

# producebusiness

MARKETING • MERCHANDISING • MANAGEMENT • PROCUREMENT

## Retailers Fulfill Social Responsibility Via Produce

SPECIAL NEW YORK  
OLYMPIC  
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ShopRite

### SUPPLEMENT



FLORAL BUSINESS

### SPECIAL SECTION



PMA  
AISLE BY AISLE

### INSIDE

WHY LIDL WILL SUCCEED WHERE TESCO FAILED IN THE US  
WILL'S SHOP'N SAVE • SPECIALTY PRODUCE • FALL AVOCADOS  
TRANSPORTATION • NEW YORK APPLES • PEARS  
WISCONSIN POTATOES • POTATO MERCHANDISING • IDAHO POTATOES  
PERUVIAN ONIONS • MICHIGAN APPLES • PISTACHIOS  
REGIONAL PROFILES: PHILADELPHIA AND ST. LOUIS  
NOGALES DEAL MEETS THE FUTURE HEAD-ON



# • GET UP • AND GROW!™ *together*

For the second year in a row, Dole has partnered with retailers to spread the word about healthy eating through a nationwide summer tour and campaign to increase fresh fruit and vegetable consumption. This summer, the tour has already visited 41 cities, encouraging Americans to get healthy together by eating more fresh fruits and vegetables. And, it's not over yet!

## TOUR



- Over 23 million summer tour impressions
- 247 sampling events
- 77,000 attendees

And there's still one month to go!

## CHALLENGE



Americans are taking the Healthy Living Challenge together with friends and family. They can enter for the chance to win unique culinary party experiences through the end of September!

## RECIPES



Our Culinary Nutrition team has been creating new recipes all summer long. Check our website for all the newest fresh fruit and vegetable dishes.

## LEARN



The latest fruit and vegetable articles and insights from the Dole Nutrition Institute are making eating healthy together even easier!

Visit [Dole.com/GetUpAndGrow](http://Dole.com/GetUpAndGrow) for the latest information. #GetUpAndGrow



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### CORRECTION

On page 83 of the August 2016 issue of PRODUCE BUSINESS, Joe Cavalier was incorrectly spelled and identified in a photo caption. Cavalier is president of Cavalier-Gulling-Wilson Co. Our apologies for the error.



# NOBODY SAYS **ORGANIC** BETTER THAN THE ORIGINAL.

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\*The Organic Trade Association presentation "Organic Produce Trends: Current Drivers and What to Watch" July 2016.

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TOP 10  
BRANDS  
"ON THE WAY UP"**

– Nielsen Harris Poll EquiTrend® Study



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Source: Top 10 brands identified as heading “on the way up” by 97,120 U.S. consumers in Nielsen’s semi-annual syndicated brand equity study. © 2016 The Wonderful Company LLC. All Rights Reserved. THE WONDERFUL COMPANY, WONDERFUL, POM, HALOS, the accompanying logos, and all other intellectual property are owned by The Wonderful Company LLC or its affiliates. All other trademarks belong to their respective owners. MB15791

# produce quiz

## THIS MONTH'S WINNER



**MARK ALLISON**  
Senior Manager,  
Produce Procurement  
The Cheesecake  
Factory Inc.  
Calabasas Hills, CA

Mark Allison's almost 30-year career in the produce industry began as a young 20-something buyer for a wholesaler.

"I started off at the order desk, taking phone orders — pricing and processing invoices," he explains. "I never saw any of the produce; I learned about it by the book."

At one point, Allison also managed the produce bidding for school districts. "I got to learn produce by specifications, so it was actually an interesting way to start in the business — especially with school bids, because everything was related to packs

and pound size, so I had an idea of what shipments were suppose to weigh," he recalls.

"That preliminary product knowledge helped me tremendously, and it will stick with me forever."

That foundation provided guidance through his positions with Marriott doing contracting, with Sysco as a purchasing director, and ultimately with his current position in produce procurement for the Cheesecake Factory and Grand Lux Cafe restaurants.

"We have very high quality standards, and when dealing with produce, the industry is constantly changing from one day to the next. Most people aren't aware, but we use a huge amount of fresh ingredients — including fresh herbs. We peel our own carrots, onions, etc. We do all of that [prep work] in the back of the kitchen — so produce is a huge focus for us."

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

### WIN A CUISINART ELECTRIC ICE CREAM MAKER

Perfect for this hot summer month, homemade frozen treats are just minutes away. From ice cream and gelato to fruit sorbet (using fresh fruits) and frozen yogurt, this brushed-stainless steel device whips up a 2-quart batch of your favorite frosty dessert in roughly 20 minutes. The digital control panel has a countdown timer and one-touch settings for ice cream, gelato or sorbet. The lid has a spout with integrated measuring cup for adding mix-ins such as chocolate chips and nuts.



### QUESTIONS FOR THE SEPTEMBER ISSUE

- 1) How many items are featured in the heart on the ad for The Wonderful Company? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) What fruit is shown on the ad for Wholesum Harvest's Vitalis Organic Seeds? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3) What is the email address for Target Interstate Systems Inc.? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) What brand highlights its "Unmistakable Pear-fection"? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5) What is the animal on the new logo for CMI Orchards? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6) What organization is supporting Hunger Action Month? \_\_\_\_\_

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Position \_\_\_\_\_  
 Company \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Photocopies of this form are acceptable. Please send answers to:  
**SEPTEMBER QUIZ PRODUCE BUSINESS • P.O. Box 810425 • Boca Raton, FL 33481-0425**

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Source: POM Fresh Consumer Landscape Study, nationally representative online survey, March 2013. IRI 12 weeks ending December 31, 2015. 2015 Average Velocity Unit/Store/Week, berry cooler vs. shelf placement, Regional Account



## Your Voice Is Needed!



BY ROBERT GUENTHER,  
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF PUBLIC POLICY,  
UNITED FRESH PRODUCE ASSOCIATION

**A** lot of less-than-positive words can be used to describe American politics and government, but particularly this year, “boring” is one word that doesn’t fit. Regardless of where your personal philosophy falls on the political spectrum, it’s safe to say this has been an election cycle unlike any that most of us have ever seen. And yet, while so much of the debate and analysis focuses on personalities, there remain so many substantive issues that affect the day-to-day lives of Americans across the country. If there is anything Democrats and Republicans can agree on, it’s that this year’s elections — not just the presidential, but also the entire House of Representatives and one-third of the Senate — are particularly meaningful.

This was a common sentiment expressed at the Republican and Democratic national conventions earlier this summer. First Lady Michelle Obama said, “In this election, we cannot sit back and hope that everything works out for the best.” Speaker of the House of Representatives Paul Ryan told delegates, “So much — so much — that you and I care about, so many things that we stand for, in the balance in this coming election.”

While others yell and make personal attacks, we in the industry need to ensure our policymakers don’t forget that we still need them to take action on a number of important issues that directly impact the bottomline now and in the future. Consider that, after promising signs of progress on trade earlier in this session of Congress, further action has ground to a halt on approving key trade agreements such as

the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), as the proposed agreement has gotten mired in election-year politics. If TPP was enacted, the agreement would account for nearly 40 percent of the global economy and could increase fruit, vegetable exports by nearly \$1 billion. There is bipartisan support for this agreement in Congress but the question remains whether they can show the leadership to move forward on this deal.

Immigration reform is another issue jammed in the election cycle. After Senate action on comprehensive immigration reform in 2013, Congress has not taken any additional action. In the meantime, usage of the only federal program to provide agriculture guestworkers, known as H-2A, doubled in recent years, and there are predictions that it could increase by 20 percent annually for the foreseeable future. There are glimmers of bipartisanship on this issue. In June, 101 Democratic and Republican members wrote a letter to the Department of Labor asking them to address some of the key challenges their constituents face and how can they effectively administer the H-2A program. Right now, a similar letter is being circulated in the Senate and will be finalized in September.

Another key issue is the Child Nutrition Act. The Senate Agriculture Committee passed a bill that reauthorizes child nutrition programs — including school lunch, breakfast, and WIC, in January of this year. The bill protects the half-cup fruit and vegetable requirements under school feeding programs while making technical changes to the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program allowing schools to transition to this program over a four-year period. Following

the Senate’s lead, the House Education and Workforce Committee passed their version of the legislation in May with only Republican support.

This legislation takes a fundamentally different approach to reforming child nutrition programs, and in fact, rolls back many advances that were made in the 2010 law, which has seen better nutrition choices for kids today, a school environment that motivates kids to make healthier choices, and even more success with implementation among school districts nation-wide. In particular, it guts the current Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program to allow for any form (frozen, dried, and canned) of fruits and vegetables in the program. The USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program is considered by many as a legacy program for our industry and provides four million students in our nation’s lowest income elementary schools with a fresh fruit or vegetable snack three to five days a week.

These issues are why it is so important that members of the produce industry take the time to come to Washington, D.C. September 12 to 14 to take part in United Fresh’s Washington Conference for three days of meetings and discussions with policymakers. To register, go to [UnitedFresh.org](http://UnitedFresh.org). This is the only gathering in D.C. of the industry from across the country, and it will be the industry’s last chance before the November elections to encourage Congress to address the long-term ailments around the immigration laws of this country. We have an important opportunity to demand our elected leaders take us seriously if they want our support in the November election and beyond.



# KEY LEARNINGS

presented by **CPS** CENTER for PRODUCE SAFETY

**KEY LEARNINGS** allow you to examine the latest research findings presented at the June 2016 CPS Produce Research Symposium. The produce safety research community came together there to share the latest results of CPS-funded research projects and to discuss how the findings can be used to build risk-and science-based food safety programs throughout the supply chain. Here is a sampling of the learnings shared at this year's Symposium:

## KEY LEARNING

### **Irrigation Water Sources Can Be Treated with Disinfectants, But...**

If a grower finds an irrigation water source that is out of compliance, it would be desirable to be able to treat the water to mitigate the problem. It was reported that short treatments with common disinfectants like sodium hypochlorite, chlorine dioxide or proxy acetic acid may not be sufficient to eliminate human pathogens from irrigation water. The contact time and concentration of disinfectant is heavily influenced by the organic matter in the irrigation water. Preventing contamination from occurring, though difficult in some instances, is preferable to trying to mitigate contamination once it has occurred.

## KEY LEARNING

### **The Search for Surrogate Microorganisms Continues As They Represent an Essential Tool for Conducting Validation Studies**

A surrogate is simply a microorganism that can be used to test preventive controls like wash water disinfection or those that might reduce the survivability of pathogens in the production environment. Facility operators and growers cannot use human pathogens in process facilities for fear of cross contamination so they need a surrogate that closely mimics or exceeds the survivability of the authentic pathogen without the public health consequences. CPS has prioritized surrogate research over the last several years. As surrogate research matures, specific surrogates or collections of surrogates can be substituted and preventive controls fine-tuned using these more representative tools.

For other **KEY LEARNINGS**, please visit [www.centerforproducesafety.org](http://www.centerforproducesafety.org)

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HMC Farms

iFood Decision Sciences  
IFCO Systems  
Markon Cooperative  
McEntire Produce  
Monsanto Vegetable Seeds  
SmartWash Solutions  
Wegmans

## TRANSITIONS



### MANN PACKING SALINAS, CA

Mann Packing announces the hiring of **Greg Komar** to the position of director of food safety and product quality. Komar will be responsible for all food safety and product quality systems for the company.

Komar joins Mann's from Emeryville, CA-based SCS Global Services where he was the director of food safety. Previously, he worked as the technical manager for NSF Agriculture for seven years and was the director of food safety for Growers Express/Green Giant Fresh. Prior to that, Komar worked as senior quality assurance plant manager at Earthbound Farm and as quality assurance manager at Mann Packing from 2001 to 2003.



### ALL FRESH GPS SPARTA MI

All Fresh GPS, a Michigan apple grower/packer/shipper hires **Nick Mascari** as All Fresh GPS's vice president of sales. Mascari spent nearly a decade working for some of the largest companies within

the produce industry working in sales, marketing, procurement and business development for Dole, Chiquita-Fresh Express, and most recently Indianapolis Fruit Company. He has proven himself within the industry driving sales growth and bottomline profitability throughout his career, and brings strong business acumen, and energy to All Fresh, which will help this growing company further establish its presence in the market.



### CARBAMERICAS FORT LAUDERDALE, FL

CarbAmericas, an importer of fresh fruits and vegetables, announces further expansion of its sales team as it welcomes **Troy Mesa** into their in-house sales team. In his new position, Mesa will manage

sales accounts as well as external relationships throughout various categories. Mesa comes to CarbAmericas with more than 30 years of experience in the produce and agricultural industries. After graduating from Chico State University, he worked for the California Asparagus Association and Rivermaid Trading before moving to North Bay Produce in Michigan where he served as sales manager overseeing sales for a multinational grower cooperative. Most recently, Mesa worked with Sol Group Marketing as key account manager where he worked with retail, foodservice and wholesale customers. Mesa also previously held positions at Rosemont Farms and Pero Family Farms as category manager and account manager, respectively.



### SORMA USA, LLC VISALIA, CA

**Kelvin Farris** joins the SORMA USA sales team as regional sales manager for the western U.S. He will be managing and expanding upon key customer relationships and contributing to the growth of Sorma

USA's 40-year history, providing high-quality and cost-effective packaging equipment and materials. Kelvin brings a wealth of produce knowledge and passion to the industry.



### APPEELING FRUIT INTRODUCES ORGANIC SLICED APPLE PACK

Appeeling Fruit, now celebrating 25 years in the sliced apple business, located near Reading, PA, is introducing a new Organic Sliced Apple pack in a stand-up, pouch bag. This new pack will allow retailers and consumers a convenient package at an affordable price that contains six, 2-ounce bags. The bag stands up for a vertical presentation on shelf. Appeeling Fruit also offers sliced Honeycrisp, Pears and a variety of conventionally grown sliced apple packs.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### READY PAC FOODS SUPPLIES DOMINO'S PIZZA

Ready Pac (Irwindale, CA) introduces three new co-branded salads exclusively for Ann Arbor, MI-based Domino's. The flavors include: Classic Garden, Chicken Caesar and Chicken Apple Pecan. The venture marks Ready Pac Food's first entry into the fast-growing, nearly \$5 million fast-food salad category. Ready Pac Food has been a supplier of fresh-cut produce to Domino's, so this collaboration with co-branded salads marks a new chapter in the relationship between two leaders in their respective categories. The new salad line-up makes Domino's the largest national chain to deliver fresh salads. The salads are available for \$5.99 each when you pair them with any Domino's mix and match menu items.



## ANNOUNCEMENT

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### MARKON'S TIM YORK CONTINUES CALL TO ACTION IN FOOD SAFETY

York will serve as chairman of the Center for Produce Safety and co-chair of The Produce Traceability Initiative to ensure a safe food supply continues to be a top priority for Salinas, CA-based Markon Cooperative and its seven independent foodservice distributor members — a charge that will be furthered with Markon President Tim York's appointment to two industry-leading food safety organizations.



(L-R) Joe Villarreal, Kellie Mancino, Yesenia Mora, Katrina Gargiulo and Sydney Burlison of Taylor Farms distributing backpacks at Roosevelt Elementary School.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### TAYLOR FARMS DONATES 7,000-PLUS BACKPACKS TO LOCAL SCHOOL CHILDREN

This year marks the sixth annual backpack program where Taylor Farms' employees, in conjunction with Golden State Foods, provided backpacks filled with school supplies to every registered first grader at four local elementary schools; Roosevelt, Los Padres, Frank Paul, and Alisal Community. Employees are involved from start to finish — filling the backpacks with supplies and participating in the giveaway ceremonies at each school. Over 600 backpacks were distributed to Salinas-based elementary schools this year.

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### JOSIE'S ORGANICS EXPANDS RECIPE COLLECTION WITH FIVE NEW RECIPES

Josie's Organics (Soledad, CA) one of the nation's premium organic vegetable producers, expands its recipe collection by adding five new dishes that help moms mix up the weekly family repertoire with easy, go-to meals. The new recipes showcase fennel, leeks and dandelion greens, which were added to the Josie's Organics whole vegetable product line earlier this year, as well as celery, kale, collards and cauliflower. They use ingredients easily found in the home pantry or at the local grocery store, require basic kitchen tools for preparation and include easy-to-follow instructions. The recipes featured are: Quick Celery-Fennel Stir Fry with Cashews; Shredded Kale Salad with Ginger and Roasted Orange; Dandelion Greens Stuffed Pork Roast with Apple and Dandelion "Pistou" Sauce; and Cauliflower Biscuits with Cheddar, Bacon and Leeks.



## ANNOUNCEMENT

### FREIGHTFLOW TECHNOLOGY COMBINES CRITICAL BUSINESS COMPONENTS AND KEY CAPABILITIES

Progistix, a Nevada-based technology company, will launch Freightflow — the next generation of a cloud-based transportation management system (TMS) — at PMA's Fresh Summit in Orlando, FL. Designed specifically for the produce industry, Freightflow gives users visibility to their transportation planning, execution and settlement needs without costly technology investments. Freightflow is the result of a shared vision between two logistics and produce veterans, Butch Peri and Bud Floyd. After spending decades in industries rooted in repetitive tasks and incompatible business systems, their goal was simple: develop an easy-to-use TMS solution that levels the playing field and allows small and medium businesses to compete in today's complex transportation industry.



Bud Floyd



Butch Peri

## ANNOUNCEMENT

### SUNFED INTRODUCES PERFECT ROMAS

RIO RICO, AZ-based SunFed grows its one-stop-shop for retailers. The company now ships vine-ripened Perfect Romas, with Grape and Beefsteak Tomatoes. The product joins the brand's Perfect Produce lineup this fall, which offers squash, bell pepper, eggplant, cucumbers, limes, and specialty melons.



# ALL-STAR LINEUP TO PROBE MENU MARKETING AT FOODSERVICE FORUM



In what promises to be a deep dive into “The Magic of Menu Marketing,” celebrated chefs from across the nation will gather this December in New York City at the Sixth Annual “Ideation Fresh” Foodservice Forum to explore ways to expand produce sales at restaurants and other foodservice establishments.

Co-located with The New York Produce Show & Conference (presented by Boca Raton, FL-based PRODUCE BUSINESS magazine and Short Hills, NJ-based Eastern Produce Council), the Forum will host foodservice executives from such iconic brands as Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, Windstar Cruises, Wendy’s and Starbucks.

On Thursday, December 8, at the New York Hilton Midtown, chefs will slice and dice their way through all aspects of marketing fresh produce to the public at large, as produce marketers and suppliers in the audience and on stage interact.

Hear from Darryl Mickler, senior director of research and development at Hard Rock International; Robin Fisher, produce category manager at P.F. Chang’s; Paul Pszybyski, senior director of culinary development for California Pizza Kitchen; and this year’s IFMA Gold Plate recipient, Rafi Taherian, executive director of Yale Dining, as they illuminate what chefs face daily in their quest to boost produce consumption.

Trends analysts, such as Maeve Webster, president of Menu Matters; Gerry Ludwig, corporate consulting chef at Gordon Food Service; and Sharon Olson, executive director of Culinary Visions Panel, will also participate in what is sure to be a lively series of panel discussions.

Slated for the final day of the conference, Ideation Fresh Foodservice Forum will address several key issues produce marketers, foodservice professionals, analysts and distributors grapple with to ensure their businesses remain relevant and robust.

Learn how chefs utilize consumer trends and nutritional information to create tantalizing produce dishes with

optimum bottom-line results.

The event will take place from 8 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. To inquire about attending the Ideation Fresh Foodservice Forum

and/or The New York Produce Show and Conference, please contact Ken Whitacre at (561) 994-1118 or email at [KWhitacre@NYProduceShow.com](mailto:KWhitacre@NYProduceShow.com). **pb**



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# Why Relationships Matter

BY JIM PREVORA, PRESIDENT & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

**W**hat have we learned in publishing *PRODUCE BUSINESS* for more than three decades? A bunch ... and especially this: When all is said and done, it is all about people.

It was a quarter-century ago that a woman just out of college, working for her family business, was given the task of promoting a new product innovation. The product was Broccoli Cole Slaw, and Lorri Nucci (now Koster) of Mann Packing had been charged with turning this innovation into a winner. Lorri's brother, Joe Nucci, led the development of the project, originally imagined as a way to take the broccoli spears, which were a byproduct of the company's successful foret business, and turn a cost of disposal into a valuable ingredient.

*PRODUCE BUSINESS* was one of a very few produce companies to have a booth at FMI — mostly because this columnist had the idea that it would help our brand to wave the flag in front of supermarket CEOs. Lorri was given the job, but not much budget, to unveil the product at FMI. We weren't allowed to share a booth, but there was no rule about what favors we could give away. Some exhibitors gave away pens, squeeze balls, magnets or made luggage tags — we gave away servings of Mann Packing's new Broccoli Cole Slaw!

So Lorri and this columnist worked the show, giving away a lot of magazines and even more of Mann's Broccoli Cole Slaw. The thing about this arrangement was there was no deal, no promise to advertise, no charge for booth sharing. We did it, for the best of all possible reasons: friendship. We wanted Joe and Lorri to succeed, because we were young people, just starting our careers, and we felt we would find success together. Money? We just figured if we did the right things with the right people, it would all work out.

Things don't always work out according to plan. There has been heartache too. Joe Nucci died while he and his family were on vacation with my family at Disney World in Florida. Joe was very successful, and about to become chairman of PMA — but our expectations were thwarted. And that heartbreak stays with us today.

But there has been joy, such as new business ventures and children growing. Lorri was to become Chairman and CEO at Mann Packing Company, and Joe and Lorri's sister, Gina, would run the foodservice end of the business before becoming director of corporate marketing at the company. Their sister, Dee Dee, became a family friend to us. One of Joe's sons interned at *PRODUCE BUSINESS* for a summer. I flew to Salinas when Lorri became chairman of the Grower-Shipper Association of Central California to give a speech and share in the celebration of her achievement. We launched a Product Innovation Award in Joe's honor, which we give out each year at The New York Produce Show and Conference. We also have kept track of Lorri's son's baseball accomplishments across many years.

I would be embarrassed to point out the many ways in which the people at Mann Packing Company supported us over the years. Most obviously, they have been on the page opposite this column for decades, but when we launched The New York Produce Show and Conference, they were there with not one, but two booths, showcasing

both the firm's retail and foodservice divisions. Although there are not many vegetables that go to the U.K., when we needed support most in our overseas expansion, Lorri was manning her booth at The London Produce Show and Conference.

Unfortunately, all too many executives in the industry today are focused on immediate returns and *quid pro quos*. The top executives at many companies often leave decisions in the hands of people whose focus is very narrow. For example, a retail executive who disregards relationships for the cheapest price or to push a private label program; a grower/shipper who dumps a wholesaler that sold its product for 100 years. In each case, the company culture is lacking a mechanism to engage on a broader field and to capture the long-term values inherent in a great relationship.

It happens at all levels of decision-making, and top executives would do well to focus on how to structure and incentivize their teams to generate responses that will produce the optimal results for the total organization. Think about retail. Cross-merchandising non-produce items with produce may increase overall sales for the retailer. However, since lemons sold in the seafood department or cheese sold in produce give rings to the departments that are not the one's giving up space, that cross-merchandising won't happen as often as it should — even if it optimizes overall store sales and profits. This is because, to use just one example, a seafood director is neither evaluated nor paid based on overall store sales and profits.

We see a great deal of problematic decision-making in marketing. The person assigned the job of evaluating marketing opportunities often has too narrow a responsibility, and often too narrow a range of experience, to make decisions that will optimize returns to the company. Those with narrow responsibilities make narrow calculations. The challenge for companies is to ensure decisions are not made on such narrow grounds. We need people capable, instructed and incentivized to see the big picture.

In both our business and personal lives, what is the real source of strength? Isn't it having people who you know are always there to back you up? In engaging with a customer or a vendor, the primary interest should be on the value of the relationship. The cost of specific things becomes the ante you pay to have some equity in these relationships.

There are hundreds of things people do for each other in this business: calls made, meetings taken, deals done — and the key to success is rarely transactional. So on this 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the launch of Broccoli Cole Slaw, I'll remember my friend Joe, and I'll remember Lorri, standing next to me engaging at that FMI so long ago. I'll remember how little we 20-somethings expected back then, and (from the sincerity of that desire to help each other) how much has grown.

pb



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WOMEN OWNED

# The Power Of Produce On Kids' Menus

BY BRIAN DARR, MANAGING DIRECTOR, DATASSENTIAL

**F**ruits and vegetables are the primary go-to healthy foods when parents shop for their kids at the grocery store. This presents valuable opportunities for the produce industry to market fruits and veggies in new, exciting, and innovative ways. It's also a chance for supermarkets, food suppliers, school foodservice operators, and restaurants to use the power of produce to enhance kids' meals for both taste and nutrition. Datassential's Keynote Report on Kids' Menus combines the extensive detail of the Datassential MenuTrends database with the opinions and behaviors of more than 800 parents nationwide and insight from hundreds of restaurant and school foodservice operators. Here are a few produce insights from the Report.

## Produce For Kids At Home

Home is where the "healthy" is — according to our Keynote Report, 85 percent of parents say their kids eat the healthiest meals at home, where they have the most control over their children's diets. They rank fresh fruits and veggies as a very important factor when they shop for their kids (78 percent). Parents are also working hard to not only get their kids to eat healthy foods but also to enjoy them. It's no surprise that taste is the prime factor that kids use to determine what they'll eat.

While parents consider a variety of factors when choosing foods for their kids, 72 percent of parents are trying to get their kids to build up a taste for healthier foods, and 69 percent want to broaden their kid's food horizon.

There are ways to make vegetables more appealing to children. Portability is paramount, as is the ability for a child to manage the food independently. Fruits and vegetables are well-positioned for on-the-go consideration in pre-portioned snack packs. Parents are also looking to feed their kids "clean" foods that are labeled with terms such as "organic," "sustainability," and "ethically sourced."

## In The Lunch Line

While parents attempt to watch what their kids eat, many put their trust in schools to provide quality, nutritious meals. Most kids eat at school cafeterias at least three times per week. Thanks to government mandates and guidelines, K-12 schools are actually doing a substantial job exposing kids to fruits, greens, and new veggies. Potatoes (on 98 percent of K-12 menus) and carrots (on 89 percent of K-12 menus) are the most commonly used vegetables in schools. Carrot-focused dishes and ingredients like glazed carrots, carrot sticks, baby carrots, and peas and carrots are high indexing items. More value-added options for fruit and vegetable applications that save time could play an important role in helping manufacturers reach schools. Prep times are also relevant to the menu development process. Examples include items that are pre-peeled, pre-sliced, ready-to-cook, or pureed.

Schools must also follow strict sodium guidelines. The produce industry may find success promoting their products by showing schools how fruits and veggies add flavor without added salt. Aromatic vegetables that are naturally lower in sodium and packed with flavor include onions, carrots, celery, and garlic.

