet Red Corn near Merced, in California's Great Central Valley. The Ruby Jewel Sweet Red Corn is a special variety developed through traditional plant breeding methods and grown only by Colorful Harvest. The corn's natural red pigment is actually a powerful anti-oxidant, called anthocyanin.

Reader Service Number 320



JP DULCICH & SONS CELEBRATES 50TH ANNIVERSARY

JP Dulcich & Sons celebrated its 50th anniversary this year, but made it a priority to focus on creating a quality, seamless look and feel for all of its table grape products, beginning with Pretty Lady and Harvest Hobgoblin bags. In addition to the new bag design, signage danglers will also be made available to retailers to help promote fall sales.

Reader Service Number 321



OCEAN MIST FARMS SUPPORTS HARTNELL COLLEGE AG INSTITUTE

Ocean Mist Farms, Castroville, CA, is supporting the expanded agriculture program at Hartnell College in Salinas with a gift of \$100,000. The company will have a classroom named for it in the 40,000 square-foot Center for Advanced Technology building now under construction and scheduled to open in January, 2011.

Reader Service Number 322



DRISCOLL'S AWARDS TOP BERRY CHEF AWARD

Driscoll's, Watsonville, CA, named executive chef/partner John Carver of Eddie V's Restaurant Inc., Scottsdale, AZ, as its Top Berry Chef of the year. He earned this accolade with his innovative recipe, Hot & Crispy Blackberry Ravioli with Chocolate Fondue. Driscoll's felt Carver's recipe was unique, delivering unexpected flavor and texture.

Reader Service Number 323



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ANNOUNCEMENTS

CUYAMA ORCHARDS EXPANDS ITS SPECIALTY APPLE PROGRAMS

Cuyama Orchards, Cuyama, CA, has expanded its Heirloom and specialty apple programs for the 2010 season and expects a bumper crop. The Crimson Gold is a 1 1/4-inch Heirloom apple bursting with flavor. It is a sweet, tart and juicy apple packed in 1-lb. bags as well as volume-filled foodservice packs.

Reader Service Number 324



PERI & SONS FARMS LAUNCHES NEW WEB SITE

Peri & Sons Farms, Yerington, NV, has launched a newly redesigned and expanded Web site in order to showcase the company's enduring farming history, which spans over a hundred years and three generations. The site also focuses on communicating the company's progressive philosophy on food safety and traceability.

Reader Service Number 325



SUN WORLD, PANDOL BROS. HELP KIDS EAT WELL

Sun World, Bakersfield, CA, and Pandol Bros., Delano, CA, have partnered with Panama-Buena Vista Unified School District to pilot a salad bar program at Stonecreek Junior High. A special ribbon cutting ceremony was held on the first day of school at Stonecreek to kick off the program, which aims to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables among students.

Reader Service Number 326



VOC BREAKS CONSUMER CONTEST RECORDS

The Vidalia Onion Committee, Vidalia, GA, partnered with DreamWorks Animation, SKG Inc., to promote the original sweet onion in conjunction with the release of *Shrek Forever After*, the last installment in the Shrek movie series. Nearly 43,000 Vidalia onion fans played to win on the newly revamped VidaliaOnion.org Web site.

Reader Service Number 327



MISIONERO REBRANDS GARDEN CUTS PRODUCT LINE

Misionero Vegetables, Gonzales, CA, is rebranding its conventional line of retail lettuce leaf products from Garden Cuts to Garden Life. The new logo, which features the words, "Garden Life," with a leaf merging from the soil, took six months to develop. Garden Life conveys a global message to Misionero's customers and consumers.

Reader Service Number 328



PBH LAUNCHES NEW INTERACTIVE TOOL

Produce For Better Health Foundation, Hockessin, DE, has launched a new interactive tool on the Fruits & Veggies — More Matters consumer Web site. The tool contains information on fruit- and veggie-related activities, promotions, contests, store tours, cooking classes and other events to help extend consumer marketing or education efforts.

Reader Service Number 329



NJDA SECRETARY VISITS BJ'S WHOLESALE STORE TO PROMOTE JERSEY FRESH

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Trenton, NJ, has partnered with BJ's Wholesale Club to promote Jersey Fresh produce. New Jersey Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, Alfred Murray, recently visited BJ's in Manahawkin, as the club offered loose Jersey Fresh produce for the first time.

Reader Service Number 330



MANN PACKING TRANSITIONS INTO FALL WITH MULTIPLE PROMOTIONS

Mann Packing, Salinas, CA, is offering multiple promotions this fall. Beginning October 10, consumers will save \$0.55 when they buy any two packages of Mann's core vegetable items such as Broccoli Wokly, Broccoli & Cauliflower or Vegetable Medley. Also in October, Mann will offer an instant redeemable coupon of \$0.55 with the purchase of one of Mann's sweet potato or Butternut squash products.

Reader Service Number 331



CAIA KICKS OFF SEASON WITH AYSO NATIONAL GAMES

The Chilean Avocado Importers Association, Aptos, CA, teamed up with American Youth Soccer Organization's (AYSO) 2010 National Games tournament for children and young adults in Wellington, FL. CAIA educated more than 10,000 youth soccer participants, coaches, parents and volunteers about avocados from Chile while emphasizing the importance of healthful eating and exercise.

Reader Service Number 332



LOBUE CITRUS ANNOUNCES NEW NAME, PLANT UPGRADES

LoBue Citrus, Lindsay, CA, has changed its name from LoBue Bros. Inc. to LoBue Citrus. The new identity is marked with an updated logo that features an orange wedge anchored on a field of blue, along with the company's tagline, "Legacy of Excellence." LoBue has also added new cooler space and rebuilt several areas of its packing line to soften the production line and increase productivity and quality control.

Reader Service Number 333



PURFRESH HELPS CHILEAN PRODUCE GROWERS, EXPORTERS STAY COMPETITIVE

Purfresh, Fremont, CA, announced the availability of its cold chain solutions — Purfresh Cold Storage, Purfresh Wash and PurfreshTransport — all integrated with Intellipur, the company's next-generation information management tool, in Chile. Purfresh solutions have been proven to maintain quality, reduce chemical usage, extend shelf-life and enhance food safety.

Reader Service Number 334



MCDILL ASSOCIATES DEVELOPS GROWING & GIVING 2010

McDill Associates, Soquel, CA, developed Growing & Giving 2010, which raised more than \$18,000 in donations to support youth. The event was hosted at Tanimura & Antle headquarters in Spreckels, CA, and attracted more than 350 attendees, including foodservice buyers and executives from leading grower-shippers.

Reader Service Number 335



CORRECTION: In the August, 2010, issue a photo caption on page 75 should have read, Darrel Miller, Mark Martin, Tristan Schmit and Brent Schmit, Eclipse Dist. Inc. PRODUCE BUSINESS regrets the error.

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Dissecting The Meaning Of Local, Sustainable And Flavorful

FROM JIM PREVOR'S PERISHABLE PUNDIT 9.10.2010

We've written many pieces about the "local" phenomenon. So when PMA's Annual Foodservice Conference focused on this matter, we wrote a piece titled, *Everyone Is In Favor of Better Flavor, But Is "Local" A Solution Or An Ideology?*

That brought a lengthy letter from a noted academic that we published under the title, *Tom Reardon of Michigan State University Speaks Out: Wither Local.*

Now we are pleased to publish a letter from the two UC Davis faculty members who moderated the original panel discussion at PMA's Foodservice Conference:

Mr. Prevor must have gotten an "A" in his microeconomics class since he clearly articulated the conventional theories of economics, including that of comparative advantage. Comparative advantage, however, supposes that markets already exist. The topic that this year's PMA convention bravely tackled was the emergence of new markets to respond to a burgeoning consumer demand for more local, sustainable and flavorful food.

As the opening speakers admitted, the industry has focused on appearance for many years; now, some industry members are beginning to examine what it would take to produce and distribute food with flavor and "the face of the farmer."

Data from the USDA's 2007 Census of Agriculture indicate that the dollar value of agricultural products marketed directly by U.S. farmers to consumers increased by 49 percent between 2002 and 2007 to \$1.2 billion. Much of this growth was attributable to sales at farmer's markets. Many consumers are willing to trade off perfect appearance and shelf-life, as well as low prices, in order to have more flavorful produce provided by foodservice operations (and well as grocers). Providing these new, local products to consumers will require new (or renewed) infrastructure, new knowledge and training about maintaining food quality from farm to fork, as Tina Fitzgerald remarked.

It will also take some investment from the industry, which will require some time to build up.

The California-based supply chain represented at the PMA panel was one example of an emerging trend. UC Davis Dining Services is taking seriously the University-wide goal of "reducing the environmental impact of food purchases and dining operations while maintaining accessibility and affordability for all students." It is, therefore, documenting its efforts to meet the University of California's goal of having its food service programs procure 20 percent sustainable food products by the year 2020.

Yes, "sustainable" and "local" still need more specificity in many places. We would welcome your ideas.

We commend the PMA for bringing this topic to the forefront of its conference and talking about how the industry can offer more choices, including "local." This is, in fact, what offering "local" and "sustainable" products is all about. It is not about narrowing our options, like Mr. Prevor seems to believe.

Consumer demand for a wide range of healthful, flavorful produce, including local, and the willingness of the industry to respond, can keep this new market working and growing for everyone. Furthermore, expanding offerings of locally grown produce can support, rather than undermine, the PMA's Foodservice 2020 Initiative with its goal to double the use of fresh produce in foodservice by 2020.

—Shermain Hardesty, Extension Economist and Lecturer, Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of California, Davis

—Gail Feenstra, Food Systems Coordinator, Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education Program "SAREP," University of California, Davis

We greatly appreciate that Dr. Hardesty and Dr. Feenstra took time to write. This is an important issue for the industry, and their expertise can enlighten us all. Yet we confess to being confused when reading the argu-

ment laid out in the way it is in this letter.

The first thing we note is that the letter conflates three different things without explanation. We are told that consumers want things that are local, things that are sustainable and things that are flavorful. Even accepting that this is all true, it is not clear why we should assume these things will always travel together. When it comes to flavor, isn't it at least as logical to think that the most flavorful items will come from the peak of the season — wherever that might be in the world — at any given time? When it comes to sustainability — whatever definition one wants to use — does it make any sense to think that the most sustainable choice will always be within 50 miles of a particular institution?

In other words, if UC Davis said it wished to procure only fruit with a high Brix content because that corresponds to flavor, and, if it turned out that only fruit grown within 50 miles of the UC Davis campus met this flavor standard, then, of course, it would be reasonable for UC Davis to procure this local produce. This is, however, pure conjecture. Nobody presented any evidence that, in fact, locally grown product is more flavorful, much less that produce grown from 50 to 100 miles away from campus is less flavorful than produce grown within 50 miles from campus.

The same point goes on sustainability. Now there are many definitions, and as UC Davis is entitled to decide its own priorities — minimize carbon output, minimize water usage, ensure proper treatment of farm hands, whatever UC Davis wants to make its priority — that is its right. Intellectually, though, the school has no standing if all it is going to do is assume that product grown between 50 and 100 miles of campus is somehow automatically more sustainable than product grown between 100 miles and 150 miles from campus.

The second point we observe is that the good professors place great emphasis on the fact that direct-to-consumer sales are increasing, especially at farmer's markets, which are increasing quickly in number. This

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is true and we have previously dealt with the point.

Yet we are not certain that the significance of the increase is what Drs. Hardesty and Feenstra wish to claim. Almost all farmer's markets are political creatures in which the streets or the public parks are made available to farmers, typically for a tiny fraction of the rent that these spaces could bring if auctioned off to the highest bidder. That failure to charge the farmers the going rate for the property represents a public subsidy to farmer's markets.

Yet even with such subsidies, this is a very small market. That \$1.2 billion our correspondents site includes not just fresh produce, but all agricultural products sold direct to consumers. Still, \$1.2 billion is a big number, but the very same report tells us that market value of all agricultural products sold in 2007 was over \$297 billion! Even if we limit it to just fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, berries, melons, potatoes and sweet potatoes, we have sales of in excess of \$33 billion.

Although we might defend to the death the right of a private party to purchase based on whim, a public institution such as UC Davis ought to be held to a higher standard.

The third point being made is that since the conference was in California, it made sense to have only Californians on the panel. We can concede on this matter, as there is, of course, nothing wrong with drawing on the expertise of the local community. We are more concerned, however, with intellectual diversity than geographic diversity, and we think the audience would have gotten more out of the session if there was someone up there to present the other side of the issue. In fact, we are sure that Drs. Hardesty and Feenstra's colleague at UC Davis, Roberta Cook, who has worked extensively on international trade issues, would have been willing to stand up and point out why the panelist who believed keeping all the money in town was a great economic theory was actually going to impoverish us all.

The fourth point is that the authors explain that UC Davis Dining wants to be serious about its goal of "reducing the environmental impact of food purchases and

dining operations while maintaining accessibility and affordability for all students." The question is whether buying local and, specifically, along the five-tier purchasing guidelines enunciated at the conference actually has anything to do with achieving these goals. These elaborate purchasing metrics only would make some sense if we assume that commercial transportation of produce is uniquely responsible for environmental harm. Yet there is no evidence for such a thing.

There is a lot of evidence that personal preferences are being elevated to purchasing metrics. Although we might defend to the death the right of a private party to purchase based on whim, a public institution such as UC Davis ought to be held to a higher standard. Even the seemingly unobjectionable goal actually raises more questions than it answers. Why, after all, are environmental goals the one thing elevated among all other goals? What if some other school said its goal was to "maximally increase the amount of

employment generated by food purchases for the dining operations while maintaining accessibility and affordability for all students?" Is this OK?

To us this is the key. If what Dr. Feenstra and Dr. Hardesty are saying is simply that lots of people want to buy local and so the food chain — producers, distributors, retailers, restaurants, etc. — should make it available to them, that is unobjectionable to us.

But we don't think the advocates for local want to say that this is just an *au courant* style or an irrational attachment; they want to make serious intellectual claims. Our point was that the specific claims made in the seminar are either not true or unproven. They don't stand up to intellectual scrutiny.

The intelligent and incisive gentleman in the back of the room at the panel discussion who asked "why local" and who suggested we look at "metrics" was Jorge Hernandez, senior vice president of food safety and quality assurance for US Food-

service. We think he was precisely correct.

Dr. Hardesty and Dr. Feenstra flatter us by asking for our advice, and the advice would be this: Local and sustainable are both code words for something else. If one wants to simply pander to people who like those words, that is fine. If, however, one wants to procure to achieve specific environmental, social or culinary goals, then define those explicitly — make meeting those goals the prerequisite for a purchase order. Setting the criteria as concentric rings of locality that may or may not achieve any actual goals allows for sloppy thinking that no UC Davis professor would ever allow in the classroom.

We would like to add one more point. Namely that the Pundit's family functioned as a wholesaler, auction buyer and much else in the produce industry for four generations in the United States and many generations more back in Russia. Although we came to be substantial exporters and importers, we were always helping local growers market their crop. The notion that selling local produce is some unheard-of adventure, some uniquely "new market" that somehow repeals the laws of comparative advantage just isn't true.

Most local growing that died out did so for good reason. There were other places where the crops could be produced more efficiently. For the most part, the revival of local growing depends on transportation prices. If high oil prices lead to expensive transport costs, then everyone will love local. If it is cheaper to produce somewhere else and bring in the product, that is what is likely to happen in most cases.

We support offering consumers a choice, if consumers want a choice. So we have no objection to local, for the same reason we have no objection to selling organic produce, imported produce, greenhouse-grown produce or branded produce. Consumers who want options should be given them. But we object if an organic producer makes unproven claims that eating organic produce extends the human lifespan, and we object to claims that local is inherently more delicious and more sustainable.

Being a foodie and wanting local may just add to the stock of harmless public fun, but here at the Pundit, and we trust at UC Davis, we will look to the facts before proclaiming an action to have special virtue.

Many thanks to Dr. Shermain Hardesty and Dr. Gail Feenstra, both of UC Davis, for weighing in on such an important issue.

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ARTICLES USED TO 'RAMP UP SALES AND PRESENTATIONS'

I truly enjoyed the May 2010 PRODUCE BUSINESS Bible. It had more relevance to retail than I have noticed for some time. The articles that I will use to ramp up sales and presentations with the 37 stores that I work with are:

- Safeway Prototype "Leeds" the Way
- Take Stock in Ripened Fruit Programs
- Despite Obstacles, Organics Continue to Gain Favor with Consumers
- Mangos Continue to be a Growing Segment
- 10 Ways to Sell More Stone Fruit Year-round
- Fresh Produce and Variety Can Drive Store Traffic and Build Loyalty
- Tale of Two Chains

Thanks for the articles. So much we, of course, do and have heard before. But your tips and reminders make us better.

*Ken Stephens
Produce Supervisor
Hy-Vee, Inc.
West Des Moines, IA*

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ever. You do the research on your stories better than the newspapers and your stories are more factual and interesting than ever.

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*Joseph M. Mercurio
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MYSTERY SHOPPER RECOMMENDATION

Among the things I brought to read on my airplane rides and layovers this week — the March PB Mystery Shopper Report issue was in the stack.

Using your recipe-driven approach — one with hard questions — requires your mystery shoppers to go to the better stores. You could title the article, "Don't Try This at Aldi's."

Is it time to take a break from "the upper crust yuppie with a food channel addiction — must have purple truffles from the Himalayas for a recipe"? Could we see a pendulum swing in the direction of the poverty package?

As we are all talking about health and salad bars in schools and the challenge of getting healthy food on a budget, could we do an "extreme makeover" of the poor shopper? How about shadowing someone who represents

households in the bottom quartile, or quintile, some with WIC or Food Stamp benefits, some without? Shadow them through the store and then do the extreme makeover.

Example: You bought 8 oz. of baby carrots for 99 cents. Why didn't you buy 2 lbs. for \$1.29 or 5 lbs. for \$1.99 and cut them yourself? Do you know how to store potatoes so you can buy on ad or in bulk? Maybe some nutritional, cooking and food storage tips.

I bet Second Harvest (or whatever they call themselves now) would be all over it. Teach them how to get stores to match ads (I saw a woman in Vegas work over a Wal-Mart clerk for 15 minutes one time), or the difference in stores. Home Ec meets Extreme Makeover meets Consumer Reports meets Mother Teresa ... or something like that.

Maybe a Congressperson would invite you to testify before Congress a la Steven Colbert.

*John Pandol
Vice President Special Projects
Pandol Bros. Inc.
Delano, CA*

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Twenty-Five INNOVATIONS THAT SHAPED THE INDUSTRY

It has been said that journalism is the first rough-draft of history. If so, it seemed fitting after 25 years of rough drafts, to stop and see what it has all added up to.

Yet we didn't want to stop there. Our interest in the past is motivated by our desire to build a better future. Thus, we sought to look at the past with an eye on the future and so, with this issue, we begin a journey back to the future.

We've been surveying industry leaders as to their assessment of what the top 25 most transformational innovations and changes were during the past quarter century. The consensus congealed around these innovations, presented in alphabetical order:

- Category Management
- Clamshell Packaging
- Consolidation
- Communications Technology
- Club Stores & Supercenters
- Five-a-Day
- Food Safety/Traceability
- Food Network
- Global Trade
- Government Involvement
- Greenhouse Produce
- Large Scale Organic Farming
- Lifestyle Retail Formats
- Locally Grown
- Logistics Efficiencies
- Organics
- Packaging Development
- Private Label
- Returnable Containers and Pallets
- Ripening Technology
- Social Media
- Sustainability
- Third Party Audits
- Value-Added
- Varietal Development

In addition to inquiring of industry thought leaders as to how they came to see these innovations as the crucial ones, we've also reached out to thought leaders to do some crystal-ball gazing.

We asked how these innovations will continue to play out over the next quarter-century and what new innovations seem primed to shape the future of the produce industry.

In this issue, we start with a discussion of five of the innovations: Communication Technology, Consolidation, Value-Added, Club Stores & Supercenter and Global Trade. We'll both look at how industry leaders perceive these issues as having shaped the past 25 years and look at some "Future Notes" as to the influence these innovations and others will continue to hold for the industry in the years to come.

We will continue to roll out this discussion over the next four issues of *PRODUCE BUSINESS*, covering five innovations per month. Please feel free to weigh in, both on what we present here and on the innovations we will be writing about over the next four months. Simply send an e-mail to innovations@producebusiness.com and we will be happy to incorporate your ideas.

When we are done, we'll collect the features and reprint them as a whole. The result will be a lovely 25-year birthday gift – this one from *PRODUCE BUSINESS* – to the industry we are a part of.

I was editor-in-chief of *PRODUCE BUSINESS* when it launched 25 years ago and I remain editor-in-chief today. That has given me an unusual fixed vantage point from which to observe industry change. In many professions, having the same job for a quarter-century would be a cause for boredom. That has not been a problem here.

When I look at the innovations listed as most significant, I am struck with the degree to which the produce industry is influenced by innovations that are really forces in the outside world and that happen to transform produce incidentally.

We haven't attempted to rank the innovations, but certainly one that was most frequently cited was the communications technology revolution. This is not surprising. Having grown up in a household where my father went to work every morning on Hunts Point, I saw first-hand the anxiety he felt leaving the place.

We never once went on a vacation that was more than one work-week and two weekends because my father just didn't feel comfortable leaving all those perishables – which he saw as boxes of money – sitting around the warehouse. We were actually lucky. My family had a larger, better staffed operation than most. Some of our neighbors on the market never went on a vacation because there was nobody there to take care of business.

We remember, though, as cell phones came into common use being pulled aside by Alan Siger, president at Consumers Produce, who told us how transformational these phones had been for his life. He now could go down to Florida with his family and still run the business.



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IDEAS OF THE FUTURE

The intriguing thing about a story such as this is that it may point to a lesson in both how the industry institutions ought to conduct themselves and how industry members, individually, ought to act.

The industry tends to get too insular – recycling the same stories and experiences. Trade associations – and publications for that matter – try to bring new ideas to the fore, but there are strong institutional hindrances that make that difficult. Part of the problem is intellectual. As Herman Kahn, the noted futurist from the Hudson Institute, pointed out, it is difficult to predict the future because if we knew how people and businesses would do things in the future, we would do them that way now.

So to go to a staffer at a trade association or an assigning editor at a publication and instruct them to plan a workshop or an article on what the future holds is not an easy task.

There are also practical considerations. People working in the industry have a variety of reasons to volunteer – so they will agree to sit on a panel at a trade show or conference, for example, and charge nothing. A great telecommunications expert, who could lay out the future, may also want big bucks to come and speak.

Synergy is also particularly hard to produce. We can find experts in the produce industry and we can find experts in technological fields – say telecommunications, aviation, etc. – but it is much more difficult to put the two together. It is interesting that we may go to Mars; the impact of that on the produce industry and the opportunities that will surely open for those in the industry is much harder to deduce.

Which doesn't mean it is not profitable work. As I write this, I am directing an effort to begin publishing a series of technology articles starting in January. We'll devote a half-page to a technological innovation not obviously produce-related and another half page to trying to make that connection.

That is a start, but the broader issue is the need to be open to ideas that are not obviously connected to one's work. The future is not likely to be a geyser erupting in the produce industry; it is far more likely that it will break out in fields such as telecommunications, and we in the produce trade will be left to navigate the wake of such innovations.

SECONDARY EFFECT

The second point we note in looking at the list of innovations is how often the produce industry is hit by a secondary effect of what is going on in grocery or at retail. Consolidation was not a produce phenomenon except incidentally; it was Safeway buying up Dominick's and Randalls and Genuardi's; it was Kroger buying up Ralphs and Fry's and Smith's, etc.

Category management was well established in grocery before it started in produce and, of course, innovations such as club stores and supercenters were as much about lawn furniture as about produce.

More recently, the trade's initiative on traceability was held up, in no small part, because questions had to be answered as to how this effort would mesh with efforts

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Our innovation analysis shows clearly that an ability to understand what is going on at retail and foodservice operators is crucial to understanding the future opportunities that will present themselves in produce.

in other perishable departments at retail and among foodservice operators.

Yet the trade's effort to engage with non-produce executives at retail has not been particularly availing. Part of it is that top retail executives don't pay that much attention to produce, and if they are concerned, they tend to rely on their own teams to bring them what expertise they need. It is also true, though, that most people in the produce trade are not particularly prepared to engage with the concerns of major retailers and foodservice operators.

When the United Fresh Produce Association was doing its Chicago show with FMI, the supermarket industry association, we

used to listen with interest as produce exhibitors expressed the hope that they might meet, *mano-a-mano*, with the CEO of Wal-Mart, Costco, Kroger or Safeway. We were a little skeptical about how often that would happen as we doubted that even if Wal-Mart's CEO suddenly wanted to know a lot about produce – unlikely to begin with – that the way he would acquire that knowledge would be to bumble around a trade show. Yet more than that, we wondered what the typical personnel staffing the booth would have to say to the CEO of Wal-Mart. We suspected it would be, "Please, buy more potatoes."

Yet our innovation analysis shows

clearly that an ability to understand what is going on at retail and foodservice operators is crucial to understanding the future opportunities that will present themselves in produce.

Ok, there is my moment to send a second directive off to my team: "Let us do a quarterly feature on things going on at retail and foodservice operators that are not being done in produce." Our goal will be to catch things like category management of a new format, before the produce trade is generally cognizant of this kind of innovation coming down the pipe.

PEOPLE BUSINESS

Our third thought upon reviewing the list of innovations is that the list is only half the story. After all, many of these innovations could have affected the industry in many different ways, but it was the people, the individuals who seized leadership, who executed them and made a difference.

One thinks of the lucky happenstance that of all the people of the world, Sam Walton chose Bruce Peterson to head up Wal-Mart's then-incipient produce busi-

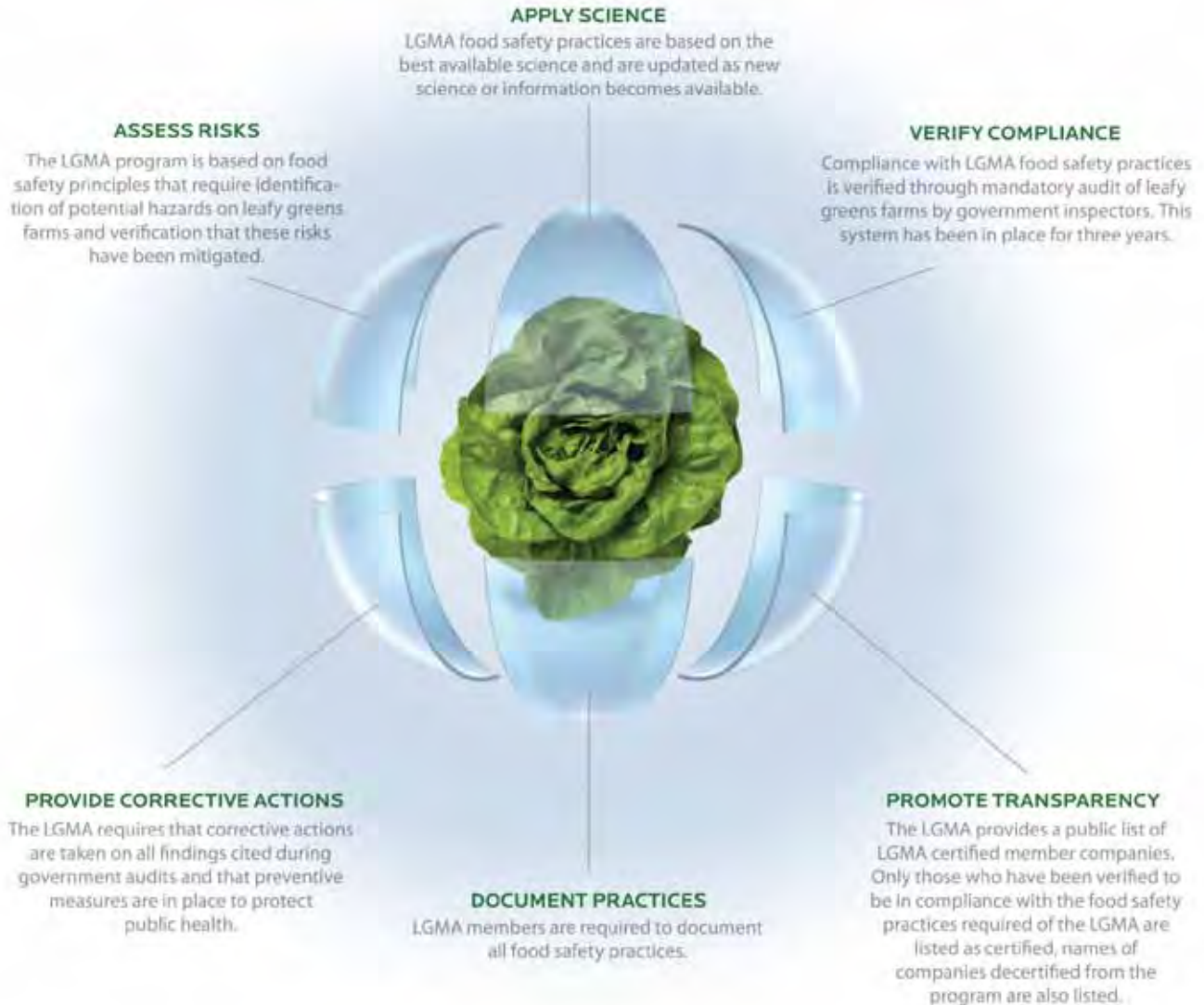
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ness. Bruce was a retailer, of course, but Sam wanted him in no small part because of his experience at Meijer.

But Bruce had roots in produce wholesaling, a commitment to working with the trade through associations and a vision that saw Wal-Mart's success as hinging on a partnership with the supply base. As a result, for the most part, the rollout of Wal-Mart Supercenters across America was benign, a positive for the produce supply base. In another person's hands, the same trend may have played out very differently.

There is a great question in the study of history as to what is the best way to think of history. Some favor the "Great Man" theory, in which individuals are presumed to have made a difference. Others say no, that there are major trends that make things happen, and they would have happened with or without these individuals. In other words, Einstein may have been a genius but if he had been hit by a bus, some other genius would have discovered relativity.

Perhaps, but having lived close to the epicenter of everything that happened in the business for the past 25 years we can say, without a doubt, that at every stage people have made the difference.

We remember Tim York, president of Markon, in a beige jacket standing up at countless meetings and, being from Salinas, thinking buyers had to act.

We look at organics and think about Drew and Myra Goodman at Earthbound Farm. It is easy to think organics sold themselves, but we remember Tonya Antle fighting with passion for the product she believed in.

We lost Jack Pandol this year. He was the chairman of PMA's first International Trade Symposium. It was held in San Francisco in 1985 along with the PMA convention, just as we were launching PRODUCE BUSINESS. He didn't just engage in international trade, he believed in it strongly, saw it as the path to profitability for growers and he fought to make it possible.

We think of about the regional retailers – Harold Alston at Stop & Shop, Tony Misasi at Grand Union, Bob DiPiazza at Dominick's, Dick Spezzano at Vons – and we remember how hard these leaders worked to see things like standardized PLUs become a standard.

Indeed we worry a bit for the industry on this point. There are a few of these types of regional operations left. Mike O'Brien from Schnucks, PMA's chairman-elect and a former chairman of PBH, comes to mind. But with consolidation, there are fewer people with the flexibility these regionals had. This is to no small extent why the Produce Traceability Initiative has stumbled. It looked to use association leadership to do what really only folks wielding the power

of the PO could actually do. If there are fewer people whose position allows them to wield the PO creatively, the industry will have less effective leadership – and that is bad for us all.

My third directive to my team: "We need to reemphasize people. Ideas are important, but without people to execute, without people willing to sacrifice to make things happen, things often don't happen. PRODUCE BUSINESS has always done a lot on people – our *40-under-Forty* is a celebration and commendation of people moving into leadership roles. Let us try to revive our old *PB Interview*, doing an in-depth interview on a person of industry accomplishment."

So there it is. We have 25 great innovations and lots of ideas for the future. But I just read our own article, starting below, and thought of three ways to do things better. Maybe that is the real lesson: That innovation is perpetual and the key is a willingness to change and grow and do new things.

JP Morgan was famous for responding to the media's demand for an explanation of what the stock market will do by saying, "It will fluctuate." Perhaps the best answer to what will happen to innovation in the years ahead is, "We will have a lot of it." The key may not be perfect prognostication; it may be flexibility to deal with what actually and unpredictably winds up showing up. **pb**

Twenty-Five INNOVATIONS THAT SHAPED THE INDUSTRY

BY JODEAN ROBBINS

In the past 25 years, the produce industry has experienced significant growth and evolution. Certainly, many industry veterans would have had a hard time imagining in 1985 the rapid change and development seen in these past two-and-a-half decades in our industry. "This is certainly not the same industry today as it was 25 years ago," says Chris Nelson, president and CEO of Mixtec Group, located in Pasadena, CA.

"We have much more of a consumer focus than a production focus today," states Bryan Silbermann, president and CEO of the

Produce Marketing Association (PMA) in Newark, DE. "We know much more about sales patterns. We've made great strides in the use of technology to communicate and enhance efficiency. Also, we've become adept at using technology in every aspect of the supply chain from production to processing to logistics and all the way through to the consumer."

In the early 1980s produce was important, but not a center-of-the-plate item. Most items were still seasonal and the average produce department was fairly limited in variety. "The SKU count

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November 15th
2010

of an average produce department was probably a third, maybe a quarter of what it is today," states Maria Brous, director of media and community relations for Lakeland, FL-based Publix Super Markets Inc. "Many tropical products and other specialty products were simply unknown in most of the United States. Packaged salads, specialty juices and the entire organic produce category are just a few of the product categories that were unavailable 25 years ago."

Continues Brous, "Apples, citrus, grapes and berries are just a few of the products that were only available a few months of the year back then. Today, improved refrigeration and transportation methods allow the shipment of product around the world, allowing most products to be available all year. Seasonality is really not much of an impact in the business now when thinking of availability."

The convergence of several factors resulted in a new focus on produce by con-

sumers and media along with greater innovation and creativity in the industry. "It is hard to narrow it down, but top areas of innovation include communications, food safety and product options," says Tim Ray, produce manager with Commerce City, CO-based Shamrock Foods Co. Inc. "The combination of these areas has brought produce to the forefront of the food industry making produce the new center-of-the-plate."

"Trends predicted even as recently as 2001 in the areas of convenience, eating out, tropicals and exotics and technology have already become a reality," says Al Vangelos, president and CEO of Sun World International LLC, headquartered in Bakersfield, CA.

Industry leaders identified a great number of different innovations and trends affecting the produce business in the past 25 years (see list on page X). However, several key areas repeatedly appeared, allowing us to report on these top five innovations. (See our November issue for the next five innovations.)

1: COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY:

By far, the most referenced innovation in and on the industry is the area of communications and information technology. "First there were the multiple phones on the buyers' and sellers' desks," reports Kevin Moffitt, president and CEO of the Milwaukie, OR-based Pear Bureau Northwest (PBN). "Then came the fax machine speeding and streamlining transactions. Then the Internet brought instant communications, reduced operator errors and provided access to quick and accurate photos of product or problems reducing the time for buyer/seller adjustments and increasing the efficiencies of the entire chain."

"First the fax, then email, and then the Internet have brought more producers closer to the retailer," adds Jon Strom, vice president of floral and lifestyle merchandising for Price Chopper Supermarkets, in Schenectady, NY.

"Everything from cell phones, Internet, and other devices have transformed communications between buyers and sellers," states Tom Stenzel, president and CEO of the United Fresh Produce Association, in Washington, D.C. "Twenty-five years ago, we were using fax machines that took six minutes a page. It's now almost instantaneous. With picture communications we

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can see a load of produce for quality issues at receiving and Skype with anyone anywhere in the world at no cost. This is transformational when you think about how the produce business exchanged information not that long ago."

The advent of cell phones quietly changed the way we do business. "We are accessible 24/7," says a large Western retailer who asked to remain anonymous. "Good or bad, it has improved communi-

cation between sellers and buyers. You have the Internet and e-mail at your fingertips wherever you are. This kind of access to information can only help us to do a better job in the future. Whether you're a retailer, wholesaler, trucker, broker, grower or anyone in between, you'll be in a position to make better more informed decisions."

"Most of us most likely don't recall a time when we didn't have access to a

smart-phone so we could instantly approve a price, save a rejected load or check weather and supply," explains Dionysios Christou, vice president of North America marketing for Del Monte Fresh Produce N.A. Inc., in Coral Gables, FL. "We have round-the-clock access to USDA market reports to have up-to-the-minute market pricing. When we are faced with a crisis we can instantly see pictures of what the cause could have been so we can fix it. Produce is unique and can be more sensitive than other products or commodities due to its perishable nature, and the immediacy of the Internet and e-mail has helped to solve and prevent many conflicts."

The Internet considerably changed the way produce companies communicate with customers, suppliers and consumers. "Technology has been the real driver over the past decade with the advent of the Internet changing consumer and business communications in a radical way," says Jan DeLyser, vice president marketing for the Irvine-based California Avocado Commission. "E-mail, blogs, social networks, shared information and, of course, shopping have affected the industry and pushed innovation."

"The Internet has helped make businessmen worldwide more efficient, more accountable, infinitely available and even more knowledgeable," says Christou. "The produce industry may have been a late entrant into the wonders of the World Wide Web and e-mail; however it has helped us come a long way in a short time."

Steve Grinstead, president and CEO of Pro*Act LLC, located in Monterey, CA, adds, "Internet communication has completely transformed how we do business in every way. In our case, almost every aspect of our business process is done on-line, from orders to projections to payments. Clearly, there remains a personal aspect to the business, but the majority of the business processes have been completely rewritten with the innovation of electronic communications."

"We are convinced that adoption of these tools has helped us achieve our goals year after year," emphasizes John Vena Jr., president of John Vena Inc., headquartered in Philadelphia, PA. "Many of our suppliers are overseas, and certainly the use of email and the drop in telecommunication rates due to improved technology has greatly lowered our costs."

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became the produce industry's major proponent. "The application of information technology came a little late to our segment of the industry," reports Vena. "But when we first installed a computer system in 1990 to enable us to sell and receive product, control inventory and invoice our customers, our eyes were opened to a whole new business world. It changed our perspective about many things in our industry that we had not thought possible until then. Also, it made us ever more receptive to looking at everything we did with a new, fresh point of view."

"The flow of information has stimulated innovation in the industry," states Tim York president of Salinas, CA-based Markon Cooperative Inc. "Advances in information technology and accessibility have made transparency a more integral part of our business. Almost every part of our business today is touched by this area and it resonates on so many different levels."

"Technology has brought far greater transparency to the supply chain," agrees PMA's Silbermann. "One obvious example is the use of digital photos and video to be able to see the arrival condition of a

“Advances in informational technology and accessibility have made transparency a more integral part of our business. Almost every part of our business today is touched by this area and it resonates on so many different levels.”

— Tim York, Markon Cooperative Inc.



product that's been shipped across the country or across the world."

It has also helped with the competitiveness of the industry. Del Monte's Christou explains, "Our customers are more educated on pricing and products, and the Internet has evened out the playing field. The ability of the Internet to instantly distribute mass communication has changed the way the produce industry reacts to recalls and communicates promotions and innovations. Everything from invoices to contracts is now electronic, and this is only

the beginning."

Information technology also has allowed the industry more direct access to consumers. "Consumers are able to find nutrition facts and other information on what foods are good for them," says York. "Also, they're able to access information on food safety, production practices, labor issues, sustainability with greater ease."

In addition to using new technology, the industry has also gone old school in developing communications directly with consumers via books. "Several major produce

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—John Pandol, Pandol Bros., Inc.



companies have created produce books in the past five years with major publishers,” reports Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Los Angeles, CA-based Melissa’s/World Variety Produce Inc. “Melissa’s has two nationally distributed books on produce for America to enjoy.”

Earthbound Farm, in San Juan Baustista, CA, Frieda’s Inc., located in Los Alamitos, CA, and the Atlanta-based Georgia Department of Agriculture are among the many

other groups that have taken this route to communicate with and educate consumers.

2: CONSOLIDATION

Along with the expansion of communication and information, the past two-and-a-half decades also brought consolidation of many businesses in the quest for efficiency. “The biggest single change in the past 25 years in produce has to be the consolida-

tion of all segments of the industry,” says Mixtec’s Nelson. “Most people recognize that retailers have merged over the years in order to better compete with Wal-Mart and Costco. But the foodservice industry, value-added processors, and now, even the grower/shippers have also joined together in order to better serve the year-round needs of the much larger, national chain customers.”

“In the past 25 years we have seen a decline in the number of operating retail and foodservice entities in the United States,” states Mike Aiton, marketing manager for Prime Time Sales LLC, in Coachella, CA. “As examples, once regional stalwarts like Dominicks, Randalls, and Vons are now Safeway and Smiths; Dillons, and Ralphs are now Kroger. Much of this was fueled by the unprecedented growth of Wal-Mart and the feeling that to win you need to get bigger. The same can be said in the foodservice arena as independent operators have either joined together in groups like Markon and Pro*Act, or have been gobbled up by national monsters like Sysco.”

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LOOKING 25 YEARS INTO THE FUTURE

In 1985, not many could have predicted the way the produce industry would look and operate today. So, who of us can predict what it will look like 25 years from now? As put by Kevin Moffitt, president and CEO of the Milwaukie, OR-based Pear Bureau Northwest (PBN), "Looking ahead to the next 25 years is difficult. Who would have seen or predicted the changes that have taken place in the past 25 years? There will be many changes that we haven't even thought of, especially with the fast pace of

innovation today."

Despite the imposing challenge, PRODUCE BUSINESS asked the industry to take a stab at identifying some of the major influencers and factors that will cause innovation in the next 25 years. Throughout the pages of this story, you will see a series of "Future Notes" that clarify some of the main areas that were identified.

In the next four issues of PRODUCE BUSINESS, we will continue to explore future innovations, and we invite you to send your own

thoughts about future innovations – as well as past innovations – to Innovations@producebusiness.com

Information Technology

"Some of the GPS technology that's a part of our industry for food safety and particularly in terms of traceability will change the ways in which our growers, distributors and retailers look at the business and deal with the business," says John Anderson, chairman, president and CEO of The Oppenheimer

organizations has played a major role in reshaping the industry and the size of the players. Dan Dempster, president of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA), headquartered in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, explains, "It is a continuation of the shrinkage in total numbers of

players that has occurred over the centuries; what we see now is an industry not unlike what has occurred in other sectors of society. This is changing the supplier side as well, such that they can respond to the challenge of servicing the larger players."

"This tremendous consolidation has

resulted in fewer buyers and the buy/sell relationship has become less personal and more programmable," adds Aiton. "There is more focus on the gross margin and labor control rather than on driving sales, and product assortment has grown from 200 to 500 [SKUs] as retailers strive to be all thing



Looking Back...

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Group in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. "Some of these new electronic category management and GPS technologies will allow retailers to be better educated on, for instance, what their shrink is on the shelf and which products are making the highest return, and that will have them changing quite rapidly from one product to another."