## Going Beyond Traditional Kid Favorites At Restaurants

Half of all U.S. restaurants offer kids' menus. The majority of parents highly rate these menus for offering foods that children enjoy, but they are less satisfied with the variety of options, the number of healthy choices, and the diversity of dishes and flavors beyond traditional favorites. Unlike schools that have mandates for including fresh produce in meals, restaurants are not held to the same standard. This presents an opportunity for operators to push for new produce menuing beyond French fries. Nutritious sides that include vegetable medleys and carrots (both up 14 percent over the

past year) and broccoli (up 9 percent over the past year) are increasingly featured. In addition, healthier juice varieties may be an area that operators explore. Juice is already a popular choice for kids as an alternative to soda. Notable fresh varieties for juice include fresh-squeezed, organic, smoothies, and more. K-12 menus could spark inspiration for creative uses for veggies. Potatoes, carrots, corn, and broccoli are menued at roughly 9 out of 10 schools.

## Opportunities For Produce In Kids' Meals:

- Restaurants can aim to move away from traditional kids fare and introduce kids (and parents) to fresh dishes.
- Datassential's Keynote Report on Kids' Menus shows that kids are more likely to enjoy authentic ethnic cuisines than to dislike them, a key area where veggies can be added.
- Understanding what kids at different age levels want and need can help identify solutions to parents' food challenges.
- Fresh fruits and veggies are well-positioned for on-the-go consideration.
- Get to know today's meaning of "healthy."

For questions or to purchase the report, please contact Brian Darr at 312-655-0594 or [brian.darr@datassential.com](mailto:brian.darr@datassential.com).



*Datassential, a Chicago-based food industry research and consulting firm, brings clients real-world information on foodservice and consumer packaged goods in the U.S. and around the world. The company's services, including its extensive MenuTrends database, provide in-depth reporting on trends in menu offerings, flavor profiles, ingredients, and preparations. Datassential helps operators, retailers, and suppliers understand and capitalize on these important trends.*



# Fundamental Challenges To Kids' Consumption Of Fruits And Vegetables

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

**I**t is often pointed out that what people say they want and what they actually purchase and/or consume can differ greatly. Rarely is that more true than when you ask parents about food for their own children.

It is not surprising that parents would report home eating is healthiest for children; it actually is healthiest for everyone. After all, Mom can control portion size, and she can control assortment.

Vegetables in school foodservice or restaurants are offered, but if your kid doesn't like squash sautéed in tomato sauce, then it is unlikely to be consumed. A mom can know that Johnny likes green beans, carrots, peas and Spaghetti squash, and include one of these on the menu every day.

We know from credible data we have on baby food and milk that many a parent who will do without organic for themselves will ante up to ensure their children have what they perceive to be the best.

So there is good reason to think that effective marketing tied to "clean" and "healthy" will lead parents to pay more for the "best" fruits and vegetables, which creates some marketing opportunity.

Certainly, those families that come from regions or belong to ethnicities that have diets rich in fruits and vegetables are going to naturally have diets that are more produce-dense.

Of course, moms have always urged their children to eat more fruits and vegetables. So how much change this represents and how much it means produce consumption can be increased is unclear.

There are fundamental challenges that make increasing produce consumption among kids difficult. Most notably, it is one thing to boost consumption of sweet snack fruit, since kids typically enjoy fruit, so feeding them fruit can be done with increased availability. However, many of the most nutrient-dense produce items are bitter and less appealing to a child's palate.

And many industry efforts to boost

**When it comes to produce industry efforts to boost consumption, maybe the focus has to be on making the healthiest produce items taste better.**

consumption among kids, such as efforts to use cartoons or puppet characters to attract children to fruits and vegetables, have not been shown to increase consumption.

Fundamentally, whatever parents may like to buy, children are not generally feeling their mortality, so they want to eat foods that taste good. When it comes to produce industry efforts to boost consumption, maybe the focus has to be on making the healthiest produce items taste better.

School foodservice seems like an opportunity, but it turns out that compelling school foodservice operations to serve more produce is a lot easier than compelling children to eat more produce.

In the school attended by this author's children, each student was required to accept a vegetable on his or her plate. After a few months in which the garbage pails were filled with discarded vegetables, the school abandoned the effort.

Even things that excite the produce industry may not actually be beneficial in the long run. The industry loves salad bars in schools, because the minute a school opens one, the industry starts receiving orders for produce items that had never been purchased by the school.

There is also real fear that children, not being experts in salad composition, may turn themselves off consuming salad items because adding salad bar items on their plate may cause digestive problems. Maybe offering composed salads on a long-term basis would serve to boost consumption.

Restaurants have been chastised for not offering children healthy options in kid's meals, and many establishments have responded. McDonald's has Cuties; Disney

made the default option baby carrots, grapes and apple slices.

At Darden restaurants, there is a commitment to make fruit and vegetables the default side dish, 1 percent milk is promoted, and at least one children's menu option must meet specific criteria regarding calories, sodium and fat.

Offering juice instead of soda may feel healthier, but the truth is many juice drinks have more sugar than Coca-Cola.

There are many restaurants trumpeting new offerings, but very few announced the improvements these healthier offerings caused in leading children to have healthier diets.

In addition, the science on health and nutrition is changing and unsettled. Not very long ago, expert opinion was that the big problem with French fries was the frying. Now the same experts tell us the oil is the best part. They worry about the glycemic load of the potato itself. So it is not always clear what a healthy option means.

Intuitively, it seems smart to focus on changing dietary habits of children to be more produce-dense. This, it is thought, will increase the likelihood that children will continue to eat more fruits and vegetables as they move into adulthood — although the evidence for this is still unconfirmed.

We don't really know what will work. Is this primarily a marketing problem? A culinary problem? Or is it something inherent in the product?

With increased travel, global media and a more ethnically diverse society, there is little question that there is a world of dishes waiting to be discovered by children, and we would be foolish to not try all we can.

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Website: [CitrusResearch.org](http://CitrusResearch.org)

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Website: [ciaprochef.com](http://ciaprochef.com)

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# Why Lidl Will Succeed Where Tesco Failed In The US

**T**im Mason of Tesco Clubcard fame and Fresh & Easy ignominy gave a somewhat wistful interview to *The Grocer* recently. He still mostly keeps his own counsel regarding Fresh & Easy. In the end, he blames the Fresh & Easy failure on two things: the economy and Tesco's problems elsewhere.

*"It was a great business," he replies. "It had super products. It had a vertically integrated manufacturing capability, which meant quality was assured. It had a good value proposition and great staff."*

*So why didn't it work? "There were many very good reasons, not least the economy, that meant it was somewhere between very difficult and impossible to be successful in that timeframe. If Tesco had been financially stronger, the business could have taken everything it learned over six years and refined and developed the model and got it to an acceptable place. Unfortunately, there wasn't that economic firepower. There were problems all over the place, not least in the UK. And the decision was made."*

These are actually two sides of the same coin. A recession provides unique opportunities — if you have resources and are willing to commit them.

A severe recession is actually a fantastic time to launch a new retailing business. During times of prosperity, there are big restraints on growing such a business. Notably, it is hard to get quality locations and hard to get quality staff. During recessions, these problems lessen substantially. So, if you have a viable concept, and if you have financial resources, the recession is the

time to put the pedal to the metal and zoom full speed ahead.

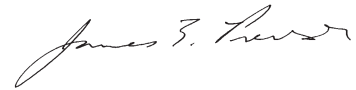
When Marks & Spencer bought Kings in New Jersey, it had many expansion plans; but that was a time and place when getting both real estate and employees was difficult and expensive. So Fresh & Easy was given a runway to grow, and grow fast, by the recession.

In all likelihood, the real problem was the concept, which is why Safeway, Kroger, etc., didn't want to snap up the chain for a song at the end. In America, the big growth in retail is all in concepts that specialise: Aldi as a deep discounter; Trader Joe's as an epicurean delight; Whole Foods Market as a healthy upscale concept; Costco as a high-quality/high-value/high-volume operator; Amazon Fresh as a convenience play, on and on. Fresh & Easy offered a vague consumer promise. Though it was a small footprint store, in its DNA it still wanted to be a community grocer like Tesco.

Still, on one point Tim Mason is certainly correct. Fresh & Easy was abandoned by Tesco not because the concept couldn't have evolved, but because Tesco decided to give up.

Now lamenting the financial weakness of the third largest retailer in the world will not bring much sympathy. And in launching a business, executives have a responsibility to know and understand the financial parameters they operate under. Recessions, which are predictable, even if the timing of them is not, are supposed to be included in a business plan. One can't proceed in business expecting only blue skies and sunshine.

What Tim Mason doesn't say, but is the real lesson to be derived from his



**JIM PREVOR**  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

comments, is the enormous difference between running a privately held and a publicly held company.

If you think about the entry of both Aldi and Lidl into the U.K. market, neither were instantaneous successes. The concepts had to evolve, and it took a steely commitment from the owners back in Germany to keep working on the concepts and committing to the market. It took time, and it took money. But these privately held companies had a strategic vision, and that vision included being successful in the U.K. They were willing to pay the price.

Publicly held companies rarely are. On the level of the shareholders, they are often not as committed as a family ownership. The shareholder's time horizon is shorter than a family focused on the grandchildren and great-grandchildren. And on Wall Street and in the City of London, only a few investors are like Warren Buffet, who declares his favourite holding time is "forever."

It is not just shareholders, though; it is executives as well. Most executives at public companies receive substantial portions of their compensation in some form of contingent compensation — Bonuses, profit shares, stock options,



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etc. This encourages great attention to short-term profits. In other words, it is all very nice and good that Aldi, after a generation in the U.K., became a big success. It is understandable that family ownership would focus on obtaining this long term success, but executives at publicly held companies, who are going to retire in five years, don't receive any personal benefit for successfully laying foundations that will pay off in decades.

This is one reason why many companies prefer to acquire rather than build. If they lose a hundred-million-pounds a year for 10 years to build a business, that billion-pound loss kills everyone's bonuses etc., for a decade. If, however, the company spends £2 billion to buy the same operation, that is capitalised and has little effect on everyone's contingent compensation.

It is not a coincidence that Wal-Mart perceives H.E. Butt, a family owned supermarket chain based in Texas, as its toughest supermarket competitor in America. Since H-E-B is a privately held, well capitalised organisation, it will not give up market share easily. Indeed, HEB is well known for having invested

## Fresh & Easy was abandoned by Tesco not because the concept couldn't have evolved, but because Tesco decided to give up.

for many years in launching its upscale Central Market concept when others would have cut and run.

Right now, here is a prediction: We called it early in saying that Tesco would flop in America, and we were right. Now we feel comfortable saying that Lidl will succeed.

Partly this is because of attitude. In America, the Tesco organisation was built around secrecy and fear. They were just not psychologically willing to be open to outsiders, new ideas and critique of their plans. Lidl has been picking the

brains of everyone they can get a hold of. Partly it is because the basic concept is clear – a deep discount format – and this is already known to be well received with the American consumer.

Mostly though, it is because it is clear that the ownership is deeply committed to success in America. They have no stores and yet have hundreds of employees working full time, many sent to Europe to learn the ropes. It is very clear that the Schwarz family has decided that, strategically, after conquering Europe, a stake in the large American market is imperative.

This doesn't guarantee that the stores will be instantaneously successful, but it means that barring something catastrophic, Lidl is committed, and it will evolve its retail format and supply chain until it gets it right. Tesco, with the public markets watching every quarter, never had that strategic commitment.

When Ernest Gallo passed away, we ran a piece commemorating his life, and in that piece we quoted a letter we had received in response to another piece we had written about Wal-Mart and upscale:

*This reminds me of a conversation I had with Ernest Gallo in another career about twenty years ago. He wanted to "upscale" the image of his wines. I explained to him that he'd spent a half billion dollars over a forty year period positioning Gallo as good cheap wine. (Remember Gallo Hearty Burgundy?) I told him it would take a generation and a billion dollars to accomplish this task. He said, "I better get started right away." Family companies have options that public companies don't.*

— Frank McCarthy Vice President of Marketing Albert's Organics/United Natural Foods

That is not 100 percent true. Some companies, such as Amazon.com, have been able to get such support in the public markets that short term profits are not a focus. So we see the great difficulty: Chains such as Tesco are competing against family owned Aldi and Lidl and against market-supported Amazon.com — all of whom are free to focus on building successful operations for tomorrow. Tesco has to make a dime today. Thus Tim Mason is on to other things, and Fresh & Easy is but a memory of what he hoped it might become.

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# Will's Shop'n Save

Veteran produce executive, Will Wedge, fulfills his dream to be a retailer and utilizes a variety of product assortments to intrigue shoppers.

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD



**W**hat do you find when a veteran produce executive has the opportunity to fulfill his dream of owning and operating his own supermarket? A fresh fruit and vegetable department unlike any other independent its size. It was five years ago that Will Wedge, former director of fresh merchandising for Hannaford Supermarkets, a 186-store chain headquartered in Scarborough, ME, decided to open Will's Shop 'n Save, in Dover-Foxcroft, ME.

## The Time Was Ripe

"After 32 years, I just knew it was the right time," says Wedge. "My wife and I fantasized for more than a decade about owning a small supermarket in a small community where we could make a positive impact. The minute we got the phone call that the former Edwards Family Shop N Save in Dover-Foxcroft was for sale, we jumped on it. A bonus for us was

that our daughters, Abby and Emily, were both at Husson University only 30 miles from the store [in Bangor, ME]. Hence, we could spend more time with them as a family and our daughters could work at the store during school breaks."

Dover-Foxcroft, located in central Maine, boasts a population of nearly 5,000. The majority of residents are of European ancestry. The median household income is \$46,273. Produce aside, the town is famous for hosting the one-day annual Maine Whoopie Pie Festival. Started in 2009, the event celebrates the Whoopie Pie, two rounds of chocolate cake sandwiched together with a sweet creamy filling, which is Maine's official state treat. Festival attendees more than double the town's population each year on June 25.

"The foundation of our business strategy is customer service. This guiding principle earned us consumer loyalty in this small community," says Wedge.

## Produce-Centric Focus

Wedge maintained ties to his former employer. In fact, 95 percent of the produce purchases for Will's come through the procurement team at Hannaford.

"I know firsthand that Hannaford's buyers procure from the best growers in North, Central and South America," says Wedge. "The other 5 percent of our produce purchases are direct-store-delivery from local farmers. I visit each local grower I purchase from, and we inspect the product when it arrives at our backdoor. We are able to source local strawberries, blueberries, carrots, squash, potatoes and much more. Our most popular item each summer is sweet corn from Grant's Farm in Saco, ME. Customers are so conditioned to this, we often get the request, 'When is that awesome corn from Grant's coming?'"

Will's Shop 'n Save is 15,000-square-foot total in size with 9,100-square-foot of selling space. Limited space means there isn't an



Melissa and Will Wedge



Will Wedge, David Kinsman and Lance Johnson

opportunity to offer the 800-plus SKUs of a big Hannaford. However, Wedge continuously rotates in new varieties and this enables him to offer customers a remarkable average of 500 SKUs.

A good example of this is instead of only offering one SKU of eggplant — as it might happen at a typical store of the same size — Wedge rotates in baby, white, Graffiti and Chinese eggplant to offer customers a wide variety. Specialty produce such as Cabel Hall Citrus' brand of Jamaican tangelos, Ugli Fruit and dragon fruit also occasionally makes an appearance on the shelf. Variety is one reason produce sales average 12 percent of the store's total sales, and produce sales grew 18 percent since the store opened in 2011. Another is freshness.

"The best part about running a small supermarket is freshness. For example, we offer the same number of apple SKUs as our major competitor in town, which is a 44,000-square-foot box store compared to my 15,000 square foot store. However, I display 20 pounds of each variety at a time; whereas they have 40- to 50-pounds on the sales floor. In turn, my remaining 20- to 30-pounds is in the produce cooler staying fresh. The same is true of leaf lettuces. Being 'fresh' is another key component of our produce strategy," says Wedge.

Two popular produce sub-categories at Will's are organics and fresh-cuts. Wedge sees organics as still on a growth trend. Best sellers are customer favorites like organic Chiquita-brand bananas, organic Hannaford salads from State Garden, in Chelsea, MA, and organic vegetables from Procacci Brothers, in Philadelphia. All fresh-cut fruits and vegetables are prepared in-store daily.

Wedge says other points that set Will's apart from the competition include creating a

**"Our goal has always been, and continues to be, viewed as the 'local' supermarket of choice."**

**– Will Wedge, Owner**

beautiful sensory experience as customers enter the store, educating consumers on seasonality, and promoting healthy attributes of fruits and vegetables. One way he accomplishes these goals is with a department where produce "pops" visually thanks to its bright color and quality. Also, Wedge designed a layout that is easy to shop and conducive to adjacencies showcasing a variety of fresh fruit and vegetables. The store's sign program clearly denotes health attributes and country of origin.

"We continuously train our produce associates on where product is sourced. For example, when Bing cherries started coming in from Washington State this summer, we shared this fact with our consumers. We learned that customers value knowing where their food is sourced, and they appreciate us being produce experts," says Wedge.

In addition, he says, "We toured more than 400 elementary school students through the store in an effort to educate them on the many facets of the supermarket business. We teach the youth about the health attributes of fruit and vegetables as well as where its grown. Students are amazed to learn everyday produce comes to Dover-Foxcroft from all over the world via tractor trailer, pickup truck, airplanes, vessels, and trains."

### **More Than Fruits & Veggies**

Produce isn't the only department at Will's

that offers something special. The bakery sells in-store fresh baked breads, rolls, muffins and donuts, plus offers cake decorating services. Meats and cheeses are the traditional stars of the deli, with name-brand, trendy flavors of luncheon meats such as Black Forest turkey, Lemon-Pepper chicken and Honey ham. Cheeses range from domestic to exotic and include the store's own Taste of Inspirations label. The deli-prepared-foods section menus hot-to-eat and ready-to-heat meals as well as soups, sandwiches and sushi to-go. Live lobsters from Maine are showcased in seafood. In the meat department, Wedge purchased a meat tenderizing tumbler. This enables customers to place their selection of beef, pork or chicken into the cylinder, select from over a dozen marinades, and the tumbler pressure separates and infuses the muscle with marinade.

### **Community Is King**

Community plays a big role at Will's. Wedge is a leader in the town's Kiwanis chapter and Chamber of Commerce, hence knowledgeable and supportive of local events such as the Maine Whoopie Pie Festival. He and his family are also very connected with area churches and especially the Food Cupboard, the local food pantry. Finally, Wedge's wife, Melissa, engages with customers daily via the supermarket's Facebook page.

"Our goal has always been, and continues to be, viewed as the 'local' supermarket of choice," says Wedge.

In five short years, Will's Shop'n Save earned success. In fact, Wedge, an Air Force veteran, was named the 2016 U.S. Small Business Administration's Veteran-Owned Business of the Year for Maine and New England.

**pb**



# Retailers Fulfill Social Responsibility via Produce

*From food donations, to cooking demos, to “Healthier for You” check-out lanes, these stores increase produce consumption using philanthropic muscle.*

BY LISA WHITE

**W**hen it comes to community outreach programs, supermarket produce departments often benefit directly and indirectly from their halo effect. St. Louis, MO-based Schnucks’ approximately 100 Midwest stores focus on a wide variety of programs and organizations, with a particular emphasis on those that focus on hunger, human services and health and wellness.

Hunger, health and wellness and education also are key initiatives at Keasbey, NJ-based Wakefern Food Corp.’s more than 280 ShopRite stores, located across New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Delaware and Maryland.

Giving back has been part of the culture at Publix’s 1,116 stores in the Southeast ever since the company was founded in 1930 by George W. Jenkins.

“It’s what we do on a regular basis,” says Maria Brous, director of media and community relations for the Lakeland, FL-based chain. “Stores and associates play a big role in this.”

Large and small retailers across the country are putting forth great efforts to

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHOPRITE, WAKEFERN





reach their shoppers beyond the four walls of their stores. With community outreach programs, corporate foundations and charitable donations serve as part of public relations campaigns to bring goodwill to the supermarkets and their fundraising crusades.

### RAISING AWARENESS

Recently, Publix was named the March of Dimes' No.1 National March for Babies Corporate Partner after raising more than \$7.3 million during its annual three-week fundraising campaign. In the past 21 years, the chain donated more than \$65 million to the organization.

"We ask customers and associates to donate at the register, and our associates and managers also hold separate fundraising efforts for the March of Dimes," says Brous. "In addition, we have teams that participate in local March of Dimes walks."

As extensive as its support for the charity is, Publix puts forth similar efforts



Large and small retailers across the country are putting forth great efforts with community outreach programs, corporate foundations and charitable donations, to bring attention to the supermarkets as well as fundraising crusades.

for a number of other organizations. These include the Children's Miracle Network, which supports local hospitals, and the United Way, for which Publix employees raised \$33.4 million, mostly from payroll deductions.

"Publix Charities matched 75 cents on the dollar for United Way, donating \$25.3 million, for a total contribution of \$58.7 million," says Brous.

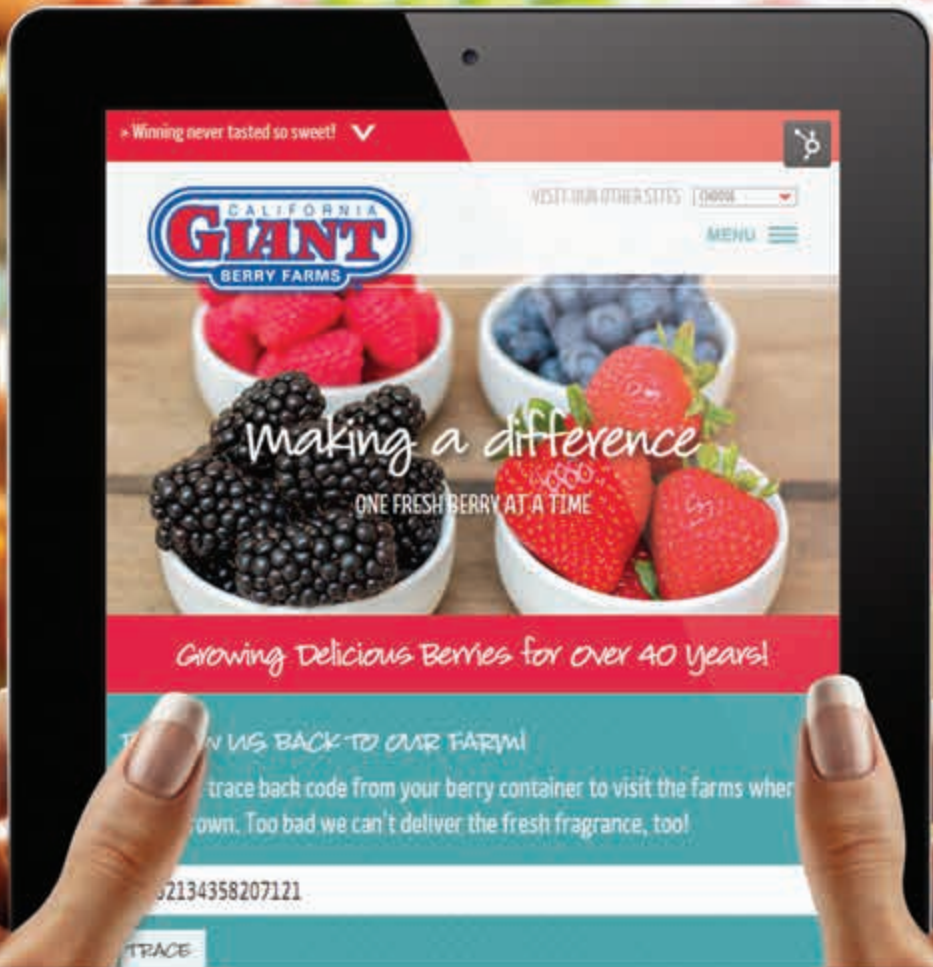
The chain established its Publix Serves Day in 2015, a designated day of service to encourage associate volunteerism. This year,

it resulted in more than 4,000 employees donating their time for hunger and homeless charitable organizations. This included retiring Chief Executive Ed Crenshaw, who spent his last day on the job volunteering with Publix associates.

Safeway Inc., Eastern Division, headquartered in Lanham, MD, which has 125 stores in Maryland, Virginia, Washington, D.C. and Delaware, focuses on community outreach programs to provide support and also to develop positive relationships in its communities.



Wakefern's ShopRite stores often provide fresh fruit for snacking at the community events the chain sponsors, and produce is made available at ShopRite tents at the New Jersey Special Olympics and Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure.



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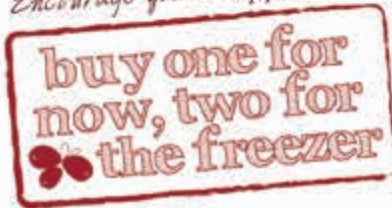


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“Like our customers and neighbors, we are part of the communities we serve, and we have a vested interest in making our communities better places to live, work and spend time with family and friends,” says Beth Goldberg, senior manager, community and public affairs. “To help us reach our goal, we invest resources in our local communities from our corporate division and stores and from The Safeway Foundation.”

Safeway’s Eastern Division and each of its stores support local communities with donations of gift cards, product and cash donations and sponsorships. Safeway employees throughout the division also contribute time to volunteer as individuals and teams.

For Thanksgiving, the chain presents a community event called Feast of Sharing in Washington, D.C., which involves thousands of guests and volunteers putting together a traditional Thanksgiving meal for those in need.

“Safeway stores also provide space for community organizations to fundraise on behalf of their missions and to share educational materials with customers and visitors,” says Goldberg.

The chain’s charitable arm, The Safeway Foundation, supports causes that impact customers’ lives and provides the opportunity to mobilize funding and create awareness in neighborhoods through employees’ partnerships with vendors and contributions by customers. The Foundation’s focus is on giving locally in the areas of health and human services, hunger relief, education, veterans and helping people living with disabilities. The Foundation also gives out grants to support educational organizations and schools.

Currently, Safeway’s Eastern Division conducts annual store checkout fundraising campaigns. The charities it supports include Easterseals, Muscular Dystrophy Association, the Children’s Cancer Foundation, March of Dimes, the Capital Area Food Bank, and the Maryland Food Bank.

### CHARITABLE CARE

As part of Wakefern’s efforts to fight hunger for almost two decades, its ShopRite stores donate unsold foods totalling more than \$3 million each year.

“Our ShopRite associates at retail assist in annual fundraisers, and at Wakefern, we have teams of associates who regularly volunteer at the food banks in our region,” says Karen Meleta, vice president of consumer and corporate communications. “Our stores



During Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, Northgate Gonzalez Markets typically hosts free mammograms for women over 40 who don’t have health insurance.

participate in Check-Out Hunger, a fundraiser for regional food banks, and Hunger Action Month in September.”

Other causes the chain supports include: the Special Olympics of New Jersey, where more than 400 of its associates volunteer to cook and serve meals to the athletes and their families; and the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure, where snacks and refreshments for runners are provided and corporate as well as store associates participate as a team.

Grassroots efforts of Schnucks’ in-store teammates and managers, as well as the chain’s corporate leaders in community-wide programs, helped a number of charitable organizations.

“Schnucks provides support in the form of financial, promotional, volunteerism, food banks/product donations and urban

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community support,” says Joanie Taylor, director of community affairs.

In its effort to combat hunger, each store partners with at least one food bank or pantry. For example, in St. Louis, Schnucks primarily works with Operation Food Search (OFS) and its member agencies. In 2015, the chain donated more than \$13 million in food to the organization. In 2014, Schnucks held a gala to celebrate its 75th anniversary that grossed more than \$860,000 for OFS.

The chain also participates in a campaign

that benefits 18 United Way organizations throughout its trade area. Last year, through pledges and fundraising events, teammates gave more than \$1.68 million to these organizations, which includes pledges made at the corporate level.

The company recently partnered with the St. Louis Area Diaper Bank to benefit families in need as well as St. Louis Ovarian Cancer Awareness (SLOCA). “Using our purchasing power with a reusable bag vendor, we were able to help spread SLOCA’s

**“I reach out to non-profits and health providers, tell them what I’m planning to do with back-to-school, and ask if they’ll sign up for the stores they cover.”**

— Teresa Blanco,  
Northgate González Markets



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message regarding the early warning signs of ovarian cancer,” says Taylor.

Anaheim, CA-based Northgate González Markets, a 42-store operation in Southern California, manages about 65 community outreach events per month that are mainly focused on nutrition, health screenings and chef events.

“Every month has a specific theme, and right now we’re focusing on back-to-school,” says Teresa Blanco, the chain’s Viva La Salud wellness manager. “I reach out to nonprofits and health providers, tell them what I’m planning to do with back-to-school, and ask if they’ll sign up for the stores they cover.”

The stores request items or resources, which are promoted in Northgate’s weekly circular, in the stores and around the community.

The chain received much positive feedback from the community with its wellness initiative. One customer who attends the monthly events was able to identify and address his high blood pressure and



Weis Markets Paws for Pets program offers pet food and supply donations.

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cholesterol.

During Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, the stores typically host free mammograms for women over 40 who don't have health insurance. More than 100 women have been alerted and have subsequently had breast cancer since the program was instituted in 2010. Northgate also hosts monthly immunizations for children in its San Diego stores.

"Health and wellness aren't only about nutrition, but also about free resources and

screenings," says Blanco.

Each year, Sunbury, PA-based Weis Markets, a chain of more than 160 stores, makes direct and in-kind donations to charities and organizations, including food banks, schools, pet shelters and the United Way.

"Giving back to the communities we serve is part of our corporate mission statement and an integral part of who we are as a company," says Patti Olenick, sustainability manager.

The annual Weis Markets Paws for Pets



**Weis' Fight Hunger annual campaign connects monetary and food donations to those in need through local organizations.**

program offers customers the opportunity to donate pet food and supplies to local animal shelters and rescue organizations. Approximately 90 local pet shelters and rescue organizations will participate in this year's program, and more than 50 stores hosted pet adopt-a-thon events with local pet organizations.

Weis' Fight Hunger annual campaign connects monetary and food donations to those in need through local organizations.

"In 2015, Weis donated more than 800,000 meals to help feed those in our communities who need assistance through our customer and associate contributions," says Olenick. "This is being expanded this year to now include a new program in partnership with the Penn State football program, as well as the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank to increase awareness and donations."

### PRODUCE-CENTRIC SUPPORT

A number of retailers' community outreach programs are produce-centric. For example, Publix collaborates with Feeding America for the chain's perishable recovery program.

"We go through our perishable departments, including produce, to look for less-than-perfect produce or products past the 'sell by' date that we can donate, rather than discard," says Brous. "Feeding America comes to the stores once a week to pick up product, loads it in refrigerated trucks, transports it back to their facility and distributes the food to those in need."

In 2015, after donating more than 100 million pounds of food, Publix was named one of only 13 Feeding America Visionary Partners.

The company continuously re-evaluates the products it includes in this program, conducting time and temperature studies as well as past "sell by" date studies, since many recipients of these food items have

An advertisement for smitten apples. At the top, two apples are shown: a red one on the left and a yellow-red one on the right. Two large, pink, hand-drawn 'X' marks are positioned above the apples. Below the apples, the text reads: "From Washington with love", "Now available if not on your local rack call 509-663-2625", "HONEY BEAR TREE FRUIT CO., Wenatchee, WA www.smittenapple.com", and the "smiXten" logo with a pink 'X' over the 'i'. At the bottom, the slogan "Once bitten, forever smitten." is written in a cursive font.

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Northgate González Markets' Viva La Salud chefs create three healthful recipes centered around produce each month.



Community outreach initiatives help retailers build relationships with customers and staff. They also help build partnerships with schools and other organizations.

compromised immune systems.

"While we don't donate every perishable item, we look at everything and donate what we know is safe to consume," says Brous.

Publix also has an affiliation with

Orlando, FL-based Produce for Kids and runs a fundraiser twice annually in its stores. When customers purchase certain produce items that are part of the program, a portion of the proceeds is given to charities. This

initiative is promoted with signage and educational materials at the store level.

Wakefern's ShopRite stores often provide fresh fruit for snacking at the community events the chain sponsors, and produce

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In August, for a back-to-school focus, Northgate González Markets partnered with Champions of Change, a White House health and wellness and climate change initiative.



is made available at ShopRite tents at the New Jersey Special Olympics and Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure.

Schnucks includes many produce items in its donations to food banks and food pantries

throughout its trade area. "And our produce teammates at every store are important parts of our community outreach," says Taylor.

The Cranberry Marketing Committee in Wareham, MA, is involved with a number

of charitable initiatives in conjunction with retailers.

The Committee recently partnered with Big Y, a 61-store chain based in Springfield, MA, and its supermarket dietitians on a

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summer promotion featuring cranberries.

“Produce departments played an important role in the community outreach, featuring shelf-stable cranberry products, such as dried cranberries, along with recipes and websites to provide shoppers with usage ideas,” says Michelle Hogan, executive director of the Wareham, MA-based Cranberry Marketing Committee.

“The Cranberry Marketing Committee takes social responsibility seriously and always looks for ways to expand community involvement beyond store promotions.”

Northgate González Markets’ stores that include Viva La Salud chefs create three recipes centered around produce each month. For example, in June, for Men’s Health Month, the recipes were created in partnership with Avocados from Mexico.

“Chefs perform cooking demos with educators from two different healthcare locations, and we cover 12 locations every month,” says Blanco. “We incorporate different products and recipes each month, and this encompasses many produce items.”

In August, for a back-to-school focus, Northgate partnered with Champions of Change, a White House health and wellness and climate change initiative, to host events at 23 store locations.

The events included healthy cooking demos, store tours, information on how to pack healthy school lunches, and visits by chefs from the Jamie Oliver Foundation who offered children’s cooking classes focused on packing healthy lunches and experimenting with fruits and vegetables.

Along with health screenings, Northgate hosts employee sports tournaments, and associates participate in a number of 5Ks throughout the year where the store makes free bananas available as part of a partnership with Chiquita.

“When we give donations to the communities, we try to make it produce,” says Blanco.

Northgate recently instituted a new program in late April at its South Los Angeles store that incorporates a Healthier for You checkout lane. This provides baskets of produce and small coolers with chopped fruit for consumers seeking convenient grab-and-go options by the register.

“It’s doing very well, and as a result, our new Anaheim store will be adding it,” says Blanco. “These checkout lanes are doing more than double the business of our traditional lanes.”

The chain also regularly partners with

**“They want to feel good about where they shop and the companies they support, so it’s a win-win for everyone. There’s definitely a movement for giving back.”**

— Maria Brous, Publix

nonprofits for grants.

The Center for Community Health, part of the University of California San Diego School of Medicine, recently received a \$3.4 million grant from the USDA to increase affordable food access to low-income community members who are part of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as the Food Stamp Program.

Working in conjunction with Northgate, the Center will develop a program to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables among SNAP participants by providing incentives at point-of-purchase at Northgate stores in Los Angeles and Orange and San Diego counties.

The goal is to promote long-term health for SNAP participants. The program will include financial incentive rebates on fruit and vegetable purchases, special fruit and vegetable promotions, in-store cooking classes, store tours and education on food labeling. It will also provide researchers with key data to better understand healthy purchasing behaviors.

“This program helps low-income consumers increase their consumption of produce, and it will include a lot of education at the store level,” says Blanco. “With this grant, our stores will receive additional education, especially from the county program, which will provide nutritionists in our stores.” The plan is to launch the program this fall.

Northgate’s stores also hold a high school culinary program in partnership with a Santa Ana nonprofit. Chefs from local restaurants advocate for healthy foods and dishes that utilize more produce, building recipes that go through many steps for approval. A competition is held, and students present the dishes themselves. City council members, store

**“Those member-owner families are active in the communities where they live, work and operate stores, and it is a commitment that goes back to our founding as a supermarket cooperative.”**

— Karen Meleta, ShopRite

owners and nonprofit staff taste the food and serve as judges. The winning team competes at a national level in Washington, D.C.

“Four out of five of our teams that went to D.C. came back as winners, and the fifth team got second place,” says Blanco.

At the annual Ta-Ta Trot, a local run/walk for breast cancer research and awareness fundraising, Weis Markets donates bananas and soft fruits to more than 1,500 participants.

The chain also initiated a new Free Fruit for Kids program that provides a basket with free apples, baby carrots and raisins for kids in the produce department.

### A WIN-WIN

In addition to serving communities and those in need, supermarkets are benefiting directly from community outreach efforts.

“The benefits are two-fold, since giving back and helping others is what we do,” says Brous of Publix. “But it also reinforces our culture of giving back.”

Not only are its programs good team-building exercises, but these also have been beneficial for the morale of the associates.

The chain’s foundation will donate upward of \$40 million in 2016. “Customers are savvy in this age of social media and increased awareness,” says Brous. “They want to feel good about where they shop and the companies they support, so it’s a win-win for everyone. There’s definitely a movement for giving back.”

Local involvement helps Wakefern’s ShopRite stores make direct connections with communities.

“Our ShopRite stores are individually owned and operated by families,” says Meleta. “Those member-owner families are active in

the communities where they live, work and operate stores, and it is a commitment that goes back to our founding as a supermarket cooperative.”

The benefits of these programs are countless for Schnucks, which seeks to assist those less fortunate.

“Since we operate 99 stores in five different states, one of the challenges we face is the large number of organizations that reach out to us for help,” says Taylor. “As a solution to this, we offer all customers

the My Schnucks Card [loyalty program].”

Customers can use the card to designate up to three nonprofit organizations, and then their purchases at Schnucks will create an automatic contribution of up to three percent to the organizations.

Community outreach initiatives help retailers build better relationships with customers and staff members who participate in events with their families. They also help retailers build partnerships with schools and other organizations. **pb**

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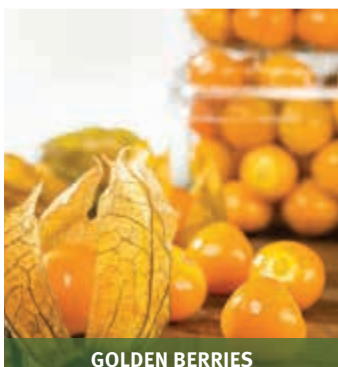
COCONUT



STAR FRUIT



GINGER



GOLDEN BERRIES



HEARTS OF PALM

ROW 1, PHOTOS BY EMILY KOHLHAS; ROW 2, PHOTOS COURTESY OF BROOKS TROPICALS  
ROW 3, L-R: PHOTOS COURTESY OF PROCOLOMBIA AND PALMELITAS

An influx of exciting specialty items attracts customers and stimulates increased ring.

BY JODEAN ROBBINS

**T**hanks to the growth of the foodie culture and soaring ethnic populations in the U.S., specialty items continue to gain in popularity. “In the past two decades, we have seen an increase in ethnic, exotic and tropical produce items distributed to mainstream retailers,” reports Robert Schueller, director of public relations for Melissa’s/World Variety Produce, Inc. in Los Angeles, CA. “Retailers have increased produce offerings to cater to all types of consumers.”

North State Grocery in Cottonwood, CA, with 19 stores, received the benefit of ethnic cooking influencing the market. “Ethnic cooking has brought on a demand for what we would call ‘specialty items,’ though, obviously, to ethnic customers, they are everyday items,” says Rick Rutte, produce/floral director. “Cooking channels have also been a big influence.”

Bashas’ Family of Stores operating 113 stores out of Chandler, AZ, credits the growing culinary trend and the rise of rock star chefs as powerful forces behind the burgeoning specialty world. “As more specialties become available, more at-home chefs are tempted to try them in their cooking – particularly after seeing them made more approachable through media,” explains Gabe Flores, produce manager.

No longer relegated to special occasions, specialty items now frequently show up on shopping lists. “Specialty produce items have gone from ‘Holiday Only’ to mainstream foods consumed daily in homes and merchandised 52 weeks a year,” explains Rick Durkin, director of business development at Crystal Valley Foods in Miami, FL.

Richard Stiles, director of produce and floral for Redner’s Markets in Reading, PA, with more than 40 stores, highly recommends

any supermarket develop a specialty line. “It’s always been a big source of extra income for us,” he explains. “It gets the stores excited. Our produce managers love to pick out different specialties from our list and put together fun promotions.”

John Vena Inc. in Philadelphia, PA, contends that specialty items have never been more important. “The nature of competition is rapidly changing and specialties are one of the best ways to enhance customer experience,” explains Daniel Vena, director of sales.

Specialties enhance profits and image. “Specialties are normally priced higher and allow for greater profit,” says Bruce Klein, director of marketing for Maurice A. Auerbach Inc. in Secaucus, NJ. “These items are usually newer items so they boost a store’s produce category.”

## A UNIQUE FOCUS

Any discussion of specialty produce is

complicated by the fluid nature of defining what 'specialty' actually means. "There is a wide variety of specialty products without much of a definition," argues Charlie Eagle, vice president of business development for Southern Specialties in Pompano Beach, FL. "We normally define 'specialty' as unique products we bring to market that are distinct from the usual fare, even though they've become increasingly common."

Though the definition broadly revolves around availability and uniqueness, Vena asserts what really counts is the merchandising. "The definition isn't as important as the merchandising and demographic work that must be done to select and sell the right products to the right people," he says.

Specialty merchandising is ultimately about customizing to specific demographics. "When you offer a specialty product, your intention is to connect at a level that resonates at a very familiar level with the consumer," says Peter Leifermann, director of sales for Brooks Tropicals in Homestead, FL.

Bashas' recommends building visibility of the category at the store level and staying consistent. "Keep it well stocked and fresh at all times," advises Flores. "These tactics will help any business become a specialty destination."

"Items such as dragon fruit bring variety to the produce section," says Adrian Capote, vice president of sales for J&C Tropicals in Miami FL. "Because of the appealing appearance, it triggers an impulse buy."

"The main reason retailers should carry specialty items such as dragon fruit, guava, and starfruit is because of the health benefits they bring to consumers," says Capote.

"Cultural diversity is growing throughout our country. Therefore retailers should look at the demographics of their stores to be able to cater to specific customers' ethnic preferences for each area," says Doria Blonder, sales and marketing director for New Limeco, LLC in Princeton, FL. "Carrying these specialty items attracts the ethnic demographic but also will attract the foodie who wants to try a recipe."

### GO ETHNIC AND TROPICAL

Brooks reports Hispanic and Asian items are at the forefront of the specialties trend. "Demand from Latinos and Asians drives the inclusion of specialties, but once in the store, these fruits and vegetables are generally embraced by any health-conscious consumer," notes Mary Ostlund, director of marketing.

Hispanic items, including hot peppers and tropical fruits, are major players in the specialty

space. North State reports chili peppers as probably the biggest growth category over the years, and Brooks sees significant growth in papaya. "Large papaya is virtually mainstream," states Leifermann, "and the Solo papaya holds a lot of promise."

The nutritional benefits of papaya offer a prime promotional opportunity. "Though papaya sales lag behind mango, we still see huge potential," says Eagle. "Papayas are healthy and have such beautiful color and great flavor."

Hearts of palm is an ethnic item more widely known as a grocery specialty, but has now become available in a produce-appropriate presentation. Pasco Foods in Spicewood, TX, markets a non-refrigerated, stand-up pouch presentation without a brine solution. "With this fresher presentation, retailers can still offer convenience and an extended shelf-life," explains Johan Andersson, vice president of sales. "Hearts of palm now appearing in produce offers a lot of potential."

"Merchandise these items in big, bulk displays," advises Capote. "Most customers prefer to pick and choose their products. Store managers must interact as much as possible day-to-day with customers to understand their needs. Consumers overall are the key to success; they will tell you what's right and wrong, how

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## ■ GUATEMALA: RISING SPECIALTY SUPPLIER

A key specialty produce supplier, Guatemala continues to push for progress and innovation.

BY JODEAN ROBBINS

In the past two or three decades, Guatemala has expanded its economy, traditionally based on sugar, coffee and bananas, to become a widely recognized source of specialty produce. "In the late 1980s, a group of ag and manufacturing visionaries formed a 'non-traditional products' association, the backbone of which was agricultural specialty items," explains Martin Maldonado, general manager/supply chain director at Pure Fresh, LLC in Miramar, FL. "Heavy hitters included Snow and Snap peas, French beans and berries."

A crucial element included the collaboration of several U.S. importers who invested time and resources to help develop non-traditional products. "Guatemala is a land of rich volcanic soil, several microclimates and excellent growing conditions for many specialty products," explains Robert Colescott, president and chief executive of Southern Specialties

in Pompano Beach, FL. "Since the 1980s, executives of Southern Specialties have been involved in pioneering the growth of specialty produce grown in Guatemala and imported into the U.S."

As the specialty produce markets evolved, Guatemala continued to innovate and improve production and distribution logistics. "Today, growers and importers of Guatemalan specialty produce have made significant investments toward food safety, sustainable practices, cold chain management and other areas of our industry," says Colescott.

Maldonado reports Pure Fresh supplies products with 100 percent traceability. "We grow under the very close scrutiny of all federal agencies," he adds. "The import process is also closely monitored by Homeland Security."

In an effort to continue promoting trade, innovation and high standards, a group of

Guatemalan exporters and U.S. importers formed the Guatemalan Produce Trade Association (GPTA) in October 2015. Priscilla Lleras-Bush, coordinator of the GPTA, states that the organization strives to facilitate marketing strategies for specialty produce in the U.S. "The exporters and importers involved in GPTA represent some of the most unique and interesting products in our marketplace," she says. "Our mission is to better help those in the U.S. understand the value of these products."

According to Colescott, a co-chair of the GPTA, the association is focused on increased consumption of Guatemalan grown fruits and vegetables throughout the U.S. "GPTA provides a forum for the association members to discuss and implement brand awareness, world class standards, coop promotional and marketing opportunities and government advocacy," he says. **pb**

they prepare it and what their expectations are.”

“The best way to educate consumers on specialties and remove their fear is simply by educating them on the health properties and recipes,” says Capote. “We have seen some of our retail partners’ business skyrocket on these items simply because of the commitment they have made to educate the consumer at the store level.”

New Limeco’s Powerful Harvest line offers QR codes on its PLU labels. “These take consumers directly to the item’s page

on our website where they are told how to store and prepare the item and given recipes,” explains Blonder. “We offer recipe cards with nutritional information to our retail customers to display with specialty items. We also try to make sure the produce managers know what the item tastes like and who uses it. This way when someone asks a question they know what the answer is.”

### HIGH POTENTIAL WITH LIMITATIONS

The increasing popularity of the starfruit

will prove profitable. “Starfruit is a great seller when merchandised in the tropical section,” relates Karen Caplan, president and chief executive of Frieda’s Specialty Produce in Los Angeles, CA. “It’s important to label the fruit with proper informative signage so the consumer knows how to use it.”

Ostlund points out the product’s versatility. “Sweet-tasting Florida fruit can be eaten like an apple or sliced into almost anything,” she says. “It’s no longer just a garnish; they’re in salads, top entrées, and give a ‘star’ quality to desserts.”

Though starfruit is available year-round, sporadic dips in supply can affect consistent sourcing. “The limited availability of starfruit has slowed growth,” laments Stiles. “I wish we had greater availability. Just last week, a customer asked me for starfruit, but we didn’t have it.”

Guava, another tropical delight, is experiencing newfound popularity in the U.S. “Guavas, both red and Thai, are coming to the forefront as consumers are choosing fresher options after tiring from more processed versions,” says Leifermann.

Stiles warns stores to tailor guava offerings to store-specific demographics. “Redner’s always carries guava, but it can be a slow mover,” he explains. “We focus on it more in some stores based on demographics.”

### ASIAN INFLUENCE

The growth of the U.S. Asian population and Asian-inspired cooking has put a spotlight on Asian specialties. “An interest in Asian items, such as dragon fruit, kiwi, and lemongrass has grown,” reports Rutte of North State.

Dragon fruit’s appearance alone sparks consumer interest. “Dragon fruit cannot be ignored,” states Brooks’ Ostlund. “Make sure signage shows what it looks on the inside — a stark contrast to the shocking scaly deep pink skin.”

Redner’s considers dragon fruit a showstopper. “It is so much fun to have out and sample!” exclaims Stiles. “Many people aren’t familiar with it, and love experiencing it. The quality of dragon fruit has improved in recent years with much better size and color.”

Fresh ginger is a specialty item turned culinary staple. “Fresh ginger sales demonstrate the broadening of the North American palette,” declares Brooks’ Leifermann. “Ginger’s health benefits and versatility are widely touted.”

Ostlund recommends signage to help consumers understand the difference in taste between fresh and dry ginger. “Spice rack ginger differs from fresh ginger markedly

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# In Loving Memory

## Peter Levantino

December 16, 1952 — July 26, 2016



**My father was truly a one-of-a-kind man.** He was the hardest worker I know. He never missed a day of work, whether it was a snow storm or he had the flu. He saw everybody the same, never judged anyone or said a bad word about anyone.

Respect was a big thing for my father. He respected everybody who respected him and even the rare person who didn't. He was not only my father but my teacher and mentor. There is no one who I looked up to more.

In this business, I don't think there was a more loved man. Everyone had a story about him, and I loved to hear them all. My father started off a broker in the market and he became one of the biggest. That's where he met his partner, Philip Guinta, so my father bought for Philip's supermarkets in Queens.

Philip and he decided to open up a store of their own. With Philip's experience in supermarkets and my father's experience in produce, they turned that one Associated store into 9 Guinta's Meat Farms.

My father has taught my brother Joe and me a lot about being a man and about life in general. If we strive to be half the man he was, I think we will be more than ok. I miss him so much every day. I know he's watching over us and smiling.

—John Levantino

**The first thing my father said to God when he got there was "what's doin' pal?"** To know my dad is to love him. He had the most infectious smile in the world. He could light up the darkest room with his smile. He truly enjoyed life. No matter what he was doing, he did it 100%.

Dad had two great loves in his life: my mother and work. He loved being in the produce business, and it shows by how many people have shared their stories about how much he meant to them. If you knew him a few weeks or a few decades, the love and respect is still the same. He always told my brother and me that respect is earned, not given, but we should always respect everyone. Whether you were a porter or a CEO, he treated you with the same respect. He truly saw the good in everyone no matter who you were or what you did.

He took care of everyone in his life, especially his family. His greatest relationship of all was with my mother. I can only wish that my siblings and I can have the unconditional love that the two of you shared. Mom, you were his soulmate, and you proved how strong your bond was over these last two years. The care and love you showed to him goes beyond what a person would do for themselves, let alone another person.

Dad you were the greatest man in the world. We will always love you, and we will try our best to see the world as beautiful as you did.

—Joe Levantino

**I met Peter through his father at the produce market in Hunts Point in the early 70's.** Our relationship as friends grew stronger for the next 20 years running into each other frequently.

When it was time to branch out and start my own company, I couldn't think of a better person to have side by side with me. We partnered up in 1992 with hopes to provide something special for our families. It seems the 20 some odd years have gone by so fast.

Starting with a small store in Queens in the 90's, we've experienced all of the highs and lows of running a successful business together. Throughout our growth, we always seemed to be on the same page trusting each other's judgement.

Looking at what Peter and I have built together, it is safe to say that neither of us could have accomplished it alone. Nine locations and a warehouse shows we've come a long way from Kissena Blvd.

Peter is a 'legend' in his own right in the produce industry. Even if you didn't know him personally, you would guess he was important because of the way he carried himself with his sharp style and cheerful demeanor.

Regardless of the tremendous partner he has been to me in the last couple of decades, his family always came first.

I'm happy to say that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree with his two hardworking sons, Joe and John, who have more than earned their spot to take our business to the next level. He is going to be so proud watching them enjoy their lives from above.

Without a doubt the last few weeks have been challenging and painful simply because Peter was the best guy around. They say friends are the family you choose. Peter was my best friend, the Godfather to my only son, and one of a kind. I will miss his electric smile and his ability to see the best in everyone.

Rest Easy, Brother.

—Philip Guinta

**Peter and I were Best Friends.** I met him when I was 16 years old. His father Joseph was one of the original partners here at A&J Produce Corp.

Peter was the biggest volume buying broker on The Market. For years, he bought for Golden Key, Wegman's, RLB, Corrado's and many other retailers.

He partnered with Philip Guinta and they started Guinta's Meat Farms.

He always had a smile on his face.

He was very generous and he was always for The Underdog.

—Thomas Tramutola

since it undergoes a chemical change when dried," she notes.

Showcasing ginger better and promoting its health benefits encourages sales, according to Auerbach's Klein. "Often ginger is merchandised in a small, out-of-the-way location," he notes. "Making it more visible encourages consumers to buy it."

"Ginger should be displayed near other Asian commodities in the refrigerated case," suggests Blonder of New Limeco. "It works great near boo chop, wonton wraps, tofu, peppers or specialty herbs."

### MINI POWER

The advent of mini produce items caused a major new category to emerge. "Retailers can now offer a full line of baby vegetables, including baby zucchinis and baby Brussels sprouts," points out Martin Maldonado, general manager/supply chain director at Pure Fresh LLC in Miramar, FL.

These miniaturized versions of common products can be used to amp up a department's appeal, according to Caplan. "Miniature vegetables give a sense of culinary sophistication when included in produce sets," she explains, "yet they also appeal to kids who love the small

size. Any parent can appreciate anything that helps their kids eat vegetables!"