"Nano-technology could have a huge impact in the future," says Bill Schaefer, president and chief operations officer at Homestead, FL-based Fresh King Inc. "It will provide new ways to code and track even the small-

est of fruits and vegetables. It will be edible and probably not seen, yet could be used all the way up to pallet quantities. It will be cheap and an effective RFID substitute."

"We will eventually work out the bugs in RFID technology and the cost will come down," says Mike O'Brien, vice president of produce for St. Louis, MO-based Schnuck Markets Inc. "Once that happens, we will use it to check out groceries at our supermarkets, take inventory, trace product from field to fork and monitor the temperature and quality of our produce in transport and who

knows what else."

"Moving forward, it will likely be mobile devices that will be the single biggest game-changer and redefine retail internal processes," says Jan DeLyser, vice president marketing for the Irvine-based California Avocado Commission (CAC). "In 2020, it is projected that there will be 3 billion mobile devices worldwide. Mobile advertising will be mainstream advertising, but customized for each person. It will interact with POS materials and displays, and provide retailers information on the specific customer as they shop."

See more "Future Notes" on page 52

to all people. Retail prices and the needed margin on more staple commodities have risen to offset the inherent shrink associated with the expanded variety."

"Consolidation has had a fundamental impact on the relationships that shippers and marketers have with both foodservice

and retail buyers," states PMA's Silbermann. "However, even today, many centralized buying organizations are still finding their way. In any buying organization they've got to be buying to the specs of the store and consumer."

Indeed, the retail sector is not the only

one guilty of consolidation, as over the past two decades the supply side has seen its share as well. "If we look at the amazing boom of fresh green asparagus out of Peru you can see that the top five companies represent more than 60 percent of all imports," says Peter Warren, sales execu-

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“Because of a desire to offer more

fresh foods in general, we’ve seen the rise of more non-traditional outlets. These include vending machines, ballparks and single-serve snacks on airplanes. As the industry provides innovative packaging and processed products, it has allowed the development of these other formats.”

— Bryan Silbermann, Produce Marketing Association



tive with Ayco Farms, headquartered in Deerfield Beach, FL. “This was quite different 20 years ago when the race for the ‘grass’ deal was in its height. Melons are another example. The deal was in hands of, say, 50 growers and 15 importers just 10 years ago. Today, we have three huge players and maybe three independent players in the offshore melon deal. It has consolidated into vertically integrated very large

mega-deals with many having use of their own ships.”

“We’ve seen many of the top items being consolidated into fewer hands,” says Warren. “Today, there are about 25 percent less melon growers and exporters than there were 20 years ago.”

Another less apparent, yet still impactful trend is the advent of the private equity/investment banking involvement

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and ownership of fresh produce companies. Mixtec's Nelson explains, "This simply was not the case 20 years ago. This trend has more to do with the overall economy and financial markets in terms of excess cash, poor returns anywhere else and the credit crunch. But, it has definitely changed how we manage and finance produce companies versus the old generational family farms. Unfortunately, some of these firms are getting a real wake-up call on how markets and weather can adversely affect their bottom lines."

"The move of Wall Street into the farm belt and supermarket has impacted facets of our industry," says John Pandol, vice president of special projects for Pandol Bros. Inc., based in Delano, CA. "Between public companies and private capital funds, how much of the production agriculture and grocery retailing are controlled by people who have never owned a produce knife or wore an apron to work?"

3: VALUE-ADDED

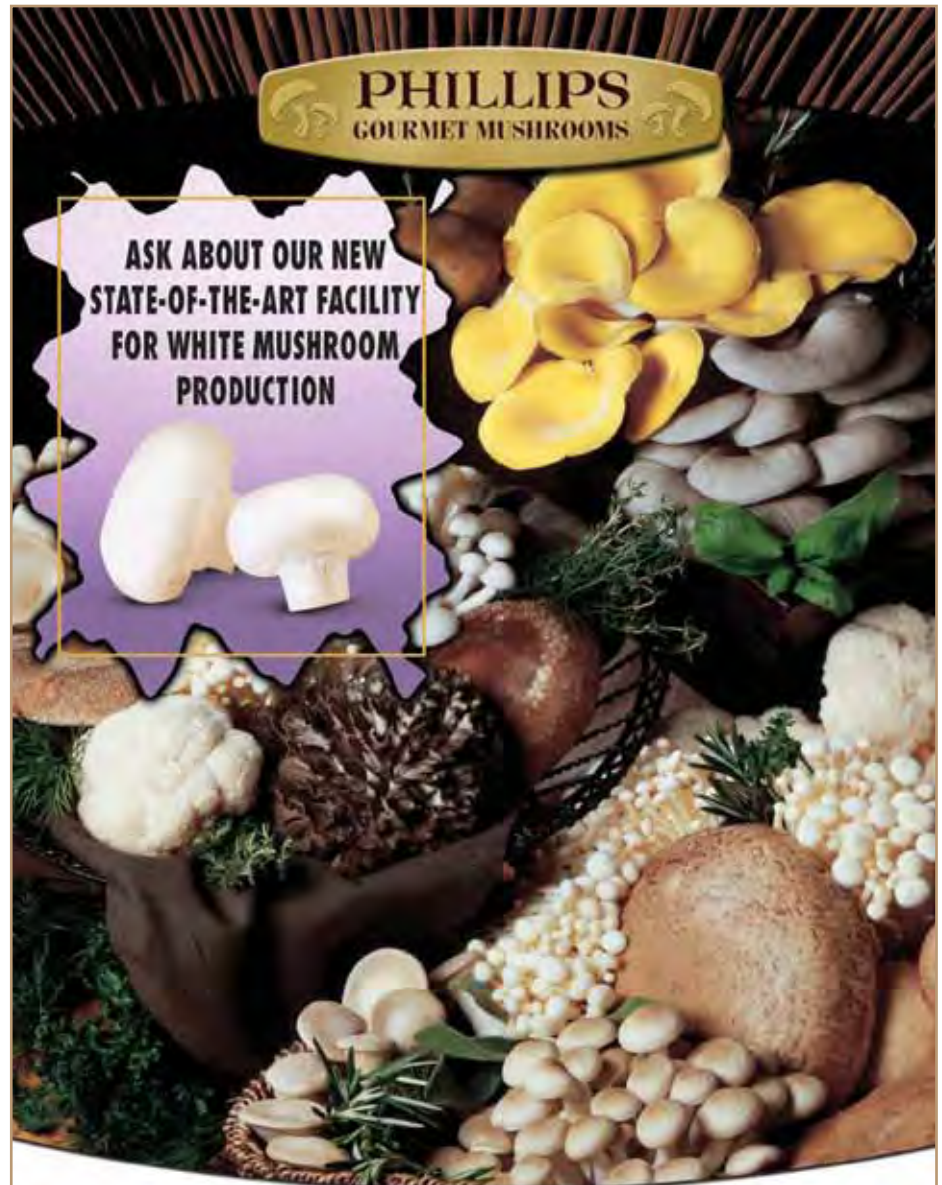
The rise of pre-cut produce was an important contributor to developing our modern-day produce department and certainly to the explosion of innovations that followed those first value-added products. "Pre-washed, packaged salads revolutionized the consumption of salads in this country, and now it's a \$3 billion category and one of the most important in the produce department," says Charles Sweat, president and CEO of Earthbound Farm. "Today, tender leaf salads — the category that Earthbound Farm built — accounts for 26.4 percent of packaged salad sales, making it more significant than romaine or iceberg in packaged salads."

"Between cut salads, cut fruit and cut vegetables, the category is now about 15 percent of the total produce sales," says Dick Spezzano, president of Spezzano Consulting Service Inc., in Monrovia, CA. "Keep in mind this category didn't even exist 25 years ago. Naturally, the category has somewhat cannibalized the whole salad, vegetable and fruit category, but it also has increased the sales and consumption of these categories."

"Looking at where we've come since fresh-cuts started in the early 1990s, how could you argue it wasn't a huge innovation?" queries Silbermann. "Those innovations began in foodservice and migrated into retail, and the convenience factor has been a great boon for the industry."

"Between cut salads, cut fruit and cut vegetables, the category is now about 15 percent of the total produce sales. Keep in mind this category didn't even exist 25 years ago."

— Dick Spezzano, Spezzano Consulting Service Inc.



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Driven by consumer trends in health and convenience, the value-added category has contributed significant advances for produce. "Fresh-cut has really helped boost consumption of both fruits and vegetables," says Robert Colescott, Jr., president and CEO of Pompano Beach, FL-based Southern Specialties Inc.

"Time and convenience have driven the category into a huge and fast-growing segment of the produce industry," says PBN's Moffitt. "Packaging and safety innovations have helped in the growth. Even with some slowdown due to the recession, this area of the industry has much more potential going forward."

"Ready-to-eat categories such as packaged salads, prepared vegetables and things such as Apio's Eat Smart line demonstrate the innovation of the industry," explains Publix's Brous. "Customers want healthful products, but they also expect products that are easy to use and provide a time savings."

Says United's Stenzel, "Fresh-cut brought produce to places and people it never reached before — consider the revolution caused by peeled cut carrots and sliced apples."

4: CLUB STORES AND SUPERCENTERS

During the past 25 years, the retail landscape has changed significantly as operators looked to innovate and differentiate. "Today's shopper spends money in many different formats depending upon the reason for their shopping trip," says PBN's Moffitt. "They vary from stocking up to a quick trip to looking for convenience. The supercenter's one-stop shopping and lower prices made great inroads over the past 25 years. However, their footprint, check-out lines, limited customer service and sheer size will limit growth as shoppers get older and time continues to be more of a factor for people."

The first and foremost large-scale innovator of a different style of retailing was the infamous supercenter, and their fingerprints are all over the innovation of the past 25 years. "Supercenters have redefined the entire retail landscape, encouraging bulk purchases, sharpening competition, creating a price-driven landscape and making logistics a core strategy," states the CAC's Delyser.

"The supercenter and Club stores have had a great impact on the industry," says

FUTURE NOTES

Continued from page 47

FOOD SAFETY/TRACEABILITY

“Food safety and traceability and its associated technology will continue innovation,” says Dan Dempster, president of the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA), headquartered in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

“Food safety, particularly third-party audits, are future factors,” says Kevin Moffitt, president and CEO of the Milwaukie, OR-based Pear Bureau Northwest (PBN). “Third-party audits have been increasingly important domestically and internationally and have been, in part, driven by food safety concerns. The audits, as well as retail, foodservice and government demands, have increased costs to growers and there is a need to standardize the protocol instead of having to do three or five different audits. It will also be important for retailers, especially in Europe, to discontinue their push for their own unique audits over and above what is safe and acceptable only to try to prove a point of differentiation. With the food safety bills floating through Congress and the recent egg recall, food safety will continue to move to the forefront and will continue to be important in the foreseeable future.”

See more “Future Notes” on page 55

Spezzano of Spezzano Consulting Services. “In spite of the few players in the supercenter group, they do about 25 percent of the entire produce business. In the Club

store business, it is even smaller, and they do about 20 percent of the entire produce business.”

“Certainly, during this timeframe, super-

centers gained access to the food business and warehouse clubs were able to offer a selection of pack-styles and alternative ways of getting produce to the consumer,” says John Anderson, chairman, president and CEO of The Oppenheimer Group in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. “They grew substantially and took their niche in the retail trade, which was certainly different than the format over the previous 25 years. These types of cases barely existed at that time.”

No matter what your opinion is on the supercenter, the new format definitely drove advancements, change and forced increased competition. “Those traditional chains that had to compete with these two formats had a difficult time, and many were consolidated into larger companies,” explains Spezzano.

“Those remaining companies worked hard to get their cost down, reduce retailers to be more competitive and develop strategies that played to their strengths with the consumer. I believe that the chains operating today are stronger and better positioned to compete with any store format,” he adds.

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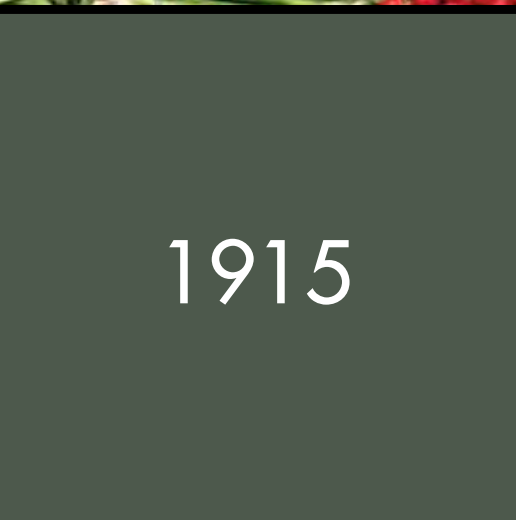
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Reader Service # 105

“The industry opened its eyes even more to the outside world. My ‘market’ became everyone’s potential marketplace, and someone else’s local product started facing off with my own local product. Fresh became available year-round. The multitude of different products has helped create a much broader drive for a wider array of fresh produce from all over the globe in our stores. This also spilled off into the restaurant sector — you can dine in almost every country now — all while still physically remaining in Canada.”

— Dan Dempster, Canadian Produce Marketing Association



Some of the industry’s innovation is due, in part, to the demands placed by these new retail formats. “We have to give recognition to Wal-Mart for being the driving force behind the innovations that have shaped our industry over the past 25 years,” says Colescott of Southern Specialties. “Category management, RPCs, EDI, GPS technology, vendor replenishment program, computer software and many more stemmed from them. They forced us to be more efficient, productive and accountable as a supplier.”

“Just as consumers have been affected, vendors have also been affected in the way we sell and what we sell,” says Del Monte’s Christou. “Non-traditional formats have created a need for a modified account management style where vendors now help manage store inventory. For those stores that sell value-priced bulk items, we have been forced to modify and improve packaging to include longer lasting, bigger containers. It has also given the produce industry the opportunity to have more volume with a limited number of SKUs. These new store formats have helped to change the competitive structure of the grocery industry and there is room for substantial growth in perishables as we move toward the future.”

In addition to supercenters, the past decade has seen the emergence and return to smaller-format convenience and quality-

oriented retailers. Businesses like Wawa, Tesco’s Fresh & Easy and even small ethnic corner stores have experienced growth as they’ve focused on providing innovative strategies to meet specific customer needs. “The consolidation business plan has enabled smaller, independent entities to find their niche and exploit it,” says Aiton of Prime Time.

“In the past 25, and really the last 10 years, we have seen many niche retailers who operate mostly in defined geographic areas emerge,” explains Spezzano. “These include retailers as small as Fresh & Easy, Wawa, Save-a-Lot, and Aldi to smaller conventional stores like Smart and Final Extras, Sprouts, Henry’s, Trader Joe’s and WinCo. We have also seen the niche ethnic players in various cities like Superior Markets, Jons, Northgate Gonzalez, KV Mart, Cardenas, Vallarta, and others.

“These ethnic stores tend to fly under the radar but most have from 15 to 40 stores and their produce sales tend to be two to three times that of conventional chains. As far as fresh produce is concerned, most lead with a large volume, low-priced, very promotional strategies and are close to the consumer needs in produce,” he adds.

The U.S. retail landscape is still experiencing change. Oppenheimer’s Anderson explains, “There is a move away from ‘the bigger I am the faster I am able to grow’ to

FUTURE NOTES

Continued from page 52

NUTRITION AND HEALTH

“Consumers will be looking at food in a more European holistic health manner,” predicts Tim York president of Salinas, CA-based Markon Cooperative Inc. “As opposed to taking supplements or looking for the next miracle nutrient product to solve health issues, they will instead return to looking for a balanced diet and getting the nutrients from real food.”

“Health, nutrition and wellness will continue to be growing factors,” says Robert Colescott, Jr., president and CEO of Southern Specialties Inc., headquartered in Pompano Beach, FL. “Our aging population will continue to spend money on any products that will increase their longevity and health.”

“We’re at the beginning of a revolution directly as a result of changes we’ve promoted in health and nutrition policy,” says Tom Stenzel, president of United Fresh Produce Association, in Washington, D.C. “Three million kids in elementary schools across the United States are now getting a free fruit or vegetable snack every day. This is a massive every-day sampling program for our next generation of consumers. Similar programs are being launched in Europe and around the world. I don’t think we have any idea how big this can be in changing dietary choices and the real impact will be in generating trial, new choices and future choices for a lifetime.”

See more “Future Notes” on page 56

‘the faster I am the bigger I am able to grow.’ But, no matter what their go-to-market strategy is, being excellent at something is critical. We are moving from economy of scale to economy of skill.”

“Because of a desire to offer more fresh foods in general, we’ve seen the rise of more non-traditional outlets,” says Silberman of PMA. “These include vending machines, ball parks and single-serve snacks on airplanes. As the industry provides innovative packaging and processed

products, it has allowed the development of these other formats.”

5: GLOBAL TRADE


Throughout the decade of the 1980s, the United States witnessed a dramatic increase in imports counter-seasonal to U.S. production. The globalization of the industry remains another significant innovation and change agent. “From my perspective, the most significant changes in our industry in the past 25 years have to do

with the surge toward globalization of the industry,” says John McClung, president and CEO of the Mission-based Texas Produce Association (TPA). “This has been made possible by advances in transportation, infrastructure and communications.


“The biggest opportunity for expansion of the produce industry and the ability to get into all kinds of different commodities on a year-round business was through global trade,” says Anderson. “It opened up the door to new supplies from countries

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that weren't in the market before. This allowed the consumer to have year-round availability of top-quality produce items and some items that didn't exist in this country prior to that. That drove a lot of opportunities for retailers to expand their produce departments and introduce category management disciplines once they had year-round supply."

The intersection of increased availability from other countries with growing health sensitivity and ethnic populations in the

U.S. led to the explosion of produce trade around the world. "During the past two decades as the health and well-being segment has grown, regional and seasonal sourcing has given way to year-round global sourcing to feed the lifestyle of today," says Sun World's Vangelos.

"I remember when we imported the very first box of fresh green asparagus from Peru more than 26 years ago," says Warren of Ayco Farms. "I think the figure this year was 16 million 11-lb. cases. We used to

bring in honeydews from Venezuela by airplane and mangos from Peru by air to Miami on a \$14 mango market!"

The availability of products from

FUTURE NOTES

Continued from page 55

SUSTAINABILITY

"Sustainability in its many different forms will continue to grow and be an important factor as we move forward," says John Anderson, chairman, president and CEO of The Oppenheimer Group in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. "Not just the sustainability of our planet, but sustainability of the organizations themselves. They will be looking for ways to make their businesses more efficient, while at the same time illustrating their respect for the planet."

"Consumers, as well as the industry, will become more knowledgeable about truly sustainable business practices," adds Robert Colescott, Jr., president and CEO of Pompano Beach, FL-based Southern Specialties Inc.

"Sustainability and locally grown are trends that will drive the industry," says Kevin Moffitt, president and CEO of the Milwaukie, OR-based Pear Bureau Northwest (PBN). "More consumers, chefs and retailers are interested in products or companies that they perceive fall into these categories. This will continue to grow. However, the local trend may come to face the realities that many places do not grow fruit and vegetables year-round. I believe the local push may morph into "buy local when in season."

"One of the key topics for the next 25 years will be ethical sourcing," suggests Keith Mathews, CEO of FirstFruits Marketing of Washington LLC, based in Yakima, WA. "This goes beyond sustainability and takes a deeper dive into employee management and more. FirstFruits is currently taking a leading position in conjunction with NCSI Americas, a global certification body, to develop a third-party evaluation module."

See more "Future Notes" on page 58

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FUTURE NOTES

Continued from page 56

FLAVOR AND SEASONALITY

“I think we’ll see a return to seasonality,” says Tim York president of Salinas, CA-based Markon Cooperative Inc. “We’ll be stopping our quest for peaches 365 days a year, and instead, go back to peaches for three months out of the year when they’re extraordinary. Celebrating different seasonality of produce will make our menus and our food a lot more interesting and it will taste a lot better. Right now, we’ve given up the excitement surrounding the seasonality of the products in exchange for availability.”

around the world allowed retailers to meet the increasing demands of the marketplace. “The growth of the flower production industry in South America, primarily Colombia, brought lower costs and year-round supply for many key floral products,” says Strom of Price Chopper. “Direct purchasing out of Miami or Colombia was hugely innovative. The supermarket industry would never have grown like it has relying solely on local floral wholesalers.”

“Global trade opened a whole world of new and out-of-season items available year-around,” says the large Western retailer. “Our consumers are enjoying many choices that just weren’t possible in the past.”

Certainly, the regional trade agreements made first with Canada, then with Mexico, spurred the movement of trade. “The Canada USA Free Trade Agreement (CUSTA) — precursor to the NAFTA — and the NAFTA itself reduced economic barriers to trade. But more than that, these trade agreements changed attitudes in people as to where they could source or sell their produce,” says CPMA’s Dempster. “The industry opened its eyes even more to the outside world. My ‘market’ became everyone’s potential marketplace, and someone else’s local product started facing off with my own local product. Fresh became available year-round. The multitude of different

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Reader Service # 134

products has helped create a much broader drive for a wider array of fresh produce from all over the globe in our stores. This also spilled off into the restaurant sector — you can dine in almost every country now — all while still physically remaining in Canada.”

“NAFTA was a precursor to the global economy that you’re seeing today,” says Lance Jungmeyer, president of the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas, headquartered in Nogales, AZ. “The successes and failures of NAFTA served as a barometer of the effectiveness of global trade deals going forward.”

“NAFTA helped create the year-round season for many produce items,” says the CAC’s DeLyster. “It helped build consumer usage and awareness as well as increasing the size and impact of the shipper/handler.”

Global trade also motivated in part the development of other innovations. Anderson explains, “Global trade created a need for food safety and HACCP-type programs to ensure the product being received was up to standard. Also, in their efforts to

become more efficient in their category management — and with the multitude of new SKUs being introduced — Electronic Data Interchange had to be developed. This created a different way of interacting with the buyers, compared to how business was conducted previously. It used to be more based on personal interactions, whereas now there’s a greater focus on technology, which supports the supply chain for the multitude of items available

to the consumer.”

“The industry used to focus on how to use trade to fill in the gaps in the season, but it’s gone so much further than that as companies have become global,” says PMA’s Silbermann. “It’s not just global trade in products, but also in practices, knowledge and innovation. Now, it’s not about a shipload of grapes from Chile, it’s also about the Australians sharing their production knowledge.” **pb**



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IN 4.5 MINUTES

Reader Service # 42

Despite One Wal-Mart Supercenter In The Neighborhood, New Jersey And Long Island Retailers Stay The Course

Wal-Mart is used to pushing independents around. New York Metro may have a lesson to teach the behemoth from Bentonville.

BY JIM PREVOR



With the first annual edition of The New York Produce Show And Conference coming around the bend, we bring the 21st rendition of the PRODUCE BUSINESS Wal-Mart Pricing Report to the Big Apple. Well, not exactly. High rents and small footprints make most of Manhattan unsuitable for a supercenter, and union agitation has kept Wal-Mart out of the outer boroughs.

So we did the next best thing and moved to New Jersey. As with our last iteration of the PRODUCE BUSINESS Wal-Mart Pricing Report, which focused on Philadelphia, Wal-Mart is not a major player in New Jersey. In the whole state, it only has five supercenters and most are in the southern half of the state.

In Northern New Jersey, there is only one supercenter — in North Bergen. Although Wal-Mart still can impact local marketing, the concentration is low enough that many chains will either react locally — just lowering prices in the store nearby the Wal-Mart Supercenter — or

they may ignore the supercenter altogether, simply closing up or not opening stores in that immediate vicinity if they can't make a profit.

Of course, great oaks from little acorns grow, and there are long-term risks to giving a competitor such as Wal-Mart a wide berth.

New Jersey Stores Put Up Good Fight

The New Jersey stores we selected — a Food Basics, a Pathmark and a ShopRite — are all in proximity to the Wal-Mart Supercenter in North Bergen. However this time, as long as we were in the giant New York Metro market, we thought we would add a little twist. We would go to the opposite side of Manhattan, out to Long Island, where there are no Wal-Mart Supercenters.

To get from Long Island to the North Bergen Wal-Mart Supercenter requires crossing at least two bridges or tunnels. In a traffic-dense area, a Long Island family shopping regularly for food in North Jersey is unlikely to happen, except under extraordinary circum-



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Reader Service # 165

WAL-MART SUPERCENTER VS 3 CHAINS
PRICE COMPARISON — NORTH BERGEN, NJ
 Prices Available To The General Public

Produce Item	How Sold	Wal-Mart Supercenter	Food Basics	% Over Wal-Mart	Pathmark Supercenter	% Over Wal-Mart	ShopRite Supermarket	% Over Wal-Mart
Apples - Granny Smith	Lb.	1.47	1.38	-6.12%	1.79	21.77%	1.69	14.97%
Apples - Red Delicious	Lb.	1.37	0.98	-28.47%	1.29	-5.84%	1.49	8.76%
Apples - Fuji	Lb.	1.67	1.38	-17.37%	1.79	7.19%	1.69	1.20%
Asparagus	Lb.	2.94	3.98	35.37%	4.99	69.73%	3.99	35.71%
Avocados	Each	1.28	0.88	-31.25%	0.98	-23.44%	1.50	17.19%
Bananas - Yellow	Lb.	0.49	0.58	18.37%	0.79	61.22%	0.39	-20.41%
Beans - Green	Lb.	1.68	1.28	-23.81%	1.49	-11.31%	0.99	-41.07%
Beets	Bunch	2.28	1.98	-13.16%	2.99	31.14%	1.50	-34.21%
Blackberries - Package	6 oz	2.98	1.98	-33.56%	2.99	0.34%	3.99	33.89%
Blueberries - Package	6 oz	2.66	2.98	12.03%	2.99	12.41%	3.99	50.00%
Brussel Sprouts	Lb.	2.98	1.86	-37.58%	3.18	6.71%	4.46	49.66%
Cabbage - Green	Lb.	0.44	0.48	9.09%	0.69	56.82%	0.59	34.09%
Cabbage - Red	Lb.	0.84	0.78	-7.14%	0.69	-17.86%	0.69	-17.86%
Cantaloupe - Whole	Each	1.50	1.48	-1.33%	2.00	33.33%	1.49	-0.67%
Carrots - Regular	1# Bag	0.99	0.49	-50.51%	0.99	0.00%	0.99	0.00%
Carrots - Baby	Lb.	1.66	1.50	-9.64%	1.50	-9.64%	1.69	1.81%
Cauliflower	Each	2.88	2.78	-3.47%	2.99	3.82%	2.50	-13.19%
Celery	Each	1.68	0.98	-41.67%	1.99	18.45%	1.49	-11.31%
Coleslaw	1# Bag	1.38	1.78	28.99%	1.99	44.20%	1.25	-9.42%
Corn - Yellow	Each	0.33	0.33	0.00%	0.80	142.42%	0.40	21.21%
Cucumbers - Regular	Each	0.33	0.33	0.00%	0.75	127.27%	0.67	103.03%
Dips - Marzetti - Tub	15.5oz	3.28	3.48	6.10%	3.49	6.40%	2.99	-8.84%
Dressing - Other - Bottle	11.5oz	3.24	3.48	7.41%	3.99	23.15%	2.99	-7.72%
Eggplant	Lb.	1.94	0.98	-49.48%	1.49	-23.20%	1.29	-33.51%
Garlic	Lb.	3.38	1.88	-44.38%	2.99	-11.54%	2.99	-11.54%
Grapes - Green Seedless	Lb.	1.88	1.78	-5.32%	2.99	59.04%	1.99	5.85%
Grapes - Red Seedless	Lb.	1.88	1.78	-5.32%	2.99	59.04%	1.99	5.85%
Green Onions	Bunch	1.00	0.39	-61.00%	0.79	-21.00%	0.66	-34.00%
Honeydew - Whole	Each	2.98	2.98	0.00%	3.99	33.89%	3.99	33.89%
Jar Fruit	20 oz	2.98	3.48	16.78%	2.98	0.00%	3.49	17.11%
Kiwi	Each	0.25	0.25	0.00%	0.50	100.00%	0.40	60.00%
Lemons - Bulk	Each	0.48	0.33	-31.25%	0.33	-31.25%	0.42	-12.50%
Lettuce - Iceberg Bulk	Each	1.38	0.98	-28.99%	1.99	44.20%	1.49	7.97%
Limes - Bulk	Each	0.38	0.16	-57.89%	0.33	-13.16%	0.20	-47.37%
Mushrooms - White Package	8oz	1.88	1.42	-24.47%	1.20	-36.17%	1.99	5.85%
Nectarines	Lb.	1.48	1.98	33.78%	2.99	102.03%	1.29	-12.84%
Onions - Red	Lb.	1.88	1.78	-5.32%	1.49	-20.74%	1.69	-10.11%
Onions - Yellow	Lb.	1.78	1.48	-16.85%	1.49	-16.29%	0.99	-44.38%
Onions - Yellow - Bag	3lb.	2.68	1.92	-28.36%	2.39	-10.82%	2.69	0.37%
Oranges - Navel	Each	0.50	1.00	100.00%	1.00	100.00%	0.66	32.00%
Papayas	Lb.	1.18	0.98	-16.95%	0.99	-16.10%	1.49	26.27%
Pears - Bartlett	Lb.	1.35	0.98	-27.41%	0.99	-26.67%	0.99	-26.67%
Pears - Bosc	Lb.	1.35	1.38	2.22%	1.59	17.78%	2.49	84.44%
Peppers - Red	Lb.	2.89	1.48	-48.79%	2.49	-13.84%	1.99	-31.14%
Pineapple	Each	2.98	2.48	-16.78%	4.99	67.45%	2.99	0.34%
Pistachios - Bag	10.5oz	2.88	3.47	20.49%	3.93	36.46%	4.49	55.90%
Plums	Lb.	1.48	1.38	-6.76%	1.99	34.46%	1.29	-12.84%
Potatoes - Red Bulk	Lb.	0.98	0.98	0.00%	1.49	52.04%	0.79	-19.39%
Potatoes - Russet - Bag	5#	2.47	2.98	20.65%	3.99	61.54%	2.99	21.05%
Potatoes - Russet Bulk	Lb.	0.88	0.78	-11.36%	0.88	0.00%	0.99	12.50%
Potatoes - White Bulk - Bag	5 Lb.	2.97	0.98	-67.00%	1.49	-49.83%	2.50	-15.82%
Salad - Caesar - Bag	1.5 oz	3.28	4.51	37.50%	6.03	83.84%	5.73	74.70%
Salad - Garden - Bag	6oz	2.88	0.64	-77.78%	1.02	-64.58%	3.29	14.24%
Salad - Spring - Bag	5oz	2.88	2.98	3.47%	3.79	31.60%	3.29	14.24%
Salad - Organic	5oz	2.88	2.26	-21.53%	2.72	-5.56%	3.49	21.18%
Spinach - Bag	10oz	1.98	1.98	0.00%	1.99	0.51%	1.99	0.51%
Squash - Zucchini	Lb.	1.58	0.98	-37.97%	1.49	-5.70%	1.29	-18.35%
Tomatoes - On the Vine	Lb.	1.88	1.58	-15.96%	2.49	32.45%	1.99	5.85%
Tomatoes - Plum/Roma	Lb.	1.38	0.98	-28.99%	1.49	7.97%	1.49	7.97%
Tomatoes - Regular Large	10 oz	1.00	1.48	48.00%	1.24	24.00%	2.99	199.00%
Watermelon - Seedless	Each	4.48	4.98	11.16%	5.99	33.71%	3.99	-10.94%
MARKET BASKET TOTAL		114.71	101.96	-11.11%	132.14	15.19%	124.18	8.26%
RED is adjusted price								

stances. So the two areas — North Jersey and Long Island — are non-competitive. Though both being part of New York Metro, both being suburban areas, they have a similar cost

structure and similar clientele.

So we thought that it would be interesting to do our normal price comparison to Wal-Mart in New Jersey and then see how the

prices in North Jersey compared to Long Island. Or to ask the question another way: Could we see that Wal-Mart in North Jersey was keeping pressure on North Jersey retailers

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WAL-MART SUPERCENTER VS 5 CHAINS PRICE COMPARISON — LONG ISLAND, NY

Prices Available To The General Public

Produce Item	How Sold	Wal-Mart Supercenter	Foodtown	% Over Wal-Mart	Key Food	% Over Wal-Mart	King Kullen	% Over Wal-Mart
Apples - Granny Smith	Lb.	1.47	1.69	14.97%	1.59	8.16%	1.79	21.77%
Apples - Red Delicious	Lb.	1.37	1.99	45.26%	1.59	16.06%	1.79	30.66%
Apples - Fuji	Lb.	1.67	1.99	19.16%	1.79	7.19%	1.79	7.19%
Asparagus	Lb.	2.94	3.99	35.71%	3.99	35.71%	3.99	35.71%
Avocados	Each	1.28	1.50	17.19%	1.99	55.47%	1.69	32.03%
Bananas - Yellow	Lb.	0.49	0.79	61.22%	0.79	61.22%	0.79	61.22%
Beans - Green	Lb.	1.68	2.99	77.98%	1.79	6.55%	0.79	-52.98%
Broccoli Crowns	Lb.	1.78	1.99	11.80%	0.98	-44.94%	1.50	-15.73%
Brussel Sprouts	Lb.	2.98	2.99	0.34%	1.99	-33.22%	2.99	0.34%
Cabbage - Green	Lb.	0.44	0.59	34.09%	0.49	11.36%	0.69	56.82%
Cabbage - Red	Lb.	0.84	0.59	-29.76%	0.89	5.95%	1.49	77.38%
Cantaloupe - Whole	Each	1.50	3.49	132.67%	2.99	99.33%	2.99	99.33%
Carrots - Regular	1# Bag	0.99	0.89	-10.10%	0.89	-10.10%	1.29	30.30%
Carrots - Organic	Lb.	0.99	0.99	0.00%	0.99	0.00%	1.49	50.51%
Carrots - Baby	Lb.	1.66	1.50	-9.64%	1.50	-9.64%	1.50	-9.64%
Cauliflower	Each	2.88	2.99	3.82%	2.00	-30.56%	2.99	3.82%
Celery	Each	1.68	1.89	12.50%	1.99	18.45%	1.99	18.45%
Coleslaw - 1# Bag	Bag	1.38	4.33	213.77%	3.69	167.39%	1.99	44.20%
Cucumbers - Regular	Each	0.33	0.67	103.03%	0.50	51.52%	0.66	100.00%
Dips - Marzetti - Tub	15.5oz	3.28	3.99	21.65%	3.99	21.65%	2.99	-8.84%
Dressing - Other - Bottle	11.5oz	3.24	3.99	23.15%	3.99	23.15%	2.99	-7.72%
Eggplant	Lb.	1.94	1.49	-23.20%	1.29	-33.51%	1.50	-22.68%
Garlic	Lb.	3.38	3.99	18.05%	3.99	18.05%	3.99	18.05%
Grapes - Green Seedless	Lb.	1.88	2.49	32.45%	2.99	59.04%	1.99	5.85%
Grapes - Red Seedless	Lb.	1.88	2.49	32.45%	2.99	59.04%	1.99	5.85%
Green Onions	Bunch	1.00	0.67	-33.00%	0.69	-31.00%	0.67	-33.00%
Honeydew - Whole	Each	2.98	4.99	67.45%	3.99	33.89%	3.99	33.89%
Jar Fruit	20 oz Jar	2.98	4.99	67.45%	4.99	67.45%	3.32	11.41%
Kiwi	Each	0.25	0.40	60.00%	0.50	100.00%	0.50	100.00%
Lemons - Bulk	Each	0.48	0.50	4.17%	0.50	4.17%	0.50	4.17%
Lettuce - Iceberg Bulk	Each	1.38	1.89	36.96%	1.99	44.20%	1.99	44.20%
Limes - Bulk	Each	0.38	0.25	-34.21%	0.20	-47.37%	0.50	31.58%
Mushrooms - White Pkg	8oz	1.88	1.99	5.85%	2.29	21.81%	1.99	5.85%
Nectarines	Lb.	1.48	1.69	14.19%	1.49	0.68%	1.99	34.46%
Onions - Red	Lb.	1.88	1.29	-31.38%	0.99	-47.34%	1.50	-20.21%
Onions - Yellow Bag	3lb.	2.68	2.99	11.57%	2.99	11.57%	2.99	11.57%
Onions - Sweet	Lb.	1.78	1.49	-16.29%	1.69	-5.06%	1.50	-15.73%
Peppers - Red	Lb.	2.89	3.99	38.06%	1.99	-31.14%	2.50	-13.49%
Pineapple	Each	2.98	3.99	33.89%	3.99	33.89%	3.99	33.89%
Plums	Lb.	1.48	1.99	34.46%	1.79	20.95%	2.50	68.92%
Potatoes - Red Bulk	Lb.	0.98	0.99	1.02%	0.99	1.02%	1.29	31.63%
Potatoes - Russet	5# Bag	2.47	2.99	21.05%	3.49	41.30%	3.99	61.54%
Potatoes - Russet Bulk	Lb.	0.88	0.99	12.50%	0.99	12.50%	1.29	46.59%
Salad - Caesar - Bag	11.5 oz	3.28	5.73	74.70%	6.04	84.15%	6.04	84.15%
Salad - Garden - Bag	6oz	2.88	3.79	31.60%	1.85	-35.76%	1.00	-65.28%
Salad - Spring - Bag	5oz	2.88	2.37	-17.71%	3.99	38.54%	3.79	31.60%
Salad - Organic	5oz	2.88	3.99	38.54%	4.69	62.85%	4.99	73.26%
Squash - Zucchini	Lb.	1.58	1.69	6.96%	1.29	-18.35%	1.69	6.96%
Tomatoes - On the Vine	Lb.	1.88	1.99	5.85%	1.99	5.85%	2.50	32.98%
Tomatoes - Plum/Roma	Lb.	1.38	1.69	22.46%	1.69	22.46%	1.69	22.46%
Watermelon - Cut	Lb.	3.25	2.99	-8.00%	0.79	-75.69%	2.99	-8.00%
MARKET BASKET TOTAL		94.79	118.61	25.13%	109.55	15.57%	111.34	17.46%

RED is adjusted price

to keep prices down on fresh produce by noting higher prices in Long Island where there is no Wal-Mart Supercenter?

In New Jersey, we compared the Wal-Mart Supercenter against one of A&P's Food Basics banner stores; against Pathmark, tra-

ditionally seen as highly promotional in pricing (now owned by A&P as well); and a ShopRite store, the uber-powerful independent supplied by Wakefern.

Wal-Mart has almost always won the PRODUCE BUSINESS Wal-Mart Pricing Report.

Among traditional supermarkets, Fiesta Mart in Texas eeked out a 0.3 percent victory in Houston, and there was a fluke in Dallas, when, at a time when Wal-Mart was enforcing uniform pricing on its Supercenter and Neighborhood Market concepts, a Dallas Wal-Mart

Since Pathmark was acquired by A&P, one of the open questions was whether it would maintain Pathmark's reputation for opportunistic buying and merchandising.

Stop & Shop	% Over Wal-Mart	Waldbaum's	% Over Wal-Mart
1.79	21.77%	2.29	55.78%
1.79	30.66%	1.79	30.66%
1.79	7.19%	2.29	37.13%
3.99	35.71%	3.99	35.71%
1.67	30.47%	2.00	56.25%
0.69	40.82%	0.79	61.22%
2.99	77.98%	1.49	-11.31%
1.99	11.80%	1.49	-16.29%
4.78	60.40%	1.99	-33.22%
0.69	56.82%	0.79	79.55%
0.99	17.86%	0.99	17.86%
2.50	66.67%	2.99	99.33%
0.90	-9.09%	1.49	50.51%
1.29	30.30%	1.99	101.01%
1.79	7.83%	2.29	37.95%
2.99	3.82%	4.99	73.26%
1.99	18.45%	2.49	48.21%
4.56	230.43%	2.29	65.94%
0.75	127.27%	0.50	51.52%
2.99	-8.84%	3.99	21.65%
2.99	-7.72%	3.99	23.15%
1.49	-23.20%	1.49	-23.20%
3.99	18.05%	1.99	-41.12%
2.99	59.04%	2.99	59.04%
2.99	59.04%	2.99	59.04%
0.79	-21.00%	0.99	-1.00%
3.99	33.89%	4.99	67.45%
3.49	17.11%	3.99	33.89%
0.33	32.00%	0.50	100.00%
0.75	56.25%	0.50	4.17%
1.99	44.20%	1.99	44.20%
0.67	76.32%	0.33	-13.16%
1.99	5.85%	2.24	19.15%
2.49	68.24%	1.99	34.46%
1.99	5.85%	2.49	32.45%
3.74	39.55%	4.48	67.16%
1.49	-16.29%	1.69	-5.06%
2.79	-3.46%	4.99	72.66%
3.99	33.89%	5.99	101.01%
2.49	68.24%	1.99	34.46%
0.89	-9.18%	1.49	52.04%
2.99	21.05%	3.99	61.54%
0.99	12.50%	1.49	69.32%
4.52	37.80%	6.04	84.15%
0.75	-73.96%	2.50	-13.19%
2.99	3.82%	3.69	28.13%
2.85	-1.04%	4.99	73.26%
1.49	-5.70%	1.49	-5.70%
2.49	32.45%	3.99	112.23%
0.99	-28.26%	1.99	44.20%
0.69	-78.77%	0.99	-69.54%
111.99	18.15%	128.17	35.21%

Neighborhood Market edged its sibling Supercenter and won by 1.2 percent due to some manager specials.

Other than those special situations, the PRODUCE BUSINESS Wal-Mart Pricing Report has consistently shown that the soft underbelly

of Wal-Mart's low price image is that the supercenter is consistently beat by deep discounters. In St. Louis, Supervalu's Save-a-lot concept beat out Wal-Mart by 12.76 percent, and Aldi trounced Wal-Mart by 25.03 percent. The last time we encountered A&P's Food Basics concept was when A&P still had its operation in Detroit, and Food Basics beat out Wal-Mart by 17 percent.

Well, as Yogi Berra, once a player for the Minor League Newark Bears, is quoted as saying, "It's *déjà vu* all over again," as Food Basics again beats out Wal-Mart with an 11.11 percent edge.

ShopRite also lived up to its reputation as a hyper-competitive organization, coming in at just 8.26 percent over Wal-Mart. With its Price Plus loyalty card applied to eight items in its comparative market basket, ShopRite comes down to 7.38 percent above Wal-Mart.

In general, consumers tolerate price differentials of less than 10 percent. Differences in location, convenience, service and product often justify those differentials. With only one Wal-Mart Supercenter in the area, it won't matter — for now — but differentials up at the 20 percent area open big windows of opportunity for Wal-Mart.