Steamed baby beets and mini cucumbers are other great convenience items, according to Schueller. "Melissa's steamed baby beets are ready-to-go out of package," he says. "They can be merchandised next to variety beets, radishes and leafy greens. Merchandise mini cucumbers next to variety cucumbers, carrots and celery."

Pure Fresh also suggests featuring super sweet baby corn, baby carrots, and bite-size potatoes in a variety of colors. "They can be sub-labeled as all natural, non-GMO, exotic, imported, or artisan," adds Maldonado.

Specialty potatoes exploded in popularity. "Dutch yellow potatoes and baby red potatoes are the top selling baby potatoes in the U.S.," reports Schueller. "They come in a variety of packages and should be merchandised next to a variety of traditional potatoes."

Auerbach reports that marble potatoes are also gaining interest. "These are so small consumers can cook them quickly," says Klein. "They make a great presentation in foodservice or for entertaining. Baby potatoes are an impulse item so give them a prominent spot."

### MIND YOUR PEAS AND BEANS

Specialty beans and peas persist as distinct and trendy items. "We see expansion in our French bean category and Snow peas remain a popular item," says Eagle of Southern Specialties.

Crystal Valley reports virtually all major retailers added a specialty line full of these products. "This includes Snow peas and Sugar Snaps as well as French beans, yellow wax beans and shucked English peas," describes Durkin.

Health considerations and increased packaging options propel sales. "Our French beans are successful, because they offer advantages over the traditional green bean," explains Eagle. "They have no fiber, better flavor, a gourmet appearance, and they're easy to cook. And the variety of packaging options stimulates sales."

Southern Selects offers around 11 items in an 8-ounce microwaveable pack. "This unique, convenient packaging has created an entirely new shelf category," explains Eagle. "This packaging includes English beans, Snow peas, Sugar Snaps and asparagus tips as well as hand peeled baby Brussels sprouts, rainbow baby carrots and baby squash."

The extended shelf life bag has increased in demand, as evidenced at Crystal Valley. "Most



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are microwaveable and available in 6-ounce and 8-ounce packs,” says Durkin. “However, some retailers prefer a more modestly wrapped tray with a sticker to give the impression it was just freshly packaged in the back room.”

### SPECIAL BERRIES

While many consumers have strawberries and blueberries on their radar, stores and restaurants can impress customers with an increasing number of specialty berry options, such as goldenberries.

Frieda’s mentions goldenberries (Cape gooseberries or Physalis berries) and baby kiwifruits (kiwi berries) as top specialty berries. Goldenberries connect with some Hispanic consumers, but in recent tastings carried out by Bogota-based ProColombia (the agricultural marketing arm for Colombian produce), the fruit has also been well accepted by the U.S. mainstream. “Its nutritional content, exotic beauty and versatility positions it to have considerable potential once better known,” says Juan Barrera, U.S. agribusiness director for ProColombia in Miami, FL.

The goldenberry is available year-round, largely imported from Colombia and California. Marketers suggest promoting its health

benefits and merchandising it as a berry. “Though some retailers display goldenberries next to tomatoes, it more appropriately fits with other berries,” says Barrera. “The goldenberry should also be promoted as a nutritional powerhouse despite its small size (just half an inch): high levels of vitamins A, C, B12 and D; low in calories; rich in antioxidants; and a low-glycemic index.”

Render’s features the golden raspberry when available. “It’s only available in the late spring into summer,” says Stiles. “But it is one of those unique items customers don’t see every day. Customers get excited to try a colorful twist on an old favorite.”

### AROUSE NOVELTY APPEAL

Educating consumers on the creative use of specialty items is fundamental to increasing demand. Redner’s emphasizes sampling and demos. “Anytime you get people to stop and try something new, it generates sales and excitement,” says Stiles.


Usage education helps people overcome their hesitation to purchase something new. “A lot of consumers are willing to try new products but feel ignorant about how to use them,” explains Pasco’s Andersson. “Cross-mer-

chandising specialties to show how they can be incorporated into traditional dishes the consumer is already used to, such as using hearts of palm in a salad, will stimulate sales.”

To combat consumers’ sense of ignorance about exotic or unfamiliar produce, Frieda’s encourages consumers to gain exposure to specialties through social media campaigns and online resources. “Today’s shoppers are more open to trying new ingredients and seeking out authentic ethnic flavors,” says Caplan. “We’re providing inspirations for new food experiences.”

Specialty marketers provide ample support for retailers and foodservice. Frieda’s educates and trains via its website, social media videos, packaging, and custom signage and emphasizes the importance of training produce managers. “Training produce managers enables them to be more engaged with their shoppers,” says Caplan.

Brooks underscores the crucial educational component of signage. “Make sure the sign shows the inside of the fruit,” states Ostlund. “The appeal of specialty items can double if the consumer knows what’s on the inside. Just one suggestion of how a specialty item can be used will also make a big difference.” **pb**

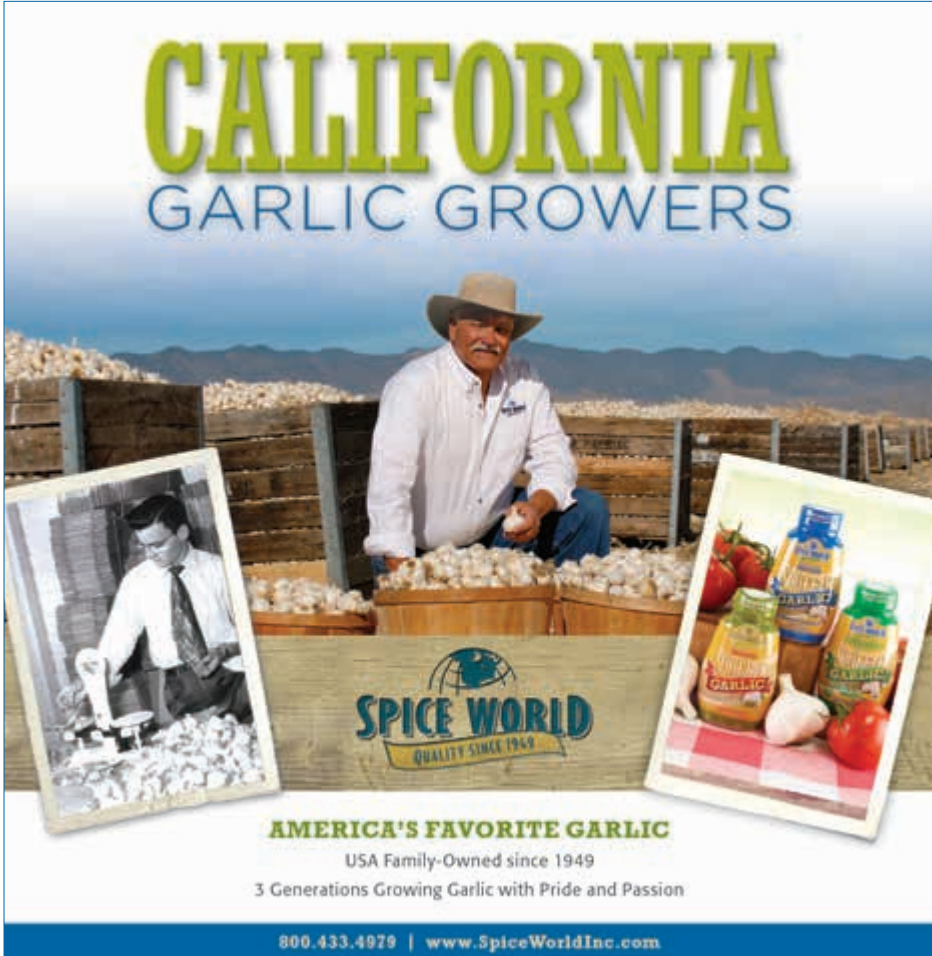


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# Fall Is The 'RIPE' Time To Promote Avocado Sales

Follow these six fall-centric best practices to maximize sales.

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

**T**he months from the Super Bowl to Cinco de Mayo were once the peak selling season for avocados when California was the main supplier to the U.S. market. Now, it is nearly two decades after the U.S. Department of Agriculture lifted its ban on Mexican fruit. It is almost 10 years since south-of-the-border avocados got the green light for shipment into all U.S. states. With these capabilities in place, the fall season is poised to become a prime time for retailers to see more "green" from avocado sales.

"We offer an unusually large amount of shelf space for avocados in produce in the fall," says Richard Stiles, director of produce and floral for Redner's Markets, a Reading, PA-based chain throughout Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware. "We also set up additional displays next to the chips and soda; plus, we keep the fruit at an attractive, everyday low price. Avocados, used especially for guacamole, have become synonymous with the fall's football season, tailgating and snacking occasions. Halloween has also become such a party holiday that avocados sell well then too."

The fall is an especially ripe time for the growth of avocado sales. This is because of a significant opportunity gap. While avocados represented 2.7 percent of total produce sales in the 52 weeks ending July 2, 2016, Q4 of 2015 represented the lowest annual percentage at only 2.4 percent, according to data provided by the Chicago-headquartered Nielsen Perishables Group. The two keys to achieving these stats are availability and season-specific merchandising and promotion.

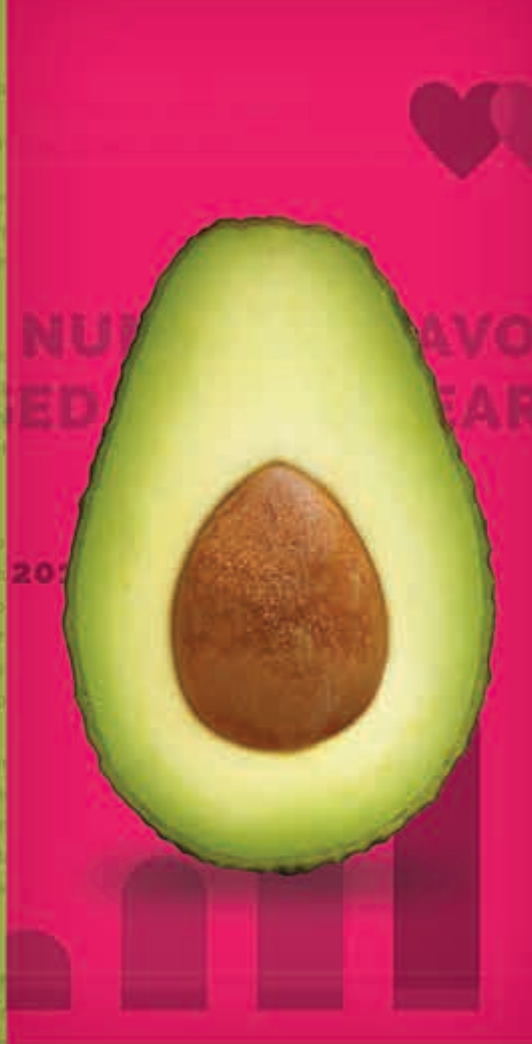
## FORECAST: PLENTIFUL

The start of fall signals a transition of growing areas for avocados in the U.S. market. "The California and Peruvian seasons come to an end between August and September," says Giovanni Cavaletto, vice president of operations for Index Fresh, Inc., in Bloomington, CA. "Mexico supplies about 60 percent of the market in September, and this moves to more than 80 to 85 percent by October with the remainder from Chile."

Rob Wedin, vice president of fresh sales and fresh marketing for Calavo Growers, Inc., in Santa Paula, CA, agrees "Mexico will be the primary supplier in the fall."

Supply from Mexico will be excellent to cover fall promotions.

New Research Explores Effects of Moderate Fat Diets That  
 Study Examines Avocado's Effects on CVD Risk  
 —Jan. 8, 2015— A moderate fat diet that includes one Hass  
 avocado per day is better for cardiovascular health than a low-fat diet, according to new research from the American Heart Association.  
 The study found that a diet with one Hass avocado per day led to a 10% reduction in LDL cholesterol compared to a low-fat diet. The researchers also found that the avocado diet led to a 10% increase in HDL cholesterol, which is known as "good" cholesterol.  
 The study was conducted over a period of 12 weeks. Participants were divided into two groups: one group followed a low-fat diet, and the other group followed a moderate-fat diet that included one Hass avocado per day. The researchers found that the avocado diet led to a 10% reduction in LDL cholesterol, which is known as "bad" cholesterol. The researchers also found that the avocado diet led to a 10% increase in HDL cholesterol, which is known as "good" cholesterol.  
 The researchers also found that the avocado diet led to a 10% increase in HDL cholesterol, which is known as "good" cholesterol. The researchers also found that the avocado diet led to a 10% increase in HDL cholesterol, which is known as "good" cholesterol.



### Nutrition Facts


Serving Size 1/5 medium (30g/1oz)  
 Servings Per Container 5

Amount Per Serving		Daily Value
Calories	50	from Fat 35
Total Fat	10g	7%
Saturated Fat	2g	3%
Trans Fat	0g	
Potassium	100mg	20%
Total Fiber	7g	14%
Dietary Fiber	7g	14%
Sugars	0g	
Protein	0g	
Vitamin A	0%	Vitamin C 4%
Calcium	0%	Iron 2%

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“Current projections show 35 to 45 million pounds per week,” says Maggie Bezart Hall, vice president of trade and promotions for the Dallas-headquartered Avocados from Mexico (AFM).

“More specifically, sizes will start small as the ‘first bloom’ or *‘for loca’* crop is harvested in September,” says Paul Weismann, president of Healthy Avocado, Inc., in Berkeley, CA. “The majority of this fruit will be 60s and 70s, which is not the size consumers prefer. As we move into October, ‘the second bloom,’ or *‘venturera’* crop, will produce a better range of sizes with more 40s and 48s and a higher oil content for healthy eating.”

Chile starts harvesting its fruit in August and will continue to have fruit in the market through March of 2017. However, the U.S. has become a smaller market for this South American country. According to Karen Brux, marketing director for the San Carlos, CA-based Chilean Avocado Importers Association (CAIA), of the 180,000 metric tons harvested in 2015, half stayed in country, and the rest shipped to Europe with only 11,000 metric tons (24 million pounds) arriving in the U.S. for a few key retail accounts. This season, Chile’s total harvest volume is expected to grow to 200,000 metric tons as areas previously affected by drought will return after this past year’s rainfall.

“In terms of volume shipped to the U.S. market, we expect it to be similar to 2015/16. If market conditions are supportive, there could potentially be opportunities to expand our U.S. program. We will continue to work with a few key retail chains and develop targeted marketing programs to support their sales of Chilean avocados,” says Brux.

Size is one key area of opportunity. “Since there will be more small-sizing out of Mexico, there’s an opportunity for Chile to get better prices in the U.S. this fall with its larger-sized fruit,” says Index Fresh’s Cavaletto.

Many retailers, especially on the East Coast with customers of Caribbean and Central American heritage, will stock green-skinned avocados.

“Florida avocados typically peak in July and August, but we have consistent supplies in the fall,” says Bill Brindle, vice president of sales and marketing for Brooks Tropicals Inc., in Homestead, FL.

### SEASONAL PROMO PROGRAMS

Avocados are a year-round staple and perennial Top 5 seller at Northgate. “We don’t really sell by the calendar, because, for us, avocados are such a high penetration item,”

PHOTO COURTESY OF CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION



says Cano. “However, we do like to take part in all the bells and whistles promotions offered by Avocados from Mexico, like sales and display contests, point-of-sale promotions and recipes. It’s a real added-value for our customers.”

AFM’s fall to early winter program this year is packed with exciting opportunities to market avocados. The first promotion of the season, ‘For the Love of Guac,’ starts this month. September presents a unique opportunity due to occasions such as Labor Day, Hispanic Heritage Month, National Guacamole Day and the start of football season. The promotion is accompanied by guacamole-centered pallet bins and Molcajete-styled bins that can display avocados as well as recognizable accent ingredients such as tomatoes, onions, limes and lemons.

“We are excited to present ‘For the Love of Guac’ for the first time. This is an extensive consumer program that will leverage all of these celebrations. Our goal is that this promotion becomes an annual tradition that our consumers will look forward to each year,” says Bezart Hall.

As part of its For the Love of Guac promotion, AFM will launch a National Catalina Coupon where shoppers can buy one Mexican-grown avocado and get a second fruit free or get \$1.50 off on the next bagged avocado purchase. This will be followed by digital coupons on Coupons.com, a National FSI ad and in-store IRC.

“September also represents a unique opportunity to celebrate with our Hispanic consumer base given the Fiestas Patrias holiday, which takes place on Sept 16,” says Bezart Hall.

AFM’s Viva La Fiesta promotion, which runs from September 1 to October 15, will bundle the AFM and Tabasco brands to offer Hispanic shoppers family-oriented celebratory meal solutions. In-store tools will feature

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September



October



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co-branded bins that offer products with a \$1 savings offer valid on one Tabasco and two Mexican avocados. POS and digital/social components are a key part of this promotion.

In October, AFM will partner with Ro\*Tel (the brand most recognized for its blend of canned tomatoes with chilies) for its Tastiest Tailgate promotion that lasts until October

31. Now in its third year, the partnership celebrates fall football and is centered on the Rock n' Guac guacamole recipe. Large and small co-branded bins feature the easy three-step

## SIX FALL-CENTRIC BEST PRACTICES

**S**trategic selling points that boost avocado sales year-round also work well in the fall, especially if a fall-centric marketing angle is employed.

■ **1) RIPENESS.** "The most important consideration for our customers is ripeness. They want to use the avocados that night or the next day; they don't want to have to wait. That's good for us, because they come back sooner to buy more," says Richard Stiles, director of produce and floral for Reading, PA-based Redner's Markets.

Anaheim, CA-based Northgate González Markets' produce director Alfonso Cano says, "Ripeness is so crucial that we ripen the fruit ourselves. It's riskier that way, but we're in the business to sell avocados, and we play to win by having ripe fruit on display at all times."

Ripeness is the key purchase driver for both heavy (purchase of 37-plus fruits annually) and light (1 to 36 annually) avocado buyers, according to the Mission Viejo, CA-headquartered Hass Avocado Board's (HAB), Shopper Purchase Decisions & Influences - Driving Hass Avocado Sales at Retail, 2015 Path-to-Purchase Action Guide.

"After ripeness, it's a combination of quality, pricing and selection that are the primary factors in the shopper's decision to purchase avocados," says Emiliano Escobedo, HAB's executive director.

■ **2) TWO SIZES.** "Size requirements vary by retailer, with some requesting at least two sizes to maximize sales potential. Offering a small size (usually 60s or smaller) and a large size (size 48s and larger) helps meet different consumer needs and give a sense of variety," says Jan DeLyser, vice president of merchandising for the California Avocado Commission (CAC), in Irvine, CA.

Another option for a two-size program is to make the second or larger size a Florida avocado, suggests Bill Brindle, vice president of sales and marketing for Brooks Tropicals Inc. in Homestead, FL. "Leverage the Florida avocado's size — often three times the size of a Hass."

Jose Rossignoli, general manager of the tropical category for Minneapolis, MN-based Robinson Fresh, says studies show selling

multiple sizes/packages will increase sales incrementally.

"Customers like to have a choice," says Rossignoli. "I recommend having the different sizes of avocados located in the same proximity in your regular schematic so consumers know their choices. Of course, if there is a front-end table, a free-standing bin, or a display rack — and you want to merchandise a promotional size there — then that is great! Secondary displays always sell more."

■ **3) BAG & BULK.** "We carry five SKUs of avocados: extra-large, large, medium, a Florida-grown when available, and a 4-count bag," says Northgate's Cano.

There are definite benefits to offering fruit individually and packaged in multiples. In fact, shoppers who purchase both bulk and bagged avocados buy the fruit more frequently (10 supermarket trips annually) and spend more (\$42 avocado spend per year) than bulk only (5 trips at \$17) or bag-only (2 trips at \$13) buyers. This is according to HAB's 2015 report, *Keys to the Cart: Key Shopper Insights for Driving Hass Avocado Sales at Retail*.

Currently, only 2.2 percent of avocado sales are bagged fruit, with bags ranging from 3 to 62 ounces in weight, according to Nielsen Perishables Group data for the 52-weeks ending July 2, 2016. Yet, Q4 of 2015 represented the highest contribution at 3.0 percent or nearly double Q2 (1.8 percent) and Q3 (1.9 percent).

"We find that merchandising both bulk and bagged avocados together in the produce department help promote sales of the category," says Scott Ross, eastern region business manager for the Giumarra Companies, headquartered in Los Angeles, CA. "We offer high-graphic, nutrition-focused bags with a prominent display rack to highlight the grab-and-go convenience for busy consumers. Bagged and bulk avocados complement each other and offer different options to consumers who are buying their avocados for different purposes."

■ **4) ORGANIC.** "Today's diverse customer base for avocados desires both conventionally and organically grown fruit," says Dan

Acevedo, director of business development for Newport Beach, CA-based Green Fruit Avocados.

Availability of organic fruit falls into a lower tier of drivers for avocado buyers across the board; however, it has been climbing in importance for enthusiasts and lovers, according to HAB's 2015 *User Segmentation Analysis* report. By definition, enthusiasts are those who purchase between 37 and 120 avocados annually, while lovers buy 120 or more each year.

"Organic avocados can be challenging to source during some months," says Timothy Spath, avocado sales and inventory manager for LGS Specialty Sales, Ltd., in New Rochelle, NY. "However, we are hearing there will be production out of Jalisco, Mexico in the future, which should support availability in the fall."

■ **5) DISPLAY & CROSS-DISPLAY.** "Increase the dimensions of fresh avocado displays and offer additional sizing for versatility and price options. Add secondary promotional and permanent displays," recommends Maggie Bezart Hall, vice president of trade and promotions for the Dallas-headquartered Avocados from Mexico (AFM).

Displaying color that breaks with complementary produce can positively impact sales.

"Avocados placed alongside red, orange and yellow tomatoes evoke the colors of autumn leaves as part of fall produce sets," says the CAC's DeLyser.

Northgate sells its avocados not only in produce, but in other departments such as meat and bakery.

"Cross-merchandising avocados drives higher rings, inspires/triggers impulse purchases and facilitates shopping convenience," says Guimarra's Ross.

The Peruvian Avocado Commission, based in Washington, D.C., sowed the seed in consumers' minds of the diverse uses of avocados this summer by conducting over 1,000 in-store demos at participating locations of Costco, Sam's Club and Wal-Mart from the Fourth of July through Labor Day. Two and three ingredient recipes demo'd included avocado smoothies, bite-size avocado toast and chocolate avocado mousse.



recipe instructions.

CAIA also offers retail marketing support for its Chilean-grown avocados this fall. This includes merchandising materials that cover

"We do this (in-store demos) not just for our season, but to grow the entire category by highlighting the fact that there are more ways to enjoy avocados than just guacamole," says Xavier Equihua, chief executive officer and president.

To make fall cross-merchandising easier, AFM's 2016/2017 Merchandising Catalog offers retailers more than a dozen types of rolling racks, stands and bins that can add creative secondary display space for bulk and bagged fruit. Each display comes with bag dispensers to allow for easy pick-up in any part of the store.

Robinson Fresh's Rossignoli says it's always a great idea to pair avocados with other primary recipe items. "Try to offer a recipe at the display to inspire a new use," he says. "Tomatoes, onions and chips are a natural for making guacamole. Don't forget tie-ins with burgers and buns for a summer burger feast; or tortilla wraps, salad fixings and chicken for a festive chicken avocado wrap."

**6) HEALTH.** The health benefits of avocados are the primary reason consumers purchase avocados, according to HAB's 2015 User Segmentation Analysis Report.

"We are working on a new bag program that highlights the nutritional benefits of avocados with a focus on ways kids can enjoy them and the fact that avocados are a great, palatable first food for babies," says Green Fruit's Acevedo.

Inform customers about the nutritional differences between a Hass and Florida green-skinned avocado, says Brooks' Brindle. "For example, Florida avocados have half the fat and a third fewer calories. This builds a consumer value proposition that considers holistically price, size and health benefits." Supermarket registered dietitians can play an important role in encouraging avocado usage for back-to-school health agendas/efforts by offering nutritional comparisons between spreads and dressings, according to the CAC's DeLyser. "After-school treats that include avocado and other produce are great promotional opportunities in late summer and early fall."

pb

three themes (nutrition, taste and seasonal) with catchy supporting taglines such as, "The Game Changer," "Taste that Tops Everything" and "Open Up and Say Ahhvacado." There's also a fully integrated social media program. Additionally, CAIA launched a new logo, moving from "Avocados from Chile" to "Chile Avocados."

Beyond country-of-origin marketing initiatives, promoting avocados during the holidays has huge potential. In 2015, holidays and events represented 25.6 percent of total annual produce sales, according to HAB's Holidays

& Events 2015 report. Five of 13 holidays showed an increase in their percentage dollar contribution. Two of these were the Super Bowl and Cinco de Mayo, while two others were fall holidays: Labor Day and Halloween.

For Halloween, "guacamole in a pumpkin shell makes for a fun decoration and a traffic-stopping demo that also encourages pumpkin sales. Beautiful fall salads with avocado are perfect for Thanksgiving, and produce-rich chili and soup recipes topped with avocado work well for the season," suggests the CAC's DeLyser.

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# TRANSPORTATION: MORE COMPLEX THAN EVER

The desire for fresher produce makes for greater demand of less-than-truckload shipments.

BY BOB JOHNSON

**T**he new age of moving produce from field to fork involves working out the logistical complexities of shipping amounts that are less than a truckload (LTL). The consumer desire for fresher produce means many retailers are looking for smaller inventories with a quicker turnover, which usually means shipping smaller amounts.

For retailers, the smaller shipments can pay off with reduced shrink and happy customers. "This model limits risk, shrink, spoilage, and inventory; theoretically, it increases quality for the end user," says Sam Coombs, vice presi-

dent of sales at Tom Lange Company and Lange Logistics, Springfield, IL. "Whether it's a pallet of avocados out of McAllen, three pallets of lettuce from Salinas, or two pallets of Clementines in New Jersey, we feel we have the capability to get it to our customers in the Northeast, in an extremely cost-effective way."

Retailer interest in smaller produce shipments has made LTL a major growth area for Lange Logistics.

"Our LTL business in the Northeast is increasing rapidly from all major shipping points," says Coombs. "I'd say at least 60 percent or more is now LTL. This is significantly much more than in the past, as retailers, wholesalers, and foodservice see added value in more frequent, smaller deliveries."

LTLs have become so important that C.H. Robinson of Eden Prairie, MN, produced a white paper on how to use them most efficiently: *Assessing the 5 Biggest LTL Savings Opportunities*, which is available online.

"Some stores have a greater focus on quality and freshness," says Mark Petersen, director of global transportation at C.H. Robinson. "That means the inventory turns are smaller, and you have more LTLs."

Although the white paper was written with dry freight in mind, many of the recommendations also apply to produce.

Because these smaller loads can wreak havoc with traditional shipping rates and increase the risk of produce going bad due to schedule delays, some trucking firms are reluctant to jump into this increasingly important business.

There are numerous challenges carrying

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less-than-truckload shipments of products, like perishable produce, that are not forgiving when the schedule is not met.

“It involves multiple pickups and multiple drops,” says Ben Batten, vice president for sales at Des Moines Trucking, Des Moines, IA. “The nature of the product makes it more difficult. The timing of the pickups and drops can be difficult if you have customers who want drop off or pick up on different days.”

Des Moines Trucking is one of the firms waiting to see if it is comfortable with the complex logistics before jumping into LTL produce shipping.

Transport becomes even more complex when you have numerous loads on a truck, coming from multiple packing houses and headed toward different distribution centers. It is further complicated when much of the trip is made by rail.

“In order to use the rails, it becomes even more complicated, because we have to meet their schedules,” says Tom Finkbiner, chief executive of Tiger Cool Express, Overland Park, KS. “It’s more complicated for the packing shed, and for us.”

Tiger Cool Express has to work this complexity out regularly, because the company specializes in medium- to long-distance shipments done, in part, by rail.

“The extra cost depends on how far apart

the stops are, and how many there are,” says Finkbiner. “It’s a difficult and complicated problem.”

### THE HIGHER COST OF BETTER PRODUCE

The bottomline question of how much added transportation cost is too much ultimately comes down to how much money consumers are willing to pay.

“The break-even point for the cost of LTL is a consumer-driven decision,” says Petersen. “If someone is selling a high-value produce item to a boutique-type consumer, they can go higher. In California, you would have a pretty low percentage increase in transportation cost with LTL, because the density supports a more consistent pattern.”

Many consumers are more than willing to pay a little more for this mode of transportation if that’s what it takes to buy fresher fruits and vegetables. “A lot of people aren’t looking to have as much inventory as they used to,” says Evan Kazan, director of business development at Target Interstate Systems, Bronx, NY. “I think there is more LTL in produce. The full loads, with one pickup, are going on the trains.”

The growing interest in locally grown produce also, ironically, means transportation logistics from nearby farms is more complex, with more fruits and vegetables shipped LTL.

In many cases, however, the economic benefits of reduced shrink and quicker turnover cover the increased cost of shipping LTL.

“Pricing may be a little higher on occasion, due to additional picks and drops, but the risk is much lower for the customer,” says Coombs. “The market swings become less of a factor when inventory turns quicker and more efficiently. So in essence, the benefits far outweigh a very minor increase in costs.”

The “logistics art” of LTL is figuring out which produce items, carried to a specific location, work best as partial-truck shipments.

“We have been able to identify, by location and destination, which partial shipments work best, as to not price the delivered product out of the market,” says Coombs. “We try our best to strategically plan our LTL shipments to maximize value. Our retail sales are increasing due to our ability to deliver pallet volume from anywhere within the country.”

### THE LOGISTICAL CHALLENGE

There is a tremendous logistical challenge in using LTLs to move a product as unforgiving as perishable produce.

“There’s more work to it,” says Kazan. “You have to load the truck in the right order. It can be complicated if there are delays at some of the earlier stops. In dry freight it’s a lot easier; they don’t need it on a specific day. You can



warehouse it if you need to, or get it there a day or two later. They may even ask for delivery any time within a couple weeks."

For transportation companies, the logistical difficulties of moving perishable produce LTL is the price to pay for more business.

"You have to simply be willing to do the work," says Kazan. "It's like working with a difficult customer. Everybody wants the easy customer. There's money to be made in LTL, and there's demand. If you're good at it, you can add more to your business."

Some carriers are taking a wait-and-see approach as they decide whether or not to jump into the complexities of LTL produce.

"We don't do any LTL," says Nick Jensen, sales manager at Loadsmart, New York City. "We're a newer company, and we want to focus on one thing, so we do full loads but may take a look at LTLs later."

Even established carriers are taking a very close look before taking the plunge into LTL produce.

"Less-than-trailer loads is something we want to do eventually," says Batten from Des Moines Trucking. "It seems like there is quite a bit of it. We have to work out a lot of the problems. It can become complicated if you have three customers on a truck and one of them, who usually does eight pallets, wants 10. You might have a problem."

There are shipping firms that regularly handle the logistics of moving dry products in LTL lots, but draw the line when it comes to perishable produce.

"All LTL is dry LTL at our company," says Mike Terry, director of ALC Logistics at Allen Lund Company, La Canada, CA. "We do not handle any produce on an LTL basis for our managed LTL customers or our brokerage side."

Terry is responsible for both the group that manages LTL for the customer base, as well as brokerage LTL for the Allen Lund Company.

"While Allen Lund Company has 40 years of produce experience and is one of the premier 3PL brokerages in the country, we do not specialize in or handle a lot of produce LTL," says Terry. "All of our produce is handled on a truckload, contract and spot-market basis."

There are some situations in which combining a number of loads can accommodate LTL produce orders.

"We do get occasional requests from our produce customers for LTL, but we do not have the carrier capacity to meet those requests," says Terry. "The way we manage to move some partials is by combining with other similar produce loads, but this is not done in

a traditional LTL sense, nor is it statistically significant to our core business."

Some shippers are able to move the smaller loads necessary to supply fresher produce by making numerous stops.

"There are certainly more multiple-stop loads than ever," says Finkbiner of Tiger Cool Express. "We are getting a higher percentage of multiple stops."

Produce shippers are generally able to provide a range of LTL, full load, and mixed transportation modes.

"We do lots of straight loads and lots of LTL business," says Lee Anne Oxford, marketing director at L&M Companies, Inc., Raleigh, NC. "It differs with the customer's particular goals as well as by customer size and commodity."

Some shippers are able to use multi-stop loads from their larger growing areas, and LTLs out of the more local, mid-sized production regions.

"With the emergence of regional growing areas, we're seeing more growth of LTL," says Petersen. "We're also seeing more use of regional distribution centers. It's hard to define what LTL means. Something with multiple

stops could be considered LTL."

There are still shippers handling enough volume that they are able to bring in full truckloads from major growing regions, like California, and then ship out multi-stop loads to retail customers.

"In our business, we don't utilize LTLs all that much," says Rick Feighery, vice president for sales at Procacci Brothers, Philadelphia. "We basically buy full loads. We have quite a large operation here. It doesn't affect us that much. We ship out full trucks. It may have two or three stops, but it is a full truck."

There are large retailers able to minimize their use of LTLs, because they can ship full loads into their regional distribution centers.

"You have the national retailers (like Wal-Mart), the regional retailers, and the local retailers," says Finkbiner of Tiger Cool Express. "The smaller the company, the more multiple stops because they don't have the volume. We tend to like the middle-sized market, the big regionals."

Carriers who are able to meet the logistical challenges that come with LTL produce shipments are enjoying steady to robust growth.

"We are seeing a huge growth in LTL

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produce sales, and it looks as though this will continue into the future," says Coombs. "We are seeing an increase in all aspects of the business. With the development of our LTL transportation services out of the East Coast piers, we are increasingly providing not only LTL produce sales, we are also selling our transportation services to other shippers and importers."

### QUESTIONS WHEN CONSIDERING LTL

C.H. Robinson recommends retailers or shippers using LTL on a regular basis evaluate annually whether they are using this more expensive mode of transportation in a cost-efficient way.

"The potential savings from doing a review of your transportation depends on how inefficient it was when you last addressed it," says Petersen. "If you are very efficient and your consumer demographics haven't changed, the savings might not be that much."

On the other hand, if transportation was inefficient to begin with, or customer demographics or produce preferences have changed significantly, the savings might be considerable, and C.H. Robinson's white paper, *Assessing the 5 Biggest LTL Savings Opportunities*, suggests where to look. First is whether volume has changed enough so a lower-cost mode of transportation is feasible.

"If you have grown your volume from California to New Jersey, which used to be low-volume LTL, now you can ship a full truckload," says Petersen. "You switch it to the most cost-efficient mode."

Second, for potential savings is aggregation, which is less applicable to perishable produce because it cannot often be held until there is enough for a full truckload. However, scheduling shipments so the truck leaves a relatively low-volume area just once a day may be a solution.

Third, for potential savings is having the largest and most expensive-to-operate vehicle make as few stops as possible by consolidating pickup locations.

"You always want to do the least efficient thing over the shortest distance possible," says Petersen. "You don't want to have a big truck making five stops in Salinas. You want to aggregate the produce so the truck can make a single stop."

This efficiency can be enhanced when a number of shippers in a local area all take their produce to the same spot for pickup.

"You can take all of my produce, and my three buddies' produce in Salinas, and ship it from one spot," says Petersen. **pb**

# New York Apples: A Crunch To Believe In



The State's finest includes some newer contenders.

BY BOB JOHNSON

**W**hile New York apple growers are waiting hopefully for the next Honeycrisp, they are (like their counterparts in most of the country) already ramping up acreage of two new varieties developed for them by Cornell University.

This will be the first year SnapDragon and

RubyFrost, two varieties developed at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station by Cornell breeder Susan Brown, will be available in significant volumes.

Tim Mansfield, director of sales and marketing at Sun Orchard Fruit Company, Burt, NY, says these two new varieties are just coming into larger production. "They're

kind of a club thing. Crunch Time is a group of apple growers in New York who can grow them [SnapDragon and RubyFrost]. Only New York growers can grow them, and only specified packers can ship them."

Sun Orchard Fruit is a fourth-generation family firm shipping a half million cartons of the most popular Eastern apple varieties a year grown by 40 growers in the Lake Ontario fruit plain in western New York.

Brown expects RubyFrost, which ripens later in the fall and stores well, will be popular with fans of Empire and Granny Smith.

SnapDragon has a spicy-sweet flavor and gets its juicy crispness from its Honeycrisp parent.

"Susan Brown of Cornell has done a great job for the New York growers," says Tim Byrne, director of special projects at New York Apple Sales, Albion, NY. "The New York team is really centered on SnapDragon and RubyFruit."

New York Apple Sales is the largest shipper in the state, handling more than a third of the entire crop from growers in every region





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of the state.

Many of the new apple varieties coming to market from New York orchards are, like SnapDragon, descended from Honeycrisp.

“We have the Pazazz,” says Mansfield. “We had our first limited release in the Buffalo area last year, and we’ll have more volume this year. We’re still learning about this apple.”

The Pazazz is a cross between Honeycrisp and an unknown second parent that came about pretty much by accident.

“Thousands of Honeycrisp seeds hit the ground, and one of the trees had an apple that’s very special,” says Mansfield. “It is more flavorful than Honeycrisp and has more acid,

**“Consumers are making more informed decisions at the shelf — we call it a ‘purposeful purchase,’ and an easy way to feel confident of making good choices is to support local whenever possible.”**

— Kelli Foster, Red Jacket Orchards

which contributes to the flavor. It harvests later and holds flavor longer than Honeycrisp. When you first pick it, it has too much acid. You have to wait three or four weeks to eat it.”

Pazazz was first developed by Doug

Shelfbine, owner of Shelfbine Orchard and a Wisconsin grower for Honeycrisp creator Honeybear, from the large collection of seedlings he regularly plants next to the orchard, he grows Honeycrisp for cider.

## ■ UGLY APPLES MAKE THE BEST CIDER

They are the fruit that is a bit too small, a touch too large, or banded up just enough to not quite fit our preconceived notion of how an apple is supposed to look.

Rather than consign these ugly ducklings from the harvest to the compost bin, New York growers squeeze from them cider that has earned its own fine reputation.

“In apples, unlike oranges, we don’t grow juice apples, they are complete waste stream that are culls off lines, picked in orchards last,” says Kelli Foster, director of marketing at Red Jacket Orchards, Geneva, NY. “So a healthy juice market does keep the fresh apple market healthy.”

Although the apples are not grown with the intent of being squeezed, they do bring a distinctive New York cider flavor that comes from the soils and climate.

“Our soils, rich from glacial activity and high in humus [a dark-brown or black organic substance made up of decayed plant or animal matter], tend to give us fruit with more pronounced acid levels,” says Foster. “It is this acid, for apples malic acid, that balances with the sugars of the fruit to give full bodied, ‘zingy’ flavor. Without

it, just a sweet apple is a flat flavor.”

There may not be cider varieties, *per se*, but there is an art to divining mixes of varieties that will make for distinctively delicious ciders.

“When it’s 100 percent apples, the varieties matter 100 percent because of the balance of acid/brix/tannins,” says Foster.

Some New York apple growers take to producing cider that comes from a single, distinctive and delicious variety.

“We do Fuji, Honeycrisp and Sweetango; those are our three varietal apple ciders,” says Dave Williams, vice president for sales and marketing at Fowler Farms, Wolcott, NY. “We don’t add any concentrate or other juice.”

For the rest, Fowler mixes apples of numerous varieties into a blend that changes a bit every year.

“There’s the traditional cider that is a blend of different varieties,” says Williams. “We cannot say exactly what the blend is because it changes. There are some people who like the traditional, but the varieties are showing the greatest growth.”

Like Red Jacket, Fowler Farms uses its cider program to make sure that no apple,

no matter how homely, goes to waste.

“Cider is made from apples that are too big, too small, bruised, or whatever,” says Williams. “We also do utility apples that are sliced or used in some other way.”

Foster expects the volume of juice from Red Jacket to be up 25 percent this year and advises retailers to give their customers a taste.

“Sample it ... people can’t resist flavor,” she says. “And it’s increasingly important to educate the consumer at the point of purchase. There is one ingredient in our All Natural Apple Cider: Apples! Simple, fresh, ingredients with nothing added is something we’re proud of, so we shout it out loud whenever we can.”

There is in the cider, as in the apples, a distinctive New York flavor that educated consumers crave.

“Consumers are making more informed decisions at the shelf — we call it a ‘purposeful purchase,’ and an easy way to feel confident of making good choices is to support local whenever possible,” says Foster. “That certainly helps us in the apple arena, since we believe New York apples are among the best in the country.” **pb**





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Honeybear expects to ship 30,000 cases of Pazazz this year, 125,000 the next year, and then 350,000 the following year, and will be sampling at major supermarkets including Publix, Hy-Vee, Coborn's, Wegmans, Kroger, H-E-B, Smith's, Fry's, QFC, King Soopers, Cub Foods and Loblaws.

The normal harvest slot for Pazazz is late September or early October, according to Mansfield of Sun Orchard.

Another new Honeycrisp variety was discovered by Wabash, IN-grower David

Doud, owner of David Doud's Countyline Orchard, who was delighted by the crisp sweetness he enjoyed when he sampled fruit from a seedling in his cider orchard.

This tasty stranger turned out to be a Honeycrisp/Fuji cross, since named Evercrisp, that is beginning to gain favor.

"A fair amount of Evercrisp is being planted, and there are managed varieties that we don't get involved in at the association," says Allen of New York Apple Association.

Another new variety will be a New Zealand

**"It's extremely difficult to introduce a new variety, because there's limited real estate in the produce department. You need advertising, social media and a branding program; but at the end of the day, you need a great product."**

— Tim Byrne, New York Apple Sales



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apple having its first-ever U.S. harvest this year.

"We are a cooperative with a few growers in Washington and about 15 in New York to grow Koru, a New Zealand variety," says Byrne of New York Apple Sales. "We will have our first domestic-grown Koru this fall."

The Koru, a cross between Braeburn and Fuji, was first discovered by Geoff Plunkett in the rose garden next to his orchard in Nelson, New Zealand, according to Byrne.

Harvest is just the beginning of the challenge of introducing new and interesting apple varieties, as it takes time, money, imagination and produce department shelf space to build a consumer base.

"It's extremely difficult to introduce a new variety, because there's limited real estate in the produce department," says Byrne. "You need advertising, social media and a branding program; but at the end of the day, you need a great product."

Most shippers continue to offer ample supplies of familiar apples as they work in some of their newer varieties.

"We are continuing with McIntosh, Empire and Cortland while transitioning to newer varieties that have more crunch — more density to the flesh," says Byrne. "Density has replaced flavor as the first test point. If it doesn't have a crunch, people won't buy it a second time."

One New York favorite remains very popular more than a century after it was first introduced. "McIntosh is still the 10th most popular variety in the country after 120 years," says Byrne.

At Sun Orchard, Empire and Gala are the Top 2 producers and, according to Mansfield, both are near the top in popularity among New York apples in general.

"The Northeast is a big market for New

York apples,” says Mansfield. “The McIntosh and Empire are the favorite varieties, and we grow a good Gala.”

McIntosh, Empire, Red Delicious and Gala remain the Top 4 New York apples out of state, according to New York Apple Association’s chief executive Jim Allen, but there are exciting new varieties becoming available.

The New York Apple Association manages promotional programs for apples and apple products from throughout the state.

New York produces the second-largest apple crop in the country, harvesting roughly 30 million bushels from 55,000 acres of orchards.

### A NEW WAY OF TALKING

The New York Apple Association produces promotional fliers as part of its promotional campaign, but Internet advertising is on the rise because it offers tremendous advantages.

“It’s direct to the consumer,” says Allen. “We’re moving more to digital every year.”

The digital approach is augmenting more traditional methods of merchandising New York apples, rather than replacing them entirely.

“We are going to follow our normal merchandising program this year,” says Allen. “We will have in-store demos, stepped up digital coupons, and online advertising.”

Proximity to the largest urban centers in the country makes New York apple growers well positioned to benefit from the desire to buy local.

“The ‘buy local’ movement is very important, because we are close to such a massive population,” says Allen.

Over the course of many decades, New York apples developed a brand desired in at least half the country.

“We ship mostly east of the Mississippi,” says Dave Williams, vice president for sales and marketing at Fowler Farms, Wolcott, NY. “The New York name helps [sales] everywhere from Texas through Chicago and east. We have a little different taste than Washington because of the weather. We may have a little higher brix with some varieties.”

Fowler Farms has grown apples for more than a century and a half in the region influenced by nearby Lake Ontario.

### WEATHER PERMITTING

New York seems to have fully recovered from the hailstorms that destroyed half the crop in 2012 and damaged much of the fruit that could be harvested.

“Volume-wise, we recovered completely from the frost,” says Mansfield. “There’s always concern if the trees were damaged. It looks like

we’re going to have a good crop this year with good volume and quality.”

Growers have, in fact, set an apple harvest record since the year of the disastrous hailstorms.

“We are back and exceeded pre-freeze levels last year with 32 million bushels,” says Allen. “We’ll see this year. We’re looking at a nice decent crop. There were just a few areas with frost, but we really need some rain.”

Some growers found last year particular amenable to production of the New York

favorite McIntosh.

“We had such a good year for the yield of McIntosh last year, but that’s cyclical,” says Williams.

Aside from some localized frost early in the year, the only question about the 2016 harvest is whether there will be enough rain to properly size the fruit.

“It’s dry,” says Williams. “There was some freeze back in February. We made out pretty well because we’re near Lake Ontario, but we need more rain.”

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# Giving The Royal Treatment To Pears



PHOTO COURTESY OF PEAR BUREAU NORTHWEST

Using the visual versatility and flavorful diversity of pears, retailers have the power to command consumer purchases.

BY BARRY SPARKS

**S**teve Lutz, vice president of marketing at Wenatchee, WA-based Columbia Marketing International Inc. (CMI), says pears have a dilemma. “Pears are a spectacular fruit, but they don’t always receive the love and attention they deserve,” he emphasizes.

Kevin Moffitt, president of Pear Bureau Northwest, located in Milwaukie, OR, agrees. “There is a crazy upside to pears,” he says. “They present a tremendous opportunity for retailers.”

Kevin Steiner, marketing director of Sage Fruit, located in Yakima, WA, says the average person consumes 3.1 pounds of pears a year.

Pears account for less than 1 percent of produce sales, while apples account for 6 to 7 percent, according to Roger Pepperl, marketing director of Stemlit Growers, based in Wenatchee, WA. But there are merchandising tactics to boost pears and their flavorful appeal.

## PROMOTING DELECTABLE FEATURES

In order to ramp up interest, marketers suggest promoting the versatility and delicious taste pears offer.

“When people try pears, they like them,” says Pepperl. “Pears are not receiving the advertising and visibility they need. When prompted, pears sell. The right placement and the right promotion make all the difference.”

Kyle Persky, sales manager at Rivermaid Trading Company, located in Lodi, CA, says pears are interesting because “you can either move the needle significantly or sell almost

nothing at all. It depends on your attitude and approach.”

Promotion is a key to a successful pear program, because pears are one of the highest impulse buys in the produce department when properly displayed and merchandised, according to Lutz.

“Pears need high visibility and larger displays, because they are not a staple item,” he says. “Few people go to the store with pears on their shopping list. But, fruit buyers are looking for something different, and that’s where the opportunity exists.”



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Steiner says: “When pears are promoted through secondary displays and advertising, shoppers not only buy pears, but they also buy apples, citrus and bananas. Pears raise incremental sales.”

According to Pear Bureau Northwest, more than half of pears are purchased on impulse, and 75 percent of consumers say appearance of the display is an important factor in their decision to purchase.

The more often stores promote pears, the better. Sacramento, CA-based California Pear Advisory Board research shows stores that promoted pears at least three times during the summer registered sales 34 percent higher than those which promoted pears less frequently.

### BOOSTING RIPENESS EDUCATION

One of the biggest challenges in marketing pears is the consumers’ lack of knowledge about how to tell if a pear is ripe and ready to eat.

Apples, grapes, strawberries and other fruits are ripe when they are placed on display. That, however, is not always the case with pears. To complicate matters, Bartlett pears are the only variety that turns color as it ripens.

“Consumers are educated to know when bananas are ripe to eat, but not so with pears,” says Steiner. “Pears can take five to six days before they are ripe to eat. But, consumers don’t want to wait.”

“Retailers need to educate consumers how to tell if a pear is ripe,” says Moffitt. “You do that by gently pressing your thumb at the neck of the pear. If it gives to the touch, then it’s ripe.”

A California Pear Advisory Board study reveals only 8 percent of consumers know where to feel to determine a pear’s ripeness and only 23 percent know how to ripen pears at home.

Pepperl says people shop 1.2 to 1.8 times a week, and they want to eat fruit the same week they shop. “It’s silly to sell pears if the

**“Riper pears mean more sales and quicker turnover. The less time customers have to wait to eat the pears they purchased, the sooner they can return to the store to buy more.”**

— Mac Riggan, Chelan Fresh

customer can’t eat them for five to six days. How much steak would you sell if shoppers had to wait a week to eat it? People don’t want to wait. Creating a better eating experience for pears is paramount,” he says.

### CONDITIONING PEARS

One of the ways to ensure pears are ready to eat, or close to eating, is implementing a conditioned pear program. Conditioning is the first step in the ripening process. Retailers can condition pears in their warehouse or have shippers condition the produce before shipment. Retailers are encouraged to have a ripening protocol.

According to Pear Bureau Northwest, more than 60 percent of consumers agree pears should be ripe when they are purchased. They want pears to ripen in one to four days of purchase. Only 10 percent are willing to wait five to six days. Conditioned pears are typically ready to eat in one to three days.

“A conditioned pear program improves the eating experience for consumers and increases sales,” says Moffitt. “Conditioned pears involve more risk because they are softer. It’s a change for shippers and retailers. It takes more education at every step of the process. To make a conditioning program work, good communication and planning are needed. It’s more work, but in the end, it pays off.”

According to the Pear Bureau Northwest, conditioned pears outsell non-conditioned pears by 19.5 percent.

Some retailers are reluctant to implement a conditioned pear program, because of concern for increased shrink. Industry leaders, however, don’t think it should be a problem.

“Riper pears mean more sales and quicker turnover,” says Mac Riggan of Chelan Fresh, headquartered in Chelan, WA. “The less time customers have to wait to eat the pears they purchased, the sooner they can return to the

### IMPORTED PEARS

The United States imported 180 million pounds of fresh pears in the 2013/14 market year, according to the Agricultural Marketing Resource Center at Iowa State University in Ames, IA.

Importers supplied 18 percent of fresh pears from 2011-13. That percentage has fallen slightly in the past decade, according to the USDA *Fruit and Nut Yearbook* statistics.

Rafael Garcia, sales manager of Salix Fruits, a global fruit trading company with headquarters in Canton, GA, says the volume of imported pears in the United States increased in recent years. He’s optimistic the volume will continue to increase.

“Nowadays, there are no seasons for our customers,” he stresses. “Most consumers don’t know when pear season is in the United States, and they really don’t care. They want pears year-round.”

Garcia says the United States is a high-demanding market, and Salix Fruits’ goal is to help meet that demand.

“Imported pears help us to maintain a constant supply during the local off-season,” says Randy Bohaty, produce director, B & R Stores, headquartered in Lincoln, NE.

“It’s important for imported pears to be in the market when the local season ends,” says Garcia. “Imported pears cover at least half the year, and they are the only

way to ensure year-round availability.”

Imported pears also complement other pears by increasing the number of varieties a store can offer.

“Different options are attractive to customers, and studies have shown sales increase when a store offers more than one variety of pears,” comments Garcia.

Garcia says retailers and consumers should not be concerned about the quality of imported pears. Due to strict regulations and controls, the quality of imported pears is at the same level as the United States pears, according to Garcia.

He says consumers definitely want to know where their fruit comes from, and more education is needed.

Salix Fruits imports varieties of pears available in Argentina. They include: Williams (known as Bartlett in the United States), Packhams, Bosc and D’Anjou.

While Abate Fetel pears have only a small share of the imported pear market, consumers appear to be showing more interest in them, according to Steve Lutz of Columbia Marketing International Inc., located in Wenatchee, WA.

Abate Fetel pears, grown in the northeastern region of Italy, are available for a short time during the early spring months. The variety, known as Italy’s favorite pear, made its debut in the United States in 2013.

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Source: 2014 Fresh Pears Usage and Attitude Study shows over 50% of consumers want to eat their pears within two days of purchase. Related sales data showing sales increase with conditioned pears was for 9 weeks period ending April 2015.



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 Woodman's Markets: **Reden Dacumos**, Madison, WI



store to buy more.”

“I think shrinkage is more of an old-school concern. A conditioning program has proven to increase sales,” says Pepperl.

Andy Tudor, director of business development at Selah, WA-based Rainier Fruit Company, believes the shrinkage concern can be easily dismissed by making a decision to sell more pears. That means a solid commitment, more promotion and better displays. He encourages retailers to use Pear Bureau Northwest materials and resources to enhance their efforts.

### STIMULATING SALES

There are multiple ways to stimulate pear sales. Riggan advocates cross-promotion with items such as bagged salads, yogurt and cheese — the three most common items found in the carts of those who buy pears. He also recommends promoting the delightful combination of pears, wine and cheese.