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Reader Service # 159

**WAL-MART SUPERCENTER VS 5 CHAINS
PRICE COMPARISON — LONG ISLAND, NY**
Prices Available To Loyalty Card Holders

Produce Item	How Sold	Wal-Mart Supercenter	Foodtown	% Over Wal-Mart	Key Food	% Over Wal-Mart	King Kullen	% Over Wal-Mart
Asparagus	Lb.	2.94	3.99	35.71%	1.99	-32.31%	3.99	35.71%
Avocados	Each	1.28	1.50	17.19%	1.50	17.19%	1.69	32.03%
Cantaloupe - Whole	Each	1.50	2.00	33.33%	0.99	-34.00%	2.99	99.33%
Carrots - Baby	Lb.	1.66	1.50	-9.64%	1.50	-9.64%	1.50	-9.64%
Cauliflower	Each	2.88	2.99	3.82%	2.00	-30.56%	2.99	3.82%
Cucumbers - Regular	Each	0.33	0.67	103.03%	0.50	51.52%	0.66	100.00%
Dips - Marzetti - Tub	Tub Wht:15.5oz	3.28	3.99	21.65%	2.50	-23.78%	2.99	-8.84%
Dressing - Other - Bottle	Bottle Wht: 11.5oz	3.24	3.99	23.15%	2.50	-22.84%	2.99	-7.72%
Grapes - Green Seedless	Lb.	1.88	1.88	0.00%	0.99	-47.34%	1.99	5.85%
Grapes - Red Seedless	Lb.	1.88	1.88	0.00%	0.99	-47.34%	1.99	5.85%
Honeydew - Whole	Each	2.98	2.99	0.34%	2.00	-32.89%	3.99	33.89%
Peppers - Red	Lb.	2.89	3.99	38.06%	1.99	-31.14%	2.50	-13.49%
Pineapple	Each	2.98	2.99	0.34%	3.99	33.89%	3.99	33.89%
Potatoes - Red Bulk	Lb.	0.98	0.99	1.02%	0.99	1.02%	1.29	31.63%
Potatoes - Russet Bulk	Lb.	0.88	0.99	12.50%	0.99	12.50%	1.29	46.59%
Squash - Zucchini	Lb.	1.58	1.49	-5.70%	1.29	-18.35%	1.69	6.96%
*MARKET BASKET TOTAL		94.79	111.20	17.31	96.09	1.37	111.34	17.46

RED is adjusted price

**Adjusted if all items in original market basket were purchased using Loyalty Cards

Since Pathmark was acquired by A&P, one of the open questions was whether it would maintain Pathmark's reputation for opportunistic buying and merchandising. Craig

Carlson, who was Pathmark's vice president of produce and floral merchandising, is now at Wal-Mart, but he was well known for running an organization that would buy many a

sweet deal off the terminal markets in Hunts Point and Philly — and then blast it through the system. The markets loved the business, and consumers loved the bargains. Now Path-



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Interestingly enough, it is another independent, Key Food, which claims the low price prize as Key Food's Savings Club card enabled the store to get within 1.37 percent of Wal-Mart's pricing.

Stop & Shop	% Over Wal-Mart	Waldbaum's	% Over Wal-Mart
3.99	35.71%	3.99	35.71%
1.67	30.47%	2.00	56.25%
2.00	33.33%	2.99	99.33%
1.79	7.83%	2.00	20.48%
2.49	-13.54%	2.99	3.82%
0.75	127.27%	0.75	127.27%
2.99	-8.84%	3.99	21.65%
2.99	-7.72%	3.99	23.15%
2.99	59.04%	2.99	59.04%
2.99	59.04%	2.99	59.04%
2.00	-32.89%	4.99	67.45%
1.88	-34.95%	4.99	72.66%
3.99	33.89%	5.99	101.01%
0.89	-9.18%	1.49	52.04%
0.89	1.14%	1.49	69.32%
1.49	-5.70%	1.49	-5.70%
107.99	13.93	126.13	33.06%

ket basket, the differential breaks the 10 percent barrier and dips to 9.85 percent over Wal-Mart. So Pathmark is in range, but just, and this pricing level may lead to changes in consumers' perceptions of Pathmark as a store where one finds great bargains.

not uncommon for them to do more than 10 times the business of a rural independent store, and Wakefern, as the largest retailer-owned cooperative in the United States, has a motto of "Helping Small Business Succeed in a

Warning Sign For Wal-Mart

So in New Jersey, we can say that the tough independent, ShopRite, is going to give Wal-Mart a run for its money. This is a warning sign for Wal-Mart. As supercenters rolled out in most of the country, Wal-Mart seized market share heavily from independents that did not have the capital, the management team or the supply structure to compete.

Yet ShopRite stores are another animal. It is



mark is coming in at 15.19 percent over Wal-Mart, and with its PAC Card loyalty card applied to eight items in its comparative mar-

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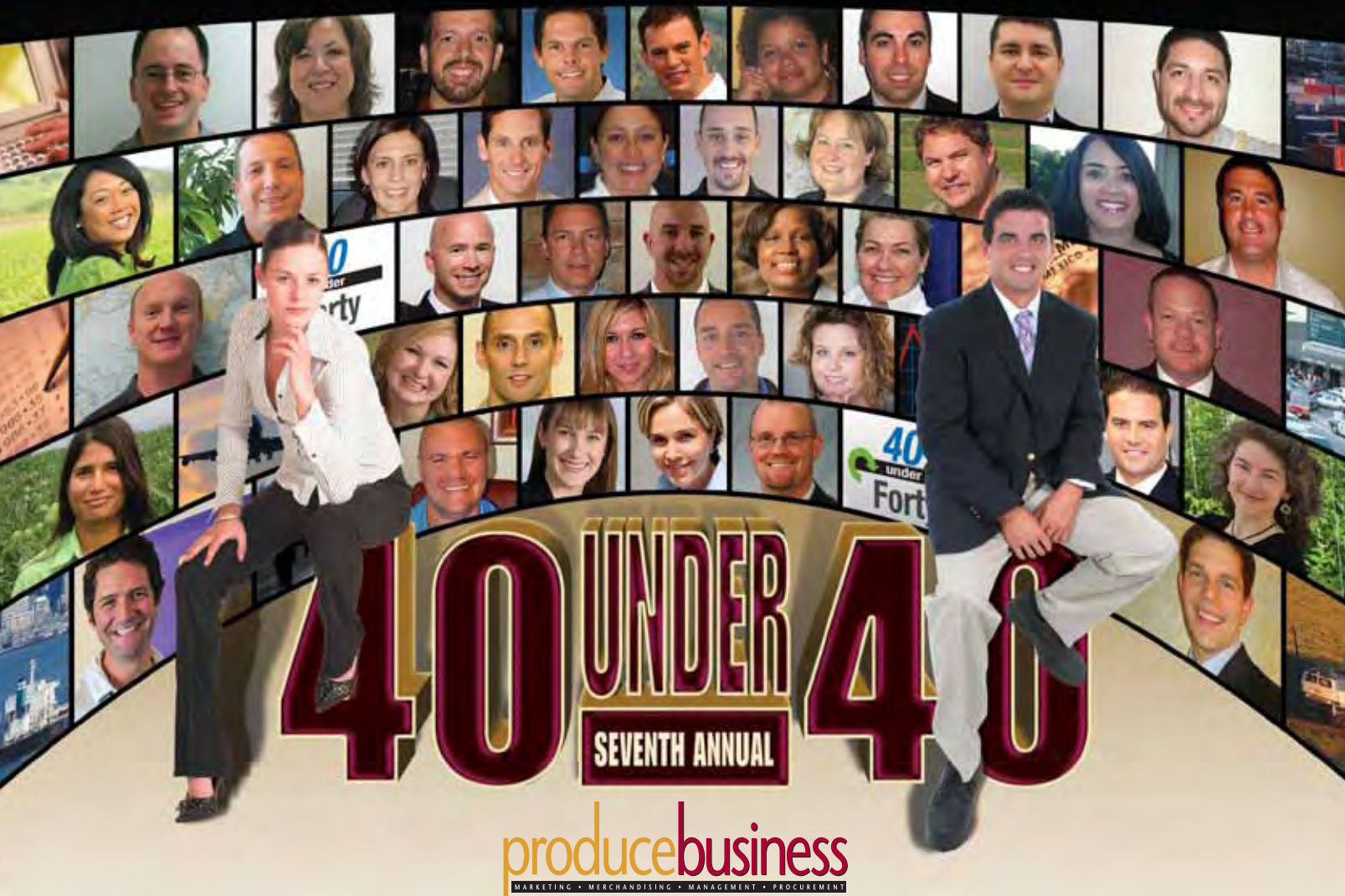
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PRODUCE BUSINESS is accepting nominations for its Seventh Annual 40-Under-Forty Project, which recognizes the produce industry's top young leaders.

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, 1971).

To nominate someone, please fill out this form by March 1, 2011, and fax back to 561-994-1610.

Once nominated, the candidate will receive forms from us to fill out asking for detailed information. A candidate only needs to be nominated one time. Multiple nominations will have no bearing on selection.

ABOUT THE NOMINEE:

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

In 100 words or less, describe why this person should be nominated:
 (You can use a separate sheet for this)

Nominee's Professional Achievements:

Nominee's Industry/Community/Charitable Activities:

ABOUT THE NOMINATOR:

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

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

**Wal-Mart Supercenter vs 3 Chains
Price Comparison — North Bergen, NJ
Prices Available To Loyalty Card Holders**

Produce Item	How Sold	Wal-Mart Supercenter	Food Basics	% Over Wal-Mart	Pathmark Supercenter	% Over Wal-Mart	ShopRite Supermarket	% Over Wal-Mart
Asparagus	Lb.	2.94	3.98	35.37%	2.99	1.70%	3.99	35.71%
Cantaloupe - Whole	Each	1.50	1.48	-1.33%	2.00	33.33%	0.99	-34.00%
Dips - Marzetti - Tub	15.5oz	3.28	3.48	6.10%	2.99	-8.84%	2.99	-8.84%
Dressing - Other - Bottle	11.5oz	3.24	3.48	7.41%	2.99	-7.72%	2.99	-7.72%
Lettuce - Iceberg Bulk	Each	1.38	0.98	-28.99%	1.99	44.20%	0.99	-28.26%
Onions - Yellow Bag	3lb.	2.68	1.92	-28.36%	1.80	-32.84%	2.69	0.37%
Salad - Garden - Bag	6oz	2.88	0.64	-77.78%	0.75	-73.96%	3.29	14.24%
Salad - Spring - Bag	5oz	2.88	2.98	3.47%	2.50	-13.19%	3.29	14.24%
*MARKET BASKET TOTAL		114.71	101.96	-11.11%	126.01	9.85%	123.18	7.38%

RED is adjusted price

*Adjusted if all items in original market basket were purchased using Loyalty Cards

Big Business World.” Together, ShopRite and Wakefern will give Wal-Mart a fight in New Jersey that it never experienced with independents in most of the country.

Pathmark is still a bit of a question mark, but it seems to be utilizing its loyalty card program in a highly aggressive way. If it continues down that path, it may find a way to compete with Wal-Mart for regular shoppers even if tourists find it a little on the high side.

It is also true that Food Basics and other limited-assortment or deep-discount stores, such as Aldi and Save-a-Lot, are in many ways putting Wal-Mart in great peril. The most powerful asset of Wal-Mart is the space it owns in the minds of consumers — that Wal-Mart always offers the lowest prices. With over 1,000 Aldi stores in the United States, Supervalu focusing on Save-a-Lot for expansion, and other deep-discount concepts like Food Basics around, Wal-Mart is on the verge of losing that price identification. That is a priceless asset to lose.

No Wal-Mart Supercenters In Long Island

Of course, for the moment, because of its enormous size, it is still Wal-Mart that poses a great risk to the price image of supermarkets, and our jaunt over to Long Island, where Wal-Mart is not a player, gives us pause as to the enormous influence of Wal-Mart on a market where it operates even just one single store.

In Long Island, we visited Foodtown, Key Food, King Kullen, Stop & Shop and Waldbaum’s, all around the Valley Stream area. Key Food was the most competitive, coming in with prices 15.57 percent over Wal-Mart, followed by King Kullen at 17.46 percent over Wal-Mart, then Stop & Shop at 18.15 percent over Wal-Mart; then it was Foodtown at 25.13

percent over Wal-Mart, with Waldbaum’s coming in at an astonishing 35.21 percent over Wal-Mart.

Of the 51 items in the overall comparative market basket in Long Island, 16 items were affected by one chain or another’s loyalty card program. King Kullen was the only chain that did not offer a loyalty card, but the rest of the chains did. Interestingly enough, it is another

independent, Key Food, which claims the low price prize as Key Food’s Savings Club card enabled the store to get within 1.37 percent of Wal-Mart’s pricing.

Stop & Shop’s “My Stop & Shop” card got the store down to 13.93 percent and Foodtown’s “Foodtown Preferred Customer Club” card pushed prices down to 17.31 percent over Wal-Mart. Despite Waldbaum’s Bonus Savings

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Club card, the store still remained in the stratosphere at 33.06 percent above Wal-Mart.

Of course, Waldbaum's has traditionally catered to a different customer, focused heavily on a Jewish clientele, and it sells a different product in a different environment. Its executives may judge that this clientele won't be easily wooed to discount operations. They may be right.

All in all, the Long Island stores seem focused on utilizing their loyalty programs as the tool to compete, rather than their walk-in price. Waldbaum's aside, once loyalty card discounts are included, the Long Island stores are mostly pretty competitive.

We take this as a sign that the one northern New Jersey supercenter hasn't really broken through to Long Island stores. When Wal-Mart built supercenters in Texas and similar places, competitors knew that land was available, zoning was friendly and, although some retailers sat on their hands, many retailers acted to either cut costs and prices or to get out of Wal-Mart's way by moving upscale. They expected a deluge of Wal-Mart Supercenters.

In New Jersey, where land and labor are typically tight, unions are powerful and it won't be easy to just roll out supercenters,

How They Stack Up Against Wal-Mart Supercenter

Region	% over Wal-Mart		% over Wal-Mart		% over Wal-Mart	
	Store		Store		Store	
Connecticut-5/02	Super Stop & Shop	.23%	Shaws	.34%	Big Y	.36%
Salt Lake City-10/02	Harmon's	.2%	Smith's	.6%	Albertsons	.12%
South Florida-2/03	Super Target	.22%	Publix	.31%	Winn-Dixie	.52%
Dallas, Texas-10/03	Albertsons	.23%	Brookshires	.7%	Kroger	.19%
	Neighborhood Market	-.2%	Tom Thumb	.27%		
Portland, OR-3/04	Albertsons	.30%	Fred Meyer	.22%	Haggen	.27%
	Safeway	.37%				
Phoenix, AZ-8/04	Albertsons	.22%	Bashas'	.25%	Fry's	.15%
	Safeway	.17%				
Palm Springs-10/04	Albertsons	.19%	Jensen's	.60%	Ralphs	.16%
	Vons	.20%				
Detroit, MI-1/05	A&P Food Basic	-.17%	Farmer Jack	.24%	Kroger	.28%
	Meijer	.3%				
St. Louis, MO-5/05	Dierbergs	.22%	Schnucks	.14%		
Houston, TX-9/05	HEB	.15%	Kroger	.30%	Fiesta Mart	-.03%
Atlanta, GA-11/05	Harry's	.18%	Ingles	.16%	Kroger	.25%
	Publix	.13%	Target	.3%		

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How They Stack Up Against Wal-Mart Supercenter (cont.)

Region	Store	% over Wal-Mart	Store	% over Wal-Mart	Store	% over Wal-Mart
Denver, CO-5/06	Albertsons	.16%	King Sooper	.21%	Safeway	.25%
	Albertsons	.32%	Fred Meyer	.21%	QFC	.54%
Portland, OR-10/06	Safeway	.30%				
	A&P	.35%	Brunos	.28%	Loblaws	.13%
Toronto Canada-7/07	Sobeys	.45%				
	Dillons	.20%	Hen House	.15%	Hy Vee	.18%
Kansas City, KS-10/07	Price Chopper	.13%				
	Fresh & Easy	.15%	Stater Bros	.8%	Ralphs	.25%
Los Angeles-4/08	Vons	.14%				
	Publix	.32%	Super Target	.22%	Whole Foods	.38%
Orlando, FL-10/08	Winn-Dixie	.28%				
	Wal-Mart Marketside	.23%	Wal-Mart Neighborhood	.7%	Bashas'	.30%
Phoenix, AZ 5/09	Fresh & Easy	.32%	Fry's	.27%	Safeway	.37%
	Food Lion	.24%	Fresh Market	.31%	Harris Teeter	.35%
Raleigh, NC 10/09	Kroger	.21%	Super Target	.11%		
	Acme	.17%	Genuardi's	.22%	Giant	.26%
Philadelphia 5/10	Super Fresh	.21%	Wegmans	.5%		
	Food Basics	— 11%	Pathmark	.15%	ShopRite	.8%

other retailers have watched and engaged but not thrown out working business models to compete with a concept that only has one store in the area.

In any case, this iteration of the PRODUCE BUSINESS Wal-Mart Pricing Study shows some tough competitors ahead for Wal-Mart in New Jersey. Retailers on Long Island have plenty of competition right now, and so are not so worried about competitors they do not have.

With the recession, Wal-Mart is finding a little more receptivity on opening stores in places that have traditionally limited Wal-Mart's growth. It is hard for a construction union to oppose any new jobs when its members are unemployed. So New York metro retailers would be wise to not assume Wal-Mart just can't expand.

Of course, with deep discount operations, supermarkets don't have to wait for Wal-Mart to find tough price competition in the neighborhood. **pb**



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Reader Service # 162



Wholesalers often provide forecasting and crop status as part of their ongoing partnership with retailers.

Wholesalers Step Up Retail Presence

Produce wholesalers find value in working hand-in-hand with retailers. **BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ**

A trusted partner is a valuable asset in every industry. But when it comes to the non-stop 24/7 hustle and bustle of the produce world, a growing number of wholesalers are finding they have a vested interest in forging close, long-term relationships with their retail customers.

From forecasting markets and keeping customers apprised of each crop's status to building private label sales and working elbow-to-elbow on retail marketing initiatives, produce wholesalers have discovered such relationships can be mutually beneficial. According to Nick Pacia, co-owner and vice president of AJ Trucco Inc., based in the Bronx, N.Y., his company has boosted sales of kiwifruit three years in a row by working together with retailers, instituting programs such as product samplings.

Likewise, Mike Maxwell, president of Philadelphia, PA-based Procacci Brothers Sales Corp. says servicing a retail customer is not a "hit-and-run type of deal." It doesn't end when the product is delivered or the bill is paid. As

he explains it, "You've got to be a partner with your customers."

Making it Personal

The wholesale produce industry has become more competitive in recent years, necessitating a stepped-up retail presence, according to Paul Auerbach, president of Maurice A. Auerbach Inc., headquartered in South Hackensack, N.J. The number of retailers has declined, and it has become harder to get into the distribution channels. In large part, the company overcomes these challenges by forging close partnerships with the retailers it serves. Auerbach is "a big believer in personal relationships" and he instills that belief in his sales force. When they are not visiting stores and talking with produce managers, his salespeople are in nearly constant contact with their retail customers, e-mailing them and talking to them as often as three times daily in order to keep them apprised of situations that arise, such as when a particular item is going to be in short supply or when prices are expected to escalate. "We've always viewed the retail chain as

our partner along the distribution chain," says Auerbach. "It's our mentality that the sale does not end with the delivery."

Auerbach takes special pride in having his salespeople participate in retail customers' food shows. Such opportunities allow for an "exchange of ideas" between people on the front lines of both companies. No buying or selling takes place, but Auerbach says the interaction is invaluable. "The best interaction and partnership is where we can actually get together with our customers and have a dialogue," he says. "That leads to better cooperation throughout the entire marketing chain."

According to Auerbach, retailers through the Northeast United States and parts of Canada occasionally turn to his company's Auerpak brand as a fill-in "on a commodity basis," but mostly rely on it as primary. Auerpak's three biggest sellers remain garlic, asparagus, and baby potatoes, but the company also boasts a strong Asian program, including snow peas, sugar snap peas, bok choy and daikon. Auerbach also deals in leafy specialties, such as endive and radicchio, as well as spe-



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cialty potatoes and specialty onions. For the holidays, he sells a variety of root vegetables, including celery root, horseradish root and black radish.

Auerbach strives to “make [its customers’]

jobs easier,” by delivering to order, often within 24 hours, using its own trucks or independent carriers. “They don’t have to be long or short, and they don’t have to make that decision four days in advance,” explains Auerbach. “That’s

one of the biggest things that differentiates us from our competitors, especially among some of the tighter chains.”

Auerbach also sets advertising periods well in advance, recognizing many of its retail partners like to plan ahead. “We try to coordinate in advance with a lot of the chains on some of the things they want to feature,” he remarks. “That way, they know we have supply enough not to worry about getting down to the last minute and having to go procure it elsewhere.”

While he admits that proximity to the retailer sometimes plays a role in acquiring shelf-space, Auerbach says that remains “basically a chain decision” and “a lot of it is based on numbers and expectations.”

Procacci’s Maxwell firmly believes that proximity makes a difference in his company’s ability to obtain shelf space. The company is fortunate to be located in the most populated area of the country, he says, with roughly one-fourth of the population of the entire United States “within six hours of our headquarters,” he says, which offers Procacci the opportunity to serve a mammoth customer base.

Mike Wise, vice president of operations for Louisville, KY-based Horton Fruit Co. Inc.,



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isn't sure if proximity "helps or hurts" matters for his company, which delivers in a 500-mile radius around Louisville. "We are always trying to get as much shelf space as we can for our products, but we are not always just a stone's throw away from the retailers to whom we sell our products," points out Wise.

Like Auerbach, he is convinced that building and maintaining relationships hold the key to effectively positioning Horton's products at retail. Horton is constantly working to improve relations with its customers, but as buying has become more centralized, Wise maintains more work has to go into ensuring they are dealing with the right people.

"We are always trying to improve our relationships with our customers up and down the organization because the buying can be moved from year to year," says Wise. "We are looking to infiltrate those retail customers and make sure we are in front of the right people all the time and that we know who is going to be the right person down the road."

'Round-the-Clock Service

Long-term relationships are also at the heart of doing business for S. Katzman Produce Inc., based in the Bronx, NY. According to corporate secretary/general manager Stephanie Katzman — the fourth generation of the Katzman family to earn a living selling fruits and vegetables — produce wholesaling in the 21st century involves far more than just selling top-quality product at competitive prices. Today's produce wholesalers must offer 24/7 customer service. "We always have our cell phones on and if our customers need something, we are there for them," she says. "If one of our customers calls at four in the morning on a Saturday because they had a problem with another delivery and they need our help, we'll bring in a driver — even though we normally

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“When we know product is going to come on strong, we get right on the phone with our retailers and tell them what items they should sample up big and go on sale with because there will be plenty of supply on the way.”

— Stephanie Katzman, S. Katzman Produce Inc.



Produce wholesalers are becoming more involved in retail marketing initiatives by providing POS signage and display material.

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do not deliver on Saturdays — and get the product to them.”

Like Auerbach, Katzman’s salespeople stay in frequent contact with their retail customers and their shippers. While that kind of cross-communication can be helpful in communicating about supply shortages, it also enables the company to make customers aware of positive situations, such as when Mother Nature is being particularly cooperative and a certain crop is in abundance. “When we know product is going to come on strong, we get right on the phones with our retailers and tell them what items they should sample up big and go on sale with because there will be plenty of supply on the way,” reports Katzman.

In business since the 1920s, Katzman has the benefit of experience, something it takes great pride in sharing with its retail customers when working on retail marketing initiatives together. “Having been in the produce business for so many years, we have experienced almost everything and seen it all,” says Katzman. “We have even taken it so far as to go to our customers’ stores and help them with display design and locations in their stores based on what we have seen work for others over the years.”

Coast Produce Co. Inc., based in Los Angeles, CA, also recognizes the importance of retail marketing initiatives. According to marketing manager Emily Fragoso, Coast’s merchandising team comprises seasoned retail produce experts who work with retailers on promotions, new item introductions, seasonal resets, contests and mentoring. “Our main customer is the retail grocery store, so marketing, retail support and taking care of our customer is very important to us,” says Fragoso.

Back in the Bronx, NY, Jerry Porricelli Produce may be looking to do more retail merchandising and marketing in the future, according to vice president Ciro Porricelli.



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“Particularly when it comes to the high-end retailers, consumers ask for names; they specify the brand and they will spend the extra dollar or two to have the better label.”

— *Ciro Porricelli, Jerry Porricelli Produce*



Wholesalers are often the first to take the risk on new items that eventually make their way into supermarkets.


Right now, the company doesn't make any point-of-purchase materials available, but Porricelli envisions having in-store pamphlets available that offer suggestions for the many ways consumers can use his company's herbs. He would also like to see such products merchandised in the fish and chicken aisle, since such proteins make an ideal palette for herbs. "If you were to put a little display of herbs down that way, maybe people would be more likely to buy a fresh herb to go with their meal," says Porricelli.

Brand Recognition

Getting product through retailers' doors first requires brands the retailer can rely on. A growing number of wholesalers now sells their own brands or acts as exclusive distributors for their grower-partners. Trucco sells several exclusive brands, including KiwiStar, GrapeStar, Fresco Garlic, Fichi fresh figs and Trucco Italian Fresh Chestnuts. "When we offer a brand, we think of a catchy name, then we package it in an attractive way and then we market it," explains Pacia. "We take out ads in trade publications because it helps to remind the buyers of the brand."

Meanwhile, Coast offers a variety of branded lines, including Coast Asia, Coast Caliente, Coast Snacking and Coast Organic. The company has also set out to increase sales through its Farmer's Select program, which highlights a particular grower, product and/or growing area. Product is hand-selected by the farmer for the consumer, thus creating an emotional connection from field to table. The year-round program features a different item each month and focuses on telling the story behind the produce.

For Katzman, it's all about the company's Bloom Fresh brand, which features only the highest quality product. The company only al-






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“You grab some Holland peppers and when you get to the register, you find out you just spent \$7 for three peppers. If you had a package that was marked \$2.99, the consumer can say, ‘I only spent three bucks.’”

— Mike Maxwell, Proccaci Brothers Sales Corp.



lows certain shippers to pack it. As Katzman explains, “We want our customers to know that if it says Bloom Fresh on the box, inside, the product will be diamonds.”

Consumers and retailers alike are conscious of brands, says Porricelli, whose company sells such brands as Little Bear and Sun Beauty. “Particularly when it comes to the high-end retailers, consumers ask for names; they specify the brand and they will spend the extra dollar or two to have the better label,” he notes. “They don’t want the off-brand in their stores.” When retailers do relent and agree to accept a different label, the expectation is that there better be a big difference in price, so they can offer it as a value option, he adds.

These days, providing value has taken on heightened importance, as the tough economy has even the most discerning consumers watching their pocketbooks. “In light of the economy and the amount of expendable cash people have when they go to the grocery store, we have to be very concerned about how much of that will be used on produce versus other items,” says Horton’s Wise. “The industry has to take that into consideration when setting forecasts and pricing models for the future.”

To help consumers and retailers alike cope with the difficult economy, Procacci Brothers introduced a value-added line with pre-pricing on the package. The goal, says Maxwell, is to help consumers keep their spending in line and reduce instances of “sticker-shock” at the registers when buying produce by the pound. “You grab some Holland peppers and when you get to the register, you find out you just spent \$7 for three peppers,” says Maxwell. “If you had a pack-

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Reader Service # 107

TRACEABILITY: NO LONGER JUST AN OPTION

Whatever product the consumer chooses to buy, retailers are increasingly relying on their wholesalers when it comes to traceability initiatives. At S. Katzman Produce Inc., in the Bronx, NY, for example, every package is marked with a lot number, which can then be traced back to the exact farm where the produce was grown. Customers' sales receipts contain these lot numbers, giving Katzman the ability to trace every box once it leaves the premises, an extra stopgap measure just in case an issue was to arise.

Louisville, KY-based Horton Fruit Co. Inc., took traceability initiatives one step further, launching a sister company called Grow Farms, focused on regionally grown produce. Each Grow Farms box features a Harvest Market code that can be used to access information about when that produce was harvested and what farm it was harvested from. According to Mike Wise, vice president of operations, this "case-level traceability" gives retailers an advan-

tage that will aid them in making the decision as to which supplier to give their business.

At Philadelphia, PA-based Procacci Brothers Sales Corp., Mike Maxwell, president, says traceability initiatives have been in place since the 1960s. His company remains committed to traceability and to COOL load initiatives. "It's something we can do and show on our billing," says Maxwell. "We have the IT capability of putting the labels on their packages and giving them the paper trail."

When it comes to forging relationships with retailers, Maxwell says it's all about anticipating needs and problems and resolving challenges. The idea is to make life easier for the retailer, so that buying, selling and marketing produce can be as trouble-free as possible. "You've got to put yourself in their shoes and ask yourself, 'What are their issues?'" says Maxwell. "Once you meet their issues, take away their headaches, and make their lives easier, you'll find that business naturally comes your way." **pb**

age that was marked \$2.99, the consumer can say, 'I only spent three bucks.'"

Procacci Brothers also seeks to reduce retailers' concerns that organic produce will walk out the door at conventional produce prices. When repacking organic apples, for instance, Maxwell says Procacci guarantees there's a scan

bar on the package to ensure they are rung up at the appropriate price.

Packed to Order

The ability to repack produce to suit particular retailers is a definite plus. According to Wise, the fact that Horton is a re-packer, rather

than a traditional wholesaler, gives the company a number of advantages it can then pass along to its retail customers. In addition to continually looking for new items to add to its line of Peak brand products, Horton often finds it advantageous to take existing items and put them in different configurations tailored

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Reader Service # 52

“In light of the economy and the amount of expendable cash people have when they go to the grocery store, we have to be very concerned about how much of that will be used on produce versus other items. The industry has to take that into consideration when settling forecasts and pricing models for the future.”

— Mike Wise, Horton Fruit Co. Inc.

to meet customers’ needs. “They don’t have to just get it one way,” contends Wise. “They can get it in many different sizes or quantity configurations to make it more of a value proposition for their customers.”

While the ability to produce a unique package configuration or product helps build a loyal customer base for Horton, it also makes for copycat products by its competitors, says Wise. “There have been some specs copied off of some of the things that we do,” he explains. “That’s somewhat flattering when someone takes something you do and does it under their own company or private label brand.”

Horton often doesn’t compete with national brands because its products are markedly different. Take spinach, for example. Whereas most of the national brands pack a baby spinach or flat leaf spinach, Wise says, Horton packs a curly leaf variety of spinach. That makes it difficult to compare Horton’s prices to that of a national brand. “Our price point is very competitive versus [the national brands] but it’s not exactly the same animal,” says Wise. “We are not necessarily a value proposition, but we certainly price our product within the market range.”

Similarly, Pacia says Trucco’s pricing is

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Reader Service # 130

roughly equal to that of national or store brands, while Katzman says her company's products "fall right in line with everything else."

Every Sale Counts

Cary Rubin, vice president of sales, Rubin Bros. Produce Corp., located in the Bronx, NY, says retail marketing initiatives are the domain of those wholesalers that service the big chain stores. Still, he is quick to point out that his customers — small chain retailers — are no less important. In fact, Rubin says they may be even more important than the big chains in the grand scheme of things. "When you add up all the small retailers, they represent a significant market share," explains Rubin. "A lot of times, people don't want to give them the time of day simply because they are only buying a box of this or a box of that, but that's a lot of business that needs to be serviced — and we thrive on that business."

Rubin serves as an exclusive distributor for Dole, handling their full line of vegetables, as well as helping the produce giant grow sales of its bagged salads along the East Coast. For the smaller retailer, Rubin says, dealing with his company presents the opportunity to handle the same brand name products as the big boys. "They welcome it because there are good margins in it for them and it's the type of product that all the larger chain stores are selling and they are trying to replicate that," says Rubin. "They don't have the ability to get those products on their own, but going to a wholesaler like Rubin Bros. gives them the ability to buy and sell at a competitive price and make those good margins."

Because they have fewer overhead costs, small retailers will often charge a slightly smaller amount than their large chain counterparts — \$3.49 instead of \$3.99, for example — recognizing that they don't need to realize as much gross profit. "They probably pay more than the chain stores pay direct for the product, but they have the ability to work on a smaller gross margin," remarks Rubin. "They also have the ability to put products out on ad through me, so there are a lot of opportunities to merchandise it."

When a retailer wants to run a particular product on ad, Rubin supports retailers' promotional efforts by charging less for that product during that time. That gives the retailer the ability to still profit, he says, while bringing people into their stores to buy other items. "Where typically, they might gross 30 to 50 percent on an item, maybe they will take 15 percent in a given week, knowing they will sell more volume, but more importantly, it will bring people in to buy other items," he explains. **pb**

"When you add up all the small retailers, they represent a significant market share. A lot of times, people don't want to give them the time of day just because they are only buying a box of this or a box of that, but that's a lot of business that needs to be serviced — and we thrive on that business."

— Cary Rubin, Rubin Bros. Produce Corp.



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Produce buyers around the U.S. and the world rely on Mexico as a top partner in providing high quality produce year round. Since 1994, U.S. imports of fresh fruits

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ety of programs and agencies providing a variety of assistance to those trading with Mexico.

AGRICULTURAL TRADE OFFICE

The Agricultural Office at the Embassy of Mexico offers various opportunities to build business with Mexican fruit and vegetables. Be sure to check out these available programs. Their Direct Buying Program & Trade Missions helps retailers enhance the value chain of produce from Mexico by organizing business agendas and trade missions. More than 20 of the largest U.S. retail firms have visited Mexico under this program. The Mexican Fresh Produce Exporters Directory promotes the exportable supply of the Mexican produce sector. It includes a master catalogue with information on growers, firms, production, availability, volume, seasons and varieties, among other information. It also offers integrated public and private databases and regular updates of registered growers and is available in an annual printed edition, a CD-ROM, and via website.



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Mexico Supreme Quality has launched a Web site dedicated to their information and news. It includes general information about the program, products and producers, seasonal recipes and nutrition, and a blog archive. For more information: msqinfo.wordpress.com



If you're looking to invest, Mexico is an attractive and convenient destination for making investments. Its public finances are sound and sustainable, as is its banking and financial system. The business climate is one of the region's most prosperous, considering the advantages afforded by its skilled population, its strategic location, the existence of specialized clusters in certain sectors, and the development of the services and infrastructure necessary to participate actively in the international market. For More information on investing in Mexico contact ProMexico at www.promexico.gob.mx.

PROMOTION BOARDS/PRODUCER ASSOCIATIONS

Industry boards with a common goal of fostering an entrepreneurial culture through promotion of Mexican agricultural products offer a multitude of opportunities for information and networking. They provide access to targeted promotion campaigns designed to increase consumption, and development and execution of advertising strategies and promotional campaigns. Some of our major promotion boards include:

Avocados from Mexico, www.avocadosfrommexico.com
ALPUM (Association of Grape Producers), www.aalpum.com.mx
AMHPAC (Greenhouse Producers Association), www.amhpac.org
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Reader Service # 219





PHOTO COURTESY OF INLINE PLASTICS CORP.

While design and configuration are key efforts, packaging companies continue to work on extending shelf-life.

Consumer Packaging: New Designs On Familiar Themes

Packages that are convenient, keep food fresh and appealing and deliver a message are a vital ingredient in produce department sales. **BY BOB JOHNSON**

Although there are relatively few new packaging products, there are many new and exciting variations on familiar products that display and advertise what's inside. There are new ways to keep produce fresh and safe. And even in a recession, the opportunities for going green in packaging are actually increasing. "I don't think there's really any new products; I think of it as redesigning and reconfiguring the products," says Kurt Zuhlke Jr., president and CEO of Bangor, PA-based Kurt Zuhlke & Associates Inc., which makes a variety of recycle PET clamshell, bubble packs and utility and herb packs.

Keep It Fresh

One major produce packaging challenge is finding ways to keep the produce fresher, longer. This is the key both to reducing shrink and to presenting the produce in an appealing way. "A lot of what we've been working on is shelf-life — extending longevity," remarks Aaron Fox, vice president of Fox Packaging,

headquartered in McAllen, TX. "A lot of times it's a question of ventilation, and you don't want moisture to build up. The main concern is keeping the product fresh from the time it's packed to the time it's on store shelves."

One example of packaging that keeps produce fresh and appealing is a potato bag that has film on one side to keep the light out, and mesh on the other side to let the consumer see the product. "In the area of white potatoes, you can get greening when the potatoes are under the light," explains Fox. "We have a bag with a film that does not let light through." The bottom of this bag is a mesh material, which offers both form and function for the bagged potatoes, allowing for ventilation and also letting consumers get a look at the potatoes.

"Our bags are produce-specific," says Don Stidham, president for Stepac U.S.A., in Encinitas, CA. "The bag for asparagus is not the same as the bag for bell peppers. We are dramatically reducing dehydration; we are able to delay it. We're able to deliver farm-fresh produce to the consumer. Our company special-

izes in high-performance packaging to extend the life and quality of produce." Different varieties of produce each have their own optimum atmosphere for staying fresh longer. StePac engineers the polymers for its bags to enhance freshness by modifying the humidity and the atmosphere to best suit the specific variety of produce in the bag. Delaying dehydration is the key to quality factors including flavor, color and crispness.

"When you think of produce packaging you want to optimize shelf-life and ideally keep the quality as good or close to as good when you get near the end of the shelf-life," says Myra Foster, director of strategic marketing for food service in North America for Cryovac Sealed Air Corp., in Duncan, SC. "Freshness comes from a combination of the material and the seal. Sometimes, the best way to get freshness is a hermetically sealed package."

The package must not only keep the produce fresh, it must also keep it looking fresh and delicious. "The package needs to show off the product in an appealing way to promote



PHOTO COURTESY OF PWP PACKAGING

The package must not only keep the produce fresh, it must also keep it looking fresh and delicious.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SAMBRAILO PACKAGING

impulse buying, as well as demonstrate to consumers that the product is fresh,” explains Roy Ferguson, CEO of Chantler Packaging Inc., located in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. “The package has to protect the product, and more importantly, extend its shelf-life. Gone are the days of retailers accepting 15 percent shrink at store level and charging their consumers for it.”

Although steamable vegetable packages serve the need for convenience, many claim that no one has yet found a way to make a package that is both steamable and attractive. “Lots of produce items are being sold in steamable bags,” Ferguson says. “Some applications have been good, while others are not really all that appetizing. The industry is in a bit of a conundrum in my opinion — the steamable route is the least appetizing way of cooking produce, and thus, may not be the best way to get customers to eat their fruits and veggies.”

The concept of reducing shrinkage by keeping produce looking fresh can also include helping consumers avoid shrink at home by

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THE PACKAGE DELIVERS THE MESSAGE

The package does more than hold the product; it also delivers the message. “I think packaging can help get your message out there,” asserts Aaron Fox, vice president of Fox Packaging, headquartered in McAllen, TX. “You can have recipes, educational information about the product or promotions. Packaging is a huge advantage in educating the consumer.”

Fox offers bags in a range of striking colors, including metallic, and has a staff of graphic artists to help design effective messages. “Packaging is an image thing, too. The type of package says something about the store, and about the shipper. The package says a lot about your con-

cern for quality,” Fox says.

Roy Ferguson, CEO of Chantler Packaging, located in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada, agrees that graphics are an indispensable part of using packages to deliver the message. “Great graphics are a must,” he says. “Your item will not be able to compete against other items in the same department without great package graphics. When we talk about the content of the graphics, the information demanded by consumers goes far beyond the regulatory minimums. Customers want serving suggestions, recipes, usage tips and even a little story that points out the unique features of your product.”

Waverly Plastics, of Waverly, IA, is bring-

ing message delivery to the high-tech stage by introducing a screen on the box containing plastic produce bags, which can be used to display a variety of promotional or advertising information without taking up any additional space.

“On the retailer side, shelf appeal or printability might be important,” notes Myra Foster, director of strategic marketing for food service in North America for Cryovac Sealed Air Corp., located in Duncan, SC. “You want good product visibility; the package should fit on the shelf well and show the package.”

Clear packaging brings a tremendous advantage when it comes to displaying produce. “Packages that are smooth and clear

using more of the food they purchase. “We need to really change the way we think about food, and how we care for it,” asserts Ferguson. “Americans are not eating enough fresh fruits and vegetables, as every study shows. Yet in

North America, according to *USA Today*, we are content to throw away more than half our food purchases. The problem is that fresh produce is often not at its peak of ripeness on our store shelves.”

One way to reduce shrinkage in consumers’ kitchens — and to increase produce sales — is to offer smaller and more economical packages. “The emphasis is on downsizing to fit the consumers’ desire for lower price points during



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Reader Service # 158

— and therefore able to show off the product — have the best visual appeal,” advises Jim Scattini, vice president of sales and marketing at Sambrailo Packaging, located in Watsonville, CA. “The package must also be able to stack well to showcase the product on the retail shelf.”

The higher end rigid packaging, such as clamshells, projects an image of value. “We’re seeing the greatest increase in rigid packaging,” reports Roman Forowycz, executive vice president for Clear Lam Packaging Inc., headquartered in Elk Grove Village, IL. “It merchandises well. From a distance, it almost looks like glass. It also has perceived value, and the produce doesn’t bruise.”

As consumers look to eat more healthfully with greater amounts of fresh fruits and vegetables, packaging will become a more important part of delivering both the produce and the message. “Customers lack the information on how to properly select and use fresh fruits and vegetables,” Ferguson says. “I see our future in North America as moving toward more high-tech shelf-life extending packaging that delivers food at the very peak of ripeness and flavor while reducing waste of all kinds. If this super-fresh produce is packaged attractively, including the information consumers want and need, produce sales will begin to climb and the American population will be healthier.”

pb



PHOTO COURTESY OF CRYOVAC SEALED AIR CORP.

Clear packaging brings a tremendous advantage when it comes to displaying produce.

the recession,” reports Zuhlke of Zuhlke & Associates. “If you downsize the package, you can come up with a bigger ring.”

One way to downsize the package is to offer produce in single-serve packs. “Expect to see

fruits and veggies in single-serving or on-the-go containers,” remarks Jim Scattini, vice president of sales and marketing at Sambrailo Packaging, in Watsonville, CA. “Many of these containers will be packed, shipped and marketed in small

multi-unit display ready cartons.”

This firm is also working on new, improved and more secure forms of the clamshell package. “Sambrailo Packaging is testing and patenting innovative new designs for rigid plastic

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Members of the Monte Family pose before loading and delivery Strawberry Crates





Reader Service # 140

“The package needs to show off the product in an appealing way to promote impulse buying, as well as demonstrate to consumers that the product is fresh. The package has to protect the product, and, more importantly, extend its shelf life. Gone are the days of retailers accepting 15 percent shrink at store level and charging their consumers for it.”

— Roy Ferguson, Chantler Packaging



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containers [clamshells] that will preclude the need for a secondary closure [which is often demanded by the retailers],” reveals Scattini.

Save the Earth

The need to find packaging that is relatively easy on the environment has not diminished during the recent difficult economic times. There are so many angles to the issue of sustainability that the answers are not always obvious. Packaging can be sustainable because it is recyclable or produced from recycled materials, because it is made from renewable materials or because it reduces waste. However, these themes may not always go together.

“The processors, retailers and consumers all want to do what’s right by the environment, but the package must protect the product and it must be economically competitive,” says Roman Forowycz, executive vice president for Clear Lam Packaging Inc., headquartered in Elk Grove Village, IL. “Some of the bio plastics have become pretty price-competitive.”

Another angle where bio plastics are not feasible is to maximize the use of recycled materials in making the packages. “PET by far has the best clarity and visual appeal and is fully recyclable,” states Natalie Kirschner, marketing manager at Vernon, CA-based PWP Industries. “Combining that with Post-Consumer Recycled PET content provides an even greater sustainable product with equal or better visual and performance characteristics. The recycled content mainly consists of used water and soda bottles that have been reclaimed, washed and reconditioned in into usable, FDA-compliant resin for food packaging.”

Sometimes, sustainability can come down to minimizing the amount of food that is wasted after it leaves the store. “Consumers have become more educated about sustainability, and that includes reducing spoilage,” says Foster of Cryovac.

The sustainability movement began with

recycling, however, and recycling continues as a major trend. "One trend is the use of recycled materials to promote sustainability," reports Zuhlke. "More places are requiring that packaging use recycled PET. We haven't seen a drop in the demand for recycled materials. The demand is still there from the consumers and the retailers."

Environmentally friendly packaging has become important to many major retailers, even when consumers do not know that the package was made, for example, from recycled materials. "Consumers don't always know the product came in recycled packaging but Costco, Kroger, Target and other retailers are interested in having their products packaged this way," reveals Rebecca Kalis, president of Keyes Packaging Group, based in Wenatchee, WA. "Accordingly, Wal-Mart and other companies have come out with corporate statements about their commitment to the environment."

Keyes Packaging specializes in molded fiber for apples and avocados. "I see sustained interest among apple packers, retailers and consumers in biodegradable and recycled products," notes Kalis. "In molded fiber packaging, there is no increase in cost for the recycled molded fiber." Molded fiber can only be used for food that has skin on it, according to Kalis. There is also, however, a clear egg package made of recycled material.

Manufacturers of clear plastic packaging are also looking for ways to reduce the environmental impact of their products. Herb Knutson, director of marketing at Inline Plastics Corp., located in Shelton, CT, reports, "Inline now uses a new high-clarity, low-carbon footprint PET material made with a

"One trend is the use of recycled materials to promote sustainability. More places are requiring that packaging use recycled PET. We haven't seen a drop in the demand for recycled materials. The demand is still there from the consumers and the retailers."

— Kurt Zuhlke, Kurt Zuhlke & Associates Inc.

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Waverly Plastics' bags are dispensed one at a time, as opposed to being on a perforated roll, thereby decreasing the number of people handling each bag.

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**PRODUCE PACKAGING DEMAND BY TYPE
(Million Dollars) 2004-2019**

Item	2004	2009	2014	2019	% Annual Growth	
					'04-'09	'09-'14
Produce Packaging Demand	3211	4000	4770	5700	4.5	3.6
Corrugated Boxes	1311	1530	1730	1950	3.1	2.5
Bags & Liners	1002	1210	1410	1650	3.8	3.1
Plastic Containers	503	795	1070	1420	9.6	6.1
Trays	89	100	120	140	2.4	3.7
Other	306	365	440	540	3.6	3.8

**PRODUCE PACKAGING DEMAND BY APPLICATION
(Million Dollars) 2004-2019**

Item	2004	2009	2014	2019	% Annual Growth	
					'04-'09	'09-'14
Vegetables	1739	2000	2350	2760	2.8	3.3
Fruit	1083	1480	1800	2200	6.4	4.0
Salad	389	520	620	740	6.0	3.6

SOURCE: THE FREEDONIA GROUP INC.

Look for steady increases in produce packaging in the years ahead, with plastic containers continuing to outpace packaging through 2014. Packaging for fruit, vegetables and salads will continue to grow at an equal pace.



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unique proprietary process. This process is so energy efficient that the resultant material has a carbon footprint that is as low as other PET material containers — 50 percent post-consumer recycled content — but with all the clarity and strength of virgin material.”

Keep It Clean

Food safety is an issue that can rear its head dramatically without notice, and packaging can be an important part of the answer. Thus, one message that must be delivered is that the produce is safe. One traditional answer to the food safety issue is packaging that resists tampering but also allows a good look at the produce. “Crystal clear rigid packaging is best because it protects the product yet allows the consumer a full 360-degree view of what they are buying,” Knutson says. “Our Safe-T-Fresh product line of containers does not require the use of costly and time-consuming shrink bands to keep products safe and secure. The patented tear strip hinge must be removed to gain access to the container, and is a visual indicator if it has been previously opened.

There are few new developments in the basic concept of tamper-resistant produce packaging. “I have not seen any new tamper-evident packaging concepts recently,” admits Chantler’s Ferguson. “The challenge faced by the tamper-evident concept is that it has to indicate the package has been tampered with, yet the packages must be able to be opened by people of all ages. Plus, any tamper-evident feature must be capable of being applied at very fast line speeds.”



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Inline Plastics uses a new high-clarity, low carbon footprint PET material made with a unique proprietary process.

But one new wrinkle in packaging to prevent contamination is a produce bag container that dispenses the bags one at a time, rather than on a roll with perforations. "Our product is on a roll, but it is not joined by perforation," describes Rose Van Nieuwenhuyzen, president and CEO of Waverly Plastics, based in Waverly, IA. "The bag comes out of the box, which provides protection from contamination. No one ever touches the bag except the person who takes it home. We call it the 'clean way to bag.'"

Shrinkage should be less, because the bags come out one at a time rather than in a stream with perforation separating the individual bags. "Once we get to a test store our success rate is 95 percent," reports Van Nieuwenhuyzen. "The cost per bag is the same; the price per bag is about the same as our competitors." Stores in 40 states are already using the Waverly bags.

Tamper-resistant packaging is another important part of offering safe food. "Food safety is a growing issue and so it is important to produce tamper-resistant packaging," contends PWP's Kirschner. "In today's competitive marketplace, retailers are looking for products that offer multiple benefits to themselves and their customers. The containers provide consumers with value-added, safe high-quality packaging. The tamper-resistant feature prevents food contamination and assures operators and consumers the product has not been opened prior to sale. It also eliminates the need for shrink bands and shrink wrap that can end up in landfills," she continues. "Safety is one of the most basic factors driving consumer behaviors about buying and eating food." **pb**



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- Unusual shortness of breath
- Unusual fatigue/tiredness
- Family history of unexpected death during physical activity or during seizure, or any other unexplained sudden death of an otherwise healthy family member under age 50.

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1. Early Recognition of Sudden Cardiac Arrest

- Collapsed and unresponsive
- Seizure like activity
- Gasping, gurgling, snoring or labored breathing noises

2. Early Access to 9-1-1

- Confirm unresponsiveness
- Call 9-1-1- and follow emergency dispatchers instructions
- Call any onsite Emergency responders

3. Early CPR

- Begin cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) immediately

4. Early Defibrillation

- Immediately retrieve and use an automated external defibrillator(AED) as soon as possible to restore the heart to its normal rhythm

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Mexican growers are increasingly relying on shade houses, which protect crop from weather worries and contamination.

West Mexican Produce Report: Momentum Gathers From Last Season

Conditions are ripe for West Mexican growers to build on their success. **BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ**

The fall and winter of 2009-2010 brought great misfortune to a major segment of America's produce growers. With torrential rains flooding California and a lengthy cold snap plunging much of Florida into a deep freeze, crops suffered significant damage and the resulting harvest was considerably smaller than anticipated. The shrunken supply brought soaring prices, with reports of peppers that regularly cost \$8 a box selling for \$18. Such inflation resulted in predictions of consumer price increases of \$1 per pound or more.

This left retailers with a momentous challenge. How could they meet consumers' demand for tomatoes, cucumbers, citrus and other fruits and vegetables grown in those two prime regions? Struggling to emerge from an economic recession, retailers were seeking to lure consumers in with high-quality product at competitive prices. With U.S. product in short supply, many found themselves turning to West Mexico to make up for the shortfall.

Certainly no stranger to West Mexican produce, the vast majority of U.S. retailers had already been relying on their neighbor to the south for pineapples, mangos, squash, avocados, and other winter produce for years. But this past year, the relationship between American retailers and West Mexican growers and distributors/importers grew by leaps and bounds, as retailers literally opened their doors to far more West Mexican produce than ever before. That led to record sales for many Mexican growers, while giving U.S. retailers — and consumers — the opportunity to further discover the increasingly high quality product coming out of Western Mexico. "It gave us the opportunity to showcase our products to customers that would have been buying them elsewhere," remarks Brent Harrison, president, Al Harrison Co. Distributors, based in Nogales, AZ. "That was a huge plus for the West Mexican produce industry."

Whenever possible, Sprouts Farmers Market LLC, a 53-unit chain based in Phoenix, AZ,

strives to source domestically, according to Neil Cullen, produce buyer. However, Sprouts' close proximity to Mexico has driven the chain to source certain types of produce from Western Mexico in order to offer its customers the freshest product possible. This past year, Cullen says, Sprouts found itself sourcing West Mexican produce longer than usual. In large part, that's because crops out of California were delayed by more than a month. "In the tomato category, it pushed us into Mexico later in the season than we might have otherwise done because California started so late," he reports. "In the case of peppers, things were delayed as well, so absolutely, it led us to source from Mexico longer than we would have otherwise done."

It's not just bordering states that have been increasingly turning to West Mexican produce. As far away as Canada, West Mexican produce has been garnering favor. Metro Inc., based in Montreal, Quebec, Canada, typically sources produce from Florida until the months following Christmas, a time period vice president

of national procurement and merchandising, Bernadette Hamel, dubs, “the dead winter months for us.” Then, the chain turns to West Mexico to supply enough product to meet the demand. This past year, however, Hamel says Metro relied on Mexican growers far more than usual due to the weather woes plaguing the United States.

This kind of migration toward West Mexican produce has suppliers like Nogales, AZ-based Farmer’s Best International LLC excited about what it could mean for their future prospects. “We added to our loyal customer base with people who historically hadn’t purchased West Mexican produce on a regular basis because they found that they needed to this past winter,” explains Jerry Wagner, director of sales and marketing. “I think you’re going to see more and more people buying fruit out of Mexico. We feel a lot of commitment from people who, until this past year, hadn’t thought of us as being their primary source, but now they do.”

While growers and importers of West Mexican produce couldn’t be happier about last year’s unexpected windfall, there is a recognition that the vast majority of those retailers who turned to them in their hour of need will return to their regular suppliers this season. Jim DiMenna, president of Leamington, Ontario, Canada-based J-D Marketing (Leamington) Inc., is buoyed by the number of produce buyers who have traditionally shopped Florida produce, but who are now calling his company asking when West Mexican produce will be available again. Still, he remains realistic. “For the most part, people will migrate back to their deals,” acknowledges DiMenna. “They’ll go back to Florida, but they may not all go back. If we can retain 20 or 30 percent of those new retail customers, we did okay.”

Proceeding with Caution

As West Mexican growers approach the new season flush with funds from last year’s unexpected windfall, DiMenna says it is critical they resist the urge to “fill Mexico with tomatoes” in anticipation of another banner year or because they expect another hurricane or freeze to negatively impact U.S. crops. “That would be a dangerous move,” he cautions.

Jim Cathey, general manager of Nogales, AZ-based Del Campo Supreme Inc., agrees that Mother Nature dealt the West Mexican produce industry a winning hand this past season, but as he puts it, “one year does not make a career.” After all, he points out, the previous year was one of the worst for the industry. He, too, is concerned about comments from growers who are



trying to justify increasing their acreage based on predictions for this winter’s U.S. weather patterns. “That’s one of the more asinine statements that anybody could make,” says Cathey. “Anytime you start planning your crop thinking you’re going to outsmart Mother Nature, you are usually going to get kicked in the teeth.”

Rather than investing their newfound wealth in acre upon acre of produce, Jorge Quintero Jr., managing member and marketing director for Grower Alliance LLC, located in Rio Rico, AZ, is encouraging his company’s growers to reinvest that money in infrastructure. “We tell them to keep the program steady,” says Quintero. “More than anything, we try to keep the focus on increasing quality, lowering costs and getting the packing line more efficient, rather than putting more product in the ground and doubling up.”

Made In The Shade

Increasingly, growers are immersing themselves in the massive movement toward protected agriculture that is sweeping Western Mexico. Across the West Mexican landscape, greenhouses and shade houses are cropping up with increasing frequency, as farmers recognize the benefits of growing produce in a protected environment. While the initial cost of constructing a greenhouse or shade house is hefty, the payoff is great, as production is approximately four times greater than in open fields.

Protected agriculture allows the grower to control the environment, thus negating any worries about frosts, bugs or temperature extremes. It also gives them the ability to control the plants’ growing mediums by ensuring they get exactly what they need and nothing more. This results in better yields and a highly consistent, high-quality product that defies all odds. “It provides ample supplies of high quality produce because it makes fluctuations in

weather not as critical at times when it otherwise would be hard to produce,” says Wagner. “It’s good for the American consumer in the sense that it’s easy to fill those windows, when historically, it’s been difficult to provide a top-notch product with open fields.”

That enhanced quality hasn’t escaped the exacting eyes of retailers who are always on the lookout for the best products. Chris Ciruli, chief operations office for Ciruli Brothers LLC, in Rio Rico, AZ, says retailers are specifically asking for protected agriculture crops. “We are seeing a tremendous amount of push for more protected agriculture from both consumers and chain stores,” he says. “We need to make sure we are growing what they are looking to purchase.”

Cullen says shade house technology has definitely helped improve the quality of the West Mexican produce he buys for Sprouts, while Metro’s Hamel has noticed an overall improvement in the kinds of produce she imports to Canada from West Mexican growers. “West Mexican produce has definitely taken a turn for the better,” says Hamel. “On peppers, in particular, we used to have an awful lot of issues, but they’ve refined their techniques and now we are seeing excellent arrivals on that product.”

Hopefully, Hamel will remain impressed for years to come as West Mexican growers’ commitment to protected agriculture grows even stronger. Just three years ago, Ciruli Brothers grew 50 percent of its Roma tomatoes in open fields; now 100 percent comes out of shade houses. Within two years, Ciruli predicts 100 percent of green pepper production will take place in shade houses. And once the proper seed varieties are available, he anticipates that a great percentage of eggplants will be grown in shade houses as well.

Rio Rico, AZ-based SunFed spent more than a decade perfecting its shade house operations. The resulting product line is dubbed Perfect Produce in honor of the many attributes that protected agriculture brings to the table. “Shade houses allow one to produce a higher quality product, with far less water and chemicals than can be accomplished in an open field,” contends Danny Mandel, chairman of the board. “The level of quality coming out of protected agriculture is immeasurably better over many parameters, sufficiently so that SunFed will not grow cucumbers or colored bell peppers in the field.”

Meanwhile, Nogales, AZ-based Plain Jane Produce is a 100 percent greenhouse company, according to Alejandro Canelos Jr., founder and chief operations officer. He envisions a future where the majority of certain vegetables

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“West Mexican produce has definitely taken a turn for the better. On peppers, in particular, we used to have an awful lot of issues, but they’ve refined their techniques and now we are seeing excellent arrivals on that product.”

— Bernadette Hamel, Metro Inc.

— tomatoes, cucumbers and bell peppers, for example — are grown indoors. This fall, Plain Jane plans to expand into Nayarit in Southwestern Mexico with the goal of getting 250 covered acres up and running within the next two years. “When you move something indoors, you have more consistent production and overall higher quality,” says Canelos. “It just takes it up another level.”

Safety Matters

Protected agriculture is also a tremendous boon when it comes to addressing food safety issues. The ability to control virtually every aspect of the growing process, particularly through the use of shade houses, practically eliminates all food safety concerns, a tremendous benefit for an industry all too often bruised by high profile recalls and contamination scares. “Whenever there’s any kind of out-

break related to produce, it gets all over the news and all of a sudden, ‘Grown in Mexico’ comes into question,” says Sprout’s Cullen. “It’s a shame, but these rogue shippers/growers who let bad stuff slip in from time to time just spoil it for the whole bunch.”

Canelos believes Country of Origin (COOL) laws will ultimately lead consumers to recognize how much of the produce they eat comes from Mexico and how good it is. For the time being, however, there are still challenges to overcome, mainly that produce grown in Mexico is still viewed with suspicion by many in the population. Consumer perception of West Mexican produce varies tremendously, with some retailers reporting strongly positive response and others citing highly negative feedback from customers who want nothing to do with anything grown south of the border.

Maria Brous, director of media and com-

munity relations for Lakeland, FL-based Publix Super Markets Inc., says the chain’s consumer base prefers domestic product and remains leery of produce from Mexico. Likewise, Cullen reports that there remains a “huge question mark as far as safety and cleanliness” of Mexican product. On a regular basis, he fields complaints from people who criticize Sprouts’ decision to carry West Mexican produce. While Cullen does his best to defuse the situation, he often finds himself struggling to make his case when faced with someone who is dead-set against Mexican produce. “You can try to argue the point, but when someone holds that belief near-and-dear for whatever reason, it’s a very strongly held perception,” Cullen admits. “The retailer is in a tough spot to be the entity getting out the message that West Mexican produce is as safe as U.S. produce because they don’t want to hear it and you risk eventually turning them off.”

Even organic produce grown in Western Mexico comes under suspicion, Cullen adds, as some consumers are hesitant to believe that produce grown in Mexico could actually be organic. Sadly, Cullen says, much of this criticism comes at a time when aggressive efforts are underway to ensure that West Mexican produce is at least as safe — if not safer — than U.S.-

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From third-party certifications to stringent water sourcing to self-policing of the fields, growers are adamant about making sure they are following all food safety practices and procedures to the letter. That comes as no surprise to Froylan Gracia, counselor for agricultural affairs at the Washington, D.C.-based Mexican Embassy. With the vast majority of West Mexican produce intended for export, it's imperative that growers adhere to the highest possible standards.

"Today, food safety is simply the price of admission to participate in the commerce of food," says SunFed's Mandel. "Anyone who has examined the level of food safety coming out of Mexico comes away in awe of the attention paid to these programs." SunFed's dedication to food safety includes audits of all its facilities by Primus Labs. Likewise, Farmer's Best relies on two separate third-party companies, one of which conducts weekly visits simply to observe and ensure that the proper procedures are being followed.

Nogales, AZ-based Viva Global Marketing LLC represents Mexico's Calidad Suprema program, the Mexican government's Supreme Quality seal for perishables. As Viva's president, Veronica Kraushaar, explains, product that does

"Today, food safety is simply the price of admission to participate in the commerce of food. Anyone who has examined the level of food safety coming out of Mexico comes away in awe of the attention paid to these programs."

— Danny Mandel, SunFed

not meet the program's stringent standards is not exported. "It really raises the bar for the Mexican producer," she says. "The United States has no such program for its exporters, so in essence, Mexico is far ahead here."

Plain Jane is certified by a U.S.-based third-party auditor, as well as the Mexican Federal Government. What's more, its U.S. facilities are USDA-certified. While Canelos is adamant that Mexico has been ahead of the curve in terms of food safety, he concedes that it's an uphill battle when it comes to convincing consumers they don't have to worry about Mexican-grown produce. "There are always going to be consumers that have concerns about Mexico just because they are xenophobes or they see sensational stories on the news," says Canelos. "The best thing we can do is just keep putting out good, safe products."

Traceability A Must

As with the vast majority of the food and beverage industry, West Mexican growers and shippers have signed on to traceability initiatives in a big way. As Quintero of Grower Alliance explains, traceability is no longer just an added benefit; it's a must-have, as the ability to determine where any suspect produce originated is the key to alleviating consumer fears and stopping any outbreaks dead in their tracks. "Consumers shouldn't have to worry about food safety, so taking these steps gives them peace of mind," he asserts. "It's not something that happens too often, but in case it does, it's very easy to trace back and pinpoint where the problem originated."

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duce inside each box back to its very origins. “We can tell what happened to that dirt before we planted the seed,” says Wagner. “We wanted to show our customers that we are good partners, so we made that investment.”

In Ontario, J-D Marketing’s DiMenna proudly reports he was asked to participate in the Produce Traceability Initiative, a group dedicated to “leading the charge” for traceability. “Traceability is a big factor to retailers in the United States,” he says. “If West Mexican growers can go to market and say, ‘we can tell you where our products came from,’ we are all over that.”

Looking Ahead

It’s not just individual growers, shippers and packers who have dedicated themselves to improving the quality, production or reputation of West Mexican produce. A number of initiatives are underway that promise to bolster an already booming industry. A pilot program to allow overweight trucks to cross the border has met with positive response so far, as it promises to cut back on the number of trucks and the amount of fuel needed to get the same amount of produce across the border. SunFed, Ciruli Brothers and Grower

Alliance participated in the program last year, as did Nogales, AZ-based Apache Produce Imports LLC, according to general manager, Alberto Maldonado. “A program like that, where we can get the maximum amount of product on the truck and not have to worry about it getting too heavy is huge for the growers and huge for us because we know we can count on getting it all across on the same day instead of having the product sit there a couple days,” says Quintero.

The Giumarra Companies, headquartered in Rio Rico, AZ, plans to participate in the program this season. Their rationale is simple. “The pilot program increases efficiencies, resulting in economic, environmental and supply chain advantages,” says Ben Reilly, Midwest business development manager.

Meanwhile, the massive \$200 million Mariposa port of entry expansion project will result in the most advanced port of entry for goods coming into the United States, according to Lance Jungmeyer, president of Fresh Produce Association of the Americas, located in Nogales, AZ. Currently consisting of four commercial trucking lanes, the resulting port will have double that number. Considering that 35 to 50 percent of Mexican produce comes into the United States through Nogales, the expansion is a significant step forward for the West Mexican produce industry.

The project is expected to be complete by the spring of 2014. However, Jungmeyer says increased lanes will be available for produce starting in 2012. While he is enthusiastic about the port expansion, Jungmeyer is concerned there may not be enough Customs Border Protection (CBP) officers to properly staff the port, which is already understaffed by approximately 100 CBPs. He estimates the newly expanded port will require an additional 250 officers.

“It’s one thing to open the port, but it’s another thing to fund the actual labor that it takes to fill it,” says Ciruli of Ciruli Bros. “We need to make sure that when we do open this, we have it fully staffed.”

This past spring, President Barack Obama signed into law an additional \$600 million in financing for Southwest border security. Kraushaar is confident that additional funding will effectively reduce the number of incidents in which containers are “hijacked” and used to smuggle drugs across the border.

“Obviously, it’s better than nothing,” says SunFed’s Mandel. “But when you distribute it across a 2,000 mile long border and you consider the challenges that exist to monitor and control both legal and illegal commerce, it is just a first step.”

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The berry category contributed 7.5 percent to total produce department sales for the past year ending June 26.

Sweeten Sales Of Imported Berries In Fall And Winter

Consistent supplies from tried-and-true sources accompany crops from newly producing locales. **BY CAROL BAREUTHER, RD**

Berries were once synonymous with spring and summer. However, that is no longer the case. Today, imports from the South and Midwest well as Mexico, allow a near seamless supply of these fresh fruits year-round. This availability is one reason why the berry category contributed a whopping 7.5 percent to total produce department dollar sales in the 52-week period ending June 26, up 0.3 percent from the previous year, according to the Perishables Group, a Chicago, IL-based market research firm.

Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral for Kings Super Markets Inc., a 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ, says, "Imports, especially when the quality is there, have provided an opportunity to really grow the berry category."

Seasonal Outlook And Promotional Opportunities

New varieties and growing practices are allowing harvest periods to be extended in major import countries such as Argentina, Chile and

Mexico, says Ben Reilly, Midwest business development manager for Giumarra VBM International Berry LLC, headquartered in Los Angeles, CA. "However, competition between countries is not yet as significant as seen in other commodities that store better and have longer and multiple harvest dates. This means that promotions are best planned for peak production periods in the strongest growing regions."

BLUEBERRIES Fresh blueberry imports averaged 45 percent of domestic fresh consumption from 2005 to 2009, according to U.S. Department of Commerce statistics.

Jeff Fairchild, director of produce for New Seasons Market, a 10-store chain based in Portland, OR, says, "Imported blueberries are huge for us, especially during the Chilean deal. The berries tend to ship well and taste good, which keeps customers buying."

Blueberries are available in good supply out of Argentina, Uruguay and Chile, reports Douglas Ronan, vice president of marketing for Driscoll's, in Watsonville, CA, "from November through March."

Argentina has made significant strides in

the cultivation, production and marketing of fresh blueberries over the past decade. Last year, the country exported 66 percent of its crop, or 15.8 million pounds, to the United States, according to U.S. Department of Commerce figures. Imports typically start arriving in mid-September and end in December.

Bobby Stokes, berry sales manager for Curry & Co. Inc., in Brooks, OR, says, "The weather pattern this year looks very similar to last year with Argentina's northern Tucumán region most likely starting late again, creating a gap between the North American deal and the South American season and obviously higher prices."

Production moves southeast to Argentina's Concordia region in October and promotional volumes of blueberries are available in the United States by November. Inés Peláez, director of marketing for Profrutal Argentina, asserts, "The Argentinean Blueberry Committee is working to deliver accurate information to distributors, wholesalers and the retail market, about weekly volumes available during our season."

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“Competition between countries is not yet as significant as seen in other commodities that store better and have longer and multiple harvest dates. This means that promotions are best planned for peak production periods in the strongest growing regions.”

—Ben Reilly, Giumarra VBM International Berry LLC

Uruguayan blueberries compete with Argentina in the October and November window, but volume imported to the United States last year was only a little more than 1 million pounds, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Keith Mixon, president and CEO of SunnyRidge Farm Inc., in Winter Haven, FL, notes, “Uruguay has had two tough seasons weather-wise, so I don’t see growth in blueberry shipments from them in the foreseeable future.”

Blueberries start harvest in the northern regions of Chile by the end of November, thus overlapping slightly with Argentina. Chile is the No. 1 importer of fresh blueberries into the United States shipping in 74.2 million pounds in 2009, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Mario Flores, director of blueberry produce management for Naturipe Farms LLC, headquartered in Naples, FL, reports, “There’s a projected 34 percent increase in blueberry production out of Chile compared to last season. This is due to an increase in acreage and productivity of some of the younger plantings. We also expect good availability of organic blueberries as more acreage has been transitioned from conventional.”

However, the season might get off to a rocky start, adds Curry & Co.’s Stokes. “Chile has experienced freeze damage to many of their growing regions and that does not bode well. However, there will be improved varieties coming online this year.”

Promotional volumes of blueberries out of Chile are usually available by mid-December, says SunnyRidge’s Mixon. “But we target mega-promotions with our retailers starting in January and running through the second week in February.”

Chilean blueberry supplies continue through March, when some volume out of Mexico bridges the gap until Florida starts in April. Stokes says, “Maybe not this year, but Mexico has an enormous blueberry deal looming. There are many big players working on varieties, timing and logistics. With a possible shipping window of eight months, the future

could be bright for Mexico.”

BLACKBERRIES Mexico is the big player when it comes to U.S. blackberry imports, with a volume of 80.5 million pounds in 2009, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. Driscoll’s Ronan says, “We have expanded blackberry acreage and production in Central Mexico in response to the continued growth in consumer demand over the past three years. Blackberries will be available from Central Mexico beginning in October. Volume will ramp up quickly in November in time for Thanksgiving holiday promotions.”

Reliable supplies of blackberries out of Mexico will last “through the second to third week in May,” adds SunnyRidge’s Mixon.

Guatemala is the only other country competing for imports, says Ronan, “but they do not overlap much with Mexico.”

There is no estimate of the import share of domestic consumption for blackberries by the U.S. Department of Commerce because of a lack in supply and utilization information.

RASPBERRIES Fresh raspberry imports averaged 24 percent of domestic fresh consumption from 2005 to 2009, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce statistics.

Like blackberries, Ronan states, “The raspberry category has shown strong growth in consumer demand during the past three years. As a result, we will be increasing our raspberry production in Central Mexico and Baja this fall and winter. Imports will begin in October and run through May.”

Raspberries are also available from Chile in November to May. Ronan points out, “Chile does compete somewhat with Mexico-sourced raspberries, but the additional supply does not create additional retail promotional opportunities.”

STRAWBERRIES Domestic production out of Florida and California supplies most of the U.S. market demand for fresh strawberries, however fresh strawberry imports did average 8 percent of domestic consumption from 2005 to 2009, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. These are chiefly from Mexico, which shipped 185.8 million pounds into the

United States last year.

Ronan discloses, “The outlook is very positive for Central Mexican strawberries with the expectation of increased acres and production this coming season as well as a good quality product. Strawberries from Central Mexico will be available in early October and will continue to supply the North American market through early March. Generally, this deal peaks in January and early February.”

Quality On The Rise

“Quality, from a flavor standpoint and perishability or shelf-life can be a concern in imported berries,” admits Kings Super Markets’ Kneeland. “That’s why we go with a branded program.”

Grower/shippers, importers and distributors are seeking to improve the quality of imported berries through varietal development, growing practices and transportation efficiencies. Driscoll’s Ronan asserts, “Every season, we strive to improve our varieties. We are particularly excited about the advances in new proprietary strawberry and blackberry varieties from Central Mexico.”

Curry & Co. has hired a full-time agronomist for its Chilean program. Stokes details, “This person’s job is to recruit quality producers, improve existing plantings, introduce new varieties and oversee our packing facility — all with the goal of ensuring a quality supply of blueberries from that region.”

“In Chile,” adds Naturipe’s Flores, “we’ve seen improvements in harvest and cultural practices over the years. For example, growers adhere to a tight picking schedule. While a U.S. grower may pick their fields every five to seven days, in Chile, it might be a three- to four-day rotation. This assures that the berries are picked firm, yet at the right level of ripeness to maintain quality during shipping. There’s also widespread pre-cooling that maintains the fruit at 32 to 33° F. We’ve also seen more USDA pre-clearance of fruit before it leaves the port. This improves communication and logistics, and ultimately results in faster transportation from the port of entry to the retailer.”

The Argentinean Blueberry Committee has embarked on a nationwide quality assurance program to make sure fruit is export-quality for international markets, says Profrutal’s Pelaez. “The program includes training courses all around the country, and in the mid-term, the positioning of a national seal of quality.”

Growing Package Sizes And Profits

Larger package sizes lead to greater berry sales at New Seasons Market, says Fairchild. “In

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4 Profitable Reasons To Purchase Blueberries From Argentina



Argentina started exporting blueberries in the mid 1990s. At first, volumes were small (350 tons in 2001), but grew quickly in response to the availability and quality of the product. In just ten year's time, volume has grown by over 3,000 percent. Projected volume for 2010 is around 12,000 tons. Argentinean blueberries offer buyers the ability to maintain blueberry sales throughout the fall and winter and keep the excitement of blueberry promotions going.

1) FIRST SUPPLIER OF THE FALL/WINTER SEASON

Argentina's blueberries are the first of the off-season crop starting mid-September and ending around Christmas time. Argentina's crop usually peaks in early November, perfect for winding up consumers for holiday shopping.

The 2010 season is off to a slightly delayed start and forecast to achieve commercial volumes around mid-October. Argentina's first harvest is from the Tucuman area, then moves to Concordia and lastly to Buenos Aires at the end of the season.

2) COMMITTED TO QUALITY AND SAFETY

Quality is a really big issue for Argentina. The major exporters in Argentina work under Global GAP certification, providing food safety for all consumers. Also, some of them have certified their production under private protocols from retail chains as "Tesco Natures Choice" or "L.E.A.F" from United Kingdom supermarkets. The Argentinean Blueberry Committee also works through a National Quality Program that involves every farm. The Committee is working on an Argentinean Blueberry Seal for next season.

Argentina transports most of its blueberries by plane, so U.S. consumers receive them as fresh as possible and with the best quality and flavor.

3) PROMOTABLE VOLUME

The explosion in growth of Argentina's blueberry exports means highly promotable volumes and opportunity for U.S. retailers and foodservice operators. Currently, the U.S. is expecting 7,850 tons of Argentinean blueberries for the season according to the Argentinean Blueberry Committee. Argentina will export a total volume of 11,850 tons, shipping to the European Union what doesn't go to the United States.

For best success, set promotions at the peak of the season. The Argentinean Blueberry Committee provides accurate information throughout the season on volumes so that importers and buyers can best plan and set promotions. Product availability during the U.S. Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday period gives buyers an excellent option for promoting blueberries for entertaining and special occasions.

4) INDESPENSIBLE BACK-UP

Buyers of Argentinean blueberries receive important support from the exporters to help in the successful sales and promotion of the product. The Argentinean Blueberry Committee is an exporter organization and represents around 70 percent of the total exported volume. It was founded by well known companies such as Tecnovital, Berries del Plata, Sun Belle

de Argentina, Hortifrut de Argentina and Agroberries de Argentina.

The Argentinean Blueberry Committee provides crucial information support including checking projections and production information, publicizing this information and overseeing quality programs.



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“Cranberries are the traditional berry for Thanksgiving, but blueberries can add something colorful on the holiday table. In addition, blueberries can be promoted for use in dishes ranging from cocktails to desserts.”

—Robin Doran, Naturipe LLC

peak availability times, such as in January and February, price points come down and allow us to carry more 6-oz., pint and even 18-oz. packs of blueberries. Consumers still come in and buy their weekly pack, but the larger unit means more volume and dollar sales for us.”

Research backs up this practice, points out Tom Tjerandsen, spokesman for the Chilean Fresh Fruit Association (CFFA), in Sonoma, CA. “A study conducted last year by the Chilean Blueberry Committee conclusively proved that retailers who offered a larger weight container at a higher price moved more product at a higher ring than saw a decline in sales dampened by the higher price point.”

Giumarra’s Reilly has seen this trend, too. “We’ve seen a lot of growth in promotion of larger pack styles by retailers committed to in-

creasing their berry category sales. As a result, we have increased our offerings of larger pack styles year-round. Larger pack sizes and offering consumers a variety of different pack styles can meet more consumer needs and ultimately increase sales.”

While overall trends are moving to larger pack sizes for blueberries, the South American regions are challenged by higher transit costs to the United States, particularly Argentina, where most of the exported fruit is sent by air, says Driscoll’s Ronan. “This drives up pricing and makes it more challenging to sell larger pack sizes. We expect Argentinean fruit to be merchandised predominantly in 6- and 4.4-oz. packs this season. Pints will be the predominant pack in Chile, with a broad assortment of other pack sizes available including 6- and 18-

oz. and 2-pounders.”

As for raspberries, Ronan continues, “We are seeing increased interest in 12-oz. as well as club pack formats. Larger pack sizes in blackberries have proven an effective way to increase sales and consumption. We offer 12 and 18-oz. packages throughout the Central Mexico season. In strawberries, the larger package sizes are a trend that cannot be ignored. We will see more 2- and 4-lb. strawberry packs, increasingly in the winter and early spring.”

While bigger does seem to be trending as better, Julia Inestroza, marketing and merchandising manager at Gourmet Trading Co., in Los Angeles, CA, says, “There continues to be a demand for the smaller packs during times of product shortages.”

SunnyRidge’s Mixon agrees. “We would rather pack in smaller sizes when production warrants it and keep product on the shelf rather than push larger packs to the point that there are times when we’re out of product and lose shelf space.”

Winter Berry Merchandising

According to New Seasons Market’s Fairchild, “The merchandising hook to sell fresh berries when there’s snow on the ground

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Reader Service # 8

IMPORTED BLUEBERRIES — TOP 5 IMPORT COUNTRIES 2009

COUNTRY	POUNDS/5-YR CHANGE	DOLLARS/5-YR CHANGE
1. CHILE	74,231,126 (+257%)	131,832,315 (+180%)
2. CANADA	41,086,169 (+15%)	53,099,183 (+16%)
3. ARGENTINA	15,884,156 (+295%)	46,160,886 (+199%)
4. URUGUAY	1,032,120 (+1827%)	3,712,132 (+1566%)
5. MEXICO	790,480 (+3138%)	1,361,528 (+7502%)

IMPORTED BLACKBERRIES — TOP 3 IMPORT COUNTRIES 2009

COUNTRY	POUNDS/5-YR CHANGE	DOLLARS/5-YR CHANGE
1. MEXICO	80,561,696 (+254%)	111,160,651 (+196%)
2. GUATEMALA	4,669,985 (+195%)	4,314,201 (+123%)
3. CHILE	34,432 (+321%)	69,856 (+522%)

IMPORTED RASPBERRIES — TOP 3 IMPORT COUNTRIES 2009

COUNTRY	POUNDS/5-YR CHANGE	DOLLARS/5-YR CHANGE
1. MEXICO	25,882,472 (+256%)	65,591,493 (+220%)
2. CANADA	2,358,090 (-65%)	2,900,731 (-54%)
3. CHILE	1,420,718 (-82%)	3,528,391 (-65%)

IMPORTED STRAWBERRIES — TOP 3 IMPORT COUNTRIES 2009

COUNTRY	POUNDS/5-YR CHANGE	DOLLARS/5-YR CHANGE
1. MEXICO	185,831,539 (+53%)	151,772,893 (+67%)
2. CANADA	650,216 (+79%)	755,313 (+37%)
3. PERU	348,361 (+594%)	403,445 (+1072%)

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce

“Berry displays that incorporate all the ingredients for a holiday dessert or recipe idea are helpful to drive sales.”

— Julia Inestroza, Gourmet Trading LLC

is a taste of summer in winter,” he advises. “It’s a little bit of sunshine. That’s why we’ll often display the berries near the grapes. We’ll also pretty much keep the berry display about the same size summer and winter and keep it in a central location. Berries are such strong impulse items.”

Kings Super Market’s Kneeland agrees. “We’ve run summer theme ads in January with imported tree fruit at the same time,” he details. “We’ve also built displays that tie in with this theme with a big image of a sun shining in the background. It’s a good way create excitement in the winter doldrums.”

“The two biggest challenges in merchandising imported berries,” says Charlie Eagle, vice president of business development for Southern Specialties, in Pompano Beach, FL, “are weather and logistics.”

Driscoll’s Ronan agrees. “Consistency of supply is always challenging due to weather conditions in many growing regions at this time of year.”

“Nevertheless,” says Naturipe’s Flores, “there is an excellent opportunity for retail promotion of blueberries for Thanksgiving,

when we see peak supplies out of Argentina and Uruguay.”

Robin Doran, director of communications for Naturipe, adds, “Cranberries are the traditional berry for Thanksgiving, but blueberries can add something colorful on the holiday table. In addition, blueberries can be promoted for use in dishes ranging from cocktails to desserts. They pair well with wine, work well in reduction sauces with meats, and can be sprinkled in salads.”

Gourmet Trading’s Inestroza notes, “Berry displays that incorporate all the ingredients for a holiday dessert or recipe idea are helpful to drive sales. We have a full range of POS items such as recipe cards and in-store posters. We also work with complementary item companies to do cross-promotions that help not only blueberry sales but store sales.”

“During the first of the year,” advises CFFA’s Tjerandsen, “build berry promotions around healthful eating.”

Another theme for promotion is meet-the-farmer. Last year, Nicholas Moller of Hortifruiti in Chile paid an in-store visit at select locations of Giant Eagle, a chain based in

Carlisle, PA.

Major importing countries are also helping U.S. retailers promote imported berries. For example, Argentina, Chile and Uruguay have joined forces in a joint promotional effort called Blueberries from the South. Profrutal’s Pelaez explains, “The initiative began to promote blueberries in the European Union and we are presently working on the method for the U.S. market, too.”

The Santiago-based Chilean Blueberry Committee has designated \$350,000 for North American marketing to target consumers, retailers and the foodservice trade. This is significant in light of the USDA deciding in February not to enact a proposed assessment hike on blueberries growers from \$12- to \$24-per ton due to the fear of economic hardship on farmers. Assessment funds are used by the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council for advertising and promotion. This \$350,000 is in addition to assessment fees.

“With good supplies of imported berries now available,” says SunnyRidge’s Mixon, “it’s possible to build a good berry patch display and promote in a big way that can really move the needle on sales.”

Global Trends

Demand for fresh berries by American consumers has led to increased production in countries now exporting to the United States and to new countries eyeing this as a potential new player in blueberry exports.

Mixon acknowledges, “There has been some experimentation by Peru, but the competitive advantage remains to be seen when compared to Argentina and Chile. Morocco is another country that grows blueberries. I’m not sure if this will be developed in a consistent way, or if it will be profitable for them to export.”

Beyond South America, “We see some berries come into the United States from New Zealand, which arrive to market at the same time as Chile,” continues Mixon. “However, New Zealand does tend to focus more on markets in Japan, Hong Kong and Europe.”

The United States potentially faces competition for berries from other importing countries. Driscoll’s Ronan says, “We have seen continued strong growth in consumer demand for fresh berries in the U.K., continental Europe and key Far East markets. Similar to the United States, this reflects the underlying consumer trend of more households purchasing berries and purchasing fresh berries more often throughout the year.”

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Manufacturers have invested heavily in bringing more restaurant-style products to retail shelves.

Savory Salad Tie-Ins Add Verve To a Growing Category

From croutons and dressings to nuts and even meat, salad tie-ins complement the category. **BY JULIE COOK RAMIREZ**

Across the nation, the past two decades have been good to salads. No longer relegated to the sidelines, salads have undergone a metamorphosis. What began as a simple bowl of iceberg lettuce complemented by a tomato wedge, a dollop of dressing and a couple of croutons has morphed into a cornucopia of gourmet, deluxe, exotic, upscale, even decadent offerings that make salads of days gone by look anemic by comparison.

“It’s more than just throwing some bagged lettuce and dressing together,” says Carla Laylin, group marketing manager at T. Marzetti Co., based in Columbus, OH. “People are making main dish salads with meats and cheeses, with nuts and other toppings for crunch, and then you have the salad dressing that brings it all together.”

Not surprisingly, the foodservice arena — where consumers have been stunned by sumptuous salad offerings — has driven the transformation of the everyday salad. From white tablecloth establishments to McDonald’s, restaurants have raised the bar, creating

salads with more exotic greens, unique toppings and distinctive dressings that make it exciting to eat healthfully.

“It’s about creating a more palatable incentive for folks to make salads part of their daily eating regimen,” says Neil Cullen, produce buyer for the Phoenix, AZ-based 53-unit chain, Sprouts Farmers Market LLC. “It’s a totally different ball game than it was 15 or 20 years ago.”

In light of the economy, consumers have been forced to cut back on their frequency of dining out. As a result, they are seeking to recreate that restaurant experience — including that salad experience — at home. But if consumers are even going to come close to replicating the kinds of salads they have been enjoying in the foodservice arena, they will need ready access to products that will allow them to dress up their salads at home. Enter the salad tie-ins category.

“Consumers are looking for something to make a basic green leaf salad more exciting and different,” says Charles Olins, vice president of sales and marketing at Concord Foods Inc., headquartered in Brockton, MA. “If they are

having a salad for dinner, they like to top it with some grilled chicken and maybe some nuts, seeds or raisins to make it tasty.”

Croutons remain a mainstay of the category, according to Cullen. He also cites Almond Accents as a top seller, although he admits such products carry a relatively high ring, which could scare off some consumers during these tough economic times. For the most part, however, Cullen says there are value-priced solutions available for those consumers who still want to add a little zing to their salad, but don’t want to break the bank in the process. For example, private label options provide a similar experience at a lower price. Of course, consumers must base their decisions on their personal economic situations. “A person’s socio-economic circumstance will dictate whether they are going to continue to buy those luxury items or maybe settle for something that is a bit more cost-effective, but still gives them that pleasurable added ingredient,” explains Cullen. “But for those people who are dead-set on that flavor and incorporating salads into their diet, they may simply opt to use

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their favorite product more sparingly.”