Promoting apples and pears together makes sense since apples are the most prominent fruit in a pear-shopper's cart. Pepperl says pears and apples complement each other. A cross-promotion lifts both, but pears probably benefit more than apples.

Moffitt says some stores have been successful cross-promoting pears with Kellogg's cereal. Pears are a great cereal topper.

How pears are displayed can have a significant impact. Steiner recommends creating a pear destination with lots of options for shoppers. Persky of Rivermaid suggests stores conduct display contests among produce managers. Eye-catching and colorful waterfall displays capture shoppers' attention. Moffitt





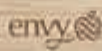
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## merchandising review ▶ pears

touts displaying three to four varieties of pears to give customers options. According to the California Pear Advisory Board, a full variety pear display outperforms a display consisting solely of Bartlett pears.

Pepperl says, more pear displays and promotion are needed. “Low visibility and no promotion is a deadly combination.”

Pairings with tree fruit such as peaches, plums and nectarines can increase sales by 11 percent, according to Persky.

Allowing customers to sample pears can

increase immediate and long-term sales. Pear Bureau Northwest says sampling can increase immediate sales by 150 to 200 percent. Nearly half of customers say having a chance to sample pears motivates them to purchase a new variety.

### USAGE OCCASIONS

Educating consumers about the various ways pears can be used is another important step. Most people eat pears out of their hand. But there are many other ways they can be eaten, such as: snacks, with salads, desserts, hot

**“The good news is Millennials want to eat healthy and fresh, and they want their children to do the same. Millennial mothers are doing a good job of making sure their kids eat fruits and vegetables.”**

— Steve Lutz, Columbia Marketing International

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cereal, cheese plates and even alcoholic drinks.

Pepperl says pear salads and pear tarts are becoming more common dishes in white-cloth restaurants, inspiring more people to want to make similar dishes at home.

At-home-delivery services, such as Blue Apron, are including pears in more recipes, introducing many younger people to the various uses of pears.

“Retailers should be offering recipe cards for pear dishes at every opportunity,” says Riggan. “It’s an effective way to educate consumers.”

Sixty percent of consumers are more likely to purchase pears if exposed to a recipe or further information about pears, according to Pear Bureau Northwest.

### CAPTURING YOUNGER CONSUMERS

One of the biggest challenges is introducing pears to younger consumers — Millennials and their children. The average pear consumer is 44 years old, according to Tudor. As the demographic ages, the generation is getting smaller and consuming fewer pears.

“Millennials generally lack knowledge about pears and how to use them,” says Lutz. “The good news is Millennials want to eat healthy and fresh, and they want their children to do the same. Millennial mothers are doing a good job of making sure their kids eat fruits and vegetables.”

Pears are one of the healthiest fruits. They are an excellent source of fiber, a good source of Vitamin C, and only 100 calories per serving. They are also free of sodium, fat and cholesterol.

While increasing the sale of pears may be challenging, Lutz of CMI says the bottomline is: “We need to capture the attention of consumers and that needs to happen at the super-market level.”

**pb**

# Philadelphia Produce Market Follows The Path To A Flourishing Future

STRATEGIC MOVES  
ENVISIONED BY BUSINESSES  
PAVE THE WAY FOR  
LUCRATIVE SALES  
AND A VITAL FACILITY.

By Jodean Robbins

In the past half-century, the city of Philadelphia rose from the ashes of a dingy, has-been metropolis to a bustling, hipster town. Philly's resurrection story features a surge of trendy restaurants and retail shops now serving as witness to the area's positive food culture.

"The Philly food climate is very healthy," says Filindo Colace, vice president operations for Ryeco. "The city boasts an ample cross-section of big retailers along with smaller independent and specialty stores. It's a very diverse community as far as offerings."

The multiplicity of Philadelphia's residents allowed for the development of a wide array of businesses in the food sector. According to the Chain Store Guide's 2015 Market Share Report, the greater Philadelphia area of about 4,700 square miles (which includes counties such as Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery) is populated by more than 6 million people: 67 percent Caucasian; 21 percent African American; 5 percent Asian;

ALL PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHARLES MOSTELLER



## PHILADELPHIA MARKET PROFILE



**B.R.S. Produce** - Anthony Carbone, Lynn Simons, Rick Milavsky, Ed Barba and Nick Stio



**Klinghoffer Brothers** - Fadi Abi-Khattar



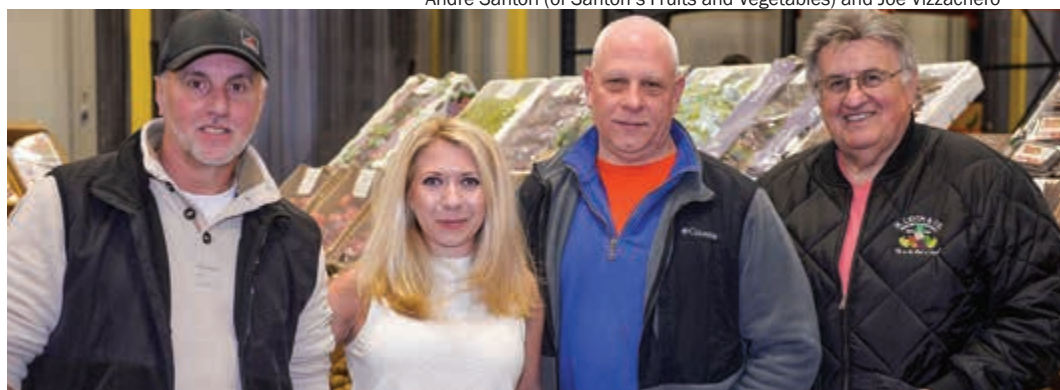
**E. W. Kean Co.** - John Black, Ted Kean and Mike Boccelli



**Hunter Brothers, Inc.** - John Nelli Sr., John Nelli Jr., Andre Santori (of Santori's Fruits and Vegetables) and Joe Vizzachero



**M. Levin & Company, Inc.** - Mark Levin



**M. Levin & Company, Inc.** - Pete Gabriele, Tracie Levin, Joe Armata and Bill DeFelice

and 9 percent Hispanic. The average household income is \$86,000 annually, and 4.5 percent of that income is devoted to food and beverages at home.

“There is a diversity of ethnicities, income levels, professional levels, and we see that mixture reflected in the retail and foodservice climates,” says Fadi Abi-Khattar, president of Klinghoffer Brothers, Inc.

“The city is thriving with many previously depressed areas now being occupied and renovated by younger generations,” reports Mike Maxwell, president of Procacci Brothers Sales Corporation. “Philly presents a wide variety of food options — all of which are bent on serving its diverse demographic.”

The city’s assorted food climate is evidenced by the wide array of customers presented at

**“There is a diversity of ethnicities, income levels, professional levels, and we see that mixture reflected in the retail and foodservice climates.”**

— Fadi Abi-Khattar, Klinghoffer Brothers, Inc.

area wholesalers. “We serve a wide variety of customers from those just starting out with a small fruit stand, to corner neighborhood markets, to big box supermarkets buying trailer-loads on a daily basis,” says Paul Giordano Jr., vice president at Paul Giordano and Sons.

The Philadelphia Wholesale Produce

Market (PWPM) guestimates its customer makeup at 25 percent wholesale (including foodservice) and 75 percent retail. “We service large supermarket chains, schools, restaurants, caterers, chefs, mom-and-pop shops, all the way to the home chef,” says Sonny DiCrecchio, PWPM president and chief executive. “Further breakdown of retail markets includes farmers

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**John Vena Sales Team** - Tom Allen, Erin Obsniuk, Joe Menei, Bill Burr, Emily Kohlhas, John Vena, Marco Matta, James DeMarsh, Rebecca Lubienski, Dan Vena and Vera Stinson



**Nardella, Inc.** - John Durante, Jim Baldwin, Mark Semmerjian, Mike Reed and Rich Clark



**North American Produce Co.** - John DiFeliciano, Michelle DiFeliciano, and Michael Lorenzo

markets, Russian markets, Indian markets, Hispanic markets, and Asian markets.”

Martin Roth, vice president for Coosemans Philadelphia, observes the Philly foodservice climate also reflects its diverse demographic. “You have high-end, white tablecloth restaurants in Center City all the way to neighborhood joints serving blue-collar areas, a huge selection of ethnic restaurants, and everything in between,” he explains.

### MOVING FORWARD

As Philadelphia transformed itself over the decades, so did its wholesale produce market — echoing the evolution of the city from historic Dock Street, to industrialized Galloway Street, to the state-of-the-art PWPM. Celebrating its

**“Now we have the finest produce market in the world. Our facility is unmatched, and we foresee great growth.”**

— Joe Procacci, Procacci Brothers Sales Corporation

five-year anniversary this past June, the new market’s implementation was no quick venture.

“We worked for decades before we actually broke ground,” says Joe Procacci, Procacci chairman and chief executive. “Now we have the finest produce market in the world. Our facility is unmatched, and we foresee great

growth.”

Market merchants admit some rocky years, but say business is now climbing. “The PWPM is on an upward trajectory,” reports John DiFeliciano, owner of North American Produce Company (NAPCO). “We had our growing pains when we moved in. It was a

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## PHILADELPHIA MARKET PROFILE



new situation and a new style of business. Now, we settled in and are performing as we envisioned.”

The PWPM garners about \$1.6 billion in

revenue with gate sales up about 5 percent in 2015. “It seems just yesterday we moved in though we’re celebrating our fifth year now,” says DiCrecchio. “We’re proud to pave the way

increased business.

T.M. Kovacevich (TMK) just added its ninth unit. “With this additional space, we now have capacity to put more than 125 trailer loads in-house,” says Tom Kovacevich, general manager. “Once in a while it dawns on me that our on-market capacity at the old market was less than 25 loads.”

M. Levin & Company, Inc. is adding more ripening capacity — enabling the company to grow into the future. “With a fourth generation in place [who happen to be all women], we look forward to continued growth,” says Mark Levin, chief executive. “The next generation is engaging new business and keeping us current on new products and food safety issues.”

## THE COLD FACTS

Merchants report increased customer satisfaction during the past five years due to the market’s cold chain benefits. “Customers want longer-lasting produce, and our technology means our packages last longer on the shelf,” says Abi-Khattar. “Retailers are reporting they’re getting better shelf life.”

Sangillo Farm Fresh Produce in Drexel Hill, PA, reports noticing significant cold chain benefits since the merchants moved to the new facility. “Product arrives in much better condition and has a longer shelf life since the move,” says Tom Sangillo, president and owner. “It looks fresher and lasts longer.”

Stephen Secamiglio, owner at Colonial Produce, remarks his customers feel more confident in buying at the PWPM facility with respect to shelf life “When product arrives here, it’s unloaded in 50 degrees and goes right in the cooler, regardless of the weather outside,” he adds.

Extreme temperatures drive customers to PWPM. “Customers know PWPM provides better shelf stability and this is never more relevant than when it’s 90 degrees or 20 degrees outside,” says Rick Feighery, vice president of sales for Procacci. “When there are temperature extremes, we see customers showing up from

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outside our normal geographic reach.”

Cold-chain confidence also results in greater consistency in buying volume. “At our old market, customers would buy less at certain times of year fearing the product would be affected by the heat,” reports John Durante, president of Nardella, Inc. “Now they buy the same regardless of weather.”

### EXPLOITING THE SPACE

PWPM’s highly accessible and spacious facility results in greater efficiency for customers. “Our location allows customers to easily get here, load and get out,” explains Todd Penza, salesman with Pinto.

The ease of loading and transport makes good buys even better. “One thing is buying the produce,” describes Durante. “Getting the product to the store is another. Time is money. The good deal the buyer got is offset if the driver has to wait several hours to get loaded and get out.”

John Vena, president of John Vena Inc., reports seeing an upturn in buyers from the New York area as well as buyers from as far south as Washington, D.C. “It may be because our facility is easier to get trucks in and out of than other markets as well as the cold chain benefits,” he speculates.

Ample space inside the market, all under



refrigeration, allows customers to effectively stage purchases before loading, and Coosemans’ Roth notes special benefit for those wanting to ship directly to multiple locations. “For

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example, a Chinese buyer purchased five skids of asparagus, but broke it down among four different trucks to deliver directly to the stores," he explains.

Customers staging product can do so under better conditions and with greater ease compared to open-air markets according to Vena. "In the old-style markets, the product

must be put into trucks right away because of cold chain considerations," he states. "In our facility, buyers have as much space and time to work as they want."

### EXPANDING OFFERINGS

Buyers report PWPM merchants are carrying more variety in response to market demands. "Twenty years ago, most wholesale merchants specialized in just a handful of things," says Al Kasharian, owner of Kash's Farm in Hackettstown, NJ, a small wholesale produce business and farm. "Now, you find just a about anything at the market, including many specialties."

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Elaine DiFelicianantonio – sales

## PHILADELPHIA MARKET PROFILE



Pinto Brothers, Inc. - Todd Penza, Fred Penza, Alex Penza, Michael Lombardo and David Carfagno



Procacci Brothers - Mike Maxwell, Joe Procacci and Rick Feighery

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Levin comments how serving a large mix of ethnic customers including Hispanic, Asian, Indian and African results in their carrying a more varied product line. Though Ryeco has always been full-line, the company continues to increase its product mix as well. "We recently upgraded our computer systems to accommodate more items," says Colace.

Vena reports growing interest in lesser-known tropical fruits such as lychee, longan and dragonfruit. "A combination of factors is contributing to the demand," he says. "An ethnic driver is no longer crucial to pull demand. Now with social media and television influence, people are looking for items they previously didn't know existed."

NAPCO now imports directly from Europe, Israel, and South America. "It's all about finding the best we can put in front of our customers and help them grow their business," states DiFelicianonio.

Specialized packaging is another growth area for PWPM companies, and Vena reports greater involvement in special packaging both for foodservice and retail. "We're doing business with newer segments of the industry, and they require very specialized products and presentations," he explains.

Procacci notes growth in its repacking business as well as other market segments. "We experience greater interest in private labeling," says Maxwell. "We also see more floral big-box business now in addition to smaller retailers. And, in tropicals, our Miami office enables us to stay well supplied and remain competitive even in short situations."

### HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY

While many customers still walk the market, others chose to communicate using technology. "The industry is adapting modern technology, and the drive for efficiency reduces face-to-face interaction," says Emily Kohlhas, marketing and business development for Vena. "It's our job to learn to communicate with them. This is an exciting opportunity to



Procacci Brothers Sales Corp./Garden State Farms - Bob Ziernicki, Paul Matthews, Sid Richardson and Dominic Leo



Paul Giordano & Sons, Inc. - Tyrik Winkfield, Paul Giordano Jr., Paul Giordano Sr., and Dwain Winkfield



translate a century of experience in produce to a modern, multimedia marketing program.”

Vena’s marketing efforts focus on sharing information about products, growers, and the specialty produce industry. “Our current initiatives focus primarily on social media, email and print with an emphasis on colorful, dynamic media,” says Kohlhas. “We are also teaming up with the nationally renowned nonprofit, The Food Trust, to create a series of resources aimed at helping small-scale retailers and corner-store owners learn to navigate the market, merchandise, and handle fresh produce as part of their Healthy Corner Store Initiative.”

Giordano points out the importance of investing in education and technology. “Food safety will be a crucial future aspect of our business,” he states. “With the evolution of different requirements, we will need to adapt and educate and technology plays a key role for this.”

Klinghoffer reports an increase in emailing and texting customers almost daily to help facilitate buying, and Pinto Brothers also communicates more via technology. North American uses Instagram to post new products every day. “We have quite a few followers and received good feedback from customers,” says DiFelicantonio.

TMK is using an online ordering system developed by the technical support system company, Orbis Solutions, Inc. “During this first phase, we are using the system internally to work out the kinks,” reports Kovacevich. “So

far it works well, and we enjoy the freedom offered by the mobility. Phase two will be to introduce online ordering to our customers.”

Ryeco is in the process of creating an online

photo library of its offerings along with online ordering. “Customers can call in or create orders off the Internet — whatever is better for them,” explains Colace. **pb**




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# Barbuzzo Mediterranean Kitchen & Bar

THIS CULINARY GEM EPITOMIZES THE TRENDY, YET AUTHENTIC, PHILLY RESTAURANT SCENE.

By Jodean Robbins

Stepping inside the crowded space of Barbuzzo transports one from the urban streets of Philly to a treasured neighborhood spot somewhere in the Mediterranean. The sleek, modern exterior belies the rustic, intimate interior of this bustling, cozy 60-seat restaurant.

“We wanted a casual neighborhood spot where people could come for a special occasion or to just sit at the bar and have a glass of wine with a cheese plate,” says chef and co-owner Marcie Turney.

The restaurant, opened in 2010 by Turney and business partner Valerie Safran, is centered on Mediterranean cuisine with particular emphasis on house-made pasta and Neapolitan-style, wood-fired pizza. It quickly became a coveted dining destination in the competitive Philly dining scene.

Barbuzzo patrons span various demographics but share a common enjoyment of food and friendship. “Our customers vary from young to mature in age,” says Turney. “We serve corporate lunchers, happy-hour-goers and those out for a good dinner.”

## RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

The inspiration for the dining concept began far from the halls of a culinary school. Turney studied at Temple University, and then went to institution’s Tyler School of Art with a major in graphic design. Safran studied at Pennsylvania’s Shippensburg University with an elementary education major. Both started working as servers to earn supplemental incomes while they were in school. One of Turney’s earliest serving gigs led her to realize she liked working in the kitchen, and she went on to attend The Restaurant School at Walnut Hill College in Philadelphia.

To say that Turney and Safran since devel-



Funghi Pizza



Mushroom Crostini



Shaved Asparagus and Speck Salad

PHOTOS BY JAMES NAROG

oped a small empire within a few Philadelphia blocks would be accurate — yet not truly reflective of their unique business ventures. They

own five restaurants on 13th Street between Chestnut and Locust Streets (a three block area): Barbuzzo, Little Nonna’s, Bud and Mari-

lyn's, Jamonera and Lolita — each establishment harboring all alternative atmosphere and food flair.

Beyond the restaurants, they also run a prepared foods shop, Grocery Market & Catering (an upscale market for gourmet staples and take-out) and Marcie Blaine Artisanal Chocolates (a chocolatier based in their lifestyle shop, Verde). They also own Open House, another lifestyle retail shop selling housewares and novelty kitchen gadgets.

Barbuzzo was formed after trips to Italy, Spain and San Francisco where they relished Mediterranean cuisine and wood-fired pizza.

"The Mediterranean rusticity and vegetable-heavy diet really appealed to me," relates Turney. "I knew it had to be our next venture."

## PRODUCE HEAVY

The menu at Barbuzzo is indeed vegetable-heavy, incorporating a produce element in 75 percent. "Produce is in every dish either as a supporting role to protein or many times the focus," reports Turney. "Fresh herbs are also a huge part of my cooking. For me, produce is a blank canvas for really interesting and strong ethnic flavors, which is how I really like to cook."

Barbuzzo's menu takes diners on a tour of delicate yet commanding flavors. For "Snacks" the restaurant features Mediterranean Olives with orange zest, Marcona almonds and Piri Piri chili. A Mushroom Crostone rests marinated white beans, garlic puree, pickled ramps and crispy pork cheek on seared country bread. The Spring Pea & Mushroom Arancini uses a mushroom escabeche, smoked garlic aioli and lemon.

Main "Plates" may focus on proteins, but the restaurant's incorporation of produce into everything gives each dish a fresh and unique flavor. The addictive Caciocavallo Stuffed Meatballs are made from a house-ground short rib and pork incorporating Sicilian oregano, calabrian chili and pickled pepper served in an exceptional fresh-made tomato sauce. Grass-fed Strip Steak comes on a bed of baby eggplant caponata with toasted pignoli, salsa verde and fennel. The Grilled Mediterranean Octopus unites Fingerling potatoes, Taggiasca olives, roasted peppers, herbs and lemon. A perfectly grilled Bronzino delights with a warm Fregola salad and herb puree with a preserved lemon tapenade and Lemon Confitura.

Barbuzzo prides itself on its house-made pasta. Pan-Seared Gnocchi incorporates Guanciale meat, smoked corn, heirloom cherry tomatoes, local mushrooms and truffle butter. Sage Ravioli stars roasted Lancaster Butternut

squash, celery root, Gorgonzola, and toasted pumpkin seeds.

Barbuzzo's Pizza menu offers a wide variety of options for gourmet pies you won't find in your corner pizza joint. Toppings include red Bartlett pears, arugula, pomegranate molasses, marinated ramps, pickled chilies, stinging nettles and charred leeks.

The restaurant's creativity with produce is evidenced in a vegan Pappardelle dish. "We shave zucchini thin to width similar in size to Pappardelle," describes Turney. "We then incorporate capers, blistered tomatoes, squash blossoms, garlic and pine nuts."

Desserts provide another opportunity for rich produce-derived flavors. The moist Ricotta Orange Pound Cake Bread Pudding is a light yet flavorful ending, uniquely pairing lavender-honey ice cream and candied mint.

The menu also offers a Blackberry-Bergamot Tea Sorbet, La Colombe Espresso Tiramisu and a Marcie Blaine Chocolate Tasting (a cross-promotion for the sister-store).

## FRESH AND CONSISTENT SOURCES

Barbuzzo sources the majority of its produce

from a broker who works with the Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market. It also sources from local farms and co-ops. The combined produce expenditure for all the restaurants of the group totals \$78,000 per month (with Barbuzzo's share at \$15,000).

Turney notes important sourcing criteria as freshness and consistency as well as the availability of unique items required for restaurants featuring particular cuisines.

"Sourcing (via our broker) from the Market and local farms provides consistency, large availability, and the capability to source hard-to-get Mexican and Spanish produce for Lolita and Jamonera, respectively," she says.

Turney also enjoys creating vegetable dishes with lesser-known vegetables. "For example, I use items such as wood-roasted fresh chickpeas, which can be eaten like edamame (out of the shell), seared cucumbers, smoked beets or ash-roasted celeriac," she says.

Barbuzzo's menu changes seasonally, and Turney takes advantage of unique finds. "Sometimes our broker will bring us a sample of something interesting such as Buddah's hand or finger limes, and I'll pair it with fresh fish for a Crudo special."

**pb**



PHOTOS BY JASON VARNEY

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# Sangillo's Farm Fresh Produce

THIS CORNER-STORE REVIVAL EPITOMIZES THE GROWING SUCCESS IN PHILLY OF THE SMALL-FORMAT RETAILER.

By Jodean Robbins

**T**he greater Philadelphia region boasts every type of retailer including: Trader Joe's, Whole Foods Market, Wal-Mart, Ahold and Supervalu chains; large independent, Redner's Market; creative store, Iovine Brothers; innovative C-store, Wawa; and the most recently aggressive retailer to make inroads is Aldi. Additionally, the area now witnesses a resurgence of the corner store.

"Neighborhood stores are growing and coming back," says John Durante, president of wholesaler Nardella, Inc. "Convenience is a big factor in today's culture, so we see a lot more corner stores popping up and handling more upscale items."

Independents occupy a key position in the Philly area and continue to increase in number and size. "Philly has many strong independents," says Mike Maxwell, president of Procacci Brothers Sales Corporation. "Many started as single stores, developing into 10 or more units. The second generation is a huge factor. Mom-and-Pops may have opened one store, but now the kids are taking it to another level."

Focused, independent retailers remain resilient in their niche. "These independents are not threatened by chain stores," observes Stephen Secamiglio, owner at Colonial Produce. "They service customers with quality and price and have more flexibility when reacting to market changes for customers. They are holding their own and growing in Philly."

## ORIGINS

Over the past 31 years, Sangillo's Farm Fresh Produce & Deli in Drexel Hill, PA, survived the rise of the big box stores and supermarket consolidation. Remaining relevant to its customer base, the independent market places emphasis on the aspects consumers appreciate about small-format stores.

"People who are pressed for time yet want good quality ingredients," says Tom



Sangillo, president and owner. "The need for convenience and smaller, more customized stores, the desire for health, and more produce consumption, as well as demand for specialty, gourmet and ethnic items all fit what we do."

The store started as and remains a family-

owned business. Sangillo and his brother Rich originally owned a tire shop at the store's current location. However, the advent of longer-lasting radial tires resulted in a drop in business.

"We began investigating other things we



could do with the store,” explains Sangillo. “After talking with friends in the produce business, we decided on produce. In 1985, we converted the tire store into a produce store.”

The store has grown to 18 employees, and Sangillo now manages the store with his wife, Pattie. He views flexibility as crucial to success. “We stay relevant by listening to our customers and paying attention to what’s moving,” he says. “Things will change, you can’t stop that, but you can adapt to what is changing.”

### UNDERSCORING FARM FRESH

Sangillo’s emphasizes the “farm fresh” aspect of the business. The building’s interior conveys a farm-market feel with wall murals as an homage to nostalgic times. The 4,500-square-foot building offers 3,150 square feet of retail selling space, and 60 percent is dedicated to produce. The rest of the space houses a full-service deli and merchandises specialty and Italian grocery items. The back area includes a walk-in produce cooler and delivery and prep area. Sangillo reports produce contributes about 50 percent to total store sales with the other 50 percent coming from the deli and specialty products.

Fitting with the farmers-market theme, the main sales area focuses around a large island display utilizing boxes and baskets to showcase colorful, fragrant fruit from citrus, to apples, to avocados. One side of the large room is lined with two displays of Italian grocery items, about 7-linear feet each. A vegetable rack boasting a wide assortment of mushrooms, peppers, tomatoes and lettuce runs the width of the room. Another smaller 6-foot linear display continues with salad mixes, asparagus and other specialty vegetables.

The store relies on displaying small quantity and restocking frequently. “It’s old-fashioned hard work,” describes Sangillo. “We are constantly culling and rotating to ensure the produce looks the best and fresh. We don’t want our customers coming in and picking up a damaged peach. We want them to have a great experience every time they shop.”

### A TAILORED MIX

Sangillo’s carries about 150 different produce items and changes the mix to serve its evolving customer base. “Though we originally started as an Italian market, we changed our product mix as our customer-base diversified,” explains Sangillo. “We once did tremendous volume in broccoli rabe. Now, we have yuca, jicama and avocados. Local statistics report there are 25 different languages spoken by students at our local high school. We see that



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The avocado display includes a few jars of the store-brand Guacamole Starter. The store carries about 150 different produce items and changes the mix to serve its evolving customer base.

diversity reflected in our shoppers as well.”

Given the space constraint of a small store, Sangillo constantly evaluates what sells and what doesn’t, shifting the product mix accordingly. The store varies the display layout with the changing seasons and availability. “Seasonal changes make produce interesting,” says Sangillo. “Changing the layout allows us to attract customer attention and keep our store exciting. We are always moving things around and looking for what we can draw out.”

The combination of diverse customer base and farm-market format means most promotion is done at point of sale, focusing on visual presentation, signage and cross-promotion. “Displays are built to communicate freshness and promote impulse buys,” says

Sangillo. “We feature signage for specials and build out displays for items we really want to promote.”