Generally speaking, the recession boosted interest in the category, as consumers found themselves eating at home more often. Even the highly publicized bagged salad and romaine lettuce recalls of the past year have not slowed the category. Manufacturers and retailers alike credit traceability efforts for making it possible to isolate the problem, thus enabling consumers to be smart shoppers and not panic over relatively minor outbreaks. “A customer

may be more inclined to change brands or switch from a conventional salad to an organic one, but it’s unlikely they would give up on the salad experience altogether,” says Cullen.

Carefully Creative

With sales of salad tie-ins going strong, manufacturers have invested heavily in bringing more restaurant-style products to retail shelves. Sandpoint, ID-based Litehouse Foods Inc., recently rolled out a new line of refrigerated

yogurt dressings containing kefir, a source of eight live and active probiotics that have been proven to clean the digestive tract; improve the immune system; and regulate blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar. Available in three popular varieties — Ranch, Bleu Cheese and Caesar — Litehouse Kefir boasts just half the fat and calories of regular dressing. “We’ve increased the benefits to the customer by offering a probiotic product,” says Paul Kusche, vice president of marketing and innovations. “The probiotic theme is growing very rapidly, particularly among women, so we are out there on the cutting edge with these dressings.”

Marzetti also just introduced a new line of refrigerated dressings. Dubbed Simply Dressed, they capitalize on the “trend of simplicity and back-to-basics,” according to Laylin. In addition to core flavors like Bleu Cheese, Ranch and Caesar, Simply Dressed also offers consumers a number of innovative new flavors, such as a Cole slaw dressing, which contains apple juice and poppy seeds.

While Laylin says she clearly sees a trend toward more gourmet and exotic flavors, she stresses that it’s critical for companies like Marzetti to ensure there will be a market for the new products it develops. “We try to look at flavors and trends that we think have a broad enough base and enough legs to work with,” says Laylin.

Linsey Foods Ltd., based in Markham, Ontario, Canada, has been manufacturing Et Tu salad kits for more than 20 years, yet the company still has to be careful not to get too adventurous when it comes to new product development. Even today, Linsey sells just seven varieties of the popular kit — Italian, Southwest Ranch, Spinach, Caesar Original, Caesar Light, Caesar Vinaigrette, and Caesar with Real Bacon. Each contains individual pouches of salad ingredients such as dressing, cheese, bacon bits and croutons. All consumers need to do is add lettuce and toss. “The objective is to appeal to the widening taste bud of the general population, but still try to find something that’s not too out there,” explains Dixie Michie, marketing manager.

Keeping a Watchful Eye

When it comes to determining what flavor profiles are likely to do well in the retail setting, Brandon Steele, vice president of marketing for Sun Valley, CA-based Sugar Foods Corp., admits his company is at an unfair advantage. With two-thirds of its business taking place in the foodservice arena, Sugar Foods has a front-row seat to emerging trends in their infancy.

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“We get a lot of our retail trends by keeping tabs on what’s going on in foodservice... As it moves down the food chain, it becomes more mainstream and you see it at places like McDonald’s. When we think it’s big enough to be considered an emerging trend, we bring it to grocery stores through our Fresh Gourmet brand.”

— Brandon Steele, Sugar Foods Corp.

“We get a lot of our retail trends by keeping tabs on what’s going on in foodservice,” discloses Steele. “We start with the early-adopters, the white tablecloth people who are on the leading edge of ideas. As it moves down the food chain, it becomes more mainstream and you see it at places like McDonald’s. When we think it’s big enough to be considered an emerging trend, we bring it to grocery stores through our Fresh Gourmet brand.”

When Southwestern salads became popular restaurant fare a few years ago, Sugar Foods began producing tortilla strips for the food-service arena. The company subsequently introduced a retail line of Fresh Gourmet crunchy toppings, including Santa Fe Style Tortilla Strips, Tri-Color Tortilla Strips and Lightly Salted Tortilla Strips, along with Authentic Wonton Strips, Wasabi Ranch Wonton Strips, Garlic Ginger Wonton Strips, Garlic Pepper Crispy Onions, Lightly Salted Crispy Onions, Lightly Salted Crispy Jalapenos and Lightly Salted Crispy Red Peppers. Since nuts and fruits have become popular salad toppings, the company followed suit with a retail Fresh Gourmet line consisting of Toasted Sliced Almonds, Honey Roasted Sliced Almonds, Ranch Sliced Almonds, Roasted Garlic Sliced Almonds, Honey Roasted Pecan Pieces, Glazed Walnut Pieces, Dried & Sweet Cranberries, Plump & Sweet Golden Raisins, Cranberries & Glazed Walnuts and Golden Raisins & Glazed Pecans.

“People know they should eat more salads because it’s nutritious, but they don’t want the same thing every night,” says Steele. “They may want a salad with croutons one night, a salad with tortilla strips on it the next night and a salad with nuts and fruits on it the third night. It’s all about variety.”

With health being the driving factor behind many consumers’ decisions to incorporate more salads into their diets, Steele is confident that Sugar Foods has hit upon the next big fad with its latest introduction: Tuna Bites and Salmon Bites. Created using a proprietary

process, Fresh Gourmet Tuna Bites and Salmon Bites are cube-shaped like croutons and come packed in olive oil or sunflower oil. Consumers simply drain them and use them as a healthy protein salad topper.

While Steele says the product is a natural extension of the trend toward tuna and salmon salads in high-end restaurants, Sprouts’ Cullen is concerned that such initiatives might be too narrowly-focused and may not meet with widespread acceptance in the retail setting.

“Most people are still focused on meat and potatoes,” says Cullen. “A very limited segment of the population has a really broad palate, so if you introduce something that’s not what they are accustomed to, it might initially be met with some incredulity.”

Profitable Partnerships

Because salad tie-in products rely so heavily on sales of bagged salads and other fresh produce for their livelihood, it’s crucial that retailers and manufacturers work closely together on placement and promotional activities. Litehouse’s category management team works hand-in-hand with retailers to ensure sections are set right, while its salespeople work with individual buyers on branded and private label cross-promotional activities.

Meanwhile, Linsey Foods has worked with Dole, Foxy, Giant Stop & Shop, and Publix on co-branding ventures. According to Maria Brous, director of media and community relations, it’s not unusual for Lakeland, FL-based Publix Super Markets Inc., to partner with national manufacturers on promotions in which the consumer receives a coupon for money off a Publix brand bagged salad when they buy a branded product, such as salad dressing or a salad kit. During such promotions, Brous says Publix encourages store-level displays to make it easier for the consumer to purchase both items and use the coupon.

Placement in the produce department is critical for these kinds of “companion products,” according to Olins of Concord Foods.



His company prefers to use clip strips to merchandise its salad topper and bacon bits pouches near the bagged salads. “Adjacency is key because it solidifies in consumers’ minds that the two products go together,” he says. “This way, consumers can pick up the bagged salad and then pick up the companion item relatively easily.”

Both Marzetti and Litehouse have their refrigerated dressings merchandised in upright cases right next to the bagged salads. Likewise, Sugar Foods prides itself on selling its salad toppers in the produce section. “Merchandising the product there helps drive the sale of bagged lettuces, which really is the big profit driver for the produce department,” remarks Steele. “People never buy a bag of croutons without a bagged salad. They buy both, plus they probably pick up a tomato and even a dressing. It’s incumbent upon us to help drive those sales. If we are not helping sell produce, we have no business being in the produce department.”

While Steele is bullish on the category, Olins is concerned over a trend he sees emerging in produce departments across the country. Stung by the recession, he says, retailers are trying to be more efficient in terms of shelf space. The result could be less-than-desirable for manufacturers of salad tie-in products. “They are taking a close look at the non-perishable items they are carrying in the produce department with an eye toward reducing the number of SKUs,” says Olins. “Some of the companion items are going to find themselves facing more of a battle for shelf space.” **pb**

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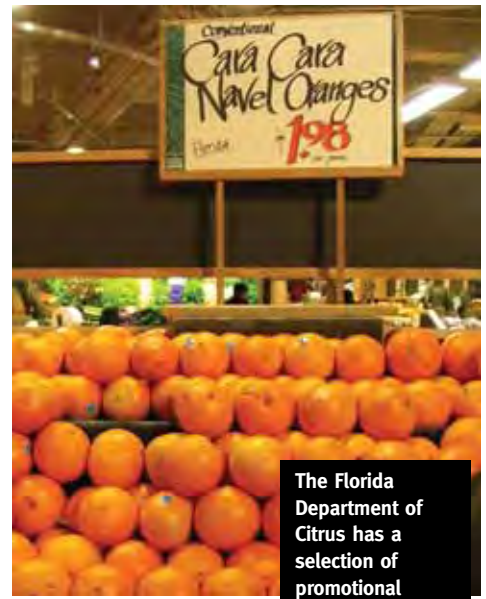


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The Florida Department of Citrus has a selection of promotional material it can provide to retailers.

Cautious Optimism Reigns For Fall Florida Produce

Following this past year's record-breaking freeze, Florida growers, packers, retailers and consumers look forward to a bountiful winter season of fresh Florida fruit and vegetables. **BY BARBARA ROBISON**

The Florida produce industry is ready to greet the new fall season with a colorful array of flavorful fresh fruits and vegetables. The state's fresh produce offerings are diverse and plentiful. It ranks first in the United States in the value of production of oranges, grapefruit, tangerines, fresh snap beans, fresh tomatoes, fresh cucumbers, squash, watermelons and sweet corn. It ranks second in the country in value of production of strawberries, bell peppers and pickling cucumbers.

"We are cautiously optimistic this year," says Nelson Mongiovi, director of the marketing and development division for the Tallahassee-based Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS). "We have had a great spring and summer with rain in most parts of the state, so we are bullish on Florida produce barring unforeseen weather conditions. There is especially good news regarding our citrus crop. We expect a 20 to 22 percent increase, bringing volume to the same level as three years ago."

Fresh From Florida Campaign Provides Strong Industry Support

The department has had a number of successful promotional programs supporting the produce industry and plans to continue them this year. The Fresh from Florida program, organized by the Florida Agricultural Promotional Campaign (FAPC) is an identification and multi-media promotional campaign designed to boost the image of Florida agriculture and increase sales by helping consumers easily identify Florida agricultural products.

Those participating in the program are authorized to use a variety of distinctive logos on their promotional materials so that consumers can easily identify Florida-grown products. Radio, television, print and billboard advertising is utilized to promote Florida agriculture and to create a positive image of the Florida farmer.

Other Promotional Programs Support Florida Produce

FDACS offers radio spots on two major

African-American health concerns, diabetes and obesity. *Hispanic Traditions* and *Good Health* brochures are available in English and Spanish, plus there are a number of other *Cooking and Health* brochures. Working with Florida schools, another program offered, Xtreme Cuisine Cooking School, is for students 10 to 15 years old. The program introduces students to the world of cooking and good nutrition.

"We also want to take advantage of the consumer interest in regionally and locally grown and so are looking at regional branding, especially in South Florida," says Mongiovi. "Signs such as 'Made in Dade' and 'Hillsborough Grown' would be used in conjunction with the Fresh from Florida campaign near population centers."

Retail Food Markets Join The Florida Campaign

The Maitland-based Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association (FFVA), a non-profit agricultural trade organization representing the

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— Nelson Mongiovi, Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

produce industry, is very supportive of FDACS’ promotional programs, according to Lisa Lochridge, director of public affairs. This past year, at its annual convention, FFVA presented its Merchandiser of the Year Award to Steve Williams and his team at Sweetbay Supermarket, a Tampa-based chain. Williams took a risk by launching a strong promotion for Plant City strawberries, in spite of two freezes. Adam Lytch, grower development manager for Eastern vegetables and melons at L & M Companies Inc., in Raleigh, NC, paid him a tribute, “In my opinion, there is no retailer in the country who promotes and merchandises products, in particular Florida produce, like Steve Williams and his Sweetbay team.”

As part of the Fresh from Florida FAPC campaign, FDACS has conducted a Global Grid program. “More than 8,000 retail stores, nationally and internationally, have agreed to run ads for certain Florida commodities during certain periods,” explains Mongiovi of FDACS. “It has been an extremely successful program.”

“We support the Fresh for Florida campaign in our ads and on all our signage, especially the vegetable items,” says Michael Purvis, director of produce at J. H. Harvey Co. LLC, a 70-store chain headquartered in Nashville, GA, with locations in Georgia, Florida and South Carolina. “Red potatoes and squash are among the popular items with our customers. In our Georgia stores, when Georgia-grown produce is not available, our customers like the idea of buying regionally grown produce from their neighboring state.”

“Interestingly enough, local produce means something different to everyone,” points out Maria Brous, director of media and community relations at Lakeland, FL-based Publix Super Markets Inc. “For some of our customers, locally grown means within a certain radius or where they live and shop. To others, locally grown means within the region. And yet

to others, it means within the state or geographic states in which they live. At Publix, we always try and source products from the areas in which we operate. When that product is not available locally, we look to other states across the country. And since customers have grown accustomed to having the same variety of fruits and vegetables available all year-long, we may have to source produce from abroad.”

Four years ago, Publix created its Season’s Peak Campaign, which highlights 14 different fruits throughout the year and reminds customers of their true peak-season flavor. “Since customers are accustomed to seeing a wide variety of fruits and vegetables throughout the year, some may have forgotten the ideal time of year when the fruit is at its juiciest and best possible time for ripeness,” Brous explains. “Our program reminds customers of the seasonality of fruit, provides proper washing and storing directions and even includes a few recipes,” adds Brous.

“Being able to say in our ads that a produce item is locally or regionally grown is a plus for us,” emphasizes Jeff Stewart, produce manager at the Bonifay, FL, Piggly Wiggly market, which is headquartered in Sheboygan, WI. “Our customers like it and we like being able to buy direct from nearby growers. The early fall squash, especially the yellow crookneck, is a customer favorite.”

Heirloom tomatoes are a big favorite Florida produce item with customers at Carmine’s Gourmet Market, a single store retailer in Palm Beach Gardens, FL. “Our customers love those tomatoes,” says Randy Sabatino, produce manager. “Honeybell Tangelos are another Florida product everyone looks forward to eating. Unfortunately, that variety has a very short season in January. We try to carry as many Florida-grown items as we can because we are a gourmet market and want to offer the freshest and most flavorful produce to our customers.”

Grower Organizations Tout Fresh From Florida

The Dover-based Florida Strawberry Growers Association (FSGA) is optimistic about the new season, with an expected increase in acreage. New growth will be located south of the more traditional Plant City/Dover area. Some new areas are equipping for alternative freeze protection methods due to last year’s water complications. Also, the Canadian nurseries, supplying transplants to Florida, experienced a good growing season all summer, so transplants for fall planting should be strong and healthy.

“Our latest strawberry release is Florida Radiance and more will be planted this season,” reports Ted Campbell, executive director. “Growers feel they better understand the nuances of the new variety after growing it last season, and therefore, confidence in the variety has increased. We have a few promising varieties in development, but they are not ready for release.”

FSGA is pushing harder this year to enhance Florida identity to consumers and fully supports FDACS’ Fresh from Florida campaign. “We are augmenting that this season with our Jammer strawberry character on individual clamshells, correlating to our kids educational video used in schools,” adds Campbell.

Locally or regionally grown is widely debated, but during the winter, Florida is the local source of strawberries for the Southeast. Recognizing the consumer interest in regionally produced produce, FSGA is focusing programs in regional magazines, such as *Taste of the South*. “This year we’ll probably add some billboard advertising to promote availability to locavores,” says Campbell.

Strawberries are an impulse purchase and data shows market penetration has a tremendous upside. Consumer acceptance rate is 95-96 percent, one of the highest, and nutritional values are excellent. Campbell suggests merchandising in multiple locations, cross-merchandising with salads, desserts and other popular combinations. FSGA is encouraging the use of strawberries for dishes apart from desserts, and Campbell reminds retailers and foodservice operators that promoting the taste of fresh strawberries in fall and winter can bring additional register rings.

Tomatoes are one of the most important crops grown in Florida, with a total value of \$622 million in the 2007-2008 year. The variety of tomatoes Florida offers is diverse in size, shapes, color and flavor. “Florida’s tomato growers are going into the 2010-11 season with a normal planting pattern for the fall crop after

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Reader Service # 60

emerging from a season with decreased volume due to severe weather conditions," reports Samantha Winters, director of education and promotion for the Maitland-based Florida Tomato Committee. "We are hoping for a marketable crop this season."

Entrée salads continue to be an important part of the restaurant business and Winters suggests the beefy, red, round Florida tomatoes contribute exceptional flavor and juiciness to a salad, in addition to offering excellent nutritional benefits. Other ideas are to add slices of fresh Florida yellow tomatoes to the traditional red ones in a classic Caprese Salad to make both colors pop. Or serve fried green tomatoes as a featured appetizer; this works well with the comfort-style food trend that is so popular right now. These are just a few of the many ways restaurants can take advantage of the Fresh from Florida tomato crop.

Everyone is pleased with estimates of a larger Florida citrus crop this year. The Bartow-based Florida Department of Citrus (FDOC) has a selection of promotional materials it can provide to retailers, including display cards, bin posters and brochures on fresh oranges, tangerines and grapefruit. The

Department also offers a Florida Citrus Varieties Produce Buyer's Guide. All items can be ordered from FDOC's Web site.

"To entice consumers to use more Florida citrus, we provide a free grapefruit spoon with purchase during our grapefruit season, which is January through June," reports FDOC's director of domestic public relations, Karen Bennett Mathis, APR. "The spoon will be available through fresh grapefruit bag inserts and tear-off pads at supermarkets, Florida Welcome Centers, state fairs and trade shows, or through online partnerships and a special Florida grapefruit Web site. A new 48-page cookbook, available with purchase, will also be promoted at retail and online by FDOC. It includes contemporary and traditional recipes, plus nutrition, selection and storage information," Mathis adds.

Growers, Shippers And Wholesalers Join Fresh From Florida Programs

Florida's growers, shippers and wholesalers primarily work with their individual customers, most often providing customized promotional programs. However, the consensus is that Fresh from Florida carries a message for everyone and the FDACS campaign is a key focal point for many such promotional programs.

The locally or regionally grown Florida program has even influenced vegetable production plans. In the case of L & M, the firm is planting the same acreage for their many crops as last year, except for broccoli. "Locally grown broccoli has been well received and our broccoli production has increased in response to customers' demands," says Carrie Smith, marketing specialist for the company.

The firm has found a great response to the locally grown promotional programs of FDACS. "Not only is the product fresher when it arrives at the stores, but it also saves fuel miles, which customers pay attention to these days," adds Smith.

When it comes to foodservice, L & M suggests restaurants listen to consumers' requests for healthful and nutritious options and locally grown items whenever possible. Restaurants can make it known on menus that certain items are locally or regionally grown, and menu inserts can even feature growers' stories for added appeal.

Locally grown or regionally grown is extremely important to East Coast Brokers & Packers Inc., based in Mulberry, FL. "We expect to have plenty of volume and all sizes of round tomatoes and vine-ripened tomatoes," reports Robert Meade, director of grape tomatoes.

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“Interestingly enough, local produce means something different to everyone. For some of our customers, locally grown means within a certain radius or where they live and shop. To others, locally grown means within the region. And yet to others, it means within the state or geographic states in which they live.”

— Maria Brous, Publix Super Markets Inc.

“Grape and cherry tomatoes also will be promotable in October and November. Pole cucumbers will be available in late October with excellent quality. We appreciate the support the Florida Department of Agriculture Fresh from Florida promotions provide to help us sell our tomatoes and cucumbers.”

Duda Farm Fresh Foods Inc., based in Oviedo, FL, is supportive on the Fresh from Florida campaign, and any item it markets in a sleeve or package will carry the logo. The company plans to unveil new packaging options at the fall Produce Marketing Association convention in Orlando.

Duda markets a variety of produce items, and its celery crop is expected to be ready the second week in December, two weeks earlier than usual, according to Jason Bedsole, Eastern region sales manager. “We will also have organic celery available,” he adds. “Some new items, such as Napa, bok choy, baby bok choy, cilantro, parsley and baby napa — sometimes called Chinese cabbage — will be introduced and we’re putting together a solid marketing program for the corn crop out of Homestead to support our retail customers. In addition, we’re pleased to be back with plans for a strong citrus crop, with promotional volumes of oranges and tangerines.”

“We’ve always been pleased to be a Florida grower and are especially pleased to have a Florida-grown product available as the Fresh from Florida campaign moves into the fall and winter season,” says Mary Ostlund, director of marketing for Homestead-based Brooks Tropicals LLC. “The Slimcado from Florida is the special product the firm will be marketing this fall and winter season. It’s special because it has half the fat and a third fewer calories than the familiar Haas avocado. The Food Network, blogs and the social networks have been excellent public relations for us. Latino customers have been particularly responsive to the information about our avocado.”

“We are supporters of the Fresh from

Florida campaign and like the locally grown aspect,” states Tom O’Brien, president of C & D Fruit and Vegetable Co. Inc., based in Bradenton, FL. “We’re glad to be back looking forward to a better year for Florida produce. Last year was the worst Florida weather I’ve ever experienced, and when weather dramatically affects the availability of fresh produce, as it did, retailers and foodservice can really help us by explaining this to their customers.” The firm, a grower/shipper of many Florida produce items, can provide both full and mixed loads for its customers.

“Crop availability will depend on our weather this fall and the readily available funding from Florida banks that has been hard to secure,” notes Chuck Weisinger, president of Ft. Myers-based Weis-Buy Farms Inc., headquartered in Fort Myers. “Notwithstanding this, we expect fairly normal plantings of peppers, cucumbers and tomatoes. The industry wants to make sure that our ultimate customer — the consumer — has the cleanest, most nutritious produce available and it is on the cusp of traceability and sustainability programs,” he continues. “The Florida phytosanitary rules are among the strongest in the nation, and most of our receivers demand this certification. With the Florida freeze of last year, many of our customers were denied the tasty and flavorful Florida fruits and vegetables they anticipated. This fall, there is a big demand for the uniqueness of our Fresh from Florida” produce and its promotional campaign.”

Weis-Buy Farms is part of an informal national “Think Global, Buy Local” network. The network has been using the phrase “locavore” to market local produce and has contacted some of the more famous members of the culinary profession to assist in marketing produce. “Jim Gray, the TV chef, and local Fort Myers chef Shannon Yates, who has presided over dinners at the James Beard House in New York City, have helped guide our efforts,” adds Weisinger.

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Red River Valley Potatoes: Food With a Story

Despite the unique characteristics of Red River Valley potatoes, national retailers must do more to promote their origin. **BY BOB JOHNSON**

Red River Valley potatoes are a product with a story that starts with heavy, organically rich soils straddling the border between Minnesota and the Dakotas. The heavy soils of this valley are able to hold enough water from winter rain and snow to support the potatoes to the end of the growing season without additional irrigation. This dry farm technique gives the potatoes a deep red color and a flavor all their own.

"The Red River Valley is truly a unique growing area, and the only region of the country where red potatoes are grown in large quantities without irrigation," asserts Ted Kreis, marketing and communications director of the Northern Plains Potato Growers Association, based in East Grand Forks, MN. "The Red River Valley black soil is very heavy, but not sandy, which means it can retain moisture from rain much longer. This allows the potatoes to grow naturally, which gives them more flavor, and also a naturally darker red skin."

Growers from the Red River Valley region of Minnesota and North Dakota are convinced

that this more natural growing process produces better-tasting potatoes. "We're all dry land, or 90 percent dry land," remarks Corey Seim, general manager of Northern Valley Growers LLC, headquartered in Hoople, ND. "In my opinion, the potatoes taste better when you don't irrigate."

Potatoes from this region also have a unique bright red color that is even more pronounced in good years. "Red River Valley potatoes are more flavorful and they have a bright red color," says Steve Tweten, president of Buxton, ND-based NoKota Packers Inc.

Red River Valley soil has unusually high organic content, in addition to its high water-holding capacity. Farmers in the region believe this organic content enhances the flavor of the potatoes from this soil. "Normally, we have some nice color to them, and a red coming out of the valley tastes better than a red coming out of Idaho because we have such high organic soil," says Lonnie Spokely, co-owner of Spokely Farms, in Nielsville, MN.

This year's harvest began in early August in central Minnesota, and continued through the

end of the month in North Dakota and the colder areas of northern Minnesota. Red River Valley growers ship all the way from North Dakota to Texas, to the East Coast and out west as far as Nevada, and sometimes California. "We ship to just about everywhere; everybody wants a good quality product," says John McDonald, operations manager at Scott's Transportation Services Inc., based in Grand Forks, ND. Around 85 percent of the firm's potato shipments go to the Central U.S. and to the East Coast.

Not Just Another Red Potato

While growers in the region make a concerted effort to ship their potatoes as grown in the Red River Valley, the origin is usually lost before the potatoes reach the end consumer. "They're shipped as Red River Valley reds, but when they repack, the identity is lost," Spokely says.

Red River Valley potatoes are rarely, if ever, merchandised on the retail level as the unique product of a unique growing region. "Usually the potatoes are marketed as reds, not Red River Valley," reports Seim, who markets under the Red



Ron Gjelsness,
NoKota Packers Inc.



Tim Lee,
NoKota Packers Inc.



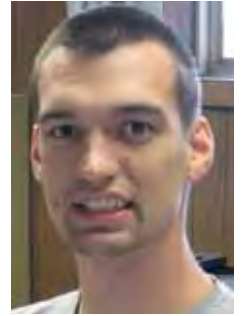
Randall Boushey,
A&L Potato Co. Inc.



Dave Moquist,
O.C. Schulz & Sons Inc.



Corey Seim,
Northern Valley
Growers LLC



James Kerian,
Kerian Machines Inc.

River Valley logo. “We’d like to get the brand recognition out there. Idaho has the brand recognition for russets. There’s a lot of russets grown here, too, but it’s mostly for the processors.”

One reason most of the consuming public does not know about the uniqueness of Red River Valley potatoes is the scarcity of funds to promote this regional product. “Idaho has done a terrific job of promoting their potatoes,” acknowledges Dave Moquist, co-owner of family owned O.C. Schulz & Sons Inc., headquartered in Crystal, ND. “They have about \$8 to \$10 million a year more than we do for promotion; and they have a huge area. They raise a lot of potatoes.”

Another reason Red River Valley potatoes develop an anonymity when they reach the produce department is that most large retailers are interested first in promoting their own brand. “Unfortunately, the retailers have switched to a lot of private label packing,” laments Moquist.

In the case of most major retailers, private label packing gives them an opportunity to develop their own brand name even further. “We don’t do a ton of marketing,” admits Randall Boushey, general manager of A&L Potato Co. Inc., located in East Grand Forks, MN. “They’re harvested as Red River Valley potatoes, but only a small percentage of them are sold that way. The Wal-Marts and Green Giants don’t exactly give in to the Red River Valley theory.”

However, some retailers near the valley do emphasize that their potatoes are locally grown. “It depends on the retailer,” says Paul Dolan, general manager at Grand Forks, ND-based Associated Potato Growers Inc. “The local guys sell them as Red River Valley potatoes, but I don’t know about the others.”

Campaigning For The Red River Valley

The potato farmers from the Red River Valley do invest in a relatively modest promotional campaign. “We facilitate trade shows, a national advertising program,

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Greg Holtman, Paul Dolan and Steve Johnson,
Associated Potato Growers Inc.



Ron Gjelsness, Steve Tweten and Tim Lee,
NoKota Packers Inc.

develop and maintain a Web site and support grower and shippers cooperatives," details Kreis of the Northern Plains Potato Growers Association. "We also have produced two new promotional videos. One is geared toward consumers and the other is aimed at produce buyers. We use the videos on our Web site and at trade shows, and they are also available to our shippers."

Red River Valley potato farmers recently completed a successful promotional campaign to benefit breast cancer research. "Our promotion raised more than \$81,000 for the National Breast Cancer Foundation," reports Kreis. "Every bag sold with a special pink ribbon Qwik-Lok

tag raised money for the organization."

But compared to some other grower groups, Red River Valley farmers do not have the resources to mount a major promotional effort. "We're not spending \$10 million a year telling people that the Red River Valley produces the best red potatoes," say Tweten of NoKota.

But even if much of the general public has not heard the word, produce business insiders generally know about Red River Valley potatoes. "We have great growers who are conscientious about what they do," asserts Dolan.

One shipper is beginning a campaign to promote its red potatoes as an ideal baking alternative. "We label ours primarily as just red

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Ted Kreis and Chuck Gunnerson,
Northern Plains Potato Growers Association



Steve Tweten,
NoKota Packers Inc.

Moquist. “A variety that looks fanciest at harvest may need to be shipped right away.”

Gone are the days when the Red River Valley had a near monopoly on red potatoes. “Fifteen years ago, red potatoes were almost entirely

from the Red River Valley, but now they’re being grown almost everywhere,” points out McDonald of Scott’s Transportation.

That has changed the shipping window for Red River Valley growers. “Our window has changed,” notes A&L Potato’s Boushey. “It used to be we would go until we ran out in the spring, and December to February was pretty much exclusive for us. Wisconsin, Colorado and Idaho are all growing more red potatoes.”

This year, the weather cooperated, and most growers were able to plant their crop a lit-

potatoes, so many of our customers want to put them in their own bag,” says Tom Campbell, co-owner of Grafton, ND-based Campbell Farms, formerly known as Tri-Campbell Farms. “But we’re coming out with a new package of red baking potatoes — a 5-pounder with a handle — aimed at the baking market. There are 11 percent fewer calories in red potatoes than the russet.”

One change in recent years has been in the size standards for premium red potatoes. The current emphasis on separating smaller potatoes and standard or larger potatoes marks a departure from the typical practice from just a few years ago. “There was a time when the most important characteristic were whether the potatoes were medium-sized, around 2½ inches in diameter,” explains James Kerian, co-owner of Kerian Machines Inc., in Grafton, ND. “That was a premium potato.”

Kerian makes machines that sort a variety of fruits and vegetables all over the world, but the firm began sorting potatoes from the Red River Valley decades ago. “These days, there is more interest in sorting out potatoes that are smaller than 1½ inches in diameter,” he adds. “We have adjusted the way we make our rollers to sort these out. It’s really important to everyone to get those sorted out because certain retailers have a premium market for the smaller sized potatoes, while others have trouble selling them.”

The Long Selling Season

Red River Valley potatoes are harvested during a fairly short window in the summer, but they are stored and shipped over a much longer season. “The majority of our potatoes are put in storage because we have a short window for harvest,” reports Moquist of O.C. Schultz & Sons. “Red River Valley potatoes are available from October through the end of May.

Because the potatoes must hold their quality for months before shipping, storability is a key part of deciding which red potato varieties to plant. “Storability is a big issue,” remarks

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Lonnie Spokely
Nielsen, MN

Reader Service # 206

tle earlier than usual. "My impression is they're in pretty good shape this year," hypothesizes Kerian. "They had an opportunity to get in early because we had an early melt. Later on, they had more water than they wanted."

Growers on higher ground in the valley can plant their potatoes in mid-April, while growers on the lower ground wait until early May. "We started harvest in central Minnesota already," McDonald reported in mid-August. "The harvest in North Dakota is in late August."

The wet spring cost a few unfortunate growers some of their red potato yields this year. "What's there looks good, but we had a lot of rain this spring, and there's going to be some losses," recognizes Boushey.

Many other growers also report a generally good crop, despite losses to early season rains. "Too much water early in the spring drowned some of the potatoes out," reveals Spokely of Spokely Farms. "We replanted, and lost them too. But what's left is of good quality."

The quality of the potatoes that made it through the rains does not appear to have been affected. "It looks like a good crop in terms of yield and quality," agrees Campbell of Campbell Farms. "However, we did lose about 5 to 10 percent in the low spots when we had a lot

of rain in April, May and June."

If the early indications hold, the 2010 Red River Valley potato crop will be better than the 2009 crop. "You tell the quality by the appearance," notes Dolan of Associated Potato Growers. "You do some digging and look at the color and shape."

The recession has done little if anything to dampen demand for quality red potatoes at the retail level. "We've seen a little bit of a dip from the restaurants because people can't afford to go out to eat, but the retail has been pretty steady," reports Northern Valley Growers' Seim.

There has also been a temporary slump in demand for processed potatoes, but that segment may be on the rebound. "We have not seen any drop in demand for potatoes for the fresh market; however processed potatoes saw demand dip last year, but are recovering nicely this year, so we are very optimistic," Kreis says.

As the new supply of Red River Valley potatoes hits the produce department, even consumers who have not heard the word will enjoy the flavor and color of this food with a story. "In my opinion, a quality red potato has to be from the Red River Valley. Our soils provide the color and the finish," O&C Schultz & Sons' Moquist says. **pb**



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Figures show plantings of 55,500 acres, a decrease of 400 acres compared to last season's 55,900.

San Luis Valley Potatoes Offer Outstanding Taste And Value

Sustainability through freight advantages, along with smart promotions, should help market this powerhouse of a potato. **BY SANDY LINDBLAD LEE**

Struggling through long periods of low market prices throughout the past season, San Luis Valley potato growers and shippers are looking for reasons to be optimistic that the supply/demand ratio for 2010-11 will yield more positive results.

The Valley's growers have already done their part to help the situation, as planted acreage was reduced this spring. According to Jim Ehrlich, executive director of the Monte Vista, CO-based Colorado Potato Administrative Committee (CPAC), planted figures show a decrease of 400 acres below last season, with 55,500 acres, compared to 2009's 55,900 acres. This mirrors an ongoing trend in this large potato-growing region, which, in 2002, reflected a planted acreage figure as high as nearly 72,000.

The acreage has been reduced voluntarily by members of United Fresh Potato Growers of Colorado, which was organized several years ago as a regional arm of United Potato Growers of America. It was established with the "unilateral intent to bring supply back in bal-

ance with demand," explains Ehrlich.

"Our crop is looking really good right now," Ehrlich reports, "and in other major growing areas, such as Idaho — where the acreage is down 8 percent — we are encouraged."

As harvest and distribution gains momentum in early autumn throughout these Colorado regions, buyers are welcoming the new crop. Aided by marketing assistance provided through CPAC, the appeal of Colorado potatoes is heightened, and fans of this state's potatoes are increasing in numbers.

"The future is bright for potatoes," remarks Ehrlich, "and even brighter for potatoes from Colorado." Colorado ranks as the second largest fresh potato-producing state. Ehrlich points out that it is also the No. 2 state in organic, fresh potato production.

Although the vast majority of the San Luis Valley spud volume is in russet varieties, Ehrlich stresses that Colorado can grow any kind of potato consumers desire. "With more than 60 varieties to choose from, there is a Colorado potato to meet every specification," he states. "And now the USDA is changing stan-

dards, allowing mixed varieties to be packed together, which creates plenty of opportunities for shippers and more options for buyers."

The San Luis Valley's response to the spiraling popularity of specialty varieties is red-, purple- and yellow-fleshed potatoes, which grow particularly well in Colorado. The elongated, thin shape and an assortment of fingerlings have captured the attention of both professional chefs and those creative home cooks who see unique ideas for their families and special guests at dinner parties.

We have tracked positive results on consumer awareness and acceptance of these specialty potatoes, Ehrlich reports. "After four years of commercial distribution, we see measurable consumer interest in the Purple Majesty," a dark purple-fleshed potato. "The same applies with our fingerlings."

Sustainability And Freight Advantage

Variety in sizes, colors and shapes of potatoes are not the only attractive characteristics of potatoes shipped from the San Luis Valley that draw new buyers. This region is a natural



Darren White,
RPE-COLORADO



Shannon Casey,
RPE-COLORADO



Shawna Casey,
RPE-COLORADO



Randy Bache,
SkylinePotato Co.



Jim Ehrlich and Roger Mix,
Colorado Potato Administrative Committee



Ryan Haynie and Michele Peterson,
Aspen Produce LLC



Matt Glowczewski and David Tonso,
Canon Potato Co.

fit for the multitudes that are going green.

“We are more sustainable than any growing area,” stresses CPAC’s Ehrlich. “Buying Colorado potatoes equals less food miles with our freight advantage, and we have less pesticide need and fewer disease problems because of winter kill.”

The majestic, snow-dotted peaks of the Rocky Mountains surrounding the fertile San Luis Valley in Southwestern Colorado provide a showcase of not only beautiful scenery, but ideal growing conditions for potatoes.

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Jim Ehrlich of CPAC serves baked potatoes to one of the 2,000 bicyclists during the 25th annual, week-long Ride the Rockies event.

ter freezing helps naturally sterilize the ground, reducing pest and disease pressures, Ehrlich explains. Cool weather also contributes to a smoother-skinned potato.

Adding to the potatoes' allure is the Valley's centralized location, which provides a natural freight advantage and is becoming even more appealing as the popularity of buying locally-grown skyrockets. "While retailers continue to strive to be more green, Colorado's freight advantage is always in our favor," Ehrlich adds.

Pam Dunning, fresh potato buyer at Ideal Sales Inc., headquartered in Dallas, TX, concurs. "Colorado potatoes can be delivered to our customers in one or two days, which make them fresher and reduces shrink." She adds that one-stop potato shopping available through a single growing region can be another way to save on freight costs.

The 800-mile trip from the San Luis Valley to the Dallas-Fort Worth delivery points "can sometimes even be done overnight," Dunning notes. Ideal Sales services both retail and food-service distributors. Monte Vista, CO-based Harvest Select is a wholly owned subsidiary of Ideal Sales.

As consumers continue to tighten their belts facing a questionable economic future, "They will be turning more to potatoes as a nutritional and versatile way to feed their families for pennies on the dollar," adds Dunning.

"The freight advantage is the primary reason we buy potatoes from Colorado," emphasizes Warren Workman, vice president of produce at Minyard Food Stores Inc., a 13-store supermarket chain based in Coppell, TX. With locations centered in the Dallas-Ft. Worth region, Minyard stores feature San Luis Valley potatoes because they are "are well-established in this market," sates Workman.

"Price is also very important to our customers." San Luis Valley potatoes have good delivery and consistent quality, Workman adds, and they maintain their freshness because of their close proximity to the Dallas-Ft. Work market.

"The industry is realizing, with freight being what it is, sales and distribution will become more regional," stresses Dwayne Weyers, part owner of Center, CO-based Aspen Produce LLC. "It's a changing world, and we have to change with it."

Economically A Perfect Fit

David Tonso, president and CEO of Canon Potato Co. Inc., headquartered in Center, CO, stresses, "In times like these, when people are getting back to simplicity, there's nothing more basic than the value, nutrition and great taste of Colorado potatoes."

Added to those attributes are an often-overlooked factor — they are convenient. "Potatoes can be a great convenience food," emphasizes Weyers. "and potatoes are still one of the best values in the produce department — in the entire grocery store, even."

General manager of Center, CO-based Skyline Potato Co., Randy Bache, says he expects a continued rise in popularity of the 8-lb. poly bag option for retail customers. "During these uncertain economic times, people are looking for the best value," he notes. "The 8-lb. bag can be a better value because there is less wasted food. We have to make sure the price of our fresh product doesn't get too high, or people will switch from fresh to canned or frozen."

Skyline's holdings also include Purely Organic, a separate packing facility, for its organic volume. "We've got a nice organic program that has taken 17 years to develop," Bache reveals. "Because of the varying popularity of

WHAT'S NEW IN THE VALLEY?

Aspen Produce LLC, Center, CO: Michele Peterson joined the sales staff at Aspen Produce in December. Prior to joining Aspen, Peterson worked at Harvest Select in Monte Vista, CO, for 10 years. Her husband is a third-generation potato farmer in the San Luis Valley.

Peterson is the second recent addition to the expanding sales staff at Aspen Produce. Ryan Haynie was brought on at the beginning of the 2008-09 shipping season, succeeding long-time salesman Glenn Stewart, who retired. "Ryan has contributed to our strength in our export program," notes Dwayne Weyers, part owner of Aspen Produce. "His bilingual abilities help us a lot. We did a lot more export last year."

Weyers also reports that the company has added "new palletizers, new balers and other new equipment. We keep upgrading our equipment to improve our quality and services to our customers."

Canon Potato Company, Center, CO: "We're working on relationships to offer fingerlings to our clients," announces president and CEO David Tonso. "That's another step in keeping Canon Potato a 'one-stop shop' for our customers. We offer russets, reds and yellow potatoes and will custom-pack to our customers' specifications." Tonso adds that yellow-flesh varieties continue to rise in popularity. "We shipped more yellows last year than we ever have," he reports.

Tonso also emphasizes, "With a special focus on food safety and sanitation, we've made key upgrades in our warehouse. Now we are perfectly positioned to answer the constantly evolving needs of the potato industry."

Harvest Select, Monte Vista, CO: This wholly-owned subsidiary of Dallas, TX-based Ideal Sales Inc. has completed upgrades in response to customer demand for more specific and uniform sizing on potatoes. Pam Dunning, fresh potato buyer with Ideal Sales, explains, "A lot of customers want a narrower size profile on their potatoes, and we've made improvements in our packing process to answer

that need."

Harvest Select is also working on developing a premium carton line, which is an additional sorting line for the best-of-the-best potatoes to be separated from the rest. A new packing line for No. 2-grade potatoes is also in place this season.

Mountain Valley Produce LLC, Center, CO: Continuing to develop the Fingerling markets for its foodservice and retail receivers, the company has made great strides in its abilities to store and increase the shelf-life of these delicate specialty potatoes, notes Ernie Myers, general manager. "Because of our advanced temperature control capabilities, we've been able to experiment with quality improvements of our fingerlings in storage with great results," he reports. "We were still shipping fingerlings in July and early August, which were potatoes we were able to keep from last fall's harvest."

RPE-Colorado, Monte Vista, CO: RPE, based in Bancroft, WI, opened a Colorado office in July. RPE-Colorado is the sales agent for Monte Vista, CO-based Hi-Land Potato Co., which specializes in Colorado russets and specialties. It also will represent other Colorado growers.

Darren White recently joined the sales staff of RPE's newly opened Colorado branch. White joins RPE after spending nine years at Farm Fresh LLC, where he helped earn the 2009 Colorado Governor's Award for Excellence in Exporting after establishing a potato export program in Mexico, according to Russell Wysocki, president of RPE. White is excited to be a part of RPE's team, saying, "It's great to be a part of a true team atmosphere, and I'm looking forward to the challenge of building a great name for RPE right here in my home area of the San Luis Valley of Colorado."

White joins potato industry veterans Shannon and Shawna Casey, who became a part of the RPE team when the Colorado office was opened. Shannon Casey oversees sales, while Shawna handles customer support.

The Colorado office is one of several offices RPE has opened during the past

year, including locations in Minnesota, Illinois, Idaho and Georgia. It also recently launched its joint venture, Tasteful Selections, which features small specialty potatoes, with two other companies. Wysocki emphasizes, "Our growth is a product of our long-term strategic plan. We have made a conscious effort to expand our position as a category leader, and it is important to not only be close to our customers, but also close to our products. Our new Colorado office allows both."

Skyline Potato Company, Center, CO: Roger Christensen joined the Skyline sales staff in March. General manager, Randy Bache, notes that Christensen "has been a great addition and has brought in many new customers to the company. He's the most tenacious person I've ever met." Christensen brings with him experience in sales and management. He is also a San Luis Valley potato grower.