Sangillo’s sources almost 100 percent from the Philadelphia Produce Wholesale Market, buying through a broker. “She walks the market and tracks down the best deals on what we need,” says Sangillo. “She does a great job for us.”

The store purchases about \$350,000 a year from the market, averaging about 500 packages a week. Sangillo credits his success to the relationship with the store’s very first broker, Jules Schaller. “He was our mentor and tutor,” he says. “We didn’t know anything about produce! Every night I’d call him, and he’d guide us on what to buy.”

**pb**

# West Phillie Produce

A GRASS-ROOTS CONCEPT MAKES A HEALTHY MARK IN A FOOD DESERT AND BUILDS A SUSTAINABLE MODEL FOR OTHER UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES.

By Jodean Robbins

**W**est Phillie Produce may not look like the typical picture of an independent retailer — most commonly categorized these days with a hip atmosphere, artisanal selections and Millennial-filled customers. But it does embody what the future of produce could be for many communities across the country.

Owner Arnett Woodall is a man on a mission to build a community with healthy eating habits and to bring affordable fresh fruits and vegetables to inner city food deserts.

For seven years now, Woodall's tiny storefront has brought a variety of healthy produce options to an underserved community in West Philadelphia. Though small in purchasing power, the real power of Woodall's business comes from its use of produce as an agent of change. Produce is the vehicle Woodall is using to bring health, education, employment, entrepreneurship and hope to his community and beyond.

"The store was founded with the vision of combining grassroots-community development, cooperative economics and health," says Woodall. "Our goal is to use the small business as a neighborhood hub, offering access to fresh, healthy foods and educating the community."

The business model adopted by West Phillie is making headlines, and Woodall has received accolades, awards and press for his work at both local and national levels. The store demonstrates what communities can do to address food deserts.

"Fresh fruits and vegetables must become an easier and more common alternative for communities living in food deserts," declares Woodall. "We need more initiatives to help operations like ours; to support more of this type of business in underserved communities. Everybody needs to get involved to make things happen."



## FROM THE START

West Phillie's story begins with social roots. Upon leaving college in the early 1980s, Woodall took a position working with at-risk youth on the campus of Sleighton Farms School in Glen Mills, PA, coordinating its farming program.

"For years, I listened to the struggles of young people challenged by growing up poor in the city of Philadelphia," he says. "I taught them life skills and urban agriculture. Then when Sleighton Farms closed in 2001, I took my work in another direction, forming a landscaping business and contemplating ways I could go back to my neighborhood and make a contribution."

Impassioned to make a difference, Woodall struck out and invested his own money to turn that vacant lot into the now blossoming store. He describes his motivation as wanting to offer an alternative to drugs, to offer a healthy option people could become addicted to.

## PRODUCE AS A SOLUTION

Woodall views produce as a solution to many ailments in his community, from health to education to employment. "Fresh fruits and vegetables must be accessible and affordable to lower income communities," he emphasizes.

"We need to get people, especially kids, to eat produce instead of going to the convenience store and getting a bag of chips. If you had a store like ours on several corners of Philadelphia's underserved neighborhoods, can you imagine how many people you could reach?"

Utilizing produce as a cornerstone enables West Phillie's mission. "We want to encourage health, and produce is the best way to do that," says Woodall. "We're looking to change the way people in our community eat and address the issue of food deserts."

Woodall reports about 85 percent of store sales is attributed to produce in one form or another. The unassuming 900-square foot retail space packs a lot in a little area offering at least 40 to 50 different items at a time.

"Our big movers include bananas, romaine lettuce, spring mix, melons, pineapples and squash," says Woodall.

The store also effectively utilizes the sidewalk, where colorful displays of fresh products entice customers to look and linger. Inside, are three upright refrigerated cases bursting with attractively arranged produce items, salads, store-made sauces, juices and smoothies. Most other product is merchandised in small amounts on dry racks and replaced frequently throughout the day.



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## PHILADELPHIA RETAIL PROFILE

“Our displays ensure people know it’s fresh product and hasn’t been sitting in a huge display all day,” states Woodall. “We would like some new coolers, but we haven’t been able to get any funding to buy them yet.”

Woodall notes the store’s product mix is principally driven by affordability. “We like to carry organic and local, but our main criteria for sourcing and promotion revolves around health attributes and cost,” he explains. “We want to offer our customers the biggest bang for their buck when it comes to eating healthy. We buy organic and local when pricing permits but otherwise we buy conventional. Fresh produce is still the healthiest option, regardless.”

West Phillie aims for the community to relate to produce from seed to plate, thus the incorporation of a neighborhood garden next to the store and a kitchen inside the store.

“Our mission is to help customers connect to where produce really comes from and to understand what can be done with it,” explains Woodall. “In our kitchen, we prepare foods such as three bean kale salad, or chicken salad with fresh herbs, or other produce-based dishes.”

### A CRUCIAL LINK

Woodall credits support from his produce suppliers as crucial to West Phillie’s success. “Our suppliers enable us to offer what we need to our customers,” he says. “Our best suppliers help us find alternatives when prices fluctuate. They understand our business model is very unique.”

Currently, West Phillie sources almost all its product off the Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market. Woodall shops there two to three times per week moving about \$1,000 of produce per week.

“The important thing is the approachability of the vendors,” he notes. “It’s about their willingness to work with us and their ability to understand our business. As they help me build my business, it will keep me coming back.”

Woodall particularly highlights the tremendous support he receives from Procacci Brothers Corp. “We source a good percentage from Procacci, because they understand what we’re trying to do here and are always supportive,” he says. “They’ll point out what I can get a good deal on. These types of relationships are crucial to my success. It’s what allows me to get the deals I need to drive my business model.”

Procacci feels a reciprocal appreciation for West Phillie. “Arnett has taken a vision and a vacant lot and turned it into a destination for fresh produce in a West Philadelphia community that needs it,” says Frank Paone, Procacci director of marketing. “Our business is to help



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(L-R) Devante Gray and Arnett Woodall

facilitate consistent access to fresh produce for people, and for us to be able to work with independent businesses such as West Phillie Produce is very rewarding for our team.”

### FEEDING AND EDUCATING

Woodall sees customer education as a crucial component of what West Philly does. “To sell produce in these communities, you have to teach people how to eat healthy and how to use the product,” he states.

The store preps or prepares much of the produce it sells. “We have people in our community who can’t cook for themselves,” he explains. “Our customers include senior citizens, school kids or young people who don’t know how to cook fresh products. We help by prepping and/or cooking for them. For example, customers can come in, choose a sweet potato, and we’ll make sweet potato fries for them.”

A focus on health and wellness is a vital piece of how West Phillie serves its customers. The store makes and promotes a line of juices and smoothies, encouraging consumption as an alternative to soda or other sugary drinks. “We look for solutions for our customers regarding health attributes for specific conditions,” adds Woodall. “We incorporate a lot of turmeric and ginger root into our sauces and juices. All our juices and smoothies are based on some type of remedy, for example, high blood pressure, weight loss or inflammation.”

The store also offers a free Slice & Dice program for senior citizens. “They can purchase an item from our store, and we’ll cut it up for them, no charge,” says Woodall. “This helps many who are dealing with arthritis and can’t easily prepare their own fruits or veggies anymore.”

### COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTION

Despite the accolades and national attention, Woodall remains focused on serving his neighborhood. “This is a demographic

where money is tight,” he explains. “In some communities, such as this, the poverty rate can approach 28 percent. But our community is full of great people who want to do better for their health and the health of their loved ones. We want to empower them to do just that.”

The store relies on mostly word-of-mouth and visibility for promotion. “We are here and active in the community and people know it,” says Woodall. “We spend a lot of time talking to customers and residents and building a relationship with them. It’s an old-fashioned approach to business.”

West Phillie Produce actually operates as a hybrid, since the grocery store is linked to nonprofit, A&W Community Solutions. Woodall employs neighborhood youth at the store and teaches life skills as well as the basics of running a community-based grocery store.

“It’s important to include the youth,” he says. “We are creating future customers of healthy practices and contributing to more stable communities when we involve them in our food and our programs.”

Woodall’s outreach to kids includes the store’s “Eat Smart Be Smart” program (the store hosts a chess club, book club, garden club and healthy eating classes) as well as an “Honor Roll” program, offering a free fruit salad or smoothie to any kid in the city of Philadelphia who makes the honor roll.

“We also help organize small business workshops, healthy cooking classes and other community events,” says Woodall. “The second floor of the store serves as a community meeting space.”

In the future, Woodall aims to take the healthy message of produce into schools and recreational centers and challenges companies to join him. “I’m envisioning connecting with the kids, helping them get excited about produce and wanting to eat it,” he says. “We’re looking for partners to help us reach out through small stores and these other formats in our community.”

pb

COMPANY NAME	UNIT #	PHONE	FAX
A. Vassallo, Inc.	I-3	215-336-1984	215-336-7955
B.R.S. Produce	D-2 to D-4	215-336-5454	215-336-5220
Collotti & Sons	I-7 to I-8	215-389-3335	215-755-9616
Colonial Produce	B-7 to B-8	215-748-6650	215-336-2134
Coosemans Philadelphia	A-7 to A-9	215-334-3634	215-334-3636
E.W. Kean Co.	D-1, G-1 to G-2	215-336-2321	215-336-1596
G & G Produce, Inc.	F-7 to F-8	215-336-9922	215-336-9925
Hunter Bros, Inc.	H-8 to H-9	215-336-4343	215-336-4340
John Vena, Inc.	F-1 to F-6, F-9	215-336-0766	215-336-2812
Kaleck Brothers, Inc.	B-5	215-336-3027	215-551-1083
Klinghoffer Bros.	C-8 to C-9	215-336-3800	215-336-5234
M. Levin & Company, Inc.	H-2 to H-5	215-336-2900	215-755-6757
Nardella, Inc.	G-4 to G-6	215-336-1558	215-336-5757
Norm & Lou's Cafe	C-1	215-336-4848	215-271-2416
North American Produce Co.	I-1 to I-2	215-525-6444	855-278-5797
Paul Giordano & Sons, Inc.	D-7 to D-9	215-755-7900	215-755-7160
Pinto Brothers, Inc.	C-2, G-7 to G-9	215-336-3015	215-336-5422
Procacci Brothers Sales Corp. / Garden State Farms	I-4 to I-6	215-334-1400	215-339-0974
Produce Interchange	B-3	215-389-1782	215-389-0288
Ryeco, LLC	C-3 to C-7, D-5 to D-6	215-551-8883	215-551-9036
T. M. Kovacevich - Philadelphia, Inc.	A-1 to A-6, B-1 to B-2, I-9	215-463-0100	267-790-0442
USDA Inspection Service	C-2 (Rear)	215-336-0845	215-336-2051
Wick & Brother, Inc.	G-3	215-336-2252	215-336-2255





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# Nogales Deal Meets The Future Head-On

Changes in product mix, infrastructure and services continue to position the region's produce as a vital part of the U.S. marketplace.

BY JODEAN ROBBINS



**N**ogales, AZ, reigns as a powerhouse port for Mexican produce entering the U.S. According to USDA's Market News, the port of entry logged a total of 5.6 billion pounds of fresh produce during the 2014-15 season and industry forecasts continued future growth.

"The Nogales industry will remain vital to the U.S. market when it comes to fresh produce," says Paula Beemer, communications coordinator for the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas (FPAA) in Nogales.

Produce imports and exports via Nogales are substantial, and companies operating on the border envision a growing role. "Nogales continues to serve as a major port of entry for produce moving into both the U.S. and Mexico," says Sabrina

Hallman, president and chief executive for Sierra Seed Company, Nogales.

"An important takeaway is the fact that Nogales has been involved in fresh produce trade for over a century," says Sandra Aguilar, marketing and strategic planning for Rio Rico, AZ-based Ciruli Brothers. "The area is rich in culture, history and industry knowhow. Close proximity to the border in a recently renovated port of entry has only enabled Nogales shippers to be more efficient, allowing inbound loads to be expedited quicker, and consequently, making fresher arrivals to customers' doors and consumers' plates."

Paul Guy, owner of PDG Produce, notes the importance of Nogales as a hub. "I see Nogales' role in produce increasing," he says. "There are so many different areas in Mexico growing, and Nogales is an easy, convenient consolidation point for many

of the areas and items."

Mike Smith, president and chief executive of Sigma Sales in Nogales, credits the experience of the city's produce industry to the success of the Nogales deal.

"Nogales is a complex deal in a lot of ways," he explains. "It is many deals within the deal incorporating multiple growing regions and multiple growing types including hothouse, open-field and now organic. It takes someone who has been around for a while to really understand it and translate it for the customer."

Beemer notes how individual and combined experience in the Nogales industry leads to trust, quality, efficiency and competitiveness.

"Buyers can rely on members for their knowledge and commitment to provide products that meet the high standards of food safety and match the consumers'



PHOTO COURTESY OF FRESH PRODUCE ASSOCIATION OF THE AMERICAS





PHOTO COURTESY OF CIRULI BROTHERS

demands,” she explains.

Companies such as Omega Produce Corporation in Rio Rico, AZ, in business since 1951, epitomize the Nogales industry.

“Our customers know they can count on us, because we’ve been here for so long,” says Celida Gotsis Fujiwara, Omega’s president. “We are ready to serve buyers and ensure we meet their requirements now and in the future. Transitions are not easy, but we will meet future changes head-on. We have the potential and heart to move forward with success.”

Malena Produce Inc. in Rio Rico, AZ, expanded its program across the board. “Eggplant is now a year-round item for us out of three different shipping locations in Mexico,” reports Peter Hayes, vice president sales and marketing. “We’ve also increased our volumes of Italian squash, yellow straightneck, colored and green bell peppers, slicer and euro cucumbers and tomatoes — both Roma and round.”

John McDaniel, sales and operations director for L&M in Nogales, AZ, envisions Nogales will continue to play a very important role in the industry.

“This is due to the great volume crossing through the Nogales border and logistic opportunities available here,” he explains. “Some of the benefits the Nogales industry offers include consistency, quality and variety of produce and infrastructure for logistics.”

Nogales’ close proximity to Mexico presents an added advantage according to



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### Start in Spring (late March through the Fourth of July)

Springtime is a budding opportunity with a wealth of products to satisfy customer demand after a long winter. The Grower Alliance portfolio at this time includes:

**watermelons, mini watermelons, honeydews, cucumbers, Italian/grey/yellow straightneck squash, green bell peppers, cucumbers and hot peppers.**

### Summer Movement (late July – September)

Moving from Spring to Summer is easy with Grower Alliance. An innovative partnership with protected ag growers allows the company to offer a mixture of greenhouse-grown **beefsteak tomatoes, Roma tomatoes and bell peppers**. These items are available through McAllen during the summer.

### A Thriving Fall (late September – November)

Grower Alliance’s Fall portfolio helps renovate consumer interest in produce for a new season and includes:

**watermelons, mini watermelons, honeydews, cucumbers, Italian/grey/yellow straightneck squash, and hot peppers through Nogales** starting in late September.

Come mid-November, the Winter products expand to include:

**watermelons, mini watermelons, honeydews, cucumbers, Italian/grey/yellow straightneck squash, green beans, euro cucumbers, eggplant, and green bell peppers.**

### Winter Wonders (December – March)

The sunny growers allied with Grower Alliance continue to serve customers throughout the winter months. Winter items include:

**watermelons, mini watermelons, honeydews, cucumbers, Italian/grey/yellow straightneck squash, green beans, euro cucumbers, eggplant, and green bell peppers.**

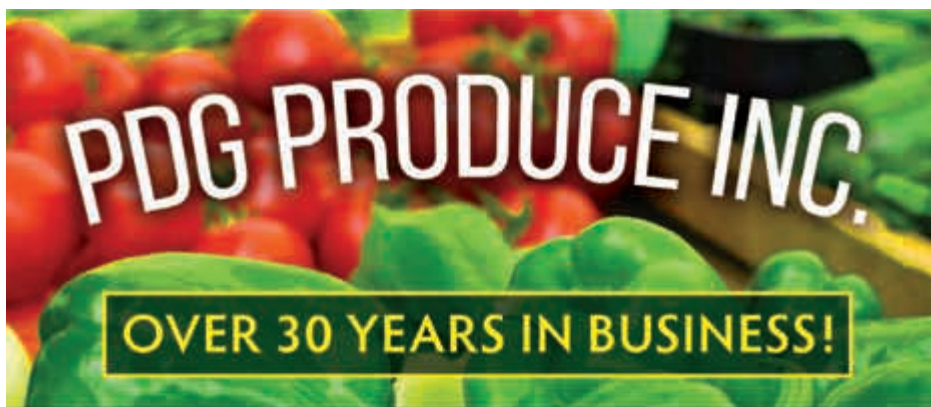
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The company provides support to its growers and customers - helping expand operations and investing in communities. To better serve customers Grower Alliance ships from both Nogales, AZ, and McAllen, TX, depending on the season. The company also offers consolidation services for companies outside of Nogales that want to load in one location as opposed to picking up in different warehouses. Grower Alliance’s success is rooted in its philosophy that this business is really about the people who grow and market the products.

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 mike@pdgproduce.com  
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PHOTOS COURTESY OF CIRULI BROTHERS

Hallman. “Having our growers just across the border in Sonora provides hands-on opportunities for us to literally walk the fields, see the product and still be home in time for supper,” she says. “In addition, the shared border community of Nogales transcends the ‘border’ issues found in so many other areas.”

Though Nogales has a solid foundation, Beemer asserts companies in Nogales are not content to stay the same year to year. “They are always looking to innovate and bring new successes to the market,” she says. “Nogales has innovative marketers as well as simple F.O.B. sellers. There is something for every buyer in Nogales.”

**EXPANDING VARIETY**

Beemer notes a combination of elements contribute to the continued rise of Nogales — one of which is increasing produce consumption. “Higher demand for fresh produce in the U.S. affects our trade,” she explains. “It is reasonable to think this comes with today’s better understanding of how food consumption impacts our health. Starting at an early age, children now learn about it with initiatives such as First Lady Michelle Obama’s educational program ‘Let’s Move’ that promotes a healthy and nutritional diet that includes the whole array of fresh produce.”

One crucial result of continued demand is the increasing variety of products moving through Nogales. *The Nogales*



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**“From a product mix perspective, we are seeing a trend toward more tropical items and citrus.”** – Paula Beemer, FPAA

*Produce Import Report 2014-2015* put out by the FPAA states approximately two thirds of the total imported volume of Mexican produce imported through Nogales is fresh vegetables, and one-third is fresh fruit. The USDA-FAS recognizes more than 50 items currently crossing from Mexico include more traditional items such as tomatoes all the way to jicama and other specialties.

The industry reports seeing a diversification of items into wet vegetable and specialties. “From a product mix perspective, we are seeing a trend toward more tropical items and citrus,” says Beemer. “This is very small compared to vegetables, such as cucumbers and bell peppers, but it represents an important new category segment. At the same time, we are starting to see lettuce, broccoli, carrots and onions through Nogales. Five years ago, this [produce selection] would have



PHOTO COURTESY OF CIRULI BROTHERS

been an anomaly. More than anything, Nogales is becoming more of a one-stop-shop for buyers.”

Hallman observes growth among

unique vegetable products. “The eggplant market is growing as well, and we are seeing an increase in Brussels sprouts,” she adds.

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## For many Nogales companies, significantly increasing volumes in key categories presents major opportunity.



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IPR Fresh in Rio Rico, AZ, will continue to increase its colored bell pepper program in both conventional and organic. “We will also start our second season of

offering European cucumbers and slicer cucumbers,” says Jose Luis Obregon, president of IPR. “Both peppers and cucumbers will be packed under the Fresh



Republic label.”

“We are expanding and preparing for increased volume in bell peppers, hot peppers, tomatillos, watermelon, summer and winter squash between Sonora, Sinaloa, Morelos and Zacatecas,” says Ciruli’s Aguilar.

“We are also adding commodities to our product mix that we have not typically grown, such as cabbage and onion. I expect we will continue to reassess and fine-tune our product line depending on our customers’ needs,” she adds.

### INCREASING VOLUME AND SEASONS

For many Nogales companies, significantly increasing volumes in key categories presents major opportunity. “Particularly the grape deal has become huge,” states Smith. “When I first started buying grapes, we were a little tiny deal. Now we’re 18 to million packages a year and growing.”

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Omega reports trying to export more avocados as well as handling more greenhouse and organic produce. “Companies are expanding business not only with what we grow but also with other products,” says Gotsis Fujiwara. “For example, I’m going to Yuma to meet with new growers there. I’m looking for new products to expand our line and have more volume. We are expanding our organic offering, because Japan is interested in organic.”

Organic products present expanding opportunity for Mexico and Nogales. “The organic category is getting bigger,”



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IN MEMORIAM

# GEORGE GOTSIS

JANUARY 29, 1926 - OCTOBER 31, 2015



**V**eteran and legend of the Nogales produce industry, George Gotsis helped lay the groundwork for a business model in West Mexico and Nogales, AZ, that now supplies millions of U.S. households with produce. Recognized as a trendsetter and innovator, he was one of the first to build in the Rio Rico Industrial Park as well as import mangos and Mexican table grapes into the U.S.

Gotsis' journey to become a Nogales leader began with an immigrant Greek father via Ellis Island. "My dad came from Greece to the U.S. in 1914," Gotsis shared in a local Nogales press interview in 2007. "After serving time in World War I, he communicated with cousins in Los Angeles who had a produce house called Farmer's Produce. They asked him if he wanted to go to Mexico. He replied, "Where's Mexico?"

Gotsis' father landed in Nogales working the produce deal until 1922, when he married and moved to Culiacan, Mexico. Gotsis was born in 1926 and lived in Mexico during his early childhood, but security issues eventually moved the family to Nogales. During high school, Gotsis began working with tomato distributor R.T. Fleischer and Co. Upon graduation in 1944, Gotsis enlisted in the Navy. He returned to Nogales in 1946, and though he had been offered a

full scholarship to the University of Arizona, he chose to help his father's business during a crucial time.

"My dad had a bad year of freezes," he explained in the 2007 press interview. "I told him I would stay and help him. At that time, he had 50 hectares of tomatoes in Culiacan, a bobtail, a pick-up, a tractor, and a bunch of wooden benches for packing."

Gotsis stayed in Culiacan farming tomatoes for five years, and then returned to Nogales in 1951, joining his sister Emilia at her newly founded Omega Produce company. In the early 1950s, Gotsis built Omega's first warehouse in Nogales. In the late 1960s, he built another in the Rio Rico Industrial Park (only the second in the Park). Through the years, he and Emilia developed Omega into one of Nogales' most influential and largest produce distributors.

In 1951, Gotsis married Celida Rico, in Culiacan, and they had six children (five sons and one daughter): Celida Gotsis Fujiwara, George Gotsis, Marcos Gotsis, Nick Gotsis, and Robert Gotsis. He was preceded in death by his son Jimmy. He left behind 16 grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren.

Gotsis was a humble supporter of many philanthropic endeavors including the Santa Cruz training programs, the Boys and Girls Clubs, and the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas.

**“This one-stop shopping is becoming more popular.”**

— Jose Luis Obregon, IPR

says Smith. “It is growing as demand is growing, and Mexico does an excellent job with organic.”

The seasons for Nogales product also continue to evolve. FPAA reports now seeing a big April to June second peak after the traditional January to March peak. “The seasons continue to start a week or so earlier every year, and we are stretching later as well,” adds Beemer. “There are more opportunities to take advantage of earlier market windows in October than in June, when many U.S. produce deals are gearing up.”

Hallman notices seasons growing longer and longer as access throughout Mexico continues to grow. “The highways and ports south of the border are modern and efficient in the movement of goods,” she explains.

The increase in product from Sonora is cited by Smith as another crucial aspect for Nogales’ future. “Sonora is growing a lot more vegetables, and it is expanding season-wise with hothouse and shade-house operations,” he says. “Sonora product will continue to come through Nogales exclusively, because geographically, it doesn’t make sense for it to enter anywhere else.”

#### GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Not satisfied to rest on laurels, Nogales companies continue to innovate in the areas of services offered to customers. “All of our companies work to improve services be it in the variety of goods offered, transportation services or government relations — both nationally and internationally,” says Hallman.

To better serve customers through improved space, PDG added 20,000 square feet to its warehouse capability. “We now have 73,000 square feet of warehouse space,” says Guy. “It better enables us to consolidate product for our customers.”

The ability to consolidate is becoming an ever more demanded requirement from buyers. “The buyer doesn’t have to make six phone calls or send a truck to six different warehouses,” says Guy. “Consolidating saves time and money.”

IPR plans to continue increasing its consolidation services. “Providing loads carrying a full mix of products out of Nogales rather than a straight load of only one product optimizes the buyers’ time as well as transportation,” says Obregon.

“This one-stop shopping is becoming more popular.”

The rise in construction improvements bodes well for the evolving deal as Smith points out how such improvements relate to the ability to maintain proper tempera-

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ture. "It's important to have a facility with temperature flexibility to handle different products," he points out. "Nogales started as a tomato deal, but now the wider range of product demands variable temperature capacity. At our facility, we have 50,000 square feet with four different coolers, so we can handle a variety of products."

Companies also look to offer specialized marketing programs. "Shippers continue to diversify their marketing mix," says Beemer. "For example, they look at the

role of delivered contract pricing within their marketing and sales presence."

L&M maintains the success of one of its niche programs. "For about three seasons, L&M has been servicing the mature green tomato industry, and every year we have more customers," says McDaniel. "They have been very satisfied with our services."

The online arena is another area for Nogales companies to differentiate themselves. This past April, PDG launched a new website. "Our website helps our




PHOTO COURTESY OF CIRULI BROTHERS

customers understand what we can do," explains PDG's Guy. "We are looking toward the future and seeing how we can better fit the needs of our customers online as well as in the physical world."

### PARTNERING FOR THE GREATER GOOD

The Nogales industry takes food safety very seriously and reports it has been working hard for years to ensure compliance with upcoming food safety standards. "Everybody has a great responsibility when providing food for the public; but even more so, we as importers almost have an added responsibility," claims Smith. "It's a privilege to be able to do what we do and supply this product from Mexico to U.S. and Canadian consumers. But with that privilege comes great responsibility to be sure everything is done properly. Individual companies, and the industry as a whole, have been ramping up for more stringent food safety regulations for awhile, and we're ready."

The pending implementation of the Food Safety and Modernization Act (FSMA) has been a topic of concern for several years now, according to Hallman. "Safety practices and policies were generated and put into place at all of our compa-




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...and much more (including our famous eggplant, now year-round) With operations in Mexico, Nogales and McAllen, we're your one-stop resource for top-level freshness, quality and service.