Bache also reports that the company is in the process of purchasing the former Blue Chip Potato Co. warehouse. Skyline had been leasing the building for several seasons prior to making the move toward the purchase. The Blue Chip facility is used for storage and processing of bulk shipments. Bache predicts that Skyline may eventually renovate that facility and convert it to an organic shed. The current company holdings also include Purely Organic, which has a separate packing shed to handle organics. "Eventually, the Purely shed may be used for our conventional potatoes."

Worley & McCullough Inc., Monte Vista, CO: L & M Companies Inc., based in Raleigh, NC, is now the exclusive marketing agent for Worley & McCullough. According to Tracy Fowler, general manager of potatoes and onions for L & M, all potato sales and marketing for this company will be handled through L & M.

Worley & McCullough broke its ties last season with Monte Vista, CO-based Farm Fresh Direct LLC, which had been coordinating sales and shipments for several years before company owners decided to implement the change. **pb**

organics, a lot of handlers jump in to organics, and then jump right back out. We've had a consistent supply for our customers."

Skyline markets a portion of its organic volume through Food Source Inc., a Monterey,

CA-based company that uses Tomorrow's Organic label. "At the same time, we sell our own Nature Fresh organic label, which is available in the 3-, 5-, and 50-lb. containers through Skyline," Bache details. "We will also pack pri-

vate labels for organics."

"Potatoes are a good food source during tough economic times," touts Jim Knutzon, president and CEO of Monte Vista, CO-based Farm Fresh Direct LLC. "Historically, there is

a direct correlation of announced recessions and more at-home eating of potatoes. Plus, when food prices are high — and they are predicted to continue to increase — potatoes are perceived as an even better value.”

Ernie Myers, general manager of Mountain Valley Produce LLC, headquartered in Center, CO, agrees. “Consumers need to be reminded that potatoes are still one of the greatest values in the produce department, and they need more education relating to their versatility.”

“We’re encouraging our customers to continue to promote potatoes as recession-proof,” adds Jed Ellithorpe, partner and marketing

director at Aspen Produce. “What else can you buy for 10 cents a pound?”

Multiply that value with the added bonus of being good for the environment and you’ve got a win-win. “People want to support locally grown to help cut fuel usage and cut costs,” Bache notes. “That’s good for all of us.”

According to Ray Keegan of American Produce LLC, a Denver, CO-based receiver that services retail and foodservice accounts, “Colorado potatoes are fresher; they have more flavor and variety; and they are convenient and economical. They are the best answer for my customers.” **pb**

Side Note

CPAC ACTIVITIES

Sponsoring Olympic gymnast Rachael Flatt, a promotion with 2,000 *Ride the Rockies* bicyclists and hosting the National Potato Council’s summer meeting are among the numerous activities the Monte Vista-based Colorado Potato Administrative Committee is involved in to draw ongoing attention to Colorado potatoes.

Reigning U.S. Olympic figure skating champion Flatt continues to represent CPAC at various promotions and special events. Flatt won the U.S. Figure Skating Championships, in Spokane, WA, earlier this year, which secured her berth at the Olympics. The recent high school graduate lives in Colorado Springs, CO, and is considered a major contender in the sport. Linda Weyers, CPAC administrator, notes that Flatt is a “wholesome, all-American role model and perfect match for Colorado potatoes.”

CPAC’s marketing message for the 2010-2011 season focuses on the health benefits of potatoes. “Rachel’s physical and intellectual attributes provide a great role model for all of that,” stresses Weyers.

Weyers reports Flatt’s personal appearance at the National Potato Council (NPC) meeting held in the San Luis Valley in June was one of the several events in which she will be involved. The meeting was lead by Colorado potato grower with Center, CO-based Mix Farms, Roger Mix, who is also the reigning president of the National Potato Council.

Concurrently with the final day of the National Potato Council meeting, CPAC held a wildly successful promotion

during the *Ride the Rockies* event. “This year marked the 25th annual bicycle tour, which takes 2,000 riders on a week-long, challenging, 532-mile ride through the Rocky Mountains during June,” Weyers explains. CPAC served baked potatoes to riders as a nutritional refuel midway through their journey. “It gets the word out about the nutrition of our potatoes,” he adds, “and riders from all over the country participate in this event,” resulting in a global reach of the message.

Olympian Rachael Flatt will also be doing several appearances on Denver television stations touting the nutritional benefits of Colorado potatoes. During the autumn season, Flatt will again help draw the spotlight on Colorado potatoes at the annual Potato Festival, which will be celebrated Sept. 11 this year in Monte Vista. The festival includes cooking demonstrations and contest featuring chefs from the Colorado Chapter of the American Culinary Federation, field and warehouse tours, “taste tours,” games and other activities, announces Weyers. The newly published CPAC cookbook will be available at the event and can also be ordered on the committee’s Web site.

The Produce Marketing Association’s annual trade show and convention is another major event for CPAC, and the San Luis Valley potato booth will be a part of the Colorado Pavilion at the PMA Fresh Summit in Orlando October 15-18. The committee has its own booth space as well as independent shipper representation from the San Luis Valley. **pb**

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Reader Service # 106

10 Ways To Sweeten Apple Sales Year-Round

With new varieties popping up every year adding to an already powerful category, retailers must stay vigilant to what works, and what doesn't. **BY CAROL BAREUTHER, RD**



The greatest challenge to merchandising the apple category is that there are so many choices.

Entice customers to buy an apple a day. It's a surefire way to keep produce department sales healthy. That's because the apple category is a major dollar contributor, ranking 4th in total produce performance during the 52-week period ending June 26, 2010, according to the Perishables Group, a Chicago, IL-based market research firm.

Ed Osowski, director of produce and floral for Martin's Super Markets Inc., a 20-store chain based in South Bend, IN, says, "Apples are still a growth category for us and they will stay a growth category for the foreseeable future. The greatest challenge with the apple category is that there are so many choices. In my opinion, the right marketing to customers, especially on flavor profile and usages, can grow the apple category to be as big as or bigger than berries in the future."

The following ten tips are sure to boost apple sales.

1. Stock Best-Sellers

Year-round best-selling apple varieties at Martin's Super Markets are Gala and Fuji,

according to Osowski. "However, Honeycrisp takes over the top spot during the window when it's available in the fall," he says.

Ten varieties of apples represented 83 percent of all apple sales in 2009, according to the Perishables Group. By dollars, and in descending order, these were Gala, Red Delicious, Fuji, Granny Smith, Golden Delicious, Honeycrisp, McIntosh, Braeburn, Pink Lady and Empire. In volume, the varieties stayed the same and only the order changed with McIntosh swapping the sixth place position over Honeycrisp.

Gala has been on an upward track to overtake Red Delicious in volume and dollar sales for some time, remarks Loren Queen, marketing and communications manager for Domex Superfresh Growers LLC, headquartered in Yakima, WA. "Consumers like sweeter apples, and varieties such as Gala and Fuji are finding favor nationwide."

In Michigan, where Red Delicious is still No. 1, Denise Donohue, executive director of the DeWitt, MI-based Michigan Apple Committee (MAC), says, "Gala has surpassed Golden Delicious for the No. 2 slot in terms of weekly shipments for fresh sales. That's a big change."

There are still a lot of plantings of Gala going into the ground, adds Brianna Shales, communications specialist for Stemilt Growers LLC, based in Wenatchee, WA, "It's a good storage apple, which enhances year-round demand and sales."

Don Armock, president of Riveridge Produce Marketing Inc., in Sparta, MI, reports, "We're seeing a replanting of older strains with newer ones that offer better color, like a more solidly striped Gala."

In Canada's Pacific Northwest, Maggie Peek, marketing manager for B.C. Tree Fruits Ltd., in Kelowna, British Columbia, remarks, "Royal Gala is the most popular."

In spite of Gala's appeal, Red Delicious still has a strong following, notes Andy Tudor, director of marketing for Yakima, WA-based FirstFruits Marketing of Washington LLC, which sells fruit grown by Broetje Orchards. "Washington will always grow the best Red Delicious in the world. With the advent of SmartFresh technology, we're able to market a consistently sweet and crunchy Red all year."

"Fuji is a mature variety, but we're still seeing growth," adds Queen.

Back by popular demand

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Alex Ott, executive director of the Fresno, CA-based California Apple Commission (CAC), reveals, "Our Fuji production was down due to plantings in the wrong place during the 1990s. The apples that grew had great sugars, but they were green and difficult to market because of this. Now, replanting in a different area has increased the crop size to 350,000 boxes this year."

Todd Hultquist, director of communications and membership for the U.S. Apple Association, in Vienna, VA, notes, "Granny Smith is

strong and has remained in the Top Five for some time."

The No. 1 apple variety grown in California is Granny Smith, reports Ott. "Grannies represent 51 percent or about 1.5 million boxes for the state."

It's the warm days and cool nights that give California-grown Granny Smiths their deep green color without a red blush, explains Dan Spain, vice president of sales and marketing for Kingsburg Orchards, in Kingsburg, CA. "We get good size, color and sugars, which makes

our Grannies in high demand."

Sandy Cohen, president of Cohen Produce Marketing, headquartered in Aspers, PA, asserts, "Honeycrisp is the hot apple. It's more available now, but difficult to grow, so it will always be a premium apple."

Domex's Queen agrees, "In some regions, like the Midwest, Honeycrisp has displaced Gala as the dollar sales leader. The average retail nationwide is double and triple that of Gala or Red Delicious, and the opening price can be as high as \$3 or more per pound."

Comparing the 2008-09 to the 2009-10 seasons, Honeycrisp increased 22 percent in production, with retail dollars gaining 30 percent and retail volume by 56 percent, according to The Perishables Group.

Fred Wescott, president of Elgin, MN-based Wescott Agri-Products Inc., marketers of Honey Bear brand Honeycrisp apples, remarks, "We expect to see a 15 percent increase in Honeycrisp production across the country this season, putting us in the 1.5 to 2 million box range."

The biggest challenge moving forward, says Wescott, is maintaining quality fruit. "Honeycrisp is site-specific, and production of fruit from poor growing areas is increasing at a faster rate than from good growing areas," he warns. "This means buyers need to be able to recognize a good quality Honeycrisp in terms of flavor, texture and color and resist the urge to buy lesser quality at a lower price, or this could undermine the variety in the future."

Going forward, Wescott says growers are looking for ways to extend the season past December. Unfortunately, Honeycrisp doesn't respond well to current controlled-atmosphere technology. In addition, the search is still ongoing for ideal growing sites in Southern hemisphere countries such as Chile and New Zealand.

McIntosh and Empire are the top-selling apples in East Coast states such as New York, says Peter Gregg, communications and marketing spokesman for the New York Apple Association (NYAA), in Fishers, NY. "These are our bread-and-butter varieties with strong consumer recognition, although the state produces more than 20 varieties commercially."

The McIntosh is also grown in volume in Michigan, Ontario and British Columbia.

According to Alan Taylor, marketing director for Yakima, WA-based Pink Lady America LLC, "Production of Pink Lady apples is expected to increase 5 percent this season."

2. Up-And-Comers And Seasonal Sellers

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seen this historically, for example, with the introduction of the Red Delicious in the 1950s, the Granny Smith in the 1970s, Galas in the 1990s and Honeycrisp in the 2000s. Yet, it's hard to tell in advance what will be a hit and what will be a miss.

Bob Van Liew, produce director at Associated Wholesalers Inc., (AWI) in Robesonia, PA, which services more than 2,000 retail supermarkets, says, "We pay attention to developments in new varieties. If our independent retailers see something new they want to bring in-store, we'll source it for them. It's important to introduce new apple varieties, either imports or domestic, to keep the mix fresh and exciting for customers."

At Martin's Super Markets, Osowski says, "Newer varieties like Jazz have sold well for us."

This will be the second year that Wenatchee, WA-based Columbia Marketing International Corp. (CMI), markets the Kiku, an extremely sweet apple with Fuji parentage that harvests in mid-October. The Kiku is also grown in the Midwest, Michigan and Pennsylvania. Bob Mast, CMI's vice president of marketing, says, "We expect a limited volume of about 25,000 cartons."

Ambrosia, a new cultivar originating in

British Columbia, is another relatively new apple variety grown and marketed by CMI for the past four seasons. It harvests in October and is available into the spring. Regarding this newer variety, Mast reports, "We have more than 600 acres in the ground and expect upwards of 250,000 boxes this season."

Sonya, a cross between a Gala and Red Delicious, is an additional new variety that starts harvest in late October. Chuck Sinks, president of sales and marketing for Sage Fruit Co. LLC, headquartered in Yakima, WA, discloses, "This will be our third season marketing the Sonya and we expect to have 150,000 boxes available."

FirstFruits Marketing introduced the Opal, a cross between a Golden Delicious and Topaz, three seasons ago. New apple varieties benefit from a proper introduction into this crowded category, emphasizes Tudor. "We only allow this apple into markets/retailers that are willing to partner with our comprehensive retail/media and social marketing program to bring information of Opal to the consumer," he details.

Another way to gain shelf space and consumer recognition in a jam-packed market is to bring in and promote a newer variety outside the peak fall season. Suzanne Wolter, direc-

tor of marketing for the Rainier Fruit Co., headquartered in Selah, WA, maintains, "Our sales strategy with the Lady Alice, which we've been marketing for four seasons now, is to hold the apple in controlled atmosphere storage until late February and release it to retail in March after many of the local varieties and most of the Honeycrisp are out of the market. Retail sales were excellent this past season with many reporting next year they anticipate three-fold growth."

Cameo apple marketing is taking a similar late season approach. This change in strategy follows on the heels of a scientific consumer taste test administered at Washington State University in June. "Results of the test," reveals Kevin Precht, marketing program director for the Wenatchee, WA-based Cameo Apple Marketing Association (CAMA), "showed that the Cameo maintained its crisp crunch after being stored in controlled atmosphere storage better than other varieties. Therefore, we're repositioning the Cameo as the king of the late season apples and will market it more aggressively from April to June."

3. Offer Organics

Sales of organic apples are a niche, admits

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Tom Williams, produce senior operations specialist for Cub Foods, a 73-store chain based in Stillwater, MN, and a subsidiary of the Eden Prairie, MN-based SuperValu. “However, organics in general have been a good category for us and we see sales as growing, especially as the price between organic and conventional gets closer,” he adds. “We usually have at least two organic items in our ad each week. What’s offered is seasonal. For example, organic apples will be featured in fall ads.”

Organic slices of apples continue to grow, reports Steve Lutz, the executive vice president of the Perishables Group. “Even though the growth rate is slower than prior to the recession, it is still high single digits, and not flat like the rest of the produce category,” he says.

The core organic buyer is still loyal and present, says FirstFruit’s Tudor. “We also see surprising growth in the 20- to 30-year-old age group, especially college students,” he adds.

Organic apple sales represented 4.5 percent of category dollar sales in 2009, according to Perishables Group data.

“One key way to stimulate organic apple sales,” says Stemilt’s Shales, “is to sell varieties that consumers demand, such as Gala and Honeycrisp.”

“We pay attention to developments in new varieties. If our independent retailers see something new they want to bring in-store, we’ll source it for them. It’s important to introduce new apple varieties, either imports or domestic, to keep the mix fresh and exciting for customers.”

— Bob Van Liew, Associated Wholesalers Inc.

Secondly, offer a full organic program. CMI will market its new Daisy Girl brand of organic apples this season. Mast explains the concept behind the new brand. “The idea is to go after the non-organic shopper with a bright, colorful campaign that includes bags, tote bags, boxes and 2-box shipper displays. We offer all of our apple varieties in organic except for the Kiku, Rubens and Grapples. Supplies are especially good on organic Galas and Fujis.”

Third, display organic and conventional apples side by side, recommends the Perishables Group’s Lutz. “This way, consumers don’t have to hunt for the organics,” he points out. “If you put the organics in a low traffic area, you’ll lose customer exposures. We’ve seen 20 percent as the magic price premium for organ-

ics. Beyond this, you’ll lose customers.”

4. Stock Enough Variety

Eight varieties of Michigan-grown bagged apples and 10 varieties of apples sourced from around the nation are on display in the produce departments of Martin’s Super Markets in the fall. “In the summer,” says Osowski, “apples are still a good seller, but we’ll drop to eight to 10 SKUs due to competition from summer fruit like peaches, grapes and berries.”

Similarly, Cub Foods stocks upwards of 18 varieties of apples during the fall peak of harvest, reports Williams. “In the winter and spring, once the local and regional deals are done, we’ll carry just 10 of the standard varieties such as Gala, Fuji, Braeburn, Granny

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Smith, Pink Lady and Jazz,” he details.

It’s crucial to offer a good variety of apples, asserts Stemilt’s Shales. “In addition to core varieties, rotate in more seasonal varieties and promote them at the same time,” she suggests. “We suggest an Apple-of-the-Month promotion that highlights new or seasonally available apples and provides customers with in-depth information about the variety.”

Education is vital to selling a bounty of apples, adds Cub Food’s Williams. “We use signage and in-store charts above the apple display to let customers know the flavor of each apple, how to select it, store it and use it in recipe applications. This has enabled us to sell more apples and more of different varieties.”

5. Gain Incremental Sales With Two Size Programs

Offering two sizes of the most popular apples is a great advantage for both customers and retailers, says Riveridge’s Armock. “It addresses the needs of families with children or seniors who can’t eat an entire standard 80-count bulk apple,” he explains. “As merchandisers, we want to see all the same size apples in a display. Perhaps, though, it might be more effective to have two or three sizes like 100s and 138s mixed into the display and all for the same price.”

“Typically,” says B.C. Tree Fruit’s Peek, “retailers will offer a two-size program in high volume varieties such as Royal Gala and McIntosh and during special promotions with a grower around a particular variety.”

Regarding this year’s Washington state crop, which due to a cold spring will anchor in the 100 to 88 range, a two-size program is smart and viable, says FirstFruit’s Tudor. “However, there will be a premium FOB for larger sizes. So, depending on a retailer’s demographic, we need to discuss whether their second size is better in a smaller 100- to 113-size program or a 3- or 5-lb. bag,” he remarks. “It all depends on a retailer’s percent of the apple category in bag versus bulk to make the right call.”

6. Promote Packaged Apples

“The beauty of bulk and bagged apple promotions is that it offers an opportunity to provide customers with two different price points,” contends Williams. “Bagged promotions especially allow us to pass on a value to our customers. For example, if a grower has some 125- or 138-size apples they want to move, we’ll work with them and offer the apples to our customers in 3- or 5-lb. bags on special for one to two weeks.”

Bagged apple promotions can also help



PHOTO COURTESY OF STEMILT GROWERS LLC

Stemilt offers eye-catching display shippers to merchandise apples.

retailers offer a solution to a particular customer demographic. “For example,” says AWI’s Van Liew, “Keith Fetterolf, the produce manager at Foodland in Lebanon, Pennsylvania, asked us to help him source a small apple as many of his customers were either seniors or families with small children. We lined up a source of new crop 196-size apples that Fetterolf marketed in bags advertised as ‘mini-me’s.’”

Tote bags are popular for seasonal merchandising, adds Martin’s Osowski. “You can sell apples that aren’t perfectly sized or shaped in a tote, akin to a Farmer’s Market look, and give customers a value price point while moving volume at the same time,” he explains.

Mother Nature often determines how each year’s apple crop will size out and if there will be a greater percentage of large apples for bulk sales or smaller apples for bagged promotions, says Rainier Fruit’s Wolter. “This year, retailers can expect opportunity buys for bags,” she reports. “Given the current economy and consumer gravitation to value buys, we believe it’s an opportune time to offer 5-, 8- and 10-lb. bags.”

“Last year,” says Riveridge’s Armock, “a retailer asked us to provide a 10-lb. drawstring bag filled with Northern Spy apples. The bag had a pie recipe printed on it. The product had great sell through.” Armock adds, “We’ve also packed 2-lb. bags for some customers who want to hit a lower per-unit price point and a 5-unit sleeve of apples for lunchbox marketing.”

“The tote bag business has grown during the last six years,” maintains Cohen Produce Marketing’s Cohen,

Sage Fruit’s Sinks adds, “We’ve seen a 25 to 65 percent lift in sales of totes. For example, sales were so strong that one retailer who carried apples in totes for one month expanded the program to two months last year and plans

to offer them for five months this season.”

Stemilt Growers will offer a new family-farmed tote bag this season made out of a clear material, which allows customers to see the apples inside. It can be merchandized in a matching secondary display unit that can be placed at the front of the store or in other high traffic areas.

“Beyond bags and totes,” Wescott Orchard’s Wescott says, “some retail customers have requested 5-lb. corrugated boxes for Honeycrisps.”

Jim Mertz, co-owner of Symms Fruit Ranch Inc., in Caldwell, ID, concludes, “In general, each retailer has its own requirements for packaging and we’re very responsive to that.”

7. Build Apple-Tizing Displays

Tips for building an effective apple display, according to Stemilt’s Shales, include “color breaks, signage with information about each variety, an assortment of bulk and bagged, high quality well-rotated product and a large enough display size.”

At Martin’s Super Markets, Osowski says, “We’ll offer 24 feet of bulk apples and 16 to 20 feet of bagged apples in the fall. Come summer, we’ll cut back on square footage, but only by

about 25 percent. Apples are a major category for us year-round.”

Meanwhile, at Cub Foods, Williams says, “We’ll use Grannies, Goldens and Reds as color breaks between similar-looking apples such as Fuji, Jazz and Braeburn. Bulk tray-pack and bagged apples sit on Euro tables, and we’ll move bags to refrigerated displays later in the season to maintain quality. For secondary displays and special promotions, we put totes of apples on pallet-sized slammer tables that we can move around so the displays don’t stay too static. The tables are also great for creating additional space for something like a 3-day promotion and demo of a particular apple variety.”

“Bins are popular in large chain stores,” says B. C. Tree Fruit’s Peek. “It’s a great way to showcase the product, gain greater display space and greater sales.”

8. Cross-Merchandise

“Caramel dip, apple crisp mix and apple cider are products many of our retailers cross-merchandise with apples,” states AWI’s Van Liew. “They’ll also often include bakery items such as muffins and pies.”

Fowler Farm’s Peters says, “Display flour,

sugar and all the ingredients for pie-baking with apples in the fall.”

Cross-merchandise corers and slicers in an apple display too, advises MAC’s Donohue. “Focus group research revealed many moms used these utensils to prepare apples for their kids.”

“Put a secondary display of apples in the deli next to the cheese,” recommends Peters.

“Think savory dishes,” says Kelly Ciceran, general manager of the Ontario Apple Growers, in Vineland Station, Ontario, Canada “and put a basket of apples over in the meat department next to pork or chicken.”

9. Sell Health

“Consumers are increasingly reaching for ‘functional foods,’” acknowledges Rainier’s Wolter, “so retailers should incorporate the health benefits of apples into their signage, ads, Web sites, social media or any place they have the ability to communicate consumers.”

New this year, Sage Fruit will launch its Kids in Force program, an initiative designed to encourage kids to eat healthfully and exercise regularly. Sinks says, “Participating retailers in target markets can use the official logo and/or Apple Buddy logo in-store and displayed on

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stand-up displays, signage, apple bins and bags.” In-store POS is accompanied by an online downloadable program that kids can use to monitor their eating and exercise and receive rewards for their successes such as Frisbees, yo-yos and jump ropes.

Earlier this year, the Pink Lady brand partnered with the newly formed Healthy Weight Commitment Foundation, a national multi-year effort designed to help reduce obesity — especially childhood obesity — by 2015. Currently, there are 40 member companies, including retailers such as Safeway, HyVee and Schnucks. Taylor says, “This partnership puts Pink Lady in a unique position as not only the first ‘partner apple,’ but it opens up a number of new opportunities to be involved with many others in the obesity battle,” says Taylor.

10. Ads And Promotion

Cub Food’s Williams says, “Apples are an item you can put in an ad and always know you can see it. Plus, it’s surprising how much more you can sell with the right ad at the right time.”

Locally grown ads are big at Martin’s Super Markets in the fall, says Osowski. “We run an annual Michigan harvest fest with 10 varieties on ad and in massive displays during two

weeks in October,” he details.

As the seasons change, so does the strategy in apple merchandising, acknowledges Williams. “Fall is an ideal time to promote apples with pumpkins and other harvest items,” he says. “In January, we’ll tie apple ads into healthful eating and weight loss. We also have a Southern hemisphere program where we’ll feature new crop apples in the summer. Then, in August, the new crop ads will include Southern hemisphere fruit along with domestic Paula Reds that are starting locally.”

AWT’s Van Liew reveals, “Our retailers’ store ads reflect the wide array of apple varieties available and take advantage of market buys throughout the year. For example, ads may be on bulk, bagged or tote apples; there might be one variety in the ad or more, or sometimes a per-each price or line-pricing on several varieties. It’s not static.”

Throughout the year, several organizations offer innovative ways to promote apples year-round. “For example,” says Pink Lady’s Taylor, “we have a trilogy of promotions planned for the 2010-11 season. A New Year’s period promotion will signal an earlier push than normal; we will continue to grow the very popular Valentine’s promotion; and Mother’s Day will

fill out the trilogy.”

Similarly, CAMA will offer recipe-themed promotions with POS kits for Cameo apples at Thanksgiving and Christmas, in January, and for Mother’s Day and Father’s Day. Precht explains, “We’re moving away from pigeonholing promotions for a specific holiday. Instead, we’re encouraging retailers to use these recipes tools to increase late season sales.”

“However, the most important time to promote apples remains in the fall,” says the Perishables Group’s Lutz. “The fourth quarter, especially from mid-September to mid-December, is a critical time for apple sales. If you miss sales in this quarter, you can’t accelerate sales later in the year to get them back. It’s like a limited-time offer that expires. An aggressive fast start to the season is the difference between building momentum or building inventory.” **pb**



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Expectations Are High For This Year's California Citrus Crop

Upcoming California citrus season offers greater varietal selection. **BY BARBARA ROBISON**



Early estimates of Cara Cara Navel volume show a 15-20 percent jump over last year.

The California citrus crop looks promising, with promotable volumes and sizes and an increased varietal selection. “The industry is following up on a positive season last year,” reports Joel Nelsen, president of Exeter-based California Citrus Mutual. “Early Navel orange volume estimates are up, but the fruit needs to size a bit, which may make the harvest begin closer to November 1st. We also hope to have increased volumes of Mandarins due to more trees being planted. There should be plenty of Navels and Mandarins for holiday promotions.”

There are many more citrus varieties coming to market with different profiles and attributes. “In addition to our Navels, we expect to have a wide selection of Mandarins, Tangerines and Tangelos coming into peak seasonality from October through early June to continually keep everyone’s palate satisfied,” says Claire Smith, director of corporate communications for Sunkist Growers Inc., headquartered in Sherman Oaks, CA.

Navel Oranges In Promotable Quantities

The Navel crop could be 10 to 15 percent larger than this past year’s 80 million-carton crop. Indications are that the quality will be good and sizes may be slightly smaller if the

larger size crop materializes. One of the newer Navels gaining in popularity is the Cara Cara. It should make its appearance in December, and early estimates are that the industry could see a 15 to 20 percent jump over this past year’s volume. Each year since the variety was introduced has seen a substantial increase in production as the large amount of acreage that has been planted over the past few years matures. The orange, originating in Venezuela, has an orange exterior and a rich pinkish-red interior. It is low acid, usually seedless and has a sweet flavor with a slight tang. It is high in lycopene, a carotenoid pigment that gives yellow, red and orange vegetables and fruits their color.

“In an attempt to extend the Navel season, there seems to be a proliferation of late varieties, including Late Lanes,” reports Neil Galone, vice president of sales for Orange Cove, CA-based Booth Ranches LLC. “Because we specialize in oranges, to balance our crop inventory we have planted more of the varieties that tend to mature late in the season. We’ve also been impressed with both the appearance and flavor of the spring Navel, available mostly January to April. Our observation is that it has a brighter orange color and richer flavor than the traditional navels typically available at that time of year. There is even a growing base of customers who are willing to

pay more for Spring Navels in season.”

The volume of organic Navels is on the rise as new acreage transitions to organic growth. Sunkist Growers expects its organic navel offerings to increase by 40 percent. Bee Sweet Citrus Inc., located in Fowler, CA, in addition to other California shippers, also recognizes the importance of the organic market and offer different organic citrus varieties.

As more consumers become aware of the Blood Orange, or Moro, as many refer to it, plantings and availability have increased. Available January through mid-April, it is known for its bright red to deep maroon interior and its juicy, sweet flavor with a hint of raspberry. Sizes are usually small to medium, with a thin skin and few or no seeds. The fruit gets its red color from high concentrations of anthocyanin, a powerful antioxidant. Bloods are especially popular in foodservice for salads and desserts.

Mandarin Volume And Selection Grows

Certain varieties of mandarins have been around for a long time, but more recently, new varieties have emerged and the whole category has changed. Terminology can be confusing. Is it a Mandarin, a Tangerine or an exotic? Plus, within those terms there are many new special names. Individual marketing firms are work-

ing to help retailers, wholesalers, foodservice and consumers become aware of the differences and the seasons for each. There are variations in size, appearance and flavor, and favorites can vary.

“Specialty citrus, or easy-peelers, seem to be the continuing bright spot for fresh citrus,” says Nichole Towell, marketing development manager at Duda Farm Fresh Foods Inc., with headquarters in Oviedo, FL.

Probably the biggest change in the category is the increased interest in the Clementine, a small, easy-to-peel citrus that is continually building in popularity. “It is anticipated there will be an increase of about 30 percent in volume this year,” reports Steve Nelsen, managing partner at Valhalla Sales & Marketing Inc., located in Visalia, CA. “They’ll be in the market from the second week in November through March. Because they’ll be available a little earlier, we plan to push our Satsumas earlier than usual to make way for the increased volume of Clementines.”

The Satsuma, available from October to December, peels and segments easily, is seedless, sweet and juicy. Other Mandarins include the Honey, Royal and W.Murcott. “Gold Nuggets and Pixie mandarins appeal to anyone with a sweet tooth, from kids to adults,” comments Sunkist’s Smith.

Scolari’s Food & Drug Co., an 18-store chain headquartered in Sparks, NV, runs quite a few Navel ads. “Our customers like the difference in the California fruit,” says Paul Dziejczak, director of produce operations. “Satsumas, one of my favorites, are popular, especially with kids, and we also support them with ads. We used to handle imported Clementines, but now we offer our customers the domestically grown ones.”

“There are a lot more plantings of the new Mandarin variety Tango, a seedless version of



Ensuring enough retail shelf space for citrus is important to maintaining a fresh eye-catching display.

the W. Murcott, and a late season variety,” notes Joe Berberian, a sale associate with Bee Sweet Citrus. The firm markets a wide variety of citrus and handles mixed loads allowing customers to purchase all their citrus needs from one place.

“While there is a good demand for Clementines during December and January, we find that retailers and consumers are looking for Navels as well,” points out states Galone of Booth Ranches. “Our volume is impacted by the Clementines, but it is certainly not proportional. Demand for Navels is still good, both in domestic and export channels, and retailers still promote Navels when Clementines are available. They realize the varieties have two completely different flavors, with two separate opportunities for promotions.”

Gordon L. Robertson, vice president of sales and marketing at Bakersfield, CA-based Sun World International LLC, reveals, “We market limited volumes of Navels and citrus varieties, such as Satsumas and Fairchild Tangerines. We certainly recognize the growth of the Clementine market, but still see strong business in the more common citrus varieties,

such as Navels.”

Make Way For Meyer Lemons

“Lemons are the second biggest category in the citrus department and the Meyer Lemon will help drive incremental sales in the category due to the higher ring,” explains Duda’s Towell. “Demand for Meyer lemons continues to rise, with a 59 percent increase in retail sales from 2008 to 2009. Retailers are reporting a lift in overall lemon sales dollars when adding Meyer lemons into their lemon category.”

As the foodservice category begins its recovery, shipments of lemons are also on the rise. “Meyer lemons, a favorite among chefs and restaurants for their sweetness, are becoming more mainstream as special handling and increased production make the variety available across the country,” reports Sunkist Growers’ Smith. Other lemon varieties are also now available not only for their ‘lemon-taining’ decorative value, but also for special product attributes, she adds. Varieties include variegated (striped and pin flesh) lemons, seedless lemons and organic lemons.

Fresh lemons seem to go hand-in-hand with spring, but the holiday season is also a time for greater lemon usage, prompting many retailers to feature them in ads and displays. “We like to offer a couple of lemon sizes, such as 95s and 235s, during the Thanksgiving period,” says Lee Reynolds, produce director of Haggen Inc., a 32-store chain headquartered in Bellingham, WA. “We also do more lemon promotions during Christmas/New Year’s time.”

From September through April, although Sun World International markets some Navels and varieties, such as Satsumas and Fairchild, its fall and winter citrus supply consists primarily of lemons, which are not typically on ad like oranges and Mandarins. “However, we do plan contract programs with our retail customers so that we are not subjected to the highs and lows of the citrus

California Citrus Industry Reacts To World Competition

One of the big concerns for California shippers is the proliferation of citrus products being produced throughout the world. U.S. imports have grown as new trade agreements are reached so the domestic industry is not only facing competition abroad, but in U.S. markets as well. Some of the California shippers, wanting to provide adequate supplies throughout the year, are supplementing their own state’s production with imported fruit. Bee Sweet Citrus, based in Fowler, CA, imports lemons, oranges and Mandarins from Chile during the summer months. Sunkist Growers, in Sherman Oaks, CA, brings in fresh limes from Mexico, and Oviedo, FL-based Duda Farm Fresh Foods imports lemons and limes from Mexico, and Clementines from Morocco and Israel.

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market,” states the company’s Robertson.

Grapefruit, Limes And Pummelos Available

California also supplies both white and ruby grapefruit during the fall and winter months. “Grapefruit unfortunately has been given a bad rap with stories regarding prescription medication interaction,” acknowledges Smith. “The reality is there are drug interactions with all kinds of foods and beverages and not all medications have interaction issues with grapefruit. Checking with physicians and pharmacists will help determine what is right for each individual.”

Limes and Pummelos are other citrus fruits coming from California shippers during the fall and winter months. The Pummelo, an exotic, large-size citrus fruit that originated in Asia, has a thick outer yellow skin, white or pink flesh, with a thick membrane surrounding the flesh. It has a sweet flavor and less acid

“Allocating the proper amount of footage for citrus at retail is important to maintaining a fresh looking citrus area. Retailers should determine how much fruit each store can sell within a two- to three-day period and plan space accordingly.”

— Nichole Towell, Duda Farm Fresh Foods Inc.

than grapefruit. It is especially popular with the Asian cultures.

Promotions Key To Building Successful Citrus Sales

Promotions are vital to building fresh citrus sales. “Hot retail prices are good, but consumers love oranges and big displays of fresh, flavorful fruit really move product,” says Galone of Booth Ranches. He suggests merchandising bulk fruit one week and following up with a bag promotion the next week. Also, he has found that bigger bags move more

product and result in a bigger register ring at retail. “Many retailers who did not believe their customers would pick up an 8-lb. bag of oranges are surprised at how well they move,” he adds.

“Allocating the proper amount of footage for citrus at retail is important to maintaining a fresh looking citrus area,” reminds Towell of Duda. “Retailers should determine how much fruit each store can sell within a two- to three-day period and plan space accordingly. Consumers choose their primary shopping store based on the overall

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“It is anticipated there will be an increase [in Clementines] of about 30 percent in volume this year. They’ll be in the market from the second week in November through March. Because they’ll be available a little earlier, we plan to push our Satsumas earlier than usual to make way for the increased volume of Clementines.”

— Steve Nelsen, Valhalla Sales & Marketing Inc.

freshness and quality of the produce.” She also explains that bagged citrus has a positive impact on category sales, but demographics play a major role in determining how much a store should market. Customers in a college-based town or a true urban environment are more apt to shop on an “as-needed” basis and bulk citrus sells well in such areas.

Smith of Sunkist Growers suggests that in addition to the usual fresh produce displays, retailers should use secondary displays in the seafood, meat and beverage areas. With the recent awareness of health issues related to daily sodium intake, the company is offering the perfect S’Alternative, by replacing salt with fresh lemons to enhance the flavor of just about any food. Details about a \$1,000 special recipe contest tied to the S’Alternative idea are available on the company Web site.

“My produce managers really like internal produce display contests,” says Paul Dzedzic of Scolari’s Food & Drug. “They really build staff enthusiasm, better displays and extra sales. I’d like to see the citrus industry do something like that. I’m sure it would be good for everyone involved.”

Bags are an important aspect of selling fresh citrus and Haggan’s Lee Reynolds finds that the 5-lb. bag works well for Satsumas. “Clementines are beginning to take over and the 3-lb. bag is a good size for them,” he suggests. “We used to carry 8-lb. boxes, but with the current economy, the smaller sized bags seem to do better for us. Our customers are very specific about what they buy and most are still shopping by price. We also are seeing a lot more interest in recipes, especially for chicken, and citrus can add a lot of flavor to many chicken dishes.”

When it comes to bags, Volm Co. Inc., in Antigo, WI, is introducing a new mesh product for fresh citrus. “It’s called Ultratech and it provides a lot of merchandising opportunities for the retailer,” says Mike Vierzba, business development and marketing manager. “The material comes in an array of colors and styles of mesh that will complement or contrast with the particular citrus fruit in the bag. A mix of colors or neutral colors is available in a multitude of ways. Labels can be added flat so the graphics on a label really pop out for a better merchandising effect,” he explains. When using the Ultratech product, the mass and weight reduction allow for approximately 33 percent more fruit to be loaded in each truck, saving storage space and transportation costs.

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(From left) Casey Bassetti, Lucky Vana, Doug Turner, Lope Valdez.
Red Blossom, Salinas, California

Reader Service # 150

Five Ways To Reach Out To The Organic Consumer

Despite a burdened economy, organic sales continue to climb, proving the organic customer is here to stay. **BY CAROL BAREUTHER, RD**



Organic produce represents 38 percent of total organic food sales, reaching nearly \$9.5 billion in 2009, up 11.4 percent from 2008.

The sight of overflowing tables or boxes filled to the brim with freshly harvested fruits and vegetables is enough to get anyone's mouth watering. It's no wonder that the number of farmer's markets in the United States has increased to more than 6,000 in 2009 and that the number of farms reportedly marketing products through community supported agriculture (CSA) programs reached nearly 13,000 in 2007, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These shopping options increasingly appeal to consumers who want to buy locally and regionally produced, as well as organic foods.

Organic foods are indeed in demand, despite their sometimes higher price coupled with the recent downturn in the economy. In fact, while total U.S. food sales grew by only 1.6 percent in 2009, according to the Greenfield, MA-based Organic Trade Association's (OTA) 2010 Organic Industry Survey, sales of organic food increased 5.1 percent. Organic fruits and vegetables, which represent 38 percent of total organic food sales, experienced the most growth and reached nearly \$9.5 billion in sales in 2009, up 11.4 percent from 2008.

Most notably, organic produce now repre-

sents about 11 percent of all U.S. fruit and vegetable sales. This category is expected to continue to be robust, with average annual growth for the years 2010 through 2012 forecast at 13 percent.

Savvy supermarket retailers realize that it pays to keep the organic customer in store. Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral at Kings Super Markets Inc., a 25-store chain based in Parsippany, NJ, says, "Organics are a huge draw for us. The category represents about 12 percent of our total produce sales, compared to the industry average of 3 to 5 percent. Even with the recession, we're continuing to see a double digit increase in sales of organic produce."

Five Tactics To Sell More Organic Produce

1. OFFER ABUNDANCE Beautiful and bountiful displays will sell more produce than thin, anemic displays," maintains Tonya Antle, vice president of organic sales at Earthbound Farm, in San Juan Bautista, CA. "Too often, organic produce is relegated to a smaller, less abundant displays because there's a concern about expensive shrink," she explains. "But, that's a self-fulfilling prophecy: less abundant displays lead

to lower sales and more shrink."

At Kings Super Markets, where 15 to 20 percent of produce SKUs are organic, Kneeland reports, "We build the organic produce displays just as large as the conventional. For example, organic tomatoes are not put in a tiny basket in the back of the department."

"If a chain is keeping a regular selection of organic items, make sure it is fresh and priced competitively," advises Andy Martin, president of A & A Organic Farms Corp., in Watsonville, CA, "then the shopper will return for more."

David Posner, president and CEO of Awe Sum Organics Inc., in Capitola, CA, agrees and adds, "While the local movement is good, there are times when local isn't available. To satisfy customers' needs, and to establish your store as a year-round destination for organics, you've got to carry a full selection all the time."

To create a plentiful supply of organic produce, Mitch Blumenthal, president and CEO of Global Organic/Specialty Source Inc., in Sarasota, FL, advises, "Consider adding a new fruit or vegetable to your organic line."

Grower-shippers are making this possible. For example, Caroline Hogue, sales manager for Lakeside Organic Gardens LLC, in Watsonville, CA, reveals, "We've started growing a

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few new commodities this year such as organic chilies and burdock root. Next year, we expect to have organic radishes.”

2. Integrate Displays Some retailers segregate organic produce into its own section. The advantage of this is that organic consumers know right where to find the product they desire. However, the disadvantage is that a shopper who is not purposely looking for organic may walk right by the display and this can be a potentially missed sale. At New Season's Market, a 10-store chain based in Portland, OR, 80 percent of produce SKUs are organic and organic fruits and vegetables are integrated with conventional product. Jeff Fairchild, director of produce, says, “If you segregate, you lose the crossover customer.”

Kneeland of Kings employs the same merchandising strategy. “For example, we'll take packaged, organic, baby peeled carrots and ribbon them in with bulk, green-topped carrots. It makes for an eye-catching visual presentation and greater impulse sales of the organic.”

“Whatever display method a retailer chooses,” says Simcha Weinstein, director of marketing for Albert's Organics Inc., in Bridgeport, NJ, “make sure it's crystal clear to your shoppers which items are organic. Signage for organic items should stand out and be easily recognized. Also, if shoppers at a glance can see lots of organic signage, it automatically will have them thinking that your selection is abundant.”

At Kings, Kneeland uses different color signs to differentiate organic and conventional produce.

3. Price It Right The price gap between organic and conventional produce is narrowing, according to Addie Pobst, import coordinator and food safety officer at CF Fresh Inc., headquartered in Sedro Woolley, WA.

Lakeside Organic's Hogue agrees and adds, “This isn't necessarily true on specialized items



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The Supermarket As An Organic Destination

Farmer's markets and CSAs are certainly attracting organic customers, says Barbara Haumann, senior writer and editor for the OTA. "However, the mass market channel had the lion's share of organic food sales in 2009, with 54 percent of organic sold through mainstream grocers, club stores and retailers. Natural retailers were next, with 38 percent of total organic food sales."

The reason for this, according to Mitch Blumenthal, president and CEO of Global Organic/Specialty Source Inc., in Sarasota, FL, is that "Farmer's markets usually occur once a week. A supermarket is accessible and is a one-stop-shop for all a person's food needs, which pro-

vides a clear advantage. The addition of organic foods across all areas, not just produce, keeps the organic consumer coming back."

Looking forward, Addie Pobst, import coordinator and food safety officer at CF Fresh Inc., in Sedro Woolley, WA, says, "I don't see farmer's markets as competition for supermarkets. Rather, they serve to broaden the organic community. For example, if a consumer is introduced to organic peaches for the first time at a farmer's market and likes them, they may be tempted to buy organic bananas or potatoes, for example, on their next trip to the supermarket."

Yet, supermarkets often offer higher

quality locally grown organic produce, asserts Greg Holzman, CEO of Pacific Organic Produce, located in San Francisco, CA. "Farmer's will sell imperfect produce at farmer's markets, while they'll pack all their best-looking items for regular distribution."

Simcha Weinstein, director of marketing for Albert's Organics Inc., headquartered in Bridgeport, NJ, agrees. "I believe that consumers are looking more toward the supermarket for their organic selection than ever before. I think the surge we are seeing in farmer's markets is driven much more by demand for locally grown food than organics," he hypothesizes. **pb**

such as organic chard, kale and cilantro, for example. But, it is true for commodities like onions, potatoes, lettuce and broccoli."

Kneeland also finds narrowing the price gap helps to sell more organic produce. "For example, on ad, an organic salad may be less

costly than a conventional bagged salad," he states. "This can entice new shoppers to the category, especially when the product is integrated and shoppers can immediately make the price comparison."

Promote organic produce often, advises

Earthbound Farm's Antle. "Consumers who purchase organic enjoy a deal just as much as everyone else, but too often organic gets short-listed on the retail promotional calendar," she says. "We do many customized promotions, which are often the best. Feedback shows there

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Retail Initiatives That Work

Two innovative retailers have created successful programs that offer customers all the convenience of a one-stop-shop supermarket and the extra fresh appeal of a farmer's market and community supported agriculture (CSA) program at the same time. Market days are held at New Season's Market, a 10-store chain based in Portland, OR, on Saturdays from 11 am to 4 pm from June to September. Jeff Fairchild, director of produce, explains, "We set up a number of tents right outside the stores and feature seasonal and locally grown conventional and organic produce. We'll usually have some type of demo going on at the same time, like grilling fresh corn or roasting peppers."

Much of the produce featured is grown by farmers who also sell at the Portland Farmer's Market, an entity to

which New Season's Market charitably donated \$25,000 last year. "The community knows our commitment to fresh, local and organic," maintains Fairchild. "The indirect benefit for us in supporting the market is that many of the farmers who sell at the market sell to us, too. Our customers recognize this and come to us to buy their organic produce when the market isn't open."

This past summer, Kings Super Markets Inc., a 25-store chain, in Parsippany, NJ, launched an 8-week pilot program to offer a CSA in-store at its Short Hills, NJ, location. Paul Kneeland, vice president of produce and floral, explains: "We set up the fresh locally grown produce in burlap bags and bushel baskets in the store's cooking studio. Customers would sign in, pay the \$25 per-week fee, and then shop

each display. Each display was labeled with how many items to take, for example, 12 ears of corn or 3 eggplants. In all, it was about a \$30.55 value. Customers could pick out the produce for themselves and even get the kids to help with the counting out of each item. Basically, it's personal produce buying with social responsibility support for local farmers thrown in."

The most popular question Kneeland was asked by customers was, "Do you have organics?"

"We questioned ourselves about going with an all-organic CSA next summer, but we don't want to sacrifice variety," Kneeland explains. "We'll probably do a hybrid — organic and conventional — program next year and expand it to all our stores." **pb**

is both immediate and residual lift for the products promoted."

4. Educate Produce Staff & Customers

Education is vital, emphasizes Albert's Or-

ganic's Weinstein. "Having a knowledgeable and well-informed team that are experts on organic farming and organic food is the best way to become a leading retailer of organic

produce." To aid in this, Albert's Organics offers an online Produce College as well as information in semi-weekly E-newsletters and blog posts.

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Similarly, Earthbound Farm offered a Produce Staff Education Kit earlier this year and will do so again in 2011. Antle details, “We offered webinars, along with the kit, for a deeper dive into the benefits of organic.”

As for educating customers, Global Organic’s Blumenthal recommends, “Post recipes and keep other organic ingredients nearby.”

5. Take a Cue from Farmer’s Markets The two biggest takeaways that retailers can learn from farmer’s markets are great customer service and product knowledge, says Weinstein. “You can’t buy food without interacting with someone at a farmer’s market. No one has to run off to unload a truck or is being paged for a telephone call. This level of service is what should be provided in every supermarket, and it is a current edge that farmer’s markets have over supermarkets.”

Weinstein adds, “Another strong point at farmer’s markets is that consumers are typically buying from and interacting directly with the farmer. This means there is probably no question that can’t be answered. While you obviously can’t have all the various growers in a retailer every day, you can have well-educated and well-informed staff, especially with regards to organic.”

With that in mind, many retailers do invite farmers for seasonal in-store or special event appearances. Lakeside Organic’s Hogue says, “We have set up promotions with small chains where farmers come in and we demo fresh, organic produce such as cut-up carrots, broccoli, cauliflower and celery.”

To create a farmer’s presence in-store, Blumenthal shares, “Our mid-size retail chains display farmer profiles by their products.”

It definitely helps sales, says CF Fresh’s Pobst. “Customers enjoy seeing the smiling face of the farmer and a description of his farm and his organic products,” he explains. “Retailers can also include grower profiles on their Web sites.” It comes down to consumers wanting to feel a connection to their food, whether that means shaking hands, seeing photos or obtaining family recipes to go along with the products on display.

Beyond this, Blumenthal advises, “Be aware of color and how you set your produce area. Use crates and bins to create that farmer’s market look.”

“Lastly,” says Awe Sum Organics’ Posner, “it’s important to realize that farmer’s markets are fun to shop. They’re in a nice environment and it’s a place where the entire family feels welcome. Remember that and make sure your produce department is equally inviting.” **pb**

“Whatever display method a retailer chooses, make sure it’s crystal clear to your shoppers which items are organic. Signage for organic items should stand out and be easily recognized. Also, if shoppers at a glance can see lots of organic signage, it automatically will have them thinking that your selection is abundant.”

— Simcha Weinstein, Albert’s Organics Inc.

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Packaged Salads Stand The Test Of Time

In an effort to revamp a mature category, fresh-cut processors create new blends, kits and varieties, with a keen focus on packaging and organics. **BY BRYANT WYNES**



The packaged salad category accounts for \$1.8 billion in sales.

As any produce marketing maven knows, there comes a point in a product's life-cycle where it begins to mature. Sales — previously a constantly growing line on the graph — flatten out, maybe even begin to slide. It's at this point that marketers are most challenged to put on their thinking caps; to reach into their bag of tricks and pull out some magic that will cure a slowing sales trend, whether that means product line extensions, price promotions, new packaging or ramped up advertising campaigns.

Has the packaged salads category hit this "maturity" point? "It's hard to believe, but packaged salads have been around for more than 20 years now," remarks John Burge, vice president of sales and marketing with Classic Salads LLC, in Watsonville, CA. Burge proudly traces his involvement with packaged salads back to the beginning in 1989, when Fresh Express successfully packaged and distributed a fresh-cut, ready-to-eat salad nationally. "In those days," he adds, "the product exploded off the shelf. We couldn't get enough to meet demand."

But in recent years, the category has been faced with various challenges to sales, ranging

from contamination/recall issues that affected the bagged spinach business, to an economy that has impacted consumer spending on those products deemed even slightly extravagant.

Where does the category stand today? Steve Lutz, executive vice president of the Chicago, IL-based Perishables Group, reports that 52-week retail volume for the category is down only 1.3 percent, despite the fact that overall sales are off 4.2 percent. "This is most likely the result of a combination of retail promotion and changes in the mix," he contends. "The category remains a good one, accounting for about \$1.8 billion in sales."

Gary Miracle, executive director of produce field procurement for Kansas City, KS-based Associated Wholesale Grocers, agrees. "The category may have hit a plateau, but we still sell an enormous amount of packaged salads," he remarks.

Lutz points out that the category has its share of successes and challenges. "Complete salad kits are facing a challenge," he notes, "and are down more than 15 percent over the past 52 weeks. Spinach, on the other hand, finished the past 52 weeks up 1.9 percent in sales and 4.9 percent in volume. Spinach has mostly re-

covered in the past four years, but still has yet to hit 2006 pre-crises levels."

Organics and private label packaged salads are two other success stories. "Organics are up 10 percent in dollars and volume, and we've seen a greater emphasis on private label over the past year," Lutz reports. Lutz' figures supports this statement. The Perishables Group statistics show a 50 percent increase in private label volume versus last year, and a 43 percent increase in sales.

Challenges For Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG)

Packaged salads are generally credited with creating or defining the value-added category in the produce department, but they have also tended to blur the gap between "fresh" and "CPG." So it's no wonder that the various suppliers have adopted pages from the CPG playbook to give the category new sales life. Like CPG products in center-store, these brands need promotion and periodic refreshing to maintain consumer interest.

"Our research demonstrates that bagged salad blends and kits were in need of a re-imaging," reports Chris Mayhew, director of



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marketing with Monterey, CA-based Dole Fresh Vegetables Inc. According to Mayhew, Dole research revealed three main points. First, consumers were less engaged in the purchase of pre-packaged salads than most other items in the supermarket. Second, consumers were reluctant to try new salad varieties or experiment with new blends or kits in the kitchen. Also, customers wanted all-natural products more than ever before. The result: the reintroduction of the Dole Salads blends line in the Fall of 2009, and the introduction of All Natural Dole Salad Kits in May, 2010. Additionally,

in response to consumers' demand for more Butter lettuce, the company introduced Butter Bliss in mid-September, a combination of Butter and baby red leaf lettuces.

Mayhew adds that since salad consumers were in need of encouragement to experiment, Dole created the on-pack Dole Salad Guide, consisting of Taste and Texture scales and a "Pairs well with" feature, to add dimension to what had become a very one-dimensional category. "We also developed a new Dole Salad Guide spokesperson to introduce



In response to consumers' demands for more Butter lettuce, Dole introduced Butter Bliss in mid-September.

these new, on-pack features to salad enthusiasts and inspire them to look at bagged salad differently via a multimedia marketing campaign with a strong social media component," she explains.

With the All Natural Dole Salad Kits, Mayhew discloses the company took its nine salad kits and made them all-natural, and added an all-natural creamy coleslaw. "We conducted extensive in-store and at-home research of packaged salad shopping, purchasing and usage and attitude trends," details Mayhew. "What we found was a growing reluctance by packaged salad users to fully embrace salad kits due to lingering doubts about the origins and wholesomeness of certain kit ingredients." The All Natural Dole Salad Kits represent not only a package redesign, but a total product reformulation.

Chris Franklin, produce merchandiser for Balls Food Stores in the Kansas City, MO, area, says that the company have been extremely happy with Dole's new program. "For us, especially at our Hen House stores, the salad kits continue to be a strong and growing category," he states. "Consumer response to the new varieties has been very good."

Expanding variety — offering new or unique blends — appears to be a popular way to give the category a needed boost and appeal to a broader audience. According to a recent press release, Fresh Express has recently created six new salad kits, some of which include chicken, for those consumers looking to add a healthful protein to their salads. Additionally, there is now Strawberry Fields, with baby spinach, sweet dried strawberries, toasted sliced almonds and strawberry vinaigrette, and

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New Salad Packaging Receives Warm Welcome

The latest in packaging for salads is the clamshell, and most suppliers now offer selected product in clamshell packaging. "Our Hen House customers prefer the clamshell," says Chris Franklin, produce merchandiser for Balls Food Stores in the Kansas City, MO. "We're offering 16-oz. sizes they seem to like." Franklin notes the clamshell packaging makes for an attractive display and also protects product in the display case.

Earthbound Farm, based in San Juan Bautista, CA, has seen a shift to clamshells, especially with tender leaf baby greens, since

the packaging provides better protection. But the company is especially proud of its efforts with recycled clamshell packaging, as it was recently awarded an Edison Silver Award for Innovation for 100 percent post-consumer recycled clamshell containers. Samantha Cabaluna, communications director, remarks, "We're an organic company. We make decisions for all aspects of the business that are good for the planet." She claims the company's recycled clamshell containers use 90 percent fewer resources and have created a market that didn't exist before. **pb**

Pear Gorgonzola, which includes spring mix, sweet dried pears, frosted almonds and pear gorgonzola vinaigrette.

Brian Kocher, president of Fresh Express, remarked in the release, "Continuously developing new, fresh and flavorful salad meals for our consumers is at the core of our mission.

Economy Not Affecting Organics

Samantha Cabaluna, director of communications for San Juan Bautista, CA-based Earthbound Farm's, is excited about the company's packaged salad business. "We see organic growing over 12 percent versus last year," she reports. "Organic packaged salads is a

bandwagon that folks want to get on — it's a bandwagon with 'legs!'"

Both Cabaluna and Classic Salad's John Burge, are quick to note that the economy apparently hasn't hit the organic packaged salad business. "One of the reasons for good growth of organics is that the price premium has

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been narrowing,” explains Cabaluna. “Prices might only be 10 or 20 percent higher than non-organic salads, which isn’t that much of a factor. Promotionally, we are even seeing some price parity.”

Balls’ Franklin agrees. “Organics are growing,” he reports. “Our customers respond well to ad promotion — especially when we see retailers that get closer to or better than conventional, non-organic salads.”

Burge, who joined Classic Salads in May of this year, discloses that the company sees so much future for the organic packaged salad line that it is introducing 20 new products this fall. “Our primary business has been in food-service,” he says. “But we see a retail opportunity in the gourmet niche that we think we can fill nicely. Our entire line of organic baby leafy

greens is new and should appeal to those customers wanting to move away from mundane to specialty products.”

What’s the Retailer’s Role?

AWG’s Myracle is pleased with the strides suppliers are making to grow the category. “They continue to refine the category, looking for ways to get more people into it,” he says. “Our retailers sell a lot of packaged salad, but we know there are still a lot of potential customers out there that we need to reach.

Indeed, Dole’s research indicates the category has some room to grow. “Household penetration for the category is 77.6 percent,” reports the company’s Mayhew, “and purchase frequency is just under 10 times a year.”

To encourage growth, Mayhew notes, “In

the spirit of cooperation, we encourage our retailers to dedicate the space needed for the in-store salad sets that allow consumers to more easily shop and compare blends and kits, and to cooperate with in-store and other promotional programs developed by suppliers.

Breathing new life into a mature category is not always easy or successful. However, it appears that the packaged salad industry is taking the needed strides to make it happen. Expanded varieties, new blends and kits, new packaging, enhanced emphasis on organics and promotion show commitment, effort and promise. Combine this activity with continued consumer demand for convenience and healthful, nutritious food and the future looks bright for the packaged salad category. **pb**



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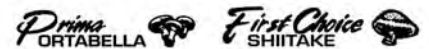
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The Fresh-cut Fruit Challenge

On a growth trajectory, fresh-cut fruit offers retailers opportunities to profit from newer categories and to differentiate themselves from the competition. **BY MEREDITH AUERBACH**



PHOTO COURTESY OF INDIANAPOLIS FRUIT CO. INC.

The Kid's Corner section at Sunset Foods is part of a 50-item fresh-cut fruit program offered by the store.

For a number of consumers, fresh-cut fruit is the ultimate convenience. More and more choices are available; pricing at retail has been fairly stable; there's a variety of package sizes and someone else handles issues of variety, ripeness, sweetness and guides to shelf-life. Nonetheless, others need more convincing. At first glance, some products can appear pretty expensive. The section may be away from the normal shopping traffic pattern. Or, it may also be just plain unfamiliar.

Some retailers answer these questions by taking the bull by the horns. Vince Mastromauro, director of produce and floral for Sunset Foods, in Highland Park, IL, has proved that even four stores can generate enough volume to successfully drive a whole category. Mastromauro contacted his primary supplier, Indianapolis Fruit Co. Inc., headquartered in Indianapolis, IN, and told them he wanted to establish a private label program for fresh-cut fruit. Today, Sunset Foods offers about 50 different fresh-cut fruit products.

The list includes less common packs such as peeled kiwifruit, orange sections and mango spears. "We wanted to differentiate ourselves in the market by developing a brand with a strong message," Mastromauro explains. "Indy Fruit

helped us do that as we built a destination spot called Kids Corner, which offers fresh, healthy fruit snacks. Our strategy is getting to moms through their kids and it's working for all of us."

Operating in a very different geographic and economic region are the 21 stores of E. W. James & Sons Supermarket Inc., headquartered in Union City, TN, with stores in Tennessee, Kentucky, Arkansas and Mississippi. Steve Legons, director of produce and floral, says, "Our stores are all essentially small-town and rural and we always have areas impacted by this recession or some other economic challenge. For us, pricing determines success. During the winter, we take advantage of contract pricing. During summer, we cut our own fruit in each store. We make our own mixes and we can price it better for our customers," he continues. "During peak season, fresh-cut fruit overall can reach 8 to 10 percent of produce sales. Customers rapidly let you know what they want and what they are willing to buy."

Fresh-Cut Trends

One of the trends in fresh-cut fruit is the gradual shift to what might be called external production: Fruit selected and cut, packed and labeled, shipped and distributed by a proces-

sor to retail distribution centers. Ali Leon, director of corporate communications for Irwindale, CA-based Ready Pac Produce Inc., reports, "Currently, the available data doesn't provide a really accurate breakdown, but we estimate roughly a 50/50 split between in-store and processor production." Part of the issue is how fresh-cut gets defined. The majority of stores may still cut and overwrap melon sections, but leave the processing and packaging of more perishable fruits to processors. Processors point to their expertise and extensive sources in fruit selection, along with their focus on consistency and food safety accreditation as sound business reasons that most fresh-cut fruit should be produced externally and distributed to retail.

As a nationwide company, Coral Gables, FL-based Del Monte Fresh Produce keeps a careful eye on changes in the industry. Dionysios Christou, vice president of marketing, remarks, "The quality of the raw product, packaging, food safety and, very critically, keeping the cold chain, continue to be the most important parts of a fresh-cut fruit program. Consumers are looking for companies with consistently high-quality product, sustainable packaging and food safety programs."

Doug Burris, director of marketing for

“Not only is there increased focus on health, wellness and nutrition, we also are seeing fundamental changes in the supply chain. Fresh-cut fruit products are finding their way into new venues such as convenience stores, theme parks and vending machines in schools and businesses.”

— Bryan Herr, Country Fresh



PHOTO COURTESY OF DEL MONTE FRESH PRODUCE

Del Monte expects its vending program to rapidly expand across the nation.

regional processor Country Fresh Inc., located in Houston, TX, generally agrees with the 50 percent share and the reasons to source fresh-cut from processors. “We’ve seen double-digit growth every year for the past several years and see no reason why that shouldn’t continue,” he reports. “Household penetration is still very low so there’s plenty of room for expansion.”

Consumer trends are driving growth, too, notes Country Fresh president and CEO Bryan Herr. “Not only is there increased focus on health, wellness and nutrition, we also are seeing fundamental changes in the supply chain,” he reports. “Fresh-cut fruit products are finding their way into new venues such as convenience stores, theme parks and vending machines in schools and businesses.”

Christou concurs, “We have received very strong demand from school administrators, businesses, institutions and vending operators and we expect our vending program to rapidly expand across the nation by year’s end.”

Understanding The Customer

Distinct demographic trends influence fresh-cut fruit purchase and consumption. Burris has studied his consumers and observed two major groups. “Both are lifestyle-driven, but very different from each other,” he explains. “One is under-30 families and 55-plus, often called ‘empty nesters;’ the older group often has more disposable income and is looking for more specific numbers of servings while the younger group

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places high value on the product and convenience and tends to be less price-resistant. These groups tend to be similar across our production facilities in Texas, South Carolina and Florida.”

Legons of E.W. James describes the stores’ target audience as office workers looking for lunch and snacks and families in search of foods to take to weekend events.

“When we first started our private label program,” says Sunset Foods’ Mastromauro, “it was pretty hit-or-miss, discovering what worked. Single serving-sized packages were not successful for us. We learned a lot through analysis of what worked on our salad bars. The Kids Corner destination display has been important in figuring out the right mix. This summer, we

Merchandising Tips

- Create a destination display that clearly communicates to the target shopper.
- Offer a mix of fruit blends, sizes and prices.
- Sign with quick usage suggestions.
- Consider a grab-and-go display at the front of the store.
- Promote regularly, but be sure shoppers understand the true value of the product.
- Promote fresh, healthful eating as part of your message.
- Analyze and learn from sales patterns.

will be promoting fresh, healthful snacks for kids to take to nearby swimming pools. Snacks, grab-and-go lunches, and family-sized mixed fruit packages are our best generators of sales.”

Freshness Counts

Processors and retailers alike identify freshness and fruit quality as the attributes most appealing to consumers. “Consumers eat first

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with their eyes,” contends Herr of Country Fresh, “and then they decide if the products fit their plans and budget. Our standard is to move product from order through production and to a retailer’s DC within 24 hours. We also advise retailers to maintain no more than two days inventory in-store.”

Shane Towne, marketing and new business development manager for Indianapolis Fruit, agrees, adding, “One of the reasons you go to a quality fruit processor is for speed and to avoid having to manage too much backstock.”

“Fresh-cut apples have a wider window of freshness,” reports Tony Freytag, marketing manager for Crunch Pak LLC, based in Cashmere, WA, “and the use-by date is typically 21 days. We constantly review packag-

“Best volume and freshness happens with high turnover, which requires good value. We know retail pricing can be a big barrier to entry on cut fruit and it is a real challenge to determine the right price point for consumers.”


— Tony Freytag, Crunch Pak

ing and product quality to validate the time allowed. In the end, all retailers must evaluate their fresh-cut product mixes for prime shelf-life.

Retail Price Impacts Sales

Freytag tracks retail pricing and movement,

and with good reason. “Recently, we have moved to smaller packages including single-serving packs that can retail at 99¢ and loose-packed 14-oz. family packages that can be priced below \$3.50,” he reveals. “Best volume and freshness happens with high turnover, which requires good value. We know retail

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Reader Service # 96

“The quality of the raw product, packaging, food safety and, very critically, keeping the cold chain, continue to be the most important parts of a fresh-cut fruit program. Consumers are looking for companies with consistently high-quality product, sustainable packaging and food safety programs.”

— Dionysios Christou, Del Monte Fresh Produce



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pricing can be a big barrier to entry on cut fruit and it is a real challenge to determine the right price point for consumers.”

Mastromauro’s customer base wants value, but is typically willing to pay a bit more. Sunset Foods is able to charge \$4.99 a pound for most cut fruit and \$6.99 for a 2-lb. pack. Specialty fruits run a bit higher with products such as mango spears at \$5.99 a pound. He gives back to his customers with frequent promotions, generally once a month.

Packaging Reassures Consumers

Consumers are quite specific in their preferences for packaging. They are looking for clear packaging, so the actual product is visible; well-sealed and hopefully re-sealable packs, as well as those that are recyclable. Ready Pac’s Leon says, “Product visibility is the most important. Labels have to be designed to let the fruit show well.”

“Ask anyone involved with fresh-cut fruit and they will tell you innovations in packaging have made a huge difference in the sales growth of the category,” declares Herb Knutson, director of marketing for Inline Plastics, based in Shelton, CT. Technology developments in the past year have been small ones, showing the step-by-step changes to make #1PET materials clearer, use less energy and be more sustainable through the ability to recycle. “Our Safe-T-Fresh line brings together all of these characteristics; it is tamper-evident, re-sealable and recyclable,” he reports.

Another approach to packaging comes from Maxwell Chase Technology LLC, in Atlanta, GA. Tom Gautreaux, national sales director, says, “Our product is a pad made from a food-grade absorbent material that is laminated between two layers of fabric; it absorbs the liquid purge that comes from the cut surfaces of fruit, extending quality and shelf-life,” he explains. “They can be custom-sized to fit a wide range of containers.”

The Last Word

Put all the parts together — great, fresh ripe fruit; careful, precise and fast processing; ideal packaging and smooth, efficient logistics. Add in reasonable pricing and imaginative displays and promotion. It all looks about perfect, and it is, unless poor cold chain management spoils the mix. Despite divergent opinions on best pricing and display techniques, industry experts across the board agree that for fresh-cut fruit, the universal answer is the status of the cold chain from field-to-fork and every step in between.

pb

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Reader Service # 151

Boosting Pecan Sales Is An Easy Nut to Crack

Savvy retailers remind consumers that whether they are cooking, baking or just snacking, pecans can be an everyday item. **BY K.O. MORGAN**



PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGIA PECAN COMMISSION

Boost pecan sales by playing up their nutritional value as heart-healthy, cancer-fighting nuts.

Pecans are the second most popular nut in the United States, surpassed only by peanuts, which are actually legumes. Retailers can increase profits from this favorite nut by promoting its many uses and its nutritional value.

Traditionally, pecans sell best during the last three months of the year when consumers snap them up to make holiday fare such as pecan pie, pecan pralines, pecan toffee and pecan graham cracker crusts. But pecans can also be pushed as salad toppings and as a grab-and-go snack, as well as an ingredient in non-holiday recipes. Produce departments that spotlight pecans can see an uptick in profitability, not only in pecan buys but in other items that can be combined with this healthy nut.

"Fresh pecans have a high customer appeal and carry a larger ring for the produce department than most items we sell," states Kevin Weaver, vice president of produce merchandising at Marsh Supermarkets Inc., a 98-unit chain based in Indianapolis, IN. "They are an extremely profitable item."

Stanford Steppa, president and co-owner of

Magruder's Grocery Stores, a Rockville, MD-based chain with 7 stores spread throughout Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C., agrees. "Pecans are a big profit item, especially unsalted pecans," he says. "Pecans are high priced and extremely popular. Retailers shouldn't be afraid of getting a high ring on unsalted pecans."

One way to boost pecan sales is to cash in on the growing health consciousness of consumers by playing up the nutritional value of pecans as a heart-healthy, cancer-fighting nut. "Pecans offer so many great nutritional values," points out M. Brandon Harrell, sales manager for Harrell Pecan Co., headquartered in Camilla, GA. "They are the No. 1 nut for antioxidants and are in the Top 20 of all foods for antioxidants. Additionally, pecans have been proven to be a valuable part of a heart-healthy diet, and new studies out just this year show pecans have strong benefits against neurological disease. These items make it a natural fit in the produce section as a nutritious part of any diet."

"The great thing about pecans is their versatility," adds Ashley Lansdale, senior account executive at Sahlman Williams, the Tampa, FL-

based public relations firm for the Georgia Pecan Commission, located in Atlanta. "They can be added to any recipe," she says. "That's why we decided to implement the *Georgia Pecans Fit!* campaign in 2007. Pecans fit in a variety of recipes and in a healthy lifestyle."

Growing Pecan Sales

Promoting pecans means building on an already popular choice. The trick is to push sales beyond the holidays to those times of the year when pecans may not be on customers' radars. Placement in the produce department can be key to increasing pecan sales. "A lot of purchases of nuts are impulse buys, so pecans need to be merchandised in high traffic areas, with large eye-catching displays," says Weaver of Marsh Supermarkets. "That's what will generate the best results."

"The produce department is the best place in the store to sell pecans," asserts Mike Tipton, director of produce for K-VAT Food Stores Inc./Food City, an Abingdon, VA-based chain of 105 locations throughout Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee. "When consumers think produce they think 'fresh!' When the new crop of pecans comes into the store, it allows for mas-

“Pecans can have a very high profit margin. Attractive packaging, competitive pricing and proper location of shelf-space are vital to marketing pecans in produce.”

— Tim Allen, San Saba Pecan

sive displays that promote ‘New Crop Pecans.’”

“Pecans are a perfect placement for the produce aisle because along with fruits and vegetables, they have many health benefits, including more antioxidants than any other nut,” adds Lansdale.

“But don’t place them close to garlic or onions as they will pick up and retain odors,” warns Tim Allen, a sales associate at San Saba Pecan Inc., in San Saba, TX. “If you must merchandise them there, make sure they are in sealed bags!”

“Pecans contain such high nutritional value that they sell themselves,” says Harrell of Harrell Nut. “Regardless of the size of the store, we always recommend focusing all promotions on the nutritional value of the product.”

“We’ve been quite successful in marketing pecans as a healthful and versatile addition to any recipe,” says Lansdale of Sahlman Williams. “Also, placing pecans near prepackaged salads is a great way to attract the health-conscious, time-crunched consumers. The same can be said for including recipe cards that list pecans as an ingredient.”

Signage can also help to make customers aware of the healthful characteristics of pecans. “The huge health benefits of pecans keep the products moving quickly even during non-holiday times, as long as retailers draw attention to them,” explains Harrell.

Points On Packaging

“Pecans can have a very high profit margin,” states Allen. “Attractive packaging, competitive pricing and proper location of shelf space are vital to marketing pecans in produce.”

Harrell believes that packaging is one of the key ingredients in increasing pecan sales. “Many years ago we began to see major supermarkets change their pecan packaging from colorful, eye-catching display-style packages to clear packages that allow the buyers to see the product,” he reports. “This was a way of showing consumers there are no surprises with this product. This type of packaging made it a natural fit in the produce section, and from what we’ve seen, has drastically increased sales.”

Tipton of K-VAT contends that pecans can sell well either packaged or loose. “There are many ways to market pecans, be it bulk in shell

or bagged,” he remarks. “Also, bagged or clamshell pecan halves and pieces are what most retailers seem to be marketing today.”

But Harrell maintains pecans sell best when

packaged in 8- or 12-oz. containers. “Most buyers are concerned with the price at the register rather than the price per ounce,” he explains. “This keeps the bag price at a more affordable level. Our company packs our products in display cartons that require virtually no handling. Each case simply needs the top removed and can then be placed on the shelf for distribution. This also decreases the amount of waste at store-level. Overall,” he concludes, “there is very little handling involved by both the warehouse receivers and

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Cross-Merchandise To Increase Selling

Cross-merchandising with other products in the produce department is another great way to shine attention on pecans and their edible adaptability. Plus, consumers get their money’s worth because they don’t spoil quickly. “Pecans have four to six months of shelf-life at room temperature so there is very little maintenance and hardly any shrink for

the produce department or consumers,” states Allen of San Saba Pecan.

“Pecans are often paired with other nuts such as walnuts or almonds. That is the most common mixing we’ve seen,” offers Harrell of Harrell Nut. “They are often placed on an aisle display or end cap, depending on a store’s layout. I’ve also seen the pecans near the salad displays since pecans make a great salad topping.”

Lansdale of Sahlman Williams agrees, and adds, “Cross-promoting pecans with prepackaged salads is a great option, but they are also

excellent additions to pre-cut fruit.”

“We regularly place pecans near apples, citrus and even occasionally with bananas for banana bread,” reveals Weaver of Marsh Supermarkets.

Other Profitable Placements for Pecans

While showcasing pecans in the produce department is natural and important, retailers can also increase pecan sales by tying the nut in with other products throughout the store, which can also boost sales of other store items as well. “We cross-sell pecans with items in the baking aisle,” states Weaver. “When we do this, we offer them in larger packages to give the consumer a better value.”

“There is still a need for pecans in other areas because they are a very versatile nut,” says Harrell. “They can often be used in many baking applications, and straight out-of-hand for consumers looking for a healthful snack. But pecan sales in the produce area are significantly higher than the sales in the baking or snack aisles since consumers looking for healthful snack alternatives seldom wander down the baking aisle or snack food aisle.”

Steppa of Magruder’s agrees. “Pecans sell well in produce departments when they are unsalted and dry, particularly when pushed as a salad item. However, when they’re salted,” he adds, “they do best in the nuts or snacks aisle that sells nuts and snacks.”

Of course, pecans will always be a holiday favorite, so produce departments should take advantage of the season by creating displays that remind customers to stock up and use pecans in a variety of ways during this time. “During the holidays, produce departments can set up huge displays of packaged pecans,” advises Paul Rich, vice president of sales for Durham-Ellis Pecan Co., in Ft. Worth, TX. “This is a great way to merchandise the product to accommodate volume. Sixty percent of supermarket pecan sales come from the last three months of the year.”

“Pecans sell well when tied into displays with sweet potatoes and marshmallows for Thanksgiving and Christmas cooking,” adds Tipton of K-VAT.

Rich agrees, noting, “Sometimes you’ll see pecans in produce, in bulk departments and in the baking section — all in the same grocery store. It is a very popular item, especially in the fall.”

“Everyone thinks of pecans as a necessary ingredient in holiday cookies, pies, cakes and other baked goods,” says Lansdale. “It’s a natural link with consumers.” But savvy retailers who get consumers to extend that link beyond holiday fare can profit from pecans all year long. **pb**

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ANNOUNCEMENTS



TPIE DATES SET

Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association (FNLGA) Orlando, FL, announces its Tropical Plant Industry Exhibition (TPIE) will be held January 19-21, 2011. TPIE is the trade event showcasing the latest trends in foliage, floral and tropicals. New this year is the Wednesday - Friday format. The popular educational seminars remain on the schedule. The events will be held at the Broward County Convention Center in Fort Lauderdale, FL.

Reader Service Number 338



MORE CALLA COLORS

Homestead Growers Niagara, Vineland, Ontario, Canada and its sister company, Amerigo Farms Inc., Apopka, FL, are pleased to grow the Supreme® line of calla lilies from Sande BV, Holland. Potted Calla lilies are available in more colors than ever before and the long-lasting blooms from the 6-inch pots available offer immediate consumer appeal.

Reader Service Number 339

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2011 WFE SET FOR MARCH

HPP Worldwide, Amsterdam, Netherlands, announces the 2011 World Floral Expo will be held March 8-10 at the Double Tree Miami Mart Airport Hotel & Exhibition Center, Miami, FL. The worldwide floricultural showcase designed for qualified buyers — mainly wholesale florists, floral mass market buyers such as supermarkets and retail chain stores — will feature exhibitors from around the world.

Reader Service Number 340



PINCUSHIONS FOR MOMS

Kendall Farms, Fallbrook, CA, is accepting Mother's Day pre-bookings on its Pincushion Bouquets and consumer bunches. Part of the Protea family, Pincushions are exotic and long-lasting for mothers to enjoy for quite a while. These California-grown beauties can be the focal flower of in-store designed bouquets or retailers can purchase Pincushions bouquets designed by Kendall Farms.

Reader Service Number 341

NEW PRODUCTS



MOSSED IVY REINDEER

Schubert Nursery Inc., Salinas, CA, is jingling with excitement over the newest member of its Mossed Animal Collection, Rudy the Reindeer. Measuring approximately 15 inches tall, the Ivy-filled topiary is packed four per case. Rudy will whimsically dress up holiday displays and attract shoppers, so order enough for your stores and plenty for your customers!

Reader Service Number 342



LABOR-SAVING AND LUXURIOUS

Highland Supply Corp., Highland, IL, introduces Four Corner Billowette® plant covers, which give a luxurious, professional hand-wrapped appearance to potted plants. Perfect for peak holiday seasons when help is limited, the pre-formed plant covers require virtually no training to apply. Colors and prints are available to enhance any blooming or foliage plant.

Reader Service Number 343



HOLIDAY BAMBOO

Eve's Garden Inc., Land O' Lakes, FL, introduces its Dressed for the Holidays Lucky Bamboo in festive, metallic-colored ceramic vases. With an overall height of 12 inches, the easy-to-maintain Lucky Bamboo is packed 12 vases per case. Floral retailers can easily promote the planted vases as Grab-N-Go holiday gifts for office workers, teachers, dentists and doctors.

Reader Service Number 344



SAY I LOVE YOU

Blossom Bucket Inc., North Lawrence, OH, offers six new ways to say "I Love You" to grandparents. Designed by Suzi Skogland, the hand-crafted resin blocks read "I Love My Grandma" and "I Love My Grandpa" in Italian, Irish Gaelic and Spanish. Retailers will reach multilingual customers with these sweet offerings, which make great floral add-on gifts.

Reader Service Number 345

Save Time And Money With Pre-greened Options

Consumers are enamored with and encouraged by the possibilities of green bouquets and arrangements offered by savvy retailers looking to boost floral sales while saving labor costs. **BY BOB JOHNSON**



PHOTO ABOVE COURTESY OF SUTTON FERNERIES
PHOTO AT RIGHT COURTESY OF DOS GRINGOS — A CALIFORNIA FLOWER COMPANY



Drop-in greens make it possible for retailers to create beautiful bouquets with minimal time, effort or training.

As supermarkets look to provide more service with less labor in the floral department, many are finding a worthy way to save labor and reduce waste is to begin with ready-to-go greens. Growers, importers and suppliers are offering pre-greened options that make it possible to build beautiful bouquets and ornate centerpieces with a minimum of labor in the floral department.

“Our Ready-to-Go Greens are prepped; you take a step out of the preparation at the supermarket,” says Michele Sutton, president of Sutton Ferneries, in Miami, FL. “We have two well-branded products in Ready-to-Go. We have the ‘Greens Drop in Bouquet’ in vases, and the ‘Add-A-Bloom,’ which is foam-based.”

The greens go between the flowers, and also serve the purpose of covering the base of the arrangement. “The floral departments in most supermarkets understand greens and how to use them,” Sutton says.

Some growers are even providing different pre-greened options that are tailored to complement specific flowers or combinations of

flowers. Jason Levin, president of Dos Gringos — A California Flower Company, headquartered in Vista, CA, dates the emergence of pre-greens to a year or a year and a half ago as supermarket floral departments looked to trim their labor costs. “It’s a real labor-saver,” he asserts. “We are seeing more and more demand for our ‘Just Add’ line. We have ‘Just Add Roses,’ ‘Just Add Tulips’ and ‘Just Add Flowers,’” Levin says. The greens in each of the three “Just Add” products are tailored to complement particular floral varieties. The “Just Add Tulips,” for example, has shorter greens that serve as fillers. And “Just Add Roses” features darker greens that go with the rose foliage.

Pre-greens allow floral departments to offer a wider assortment of bouquets and floral arrangements for a wider range of occasions. Receiving the greens ready-to-use not only saves time, it also saves waste from assembling the greens at the store. “Pre-greens are becoming more popular,” reports Kim Tozier, assistant sales manager at Hiawatha Evergreens, based in Shelton, WA. “One item is vases with the greens already pre-arranged. The retailers

just drop in the flowers. It saves them the waste involved in taking the greens out of the boxes and putting them in vases; they’re also not taking as much time to make the arrangements.”

’Tis Always the Season

Everything in the floral department is most in demand from Thanksgiving to Christmas, which is the supreme greens holiday period as consumers look for new and interesting wreaths, door hangers and centerpieces. “Consumers can justify spending extra on home décor as they embrace traditions by spending more time at home and less in travel,” explains Tozier. “The grocery store is a perfect fit, because while they are shopping for their turkey dinner, they can pick up the fresh centerpiece arrangement for the holiday table, or buy a fragrant fresh wreath to hang on their front door to greet guests.”

Growers are coming up with a wide assortment of products for the Christmas season when it is easiest to entice new customers with quality greens. “There’s an array of products for the Christmas season — decorative

“The grocery store is a perfect fit, because while consumers are shopping for their turkey dinner, they can pick up the fresh centerpiece arrangement for the holiday table, or buy a fragrant fresh wreath to hang on their front door to greet guests.”

— Kim Tozier, Hiawatha Evergreens

wreaths, door swags and baskets,” says Branden Smith, sales manager at Carolina Fraser Fir Co., headquartered in Mouth of Wilson, VA. “Most of the volume is done through the box stores. There are also sleeves, baskets and candle centerpiece, which should be merchandised with the flowers.”

Cool Springs Nursery, in Banner Elk, NC, has developed a line of combination wreaths — a single wreath that includes two or more different varieties of greens such as Fraser and white pine, or magnolia and cedar wood. “I personally like the pine cone wreath; it’s more expensive, but you can use it for years,” says Paul Smith, president of Cool Springs.

Long after the Christmas tree has been stripped of ornaments and carried to the curb, greens are finding an important place in the floral department. “Greenery is popular all year,” maintains Smith. “One popular item is bunches of greens wrapped in cellophane. That makes it easier for the floral department staff to put together bouquets or center pieces, or if the customers are Martha Stewart-oriented they can make their own centerpieces.”

Some suppliers have already created pre-green arrangements specially tailored for holidays beyond Christmas and Thanksgiving. “Our ‘Drop & Go Bouquets’ have been the biggest holiday seller over the past few years,” reports Jennifer Strickland Callahan, director of sales and marketing for Alfa Fern Co., headquartered in Pierson, FL. “They are the perfect greens base for any bud vase, half-dozen, dozen roses or other flower vase arrangement. They save, on average, 60 percent on costs toward pre-greening Valentine’s and Mother’s Day arrangements.”

Alfa Fern has developed a greens program designed to complement and highlight each season’s finest flowers and foliage. “Seasonal green bouquet options are the newest trends,” adds Strickland Callahan. “Created with some traditional greens to anchor the bouquet, they are highlighted by each season’s best foliage.”

The rise of pre-greens goes hand-in-hand with the emergence of full-service supermar-

ket floral departments. “More than 76 percent of retail grocers offer floral and plant shops and the trend is still growing,” reports Tozier of Hiawatha.

Something New Under the Sun

As consumers become aware of the range of uses for greens, many of them are drawn to new and interesting varieties. Sutton of Sutton Ferneries believes more consumers are ready for novelty when it comes to greens. Monstera, for example, is a unique fern from Florida, and Emu fern — or Dingo fern from Australia — are also attention grabbers. “Try unusual things,” she advises. “Consumers are becoming more educated and are open to new things.”

Among the Western greens, salal, red and green huckleberry, bear grass and curly willow are varieties drawing strong interest, according to Tozier of Hiawatha. Many Florida growers are working to increase awareness of the wide-ranging uses of leather leaf ferns. “We are trying to show the value of leather leaf,” remarks Jana Register, director of sales and marketing at Fern Trust, headquartered in Seville, FL. “It is unsurpassed in longevity and price-per-stem. Bottlebrush is another strong variety. Once the flowers drop off, it reveals a great cone. The foliage itself lasts a long time in the vase. African Iris is a filler-green that has wider leaves and is more erect.”

One way to offer a wide variety of interesting greens, while minimizing the danger of shrink, is to order combination packs. “We believe variety and mixed packs can give the retailer more flexibility,” notes Register. “We’re creating custom mixes that the wholesaler can ship directly to the retailer. The key is variety; people are interested in tropical, Italian and Florida greens.”

An interesting, attractive and novel wrinkle for holiday offerings is Safari Sunset. “Safari Sunset is a great fall or Christmas item,” states Jan Gustin, sales representative for Fiore Farms LLC, based in Miami, FL. “We get them at 70 to 80 centimeters in burgundy or gold strike, which is green. It looks great in arrangements

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with flowers, and goes well with whites and softer colors.”

Give It Care and It Will Last

Most greens have tremendous shelf- and vase-life, far longer than flowers, as long as they receive proper care, which begins with cold chain management. “Foliage responds positively to cold chain management,” maintains Register of Fern Trust. “We’ve seen vase-life of eight to 10 weeks. As a retailer, that helps you avoid shrink, and leaves you with satisfied customers.” If the product is shipped and handled with care it can have three weeks’ shelf-life at the retail store and still have two weeks of life at the customer’s home. “We lose sales when people buy the product, take it home and it only lasts a couple days,” she adds.

Evergreens should be shipped and stored in moisture-retaining boxes at 33 to 35° F, according to Hiawatha’s Tozier. They should be kept at a minimum of 85 percent humidity. When the evergreens arrive at the store, she recommends opening the boxes, loosening the greens and misting them if they are dry. “If you mist them once a day they’ll last through Christmas and into the next year,” says Smith from Carolina Fraser.

It is also important to keep the water and the water buckets as clean as possible. “Ideally, you want to change the water daily, but at the very least, I would change it every time a new shipment comes in,” encourages Levin of Dos Gringos. “You can also use a disposable bag inside the bucket to keep the bucket clean.”

One tip to gain an edge in keeping your greens fresh is to rotate last week’s product into the display. “At the end of the week, use the greens and flower bouquets you have left over in your display case arrangements,” suggests Alfa Fern’s Strickland Callahan. “That gives you a controlled cost of goods toward each arrangement and keeps you from losing any items that did not sell.”

It is also possible to order greens boxes that make it simpler to always have new and fresh looking display arrangements. “Order a rotational bouquet that gives you variety from week to week and within the case,” she adds. “Our bouquet boxes average between four and five bouquet designs per box and rotate on a 3-week period. They always include a mixture of traditional and contemporary foliage.”

Shoppers need to be wowed by a mass of greens to grab their attention and show them the potential of pre-greened products. “Greens are a nice complement inside bouquets, but make sure there are enough greens to make an impact,” Levin advises. **pb**

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Potted Calla lilies are a beautiful, elegant, live product to offer customers who want to enjoy the plants in their home or give them as long-lasting, floral gifts. They are appealing to a wide variety of consumers because of their exotic look and designer-like presence.

In business since 1979, family-owned Homestead Growers Niagara started Calla lily production in 1990. The nursery supplies North American supermarkets, distributors, garden centers and florists. We grow the highest quality plants because we start with California and Dutch-origin tubers. Production facilities in Niagara, Canada, and Apopka, FL, enable us to offer different colors of Calla lilies throughout the year. We match production with our customers' expectations and needs. Our market-driven approach ensures we can supply when your customers want to buy.



Variety And Availability

The best American and European Calla lily varieties are selected for their color and seasonal characteristics and produced accordingly. We offer Orange, Red, Peach, Black, and Yellow colors at Thanksgiving. Pinks are available for Valentine's Day. Spring products include Whites and Purples at Easter, and pastel shades of pinks, lavenders, yellows and cream for Mother's Day.

All Callas are available in two sizes: 6-inch and 4.5-inch round pots.

Most of your favorite upgrades fit these sizes. Ordering well in advance will ensure you and your customers are more than satisfied.

Promotion

Retailers can promote the two lives of Calla lilies. Consumers can first enjoy them in the home and later outdoors where the plants will live for years in the garden or as container plants.

Each potted plant arrives with a durable, consumer-friendly Care and Use tag, which depicts Callas in seasonal settings. Consumers can log on to the Web site provided, learn more and become repeat Calla customers.

Encourage the floral department to promote ways consumers can use Callas to decorate their home with other seasonal items. Callas can be promoted as great gifts for special occasions or holiday parties.

Play up the variety of colors. As more and more consumers look for unique products for home décor, the many color varieties of Callas are a

perfect fit. From red to white or even black, a very modern color, Callas can complement any home fashion color scheme.

Promoting Biopots, a biodegradable pot that can be composted after use, is a great way to reach out to eco-conscious customers. These pots come in many different colors and are a very nice looking upgrade at a reasonable cost.

Display Care And Handling

Plants arrive with enough water for at least 3 to 4 days. Overwatering leads to droopy plants. Count to three when watering or add a maximum of 8oz.

Well lit or natural light is best, and Callas should not be crowded. People need to visualize what the plant will look like in their home.

Cross Merchandising Opportunities

The flexibility in use and amazing color variety of Calla lilies lend to many different cross-merchandising opportunities. Encourage store personnel to have fun in thinking about what to combine with the plants in a special display. Play on some of the unique variety names of the Callas.



OUT OF THE BOX PROMOTION IDEAS

1. Promote varieties with names that appeal to creative minds, like Picasso®, Red Sox®, and Hot Flashes™ (one of the best performing varieties).
2. Incorporate Calla plants into suggestions for party favors or party décor.
3. Celebrate Earth Day on April 22 with a Calla in a bio pot.
4. Promote National Teacher's Day on May 6 with a 4.5-inch Calla with a card or pencil pick.
5. Promote Flag Day on June 14 with a red or white calla in a blue wrap.



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12345 Eddie & Park Road
St Louis, MO 63127
Tel: 800-753-6464 or 618-476-3000, ext 308
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When merchandised correctly, miniatures will add incremental sales to any retail floral program because this product is intended to reach the "mini-size" niche market — when

consumers are looking for that little something that will fit nicely on a desk, windowsill, or where ever a small size gift, or accent item would be ideal. The minis are not intended to compete with larger size plants and thus will complement floral retail sales.

Marketing to children is another great fit to minis. Their unique size especially attracts the pre-adolescent age group. The distinctive look of Micky's Minis is engaging for young people because they can relate to the size. It's as if to say it was grown just for them. Minis can be targeted for kids buying gifts for their mother, their favorite teacher, or for themselves. By engaging children in the floral business now, they will more likely be active in this retail category later in life.

Variety/Availability

1. Roses, kalanchoes, mums, ivy, herbs and cactus/succulents: available year round
2. Poinsettia: available from November through December
3. Violets: April through October
4. Lucky Shamrocks: late February through mid-March
5. Cyclamen and orchids: October through May
6. Azaleas: November through May

Promotional Ideas

The best times of the year to promote the minis are during the three major floral holidays because of the increase in business for the floral retailer. These time periods present the



greatest opportunity for taking advantage of impulse sales:

- Mother's Day: showcase blooming products but especially the All Dressed Up mini gift set (pictured above).
- Christmas/December Holiday: mini poinsettias with a variety of accessories.
- Valentines Day: mini rose, or azalea with the I Luv U gift box.

Other important holidays because of the affinity kids have for the minis include:

- Teacher's Appreciation or Back to School: promote our crayon gift bag or the school theme wicker baskets.
- Halloween: showcase the mini kalanchoes and mums in pumpkin ceramic pots.

Miniatures make great gifts for other special occasions and can be promoted especially for smaller recognition holidays such as:

- Administrative Professional's Day: minis' unique size makes them ideal for this special occasion, especially the pencil gift box and minis gift item.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Minis present a huge chance for retailers to significantly increase sales with cross promotion. It's one of the rare cases where one plus one is more than two. Cross merchandising items include: coffee mugs, cups, votives, small bowls, and balloon weights. Be creative and most of all... make things visible!

OUT OF THE BOX PROMOTION IDEAS

1. Balloons & Blooms: Take any balloon theme, add a little something special at the end like a living miniature potted plant. Micky's Minis will act as the balloon weight. The miniature plant is perceived as a natural, wholesome, and a value-added upgrade to the balloon.

2. Air Freshen Minis: Take a two-inch miniature rosemary plant and use it to refresh the room it's in. This works especially well in small rooms.

3. Birthday Minis: Every day is someone's birthday! The minis make a nice little added touch to any birthday card, or gift.

4. Party Favor Minis: Sell multiple minis at one time by promoting them as party favors. This works great for business luncheons, dinner parties, special anniversary celebrations, or just about any party.



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 Creating a World of Color
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Cut tulips are a mainstream, profit-driving offering at the forefront of marketing plans across the nation and offer significant opportunity for floral sales in any supermarket. Many chains consider cut tulips to be their number two SKU, and are experiencing major growth in this category.

Through decades of production experience and extensive product testing, Sun Valley believes tulips grown in soil result in a superior bloom. Hydroponically produced tulips are more economical to produce but lack the vigor and health achieved with tulips grown in soil. This translates into a tulip with shorter shelf life for the store and a shorter vase life for your customers. Maximizing vase life and consumer satisfaction is the key to repeat regular sales and consistent consumer satisfaction.

All Sun Valley Tulips receive proprietary post harvest treatment resulting in consistently high quality. Our facilities in Arcata, California include 170,000 sq. ft. of coolers and a state-of-the-art pre-cooling system — the foundation of professional cold chain management. Our tulips ship in environmentally controlled trucks directly from the farm to you.



Variety and Availability

Varieties differ throughout the year. Some varieties produce well year-round, while others excel during specific seasons. Through the years, Sun Valley has optimized the growing season for each variety. The company has also researched which varieties are most popular with the end consumer and have focused their programs on these varieties.

Traditional spring tulips, grown with bulbs from Holland and France, bloom from December until May. Sun Valley uses ULO technology to preserve the bulb's energy, enabling us to produce tulips June through August. Fall tulips, available from September through December, are bloomed with bulbs



from New Zealand. So no matter what the season or occasion, quality tulips are available.

Promotion

Tulips offer wonderful excitement to the customers and are easy to promote. It is important to engage the consumer as they traverse the stores. Studies have shown education is the key to increased sales and point-of-purchase (POP) information is a must. Teaching customers about tulips so they can make a connection to the product is key to driving sales in the stores. When the consumer knows what to look for in a tulip and they are not intimidated by what they don't know, they purchase more often.



Display Care and Handling

Tulips are very geotropic, meaning they turn against the gravitational pull of the earth. Mother Nature instilled this in the tulip bulb to ensure the sprout found its way out of the earth. Tulips should be shipped from the grower upright, if curved tulips are received, simply flip them and they will bend the other way. Tulip stems need not be trimmed unless severe dehydration has occurred. Simply drop into a bucket of water and display.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

The vibrant coloring of tulips presents a variety of attractive cross-merchandising opportunities. They can be cross merchandised with just about any item in the store. Encourage store personnel to think out-of-the-box and place tulips where impulse sales will result. Some great cross-merchandising ideas include placing them next to fresh fruit, spirit drinks and fresh bakery items. Additionally you can place a small display near any items or departments where entertaining products are featured. What customer would not want a beautiful vase of tulips for any party?

OUT OF THE BOX PROMOTION IDEAS

1. Provide POP information in store displays. Focus on educating the consumer about cut tulips and the value they offer.
2. Use Sun Valley's ready-to-go Display Box for easily merchandising tulips in the floral department and throughout the entire store.
3. Place secondary tulip displays in high traffic areas (i.e. deli, check out) to promote impulse buys.

FOR THE CUSTOMER

Customer education is crucial to satisfaction and repeat sales. Make sure the customer knows how to properly handle their cut tulips by providing care information (available from Sun Valley in poster form).



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By offering new and unique blooming plants, retailers can generate excitement and passion with consumers and store personnel as well as stimulating sales. Bay City Flower Company offers a variety of new, proprietary floral products designed to help stores stand out. Instead of price-driven, shrinking-margin sales, retailers can reset pricing with the prospect of high perceived-value products and healthy margins.

Retailers build loyalty and repeat purchases in their floral departments by consistently offering long-lasting products that exceed consumer expectations. Bay City is fanatical about post-harvest quality. By giving the customer value, not just a low price, stores can build a customer base with consumers who are delighted, not just "satisfied" with their purchase. Bay City is pleased to be celebrating its 100-year anniversary this year with a proven track record of providing quality and value to customers and their consumers.

As consumers continue to focus on beautifying their homes, retailers can offer fresh, new, seasonal and on-trend packaging in floral products. Create fashion in your floral department and raise the perception of high value. Also, consider promoting Bay City's Petra Paper packaging, made of 80 percent rock, for the growing number of consumers who consider eco-friendly products important in their buying decisions. Exclusive designs, art and materials help you create a unique, never off-the-rack experience for your customers.



NEW! Angel's Parasol Hydrangea



Variety

Here are a few of Bay City's new proprietary products: Ornamental Oregano, Pineapple Lily, Angel's Parasol, 3-inch Mini Clay Hydrangeas, Star of Bethlehem, Ravel Hydrangeas, Vintage Harvest Hydrangeas, Qt Lilies, Bud-Laden Gardenias and Hebe. Hydrangeas include a unique and broad assortment of proprietary varieties and brilliant colors.

Promotion

Create additional sales to holiday purchases and daily product offerings by putting together easy-to-display themed promos for non major Holiday weeks. Examples include: Breast Cancer Awareness, Cool and Blue, Ice Cream Social, Fourth of July and holidays such as St Patrick's, Hanukkah, Passover and Chinese New Year. Inspire your staff to be creative in coming up with other locally-relevant promotions.

Cross-Merchandising Opportunities

Profit Catcher Promos are designed for easy cross-merchandising. Bay City's newest promotion, the Ice Cream Social, features assorted and colorful single ball hydrangeas in ice cream cone packaging! Novel and new, this is a perfect tie-in with National Dairy month, Ice Cream Month, or other summer promotions. Display in a high traffic area with signage saying, "We all scream for ice cream." Autumn and Christmas holiday promotions can also tie in festive foods, wines, gift baskets, and many others products associated with the season.

Handling & POS Information

All Bay City Flower/hana bay flowers® products include complete care and handling care tags. Care and culture information and POS signage is available on our website for free downloading by retail stores. Retailers can also take advantage of Bay City's assistance with in-store signage and art.



OUT OF THE BOX PROMOTION IDEAS

1. Showcase a vivid display of blooming plants to create excitement and sell value to customers.

2. Tie-in upcoming autumn and Christmas holiday entertaining by promoting use of plants for decoration.



BAERO NORTH AMERICA INC.
 10432 Baur Boulevard
 St. Louis, MO 63132
 Tel: 314-692-2270 Fax: 314-991-2640
 Contact: Lee Rhoades lee.rhoades@baero.com
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The L.E.D. Conversation

Any supermarket considering a lighting change right now is having a conversation about LEDs. The promise of 50,000 and even 64,000 hours of maintenance-free life might seem too good to pass up. However, since studies show that impulse sales contribute up to 80% of total floral revenue, greater care needs to be exercised in choosing floral lighting than in any other department.

Floral sales present unique challenges not faced by produce, deli, HBC and the rest. Unless it's time to celebrate an anniversary or one of those other handful of yearly occasions, a bouquet is nowhere on a shopper's list or mind as they walk through the door. Having to sell a desire as opposed to a necessity creates a situation in which floral managers must offer customers a dramatic presentation and enticing atmosphere above and beyond the rest of the store. Anything less puts all those impulse sales at risk. With so much at stake the best course of action is an actual in-department demonstration of exactly how any type of lighting affects department appeal, customer response and ultimately floral profits.

The Power of Color

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

The most efficient way to harness this power is with the newest generation of HID lighting.

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

The Rest of the Story

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

First, it is a fact that ceramic metal halide lamps are far more energy efficient than the LED fixtures on the market today. With an output of around 100 lumens per watt, CMH



lamps provide much more bang for your buck than the LED average of 50 or so. Saying a 20 watt LED fixture can replace a 70 watt HID fixture is similar to saying a Gremlin can replace a Ferrari. Sure it might get you there but are you going to enjoy the ride or attract any attention, positive attention that is?

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

Third, just make sure you know everything about your lighting options including the advantage and disadvantage of those options. For example, some questions you must consider are: "How many more LED fixtures will I need to create the same pop as HID lighting? After those 50,000 hours are up, then what? Do I have to buy all new LED fixtures?" and "How much of the 50,000 hours is covered by warranty?"

What is Great Lighting?

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

As LEDs are rushed to the market with claims of being able to effectively replace existing lighting systems, the LED's relatively low light output and general color performance leave some store owners doubting their investment.

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

peonies to peppers to prime rib providing heat protection and UV protection for each. On top of that, truly quality lighting should create a warm, relaxing atmosphere with "shoppability" and do so with a level of energy efficiency that meets the standards of today and tomorrow. If your current lighting design does not serve all these functions, it might be time to look at other lighting options.

Profits through Presentation

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

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

QUICK TIPS

1. Separate your floral department from the rest of the store with different lighting to create a store within a store that will become a destination for shoppers.
2. Make sure your lighting system provides UV protection to keep your flowers fresh.
3. Give your floral displays a beauty test — place them under varied light sources to see the enormous differences HID, fluorescent and LED lighting have on your product.

When Ordinary Is Not An Option

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Supermarket floral does not have to miss out on the opportunities presented by the increasing trend of sustainability and environmentally-consciousness consumers. In today's rapidly changing business environment, one of the most valuable services a business can offer to their customers is a way for them to stand out from their competitors. EcoFlowers, the largest provider of sustainably grown fresh cut flowers and bouquets, offers retailers an easy solution to give eco-consumers options in the floral department.

What Makes Us Different

- We provide the freshest selection of organic and eco-friendly certified fresh cut flowers. All of our products are certified by third-party organizations to ensure they are grown in a manner that protects the environment and the farm workers.
- EcoFlowers has created programs to provide financial assistance to small farm owners to become certified Organic.
- We support our nationwide customers with the best marketing programs in the floral industry. Our marketing team will partner with you to provide assistance in creating in-store signage and promotional opportunities.
- All of our bouquets are 100% vase ready requiring no additional arranging.
- Every purchase helps improve the lives of farm workers by providing fair wages, health care benefits, education programs, and employment of women (most farms employ 60% women). EcoFlowers also contributes a percentage of all shipments to offset carbon usage through CarbonFund.org.
- Easy online ordering process.



Product Selection

- Bouquets perfect for everyday occasions
- Novelty products and wreaths
- Pre-made bouquets designed for all major holiday themes

Promotion

POS and education is a big part of helping promote eco-products and drive sales. Customized marketing materials are available to promote the use of eco-friendly and certified sustainable products. Make sure signage and products are visible to draw attention to the fact that sustainable options are available.



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**OUT OF THE BOX
 PROMOTION IDEAS**

1. Tie-in to Earth Day to encourage customers to purchase eco-friendly floral products.
2. Encourage customers to have a "green" Christmas party by using eco-friendly floral products as decoration.
3. Provide options for couples to have an eco-friendly wedding by using sustainably grown flowers.
4. Host eco-friendly seminars in your local area to discuss the advantages of using sustainably grown flowers.
5. Train your floral staff in the growing practices of sustainable products so each location has an on-site expert to answer consumer questions.





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RETIREMENT PREPARATIONS



It seems appropriate to sidestep from the regular retail world on this 25th anniversary occasion and touch on broader aspects everyone can relate. When *PRODUCE BUSINESS* magazine was about to be born, I was just beginning to think about financial preparations for future retirement. Then there were defined benefit pension plans, stock options, 401Ks, IRAs, real estate and

personal investments growing at rates far exceeding the last decade's results. One thought about retirement lasting one to two decades.

Recently I heard a retirement presentation that focused on the potential for extending one's life past the century mark by following good nutritional practices and maintaining an active mental and physical lifestyle. The life expectancy for men and women not suffering from an incurable disease was projected to reach 101 and 105, respectively.

So how does one prepare financially for this possibility in their working years? Certainly, the majority of financial investments have not been kind to increasing retirement fund growth recently.

During my travels in Italy, I had the opportunity to spend some time with the CFO of a major U.S. university and her football coach husband. Eventually, we spoke about wine and I was about to discover that following

considerable studies, they had decided the appreciation of selected fine wines offered the potential for greater returns than the current level of financial gains from nearly any other investment program.

The gains that they are attempting to achieve are not the short or intermediate gains people watching CNBC are expecting. No, they are anticipating wine price appreciation over periods of five, 10, 15 years — or even longer periods of time.

The most interesting part of this wine investment program is that after careful, in-depth investigation the CFO and her husband decided to convert a substantial portion of their home's basement into an environmentally controlled wine cellar. The overall objective is to have a broad variation of dates that the wines will approach their maximum value. In essence, this is similar to the principal of creating a bond ladder with maturity dates that are continually further out, thus providing a constant and continual cash flow during the projected retirement period. Of course, achieving the desired outcome requires diligent study in order to select the most suitable wines.

Prior to traveling throughout the Northern Italian countryside, their preparation had included identifying the well-known wine shops that would normally carry the better wines, particularly those from Italy. Nat-

urally, packaging the wines for shipment was a major task, even using the best of today's protective materials.

Obviously, this type of wine 401K is not for everyone. As an alternative, there are several investment programs that focus on wine. One such program is Bolton's Wine investments, which provides active management of wine investment portfolios and recommends timing for purchases, sales and holdings of fine wines, typically focusing on the much-appreciated Bordeaux variety. Likewise, Bacchus Partners LLC is the general partner for a group of limited partnerships investing in fine wines for long-term price appreciation. One may follow the price changes of the Liv-ex 50 index of fine wines, which has risen from 89 in December, 1999, to 339 in July, 2010, by going to www.livex.com.

However, financial success is only a minor portion of the retirement picture. The major part is the opportunity we are now afforded to do as we choose with our lives, often in relation to those around us. Several years earlier, we joined our current church at about the same time as Bobby

Thomson, the New York Giants baseball player and accidental hero — as he identified himself — who, in 1951, hit the home run that became known as “The Shot Heard Round The World.”

I didn't know what to expect from such a famous athlete, especially in relation to media stories about the majority of today's celebrity athletes. Quickly, I was to

find out that this man in his 80s, who used a cane for walking support, was one of the most gracious people one would ever meet. Always the gentleman, he treated everyone with respect.

Regardless of the time required, he personally answered all his fan mail. Almost 60 years after the great event, he still fulfilled anywhere from 30 to 50 weekly autograph requests. He was always willing to speak and do other events for charity, from cancer foundations to reading to first graders. No one standing in line was ever left waiting.

This humble living legend discovered one of his most cherished memories came when the 50th anniversary celebration of his home run was canceled out of respect for the 9/11 tragedy. Instead of his planned celebration, he visited firehouses around Ground Zero with the opposing pitcher, Ralph Branca, to offer support to those who had lost so many heroes of their own.

As the years rolled by, his injured ankles, which had provided the opportunity for Hank Aaron to become a starter, transformed his walking to a slow shuffle. But attending church each Sunday was the right thing for him to do regardless of the pain caused by the tedious 40-yard journey between his car and the church. Returning from his memorial service, one realizes financially preparing for retirement is minor in comparison to living our life interacting with others.

pb

Financial success is only a minor portion of the retirement picture. The major part is the opportunity we are now afforded to do as we choose with our lives, often in relation to those around us.

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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CONTACT INFORMATION:

FOR REGISTRATION

Fran Gruskin

Ph: 212-426-2218

E-mail:

register@nyproduceshow.com

FOR BOOTH SALES AND SPONSORSHIPS

*Eric Nieman, Ellen Rosenthal,
Bill Martin, Sandy Lee,
Shaunn Alderman*

Ph: 212-426-2218

E-mail:

exhibit@nyproduceshow.com

EASTERN PRODUCE COUNCIL

John McAleavey

Ph: 973-564-6295

E-mail:

jmcaleavey@comcast.net

PRODUCE BUSINESS

Ken Whitacre

Ph: 561-994-1118, ext 101

E-mail:

kwhitacre@phoenixmedianet.com

MOBILE GROCERY SHOPPING BEGINS TO TREND IN EUROPE



After successful launches by the UK's Ocado and Tesco, international grocers from Germany to Australia are now looking to capitalize on the trend toward mobile shopping. Earlier this month, Ahold-owned Peapod, a leading online grocer in the United States, became the first major supermarket chain in the country to launch a transactional mobile application (app) for mobile devices.

The move toward mobile browsing and shopping is very much in its infancy. However, the number of smart-phone users is reaching critical mass, which is opening up an entirely new portal for retailers to reach consumers.

The wisest retailers are looking to capitalize on this trend at an early stage, in an effort to build a brand presence. Research from Parks Associates, a Dallas, TX-based market research and consulting firm focused on all digital product and service segments, suggests the number of global smart-phone users could exceed 1 billion by 2014. While this clearly represents an opportunity for retailers, it is important to remember that a

large percentage of revenue generated from the mobile channel will be at the expense of other e-commerce. It is unlikely to be lucrative as a stand-alone channel; yet it will be critical for retailers with a strong online presence to launch into the mobile platform to meet their customers' needs.

Few retailers have yet to take the plunge into transactional platforms. Even in the UK, which is one of the most developed online grocery markets in the world, market leader Tesco had only just launched its transactional app in September, while pure-play online grocer, Ocado, entered this new arena earlier in the year. Outside of the UK, Ahold in the United States, and Switzerland's Migros, are the only major supermarkets to launch transactional mobile apps.

Ahold's launch of PeapodMobile is not dissimilar to the Ocado On-the-Go app. Despite trading on opposite sides of the Atlantic, both retailers target a similar demographic in key urban clusters. For cost-efficiency reasons, focusing on densely populated areas is a critical aspect of online retailing, and one of the reasons both retailers have had success online.

It is also interesting to note that both Peapod and Ocado do not have

stand-alone stores, but sell national brands and private label items from well-known brick-and-mortar stores — Ocado has a partnership with Waitrose, and Peapod is a sister company to Stop & Shop and Giant in the Northeast. This has enabled them to gain the confidence of consumers while still acting in many ways as an independent retailer. Going mobile is much more important to retailers such as Ocado, Peapod and even FreshDirect, which launched its transactional app in March, for one simple reason — as purely online grocers, their shoppers are already tech-savvy, and therefore, likely to fully embrace mobile shopping. In fact, FreshDirect conducted a survey this past year and found that two-

thirds of its shoppers owned a smart-phone. Launching transactional apps allows these grocers to reach their core shoppers while they are away from their computers, thereby improving convenience and removing any purchasing barriers.

While most retailers are not yet ready for full-scale mobile shopping, a large number are embarking on services-based apps to allow shoppers to use their phone to scan barcodes, view recipes, create shopping lists and so on. In France, for example, Carrefour recently launched an app allowing customers to use mobile phones as loyalty cards and to download a floor plan of

its stores in Écully and Vénissieux.

In the United States, Meijer recently launched Find-it, an app that allows shoppers to see the location of more than 100,000 SKUs in a retail store, improving navigation and shopability in a large-store format. The Meijer app also features an innovative "Remember My Parking Spot" function, which shows the location of a shopper's car in the Meijer parking lot. Additionally, both Publix Super Markets, a large Southern-based retailer, and Target offer apps that allow users to view current store circulars and sale items.

Meanwhile, outside the United States, the Coles Shopmate app was unleashed in Australia this summer, offering real-time pricing aimed at users' locations. Virtually all of the major French and German grocers offer service-based apps. Even discounter, Netto, offers an app with weekly promotions, a shopping list generator and a store finder.

Service-based apps will become standard practice for the major supermarkets. However, transactional apps are only likely to take off in regions where grocery e-commerce is already established, primarily in Western Europe and North America.

pb

While this clearly represents an opportunity for retailers, it is important to remember that a large percentage of revenue generated from the mobile channel will be at the expense of other e-commerce. It is unlikely to be lucrative as a stand-alone channel; yet it will be critical for retailers with a strong online presence to launch into the mobile platform to meet their customers' needs.

By Natalie Berg, Global Research Director, Planet Retail

Natalie Berg heads up the Grocery Research Team at Planet Retail, working from the London office. She has spent the past six years analyzing global retail trends. Natalie's expertise lies in sustainability, format diversification and private label trends. She also contributes to print and broadcast media on retail issues and is a member of the UK Sustainable Development Commission.

Something Real

As a child, I didn't know it, but they had silver in the coins.
Then someone decided that the money didn't have to be real.
That we could sustain, in our imaginations, the value.
A proposition still to be confirmed.

In time, I collected the old JFK Half Dollars and the
Quarters with George Washington and the
Dimes with Franklin D. Roosevelt — and they were real.
You could melt them...
And the value would ooze out,
Like the juice from an orange or a banana too-ripe-squeezed or
A peach when everything is perfect.

It is our Silver now.
From San Francisco to Orlando spans a continent.
Spans a quarter-century.

If you shook a magazine and the letters all fell out,
You could reorganize the letters,
And the value would still be there.
The message is inherent.

That is what silver is all about.

By JIM PREVOR



SOCIAL MEDIA — AM I MISSING ANYTHING?



My son started college the year Facebook rolled out. “Are you on Facebook?” had replaced, “What’s your screen name?” By semester’s end, they were all part of it. My daughter entered school the following year, and met her roommate on Facebook before they even showed up at the dorms.

Three years later, I joined social media. My political party asked me to sign up. I won’t say which political party, but let’s just say we had our head handed to us in the election. Our party’s national chairman told us one of the things we got smoked on was social media. Our chairman said to us, “Many of you have Facebook and Twitter accounts, but are not linked to the cause. Get linked to the local, state and national party organizations as well as campaigns. If you are not on Facebook or Twitter, start accounts.”

And so started my 18-month odyssey into the world of social media. I dutifully linked to the party. Then it started. Other campaigns and causes started following me and I reciprocated. I then took the gateway drug of the social media: I went looking for who and what was out there.

My university student children warned me, even mocked me, that I was getting sucked in. “That 20-somethings are connected to a virtual network all the time is a myth,” they assured me. But surely there must be some way my business could benefit?

Fast Forward

I’ve spent between 500 and 1,000 hours on this project in the past 18 months. On four social media sites, I linked to over 200 individuals and organizations. These fell into three groups: political and cause-oriented, produce-trade-oriented and friends. I was receiving between 200 and 300 messages a day.

After my initial link to political and cause-oriented sites, I quickly became overwhelmed, bored and annoyed with the stream of legislative updates. I appreciate the heads up, but I can’t contact 20 to 30 public officials a day. It wasn’t even an election year and the candidates’ “new media” was in overdrive. I felt bad to block organizations I have supported for years, but I toss their junk mail and hang up on their telephone solicitations, so what’s the difference?

The bulk of my time I spent looking at produce messages. I followed more than 100 produce and grocery store sources and I don’t

know that I learned anything. Most stores have between a few dozen to a few hundred followers per store, the notable exception being Whole Foods. Most of the communication is about promotions or special events. Do I really want to be reminded on my mobile phone that country pork ribs are on special this week or that flu shots will be available from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday?

I must have read a thousand health claims. I took them as serious as the infomercial that they are. None of them changed my attitude or buying behavior, nor did I repeat them. So much for viral marketing. A grocery chain dietitian Twitter feed must have had five to 10 tweets a week on gluten-free products. Are there that many people with celiac disease? I think the only health study I paid attention to was the one that said 25 percent of Americans think they have a food allergy when, in fact, they do not.

I would search Twitter for all tweets that mentioned grapes. I learned that politicians like the term “sour grapes;” that people still quote the

Grapes of Wrath; that dieters proudly report what they just ate — many times including grapes; that people frequently report enjoying grapes; that people are dissatisfied daily to find seeds in their seedless grapes; that once in a while spiders are found in grapes; that many romantic fantasies include being fed grapes; and that some people have a fondness for smoking grape,

which, thanks to urbandictionary.com, I now know means smoking a type of marijuana with leaves with purplish veins.

What really made it — or ruined it — for me was the week after the Chilean earthquake. It’s benchmarking time. Here is a situation where I have inside information, being in the grape business and having in-laws in Chile. Well, I learned grapes would be plentiful AND in short supply. Gee, that’s just what the Chileans told us — there would be plenty of grapes, but at double the price because the market was up.

Epilogue

Years ago, I wrote to the Direct Mail Association to take my name off mailing and call lists. I did this for the first time to an electronic database a few weeks ago. I have a spam filter on my e-mail and use caller ID and voice mail to screen calls. So now I’m going to publish my information, and in some cases publish my address book, generating a list for someone to sell, in order to use social media? Social Media is just that — social media. It’s great for organizing a class reunion, but the business benefits are limited. Don’t feel left out. Ignore the consultants. You’re not missing much.

pb

Do I really want to be reminded on my mobile phone that country pork ribs are on special this week or that flu shots will be available from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday?

By John Pandol

John Pandol is in charge of special projects and Mexican sourcing for Pandol Brothers Co., in Delano, CA.

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Louis J. Acompora Foundation	98	194	800-223-8070	718-991-1599
Albert's Organics	171	133	800-996-0004	610-444-0316
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APEAM (Avocado Producers & Exporting Packers of Michoacan)	101	114		
Apio, Inc.	91	144	800-454-1355	805-343-6295
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Asociacion Mexicana de Horticultura Protegida A.C.	106	156	667-715-5830	
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Maurice A. Auerbach, Inc.	76	128	201-807-9292	201-807-9596
Maurice A. Auerbach, Inc.	185	129	201-807-9292	201-807-9596
Ayco Farms, Inc.	50	27	954-788-6800	954-788-5600
Babe Farms, Inc.	132	15	800-648-6772	805-922-3950
Baero North America, Inc.	200-201	86	314-692-2270	314-991-2640
Wayne E. Bailey Produce Co.	146	221	800-845-6149	910-654-4734
Basciani Foods, Inc.	178	99	610-268-3044	610-268-2194
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Chep USA Inc.	67	160	800.CHEP.USA	407-422-4614
Chep USA Inc.	69	161	800.CHEP.USA	407-422-4614
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Chilean Avocado Importers Association	41	37	202-626-0560	
Christopher Ranch	184	1	408-847-1100	408-847-0581
Cirul Brothers	105	93	520-281-9696	520-281-1473
Coast To Coast Produce Co.	80	68	800-433-1403	617-381-0067
Cohen Produce Marketing	152	190	800-633-6173	717-677-6120
Columbia Marketing International	151	30	509-663-1955	509-663-2231
Community Suffolk, Inc.	86	79	617-389-5200	617-389-6680
Compu-Tech, Inc.	154	108	509-884-1542	509-884-8982
Concord Foods	32	124	508-580-1700	508-584-9425
Continental Plastic Corp.	97	214	866-811-6510	
Copexue	111	25	54-11-4866-1135	54-11-4866-1135
Country Fresh Mushroom Co.	179	3	610-268-3043	610-268-0479
The Cranberry Network LLC	85	11	715-422-0410	715-422-0406
Crowley Maritime Corp.	50	137	800-CROWLEY	
Crowley Maritime Corp.	31	39	305-471-8999	
Crystal Valley Foods	50	31	800-359-5631	305-592-9803
Curry & Company	109	21	800-929-1073	503-393-6085
D'Arrigo Bros. Co. of New York	73	12	800-223-8080	718-960-0544
Dawson Farms	147	197	318-878-5806	318-878-2826
Del Monte Fresh Produce	212	115	800-950-3683	305-520-8495
Desert Glory	175	163		
Dole Fresh Vegetable Co.	2	111	800-333-5454	831-754-5243
dProduce Man Software	66	14	888-PRODMAN	650-712-9973
Duda Family Farms	129	155	561-804-1477	561-753-6660
East Coast Brokers & Packers, Inc.	211	117	800-557-7751	863-869-9850
Eastern Propak LLC	162	119	856-881-3553	856-243-0154
EcoFlowers.com	202	217	407-754-3232	
Edinburg Citrus Association	162	95	956-383-6619	956-383-2435
Edinburg Citrus Association	84	75	956-383-6619	956-383-2435
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Joseph Farmer & Son, Inc.	77	97	718-893-1640	718-328-3738
Florida Classic Growers	163	198	863-438-2200	863-439-1917
The Florida Tomato Committee	130	60	407-894-3071	407-898-4296
Fowler Farms	158	73	800-836-9537	315-594-8060
Fresh Produce Association of The Americas	141	154	520-287-2707	520-287-2948
Freska Produce International, LLC	104	55	805-650-1040	805-650-3550
Fruit Logistica	70	164	540-372-3777	540-372-1414
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Gourmet Trading Company	50	33	310-216-7575	310-216-7676
Green Giant Fresh	59	42	800-767-6104	208-524-2420
Grower Alliance, LLC	132	223	520-761-1921	520-377-9189
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Idaho Eastern Oregon	43	54	208-334-2350	208-334-2274
Ion Promotion Committee	57	20	888-466-4667	208-722-6582
Indianapolis Fruit Co.	82	173	317-546-2425	317-543-0521
Inline Plastics Corp.	94	123	800-826-5567	203-924-0370

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L&M Companies, Inc.	40	91	509-698-3881	509-698-3922
Lakeside Organic Gardens	172	175	831-761-8797	831-728-1104
Tom Lange Co.	46-47	90	217-786-3300	217-786-2570
LGS Specialty Sales, Ltd.	63	224	800-796-2349	718-542-2354
Limoneira	164	212	805-525-5541	805-525-8211
Lifeshare Foods, Inc.	119	92	800-669-3169	208-263-7821
Living Herbs	176	70	866-548-4644	760-397-5807
Lynn-Ette & Sons, Inc.	133	215	585-682-4435	585-682-4968
Maine Potato Board	45	45	207-769-5061	207-764-4148
Malena Produce, Inc.	104	176	520-281-1533	520-281-2156
Mann Packing Company, Inc.	11	2	800-884-6266	831-422-5171
J. Marchini & Son / LeGrand	134	191	559-665-9710	559-665-9714
Mariani Nut Co.	189	100	530-662-3111	530-795-2681
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Marzetti Produce, Ltd.	122	40	614-846-2232	614-842-4186
Mastroratti Produce, Ltd.	29	116	519-326-8799	519-326-8799
Melissa's/World Variety Produce, Inc.	72	78	800-668-7111	323-588-8841
Apache Produce / Melones International	102	184	520-281-2882	520-761-1829
Michigan Apple Committee	155	132	800-456-2753	517-669-9506
Micky's Minis Flora Express	197	147	800-753-6464	
MIXTEC Group	197	147	626-440-7077	626-440-1557
MJB Sales, Inc.	67	105	610-268-0444	610-268-0837
Monsanto Company	42	181	805-918-2283	805-918-2557
Monte Package Company	93	140	800-653-2807	616-849-0185
Monterey Mushrooms	180	94	800-333-MUSH	831-763-2300
Mooney Farms	120	18	530-899-2661	530-899-7746
Mor USA	86	52	917-416-3768	914-347-1605
N&W Farms	147	106	662-682-7961	662-682-7998
National Raisin Company	34	24	559-834-5981	559-834-1055
New Jersey Department of Agriculture	21	32	609-292-8853	609-292-2508
New York Apple Association, Inc.	149	13	585-924-2121	585-924-1629
New York Apple Sales, Inc.	158	57	518-477-7200	518-477-6770
Niagara Fresh Fruit Co.	134	188	716-778-7631	716-778-8768
Nicky Gregory Company, LLC	79	125	404-366-7410	404-363-8169
Nokota Packers, Inc.	137	82	701-847-2200	701-847-2109
North Bay Produce	51	64	231-946-1941	231-946-1902
North Shore Greenhouses, Inc.	176	70	866-548-4644	760-397-5807
Northern Plains Potato Growers Assn.	138	84	218-773-3633	218-773-6277
Northern Valley Growers	140	102	701-894-6464	701-894-6462
Ocean Mist Farms	25	44	831-633-2222	831-633-4363
Pacific Organic Produce	172	202	415-673-5555	415-673-5585
Paramount Farms	37	203	800-528-NUTS	310-447-7778
Paramount Farms	39	218	800-528-NUTS	310-447-7778
Peri & Sons Farms	54	16	775-463-4444	775-463-4028
The Perishable Specialist, Inc.	51	65	305-477-9906	305-477-9975
Philadelphia Fresh Food Terminal Corp.	81	43	215-336-3003	215-336-5542
Phillips Mushroom Farms	49	142	800-722-8818	610-444-4751
Pismo-Oceano Vegetable Exchange	134	177	805-489-5770	805-489-7058
Plain Jane	102	184	520-281-2282	520-761-2829
PMA Foundation for Industry Talent	125	49	302-738-7100	302-731-2409
Ponderosa Mushrooms	180	180	800-575-4393	604-945-9735
Jerry Porricelli Produce	83	107	718-893-6000	718-893-0158
Potandone Produce	59	42	800-767-6104	208-524-2420
Prime Time	27	204	760-3	

BLAST FROM THE PAST

BY JAMES PREVOR
PRESIDENT & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



OCTOBER 19, 1985

It's the 25th anniversary of the launch of PRODUCE BUSINESS magazine, so it's only natural we should do our "Blast From The Past" about that first issue of PRODUCE BUSINESS and its debut at the PMA convention in San Francisco in 1985.

I look at the old photos of that convention, lay them all out on a big table and ask myself what I think of it all...

First thought: Ken Whitacre and I were really young back then. I remember when the issue arrived, how proud we were of it. Ken and I were only 23-years-old and this was our first great contribution to the world.

Looking now at our first issue, I'm shockingly impressed at the quality of our editorial judgment, even in that first effort.

Our biggest editorial commitment in the publication was to the debate on citrus volume control, known as Prorate. Three articles, over 20,000 words, drew on pieces from USDA, academia and think tanks — to this day the most extensive analysis done on the issue featuring both a pro and con. The public policy change that eventually ensued to eliminate citrus Prorate transformed that industry forever.

We also ran a front page article on Alar — four years before the famous *60 Minutes* segment that not only led to its banning but that brought pesticides and the broader food safety issue to new prominence with the public.

Perhaps most prescient: We focused attention on the then-tiny Farmer's Market industry, doing a photo montage of the Nashville Farmer's Market and an interview with the head of San Francisco's Farmer's Market. At the time, in the whole state of California there were only 15 certified Farmer's Markets — certified meaning verified farmers were selling their own product. Today, California has over 400 certified Farmer's Markets.

Of all the individuals we could have profiled, we selected a very young Karen Caplan, who went on to be, among many things, the first woman to chair United.



I have to confess that I get a little emotional when I think of the early contributors who are no longer with us. Bob Strube was a columnist from our first issue, and he believed in us and what we were doing, and he supported us when he had no need to. He called me when he received that issue and told me: "Jimmy-boy, you are going to do something great for this industry. Your grandfather will be proud." I wonder if I'm living up.

Cornell's Max Brunk, the great dean of agricultural economists, was another columnist from the start. He called after he read the prorate piece and said, "You should know that nobody else would have run those pieces. There are many people in the industry now sophisticated enough to appreciate this kind of high-level thought.

You are going to push the trade to deal with its issues on a level it never saw before." His voice still haunts me a little.

Robert Zwartkruis is still with us, but his pen was felled by illness. He taught me the value of being bold. Whether he was talking about his old friends, people like Howard Marguleas, Jack Pandol or Joe Cerniglia, or the quality of that year's crop, or the marketing approach of agencies, or the Ayatollah Khomeini — he always spoke his mind. He believed there was always a place in the world for an entrepreneur. When people questioned if we could do it, with so many older and larger competitors, he told me, "The giants are great at everything but thinking in unconventional ways. The more the big boys dominate, the more opportunity for those who reject conventional wisdom."

It wasn't all fun and games, of course. The publisher of another publication came by and begrudgingly acknowledged that the first issue was high quality. He asked, with a tone that indicated he knew the answer, if I thought we could sustain it. One supposes 25 years later, our sustainability credentials are now in tact.

pb

The *Blast from the Past* is a regular feature of PRODUCE BUSINESS. We welcome submissions of your old photos, labels or advertisements along with suggested captions. Please send materials to: Editor, PRODUCE BUSINESS, P.O. Box 810425, Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425, or e-mail info@producebusiness.com



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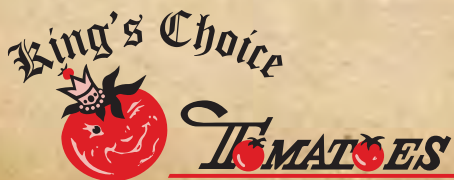
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