# MALENA

Produce, Inc.

*Experts in eggplant, and much more...*

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or call our sales team today at 520-281-1533**





nies,” she states. “Labeling, traceability, and open transparency have become a way of life — not only in our warehouse on this side of the border but throughout the fields and packing sheds of our partners to the south. Response-time issues are critical, and rapid deployment strategies are in place should a food safety issue become a concern. We truly work together to assist in the isolation and rapid containment of any issue that may arise.”

McDaniel agrees the industry has been ready for FSMA for a long period of time. “There have been many investments in farms and buildings in both Mexico and Nogales, AZ,” he says.

Obregon affirms the FPAA has been proactive in providing Nogales companies with information seminars and workshops regarding FSMA, helping them improve their methods to guarantee safety and quality in their products.

FPAA reports continuing to offer workshops, seminars and webinars to help its members maintain compliance with all new regulations. “There are some aspects of FSMA that are very specific to importers, and this is where FPAA will show its value as a trade association,” says Beemer. “We will be rolling out these seminars later this year.”

Omega emphasizes its commitment to sending employees to take classes on certification. “There is a movement of trying to improve everything — even though we’re already doing well,” says Gotsis Fujiwara. “This includes everyone from our office staff, to the foreman, to those who work in the warehouse. We are always looking toward the future and aiming to do things even better.”

Continued efforts to facilitate legal commercial trade conditions between

Mexico and Arizona hold even greater promise for Nogales business in the future. “There is great interest and government support to invest in road infrastructure and inspection efficiencies,” explains Beemer.

Gotsis Fujiwara sees more efforts to share information. “We see greater cooperation between government and industry to discuss how we can improve movement of trucks,” she points out. “The Sonoran government is emphasizing greater educa-



**Growing, Packing and Shipping:**

Zucchini, Yellow Straight Neck and Grey Squash. American Slicers and English Cucumbers, Fresh Pickles, Green Bell Peppers, Red Peppers, Butternut, Acorn, Spaghetti and Kabocha Squash, Green Beans, Eggplant, Roma Tomatoes, Organics, Watermelon, Mini Melons, Persian Limes and Table Grapes.

**CONTACT:**

**Jerry Havel** *Director of Sales and Marketing*  
**Marco Serrano, Alan Voll, and Robert Hernandez** *Sales*  
**Juan Pablo Molina** *General Manager*

**Sales 520 377 0878**  
**[jhavel@freshfarms.com.mx](mailto:jhavel@freshfarms.com.mx)**  
**Nogales, Arizona**





Cucumbers from a Ciruli Brothers' grower in Culiacan, Sinaloa.

**“We’ve had long-term relationships with most of our growers and we constantly have a steady flow of communication back and forth.”** — Peter Hayes, Malena Produce

tion and collaboration with the Nogales community. They are sending representatives from the growing areas to get to know the importers better and discuss needs and windows of opportunity.”

“We’ve had long-term relationships with most of our growers and we constantly have a steady flow of communication back and forth,” says Malena’s

Hayes. “We discuss what customers are looking for and expecting or we’re working on different types of cartons or packaging to make things easier for the grower and to meet customer needs. And, our customers also educate us on such things as new varieties coming on or how we can get better pack-out or prolong shelf life.”

As the deal moves forward, the Nogales

produce industry is positioned to persist in its vital role. “Our industry through the FPAA will continue to advocate for the importation of Mexican fresh fruit and vegetables into the U.S.,” says IPR’s Obregon. “FPAA provides support for its member companies in various aspects of the business, including education, sustainability and infrastructure.” **pb**

## ENHANCING MOVEMENT

Outstanding improvements in the supply chain in Mexico and on the border are another contributing factor according to Paula Beemer, communications coordinator for the Fresh Produce Association of the Americas (FPAA) in Nogales.

“This includes better technology, food safety, social responsibility, infrastructure and the fact that today agriculture in Mexico is providing more resources to Mexico than oil or tourism, according to a statement made by Mexico’s Secretary of Agriculture José Calzada,” she notes.

Infrastructure in Nogales, AZ, received significant impetus as well. In 2014, the Mariposa Port of Entry underwent substantial reconstruction, increasing the U.S. capability to process commercial trucking with a

potential reach of 4,000 trucks a day. The SR189 [highway expansion] was allocated \$25 million in the state budget and the project applied for a \$25 million TIGER grant as well, according to FPAA.

(The Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery grant program provides opportunity for the U.S. Department of Transportation to invest in road, rail, transit and port projects that promise to achieve national objectives.)

“The crossing of goods has become more efficient,” states Beemer.

Oregon has seen the new port facilities expediting the importation of produce by reducing crossing times, and Hallman notes easy access to interstates, rail and air allows rapid and on-time delivery to all points of service. “Now that the Mariposa port has

been expanded, the improvements to SR189 will enhance truck travel in accessing the interstates,” she explains.

Additionally, initiatives to improve Interstate 11 are progressing. “This highway will connect the growing regions of Mexico to the U.S., across our country and up to the Canadian Border,” says Sabrina Hallman, president and chief executive for Sierra Seed Company, Nogales.

Beemer reports the designation of Interstate 11, considered Arizona’s Key Commerce Corridors transportation plan, will connect the state to regional and international markets.

“It will make the distribution of goods from Nogales to the rest of the West Coast efficient and more cost effective,” she says. **pb**



OCTOBER 14-16, 2016 - ORANGE COUNTY CONVENTION CENTER - ORLANDO, FL

producebusiness

**AISLE** *by* **AISLE**

**BOOTH** *pma* **REVIEW**  
FRESH SUMMIT  
CONVENTION + EXPO



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**LGS SPECIALTY SALES**



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## PMA FRESH SUMMIT AISLE BY AISLE BOOTH REVIEW

AISLE 100

### BOOTH #122 PALINTEST

Erlanger, KY

Palintest's new on-site sensor test kits, ChloroSense and Chlordioxense, offer simplicity and optimal accuracy for chlorine and chlorine dioxide testing. Unique technology not affected by color or turbidity, uses no glass, and stores up to 500 test results! Visit us to receive a 10 percent off promo code.



### BOOTH #143 DEVILLE TECHNOLOGIES USA LLC

Kenosha, WI

We are proud to present the FAM Tridis 240 a new generation of 3D dicers! This innovative dicer delivers up to 40 percent more capacity compared to conventional high-capacity dicers. Drop by Deville Technologies to find out more about the Tridis Set & Forget technology!



### BOOTH #153 HONEY BEAR TREE FRUIT CO.

Wenatchee, WA

Honey Bear Tree Fruit Company is offering a commercial crop of Washington Smitten for the second year in a row! Come and see the latest apples and POS material, and stay for a bite. "Once bitten, forever smitten."



### BOOTH #162 SCHMIEDING PRODUCE

Springdale, AR

Stop by the Schmieding Produce booth to see the new innovation for 2016-2017 including the revolutionary 100-calorie "SKINNY" potato. Learn about our new convenience packages and our expanded sweet corn, watermelon and pumpkin programs as well as our "Meet the Grower" packaging and many other consumer driven programs.



AISLE 200

### BOOTH #217 TRULY GOOD FOODS

Charlotte, NC

Truly Good Foods specializes in the production of premium snack mixes, nuts/seeds, dried fruits and offer bulk/package candies, spices and unique holiday gift items. Packaging concepts focus on freshness and convenience. Featured brands include My Salad Bar toppings, Yorks Harvest Garden Chips, and Dip & Devour dipping products.



### BOOTH #220 PRODUCEPAY

Los Angeles, CA

ProducePay is helping farmers feed the world by solving an industry-wide shortage in working capital. We make payment advances to farmers the day after they ship their produce and match buyers and sellers of fresh produce around the world.



### BOOTH #243 BORTON & SONS, INC.

Yakima, WA

Borton & Sons, Inc., established in 1912, is a fourth generation premier Washington State grower, packer and shipper of premium quality apples, pears and cherries.



### BOOTH #272 HOUELING'S TOMATOES

Camarillo, CA

Houweling's Tomatoes is a greenhouse grower with farms in Camarillo, CA; Delta, BC; and Mona, UT. Houweling's grows fresh, flavorful, locally grown tomatoes, cucumbers & peppers year-round, and is committed to utilizing industry leading sustainable growing practices.



AISLE 300

### BOOTH #331 WESTMORELAND-TOPLINE FARMS

Leamington, Ontario, Canada

Westmoreland-TopLine Farms is home for all your staple and specialty produce needs and now home for your organic grape and organic cluster tomatoes too. Growers, Packers, Shippers, we service your needs 365 days a year. TopLine Fresh, TopLine Flavor, TopLine Farms.



### BOOTH #357 NAVITAS NATURALS

Navato, CA

Introducing Superfood+ Snack Bars: four bars in four delicious flavors. Cacao Cranberry, Maca Maple, Goji Acai and Hemp Peanut. Wholesome nutrition from ancient superfoods, meets modern convenience in one deliciously designed snack bar. Each bar is crafted in small batches, using only certified organic, plant-based and minimally processed ingredients.



### BOOTH #363 CRAVO

Brantford, Ontario, Canada

Cravo joined with Marks & Spencer/Total Worldfresh to evaluate the potential of Retractable Roof Production System as part of their sustainable food supply of the future. Visit Cravo to learn more about RRPS for berries.



AISLE 400

### BOOTH #400 RED SUN FARMS

Kingsville, ON

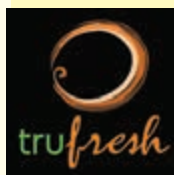
Red Sun Farms vertically integrated greenhouse growing provides you with high quality greenhouse perfection all year long. Stop by our booth to see our Monarch Pearls grape tomatoes and our organic lineup!



### BOOTH #408 TRUFRESH

Nogales, AZ

Trufresh is one of Mexico's premier growers started by the Zaragoza and Llano families. As first-time exhibitors at PMA, the company will discuss state-of-the-art growing/food safety protocols for you to make the right choice in tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, and more.



### BOOTH #418 GENERAL MILLS CONVENIENCE & FOODSERVICE

Minneapolis, MN

Minimize labor time and product waste when making on-trend yogurt parfaits! Making parfaits with ParfaitPro takes half the time as with 32-ounce tubs. Clean up in no time. No utensils to wash. Simply dispose of the bag. Easy-to-squeeze pouch. Visit our booth for more information!



### BOOTH #435 INLINE PLASTICS CORP.

Shelton, CT

These new Safe-T-Fresh Tamper Evident 4X4 square containers are built to outperform anything like it in the market. Processors, C-Stores, and Supermarkets all love these leak resistant crystal-clear products that make their fresh-cut and dried produce stand out in the crowd!



### BOOTH #443 LITEHOUSE

Sandpoint, ID

Litehouse innovations continue with on trend items: New! Guacamole Herb Blend; OPA by Litehouse Pourable Greek Yogurt Dressing; Sweet heat vinaigrettes and varietal apple cider! Stop by our booth for a taste!



New!



# Grill It, Sear It or Chop It!

Introducing DOLE® Chef's Choice Salad Kits,  
an exciting addition to your Romaine Heart or Value-Added Salad Section



Great  
upsell from  
Romaine  
Hearts and  
Caesar Salad  
Kit



**MUST WASH  
BEFORE USE**  
PERISHABLE - KEEP REFRIGERATED

DOLE® Chef's Choice is a new line of salad kits for salad lovers who enjoy preparing fresh head lettuce but want the convenience of a kit. Each kit contains two heads of mini Romaine, flavorful toppings, plus Dole's Signature dressing. The bag has step-by-step instructions to create the perfect grilled, seared, or chopped salad that serves four people. With DOLE® Chef's Choice Salad Kits, it's never been easier to prepare a restaurant-style salad in minutes.

To add the **NEW DOLE® Chef's Choice Salad Kits** to your stores, contact your sales representative.  
See how simple it is to prepare at [www.youtube.com/user/DoleTube](http://www.youtube.com/user/DoleTube)

**MERCHANDISE IN A REFRIGERATED LOCATION**

Must be refrigerated due to inclusion of cheese and dressing.

DOLE AND RELATED MARKS ARE TRADEMARKS OF DOLE FOOD COMPANY, INC.

October 14-16, 2016  
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## PMA FRESH SUMMIT AISLE BY AISLE BOOTH REVIEW

### BOOTH #449 PURE FLAVOR

Leamington, Ontario, Canada  
Get a real taste of Pure Flavor this October with fresh, innovative produce, a young and vibrant team excited to connect with you over organics, hydroponics and greenhouse growing. Head to our booth and learn about and taste Pure Flavor's most innovative and exciting products to date! Come out and taste the difference for yourself.



### BOOTH #483 T.R. TURONI SRL Forlì, FC, Italy

T.R. Turoni srl offers a complete range of post-harvest scientific instruments such as non destructive fruit ripeness testers, fruit durometers and penetrometers, fruit sizers, etc.



AISLE 500

### BOOTH #501 ZESPRI KIWIFRUIT Newport Beach, CA

Want to learn about the new fruit taking the world by storm? Visit our booth to cut, scoop and enjoy the tropical-sweet taste of Zespri SunGold Kiwifruit.



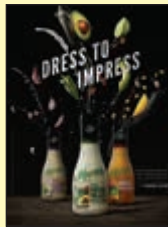
### BOOTH #532 RED SUN LUCI Chico, CA



Visit Bella Sun Luci, the only original brand of California sun dried tomatoes packed in 100 percent olive oil.

### BOOTH #573 MARIE'S Brea, CA

At Marie's, we're always in the kitchen crafting new dressings and recipes, so your customers can dress up lunches, snacks and dinners. Made with real premium ingredients, homemade flavor, freshness, quality, variety. Discover the Marie's difference for yourself.



AISLE 600

### BOOTH #617 POLYMER LOGISTICS Riverside, CA

Polymer Logistics extensive range of returnable transport, storage and display products includes collapsible bins, folding, nesting and stackable crates, together with reusable dollies and pallets. Polymer Logistics' most recent innovation is the wood grain RPC, which brings an upscale look to stores and drives sales and shopper engagement.



### BOOTH #634 GREAT LAKES INTERNATIONAL TRADING, INC Traverse City, MI

Great Lakes International Trading has been specializing in premium quality dried fruits, nuts, and edible seeds for over 30 years. Stop by our booth to see some of what we can offer you!



### BOOTH #642 OCEAN MIST FARMS Castroville, CA

Ocean Mist Farms, a fourth-generation, family-owned business and the largest grower of fresh artichokes in North America, is committed to delivering the highest standards in the industry for food safety, product quality, customer service, innovation and sustainability. The company's full line of 30 fresh vegetables includes the award-winning Season & Steam and Ocean Mist Organic product lines.



### BOOTH #634 BOOTH #661 TOMRA SORTING SOLUTIONS

Sacramento, CA

TOMRA Sorting has become the preferred supplier of sorting solutions for a wide range of fresh market applications such as potatoes, peppers, berries, onions, lettuce, citrus, pickles and more. TOMRA will showcase the Sentinel II, offering unrivaled efficiency, capacity, technical specification and durability.



AISLE 700

### BOOTH #725 PAKSENSE Boise, ID

PakSense is your partner for comprehensive cold chain monitoring under one umbrella. We help retailers, suppliers, growers, shippers and exporters ensure the freshest and safest perishables reach consumers.



### BOOTH #731 THE IDAHO POTATO COMMISSION Eagle, ID

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



### BOOTH #763 KEYSTONE FRUIT MARKETING, INC. Greencastle, PA

Keystone Fruit Marketing, Inc. is a grower, packer, shipper, and marketer. We are a family of professionals that thrives on working with our growers, and we dedicate ourselves to meeting the needs of our retail, wholesale, and food service customers.



### BOOTH #778 HARVEST SENSATIONS Los Angeles, CA

Harvest Sensations is an industry leader in fresh produce innovation. The famous Harvest Sensations brand stands for premium quality, great tasting core conventionally grown products, amazing organically grown products, specialties and herbs from around the world, and services from our state-of-the-art facilities in Los Angeles, CA and Miami, FL.



### BOOTH #783 CRISPY GREEN Fairfield, NJ

Crispy Green, makers of freeze-dried Crispy Fruit snacks, is excited to showcase their new stand-up gusset "Fruit-to-Go" bags made for easier merchandising. Stop by our booth and check them out, along with their new FREE produce racks! While you're there, sample their seven Non-GMO Project Verified freeze-dried fruit crisps!



AISLE 800

### BOOTH #801 POTANDON PRODUCE Idaho Falls, ID

America's leading marketer of fresh potatoes and onions. Potandon Produce can provide complete category solutions for retail, wholesale, and foodservice.



### BOOTH #843 T. MARZETTI COMPANY Columbus, OH

T. Marzetti Company is a leading manufacturer of refrigerated salad dressings, dips, and croutons, including the very successful Marzetti Simply Dressed line of dressings. See what's new for this year!



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## PMA FRESH SUMMIT AISLE BY AISLE BOOTH REVIEW

**BOOTH #853**  
**HBF INTERNATIONAL**  
Mcminnville, OR

HBF International sells a wide variety of the freshest specialty berries under the Hurst's Berry Farm brand. From blueberries, blackberries and kiwi-berries to red currants and cranberries, HBF offers premium berries all-year-round with our continued commitment of leadership, loyalty and excellence in berries from farm to market.



**BOOTH #889**  
**LACERTA**  
**GROUP, INC.**  
Mansfield, MA

Specializing in custom packaging for the produce market, Lacerta excels in providing their customers with speed to market, low capital investments and innovative solutions. Along with custom packaging, Lacerta carries a variety of stock food products including Fresh n' Sealed tamper evident containers, herb clamshells, parfait cups, snack packs and more!



**BOOTH #961**  
**SUN BELLE INC.**  
Schiller Park, IL

Celebrating our 30th anniversary, we continue our efforts as the largest blackberry shippers in the world and a leading shipper of blueberries, raspberries, golden berries, Jamaican papayas, red currants and cranberries for customers throughout the world.



**BOOTH #1029**  
**BAJASON GROWERS**  
Spreckels, CA



BajaSon Growers is a third-generation, family-owned and operated grower/harvester/shipper of premium quality California and Mexico asparagus. We bring you grower-direct, premium-quality, year-round supplies. Learn why we are the only asparagus green onion shipper you need!

**BOOTH #1029**  
**CHURCH BROTHERS, LLC**  
Salinas, CA

Visit Church Brothers Farms' booth to view our full line of commodity and value-added products as well as new packaging for our organically-grown items and retail club customers.



**BOOTH #1029**  
**FOXY FRESH PRODUCE**  
Salinas, CA

For four generations, the Nunes family has been practicing innovative farming methods in California's Salinas Valley, producing a complete line of premium quality vegetables for consumers across the globe. Today, the company grows a complete line of both conventionally and organically grown vegetables in California, Arizona and Nevada.



**BOOTH #1029**  
**IPPOLITO FRUIT & PRODUCE**  
Burlington, Ontario, Canada

North America's largest grower-shipper of fresh Brussels sprouts is offering exciting new value-added Brussels sprout packs for retail and foodservice. We also have included value-added cello spinach to our full line of premium quality "Queen Victoria" fresh vegetables. Stop by to chat about how we can service your needs!



**BOOTH #1029**  
**STEINBECK**  
**COUNTRY**  
**PRODUCE**  
Spreckels, CA



Visit Steinbeck Country Produce to see our full line of premium quality vegetables, color cauliflower and strawberries. We will be featuring our latest addition, Romanesco. This vibrant veggie will add intrigue and a pop of color to your shelves or menu! See you in Orlando!

**BOOTH #1051**  
**SUNSWEEP**  
Yuba City, CA

Sunsweet Growers features AmazIn Prunes. In today's busy lifestyle, people face many challenges throughout their day to eat right. Sunsweet provides a variety of convenient forms from Individually Wrapped Ones to AmazIn Diced Prunes, or even PlumSweet Chocolate Coated Prunes. With strong marketing programs that drive consumers to the shelf, Sunsweet also offers a full range of dried fruits including new Pacific Tropicals.



**BOOTH #1091**  
**LABELPAC INTERNATIONAL LLC**  
Detroit, MI

LABELPAC Inc. presents its total fruit labeling solutions this year at the PMA show in Orlando FL. Come to our booth to see our new MOTO-HEAD high-speed fruit labelers and our famous HL-2 Lithium Cordless hand labelers.



**BOOTH #1142**  
**WELL-PICT BERRIES**  
Watsonville, CA

Well-Pict Berries provides 100 percent proprietary conventional and organic strawberries year-round and premium raspberries Spring-Fall.



**BOOTH #1178**  
**DEVIK INTERNATIONAL, INC.**  
White Plains, NY



Devik International, Inc. is an importer and distributor of conventional and organic Medjool, Halawi, Deglet Nour and Barhi (fresh yellow) dates. Offering continuous availability for Delilah, Jordan River and King Solomon brands.

**BOOTH #1179**  
**NATUREFRESH FARMS**  
Leamington, Ontario, Canada

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



**BOOTH #1249**  
**HONEYBEAR**  
**BRANDS**  
Elgin, MN

Visit Honeybear Brands and see Pazazz, the newest apple variety that's delighting apple lovers. Pazazz is the star of Honeybear's varietal development program giving customers a "Wow Right Now" experience. Visit with the Honeybear team to see how you can build excitement with our newest variety.



**BOOTH #1261**  
**MARIANI NUT COMPANY**  
Winters, CA

Mariani Nut Company supplies retailers nationwide with a full line of natural, premium California almonds and walnuts. Packaging options include clear and foil packs. Attractive retail displays are available. For more information, go to marianinut.com.



**BOOTH #1311**  
**GIUMARRA COMPANIES**  
Los Angeles, CA

Experience quality, flavor, and world-class service with the Giumarra and Nature's Partner global line of fruits and vegetables, including Fair Trade Certified produce grown in Mexico.



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## PMA FRESH SUMMIT AISLE BY AISLE BOOTH REVIEW

### BOOTH #1343 FRESH SOLUTIONS NETWORK San Francisco, CA

Fresh Solutions Network is a group of family-owned growers and shippers who work together to make the potato and onion industry better for everyone. Visit our booth to experience what's new!



AISLE 1400

### BOOTH #1473 HOLLANDIA PRODUCE Carpinteria, CA

Hollandia Produce's premium, heartless Romaine contains dark, nutrient dense leaves portioned for an entrée or two side salads. The leaf size is also great for lettuce wraps and cups.



AISLE 1500

### BOOTH #1501 BEJO SEEDS INC. Oceano, CA

Visit Bejo Seeds Inc. for innovative concepts in foodservice and retail! Sample Tasti Lee premium vine ripened tomatoes, the No. 1 Branded Round Tomato Nationally (Nielsen FreshFacts), or add something new and healthy to your veggie snacks and salads with our fresh-cut Kohlrabi sampled in a variety of forms!



### BOOTH #1507 WISHFARMS Plant City, FL

Wish Farms, founded in 1922 and third-generation owned, is a year-round supplier of strawberries, blueberries and blackberries growing both conventional and organic varieties. Nationally recognized for innovation, Wish Farms utilizes How's My Picking? A patented tool for traceability to ensure quality by tying consumer feedback to specific information from each day's harvest.



### BOOTH #1531 BROOKS TROPICALS Homestead, FL



Brooks Tropicals grows, packs and ships premium tropical fruits and vegetables to North America and beyond. Specialties include Caribbean Red papayas, SlimCado avocados, Florida starfruit, Solo papayas, Uniq Fruit, red guava and more.

### BOOTH #1560 KWIK LOK Yakima, WA

Kwik Lok is bag closures. We also manufacture a wide range of bag closing equipment, printers and other machinery to meet the needs of the flexible packaging industry.



AISLE 1600

### BOOTH #1601 AYCO FARMS INC. Pompano Beach, FL

At Ayco, farming is the foundation of what we do, and we devote great effort to growing and shipping the best tasting, highest quality products. This year we will unveil two new commodities along side our diverse assortment of world-class melons, and over a dozen of our other commodities. We have also made additions to our team to continue our efforts in delivering the highest quality products possible.



### BOOTH #1643 RENAISSANCE FOOD GROUP Rancho Cordova, CA

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



### BOOTH #1653 TWIST-EASE Minneapolis, MN



Innovative twist-tie dispensing system designed to provide hassle-free bag closure for customers. Keeping twist-ties in one place results in no waste and a positive experience for employees and customers.

AISLE 1700

### BOOTH #1731 CARLSON AIRFLO Brooklyn Park, MN

Carlson AirFlo continues innovative designs that provide retailers with more effective, cost-efficient solutions for produce merchandising. Stop by to see AirFlo's new 2016 bright ideas!



### BOOTH #1756 BACK TO THE ROOTS Oakland, CA

Back to the Roots is an organic food company on a mission to "Undo Food" and reconnect families back to where it comes from through fun, innovative, and delicious Ready-to-Grow and Ready-to-Eat products. Ready-to-Grow products include the organic Mushroom Farm, Garden-in-a-Can, Garden-in-a-Jar, Self-Watering Planter, and Water Garden fish tank.



AISLE 1800

### BOOTH #1801 DNE WORLD FRUIT Fort Pierce, FL

DNE World Fruit is your year-round global citrus source. One of the largest independent grower, packer, and shipper of Florida citrus since the 1950s with over 30 years of experience exporting and importing citrus to and from the U.S. Our experience in growing, packing and marketing can help grow your citrus profits all year.



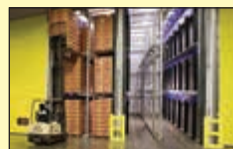
### BOOTH #1815 LINEAGE LOGISTICS Cranford, NJ



Lineage Logistics is one of the largest temperature-controlled warehousing and logistics companies in the world company serving the food, retail, agriculture and distribution industries. The company was founded through the combination of premier, temperature-controlled warehousing companies, some of whose roots date back to the early 1900s.

### BOOTH #1855 THERMAL TECHNOLOGIES, INC. Blythwood, SC

Thermal Tech's TarpLess ripening rooms are the most widely used in the industry, processing millions of pounds of bananas, pears and avocados across North America and around the world every day.



### BOOTH #1873 VISION PRODUCE COMPANY Los Angeles, CA

The Vision Companies are proud to announce expansion of our FOB Nogales operations. Including additional inventory/cold storage, cross dock and mix pallet accommodations. Grower direct deals for the fall and spring include La Vision Honey Dews, Cantaloupes, Cucumbers, Chili Peppers and Watermelon.



### BOOTH #1881 ITAUEIRA REI MELONS Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil

Rei melons label now shows a QR code link to its complete traceability info, recipes and a lot more. These Canary Brazilian melons are famous for its premium taste and high brix. All Itauera farms have GlobalGAP for safety and quality, SMETA - social responsibility and Rain Forest Alliance - environmental certifications.





# LABEL YOUR PRODUCE AS SOME OF NEW YORK'S BEST.

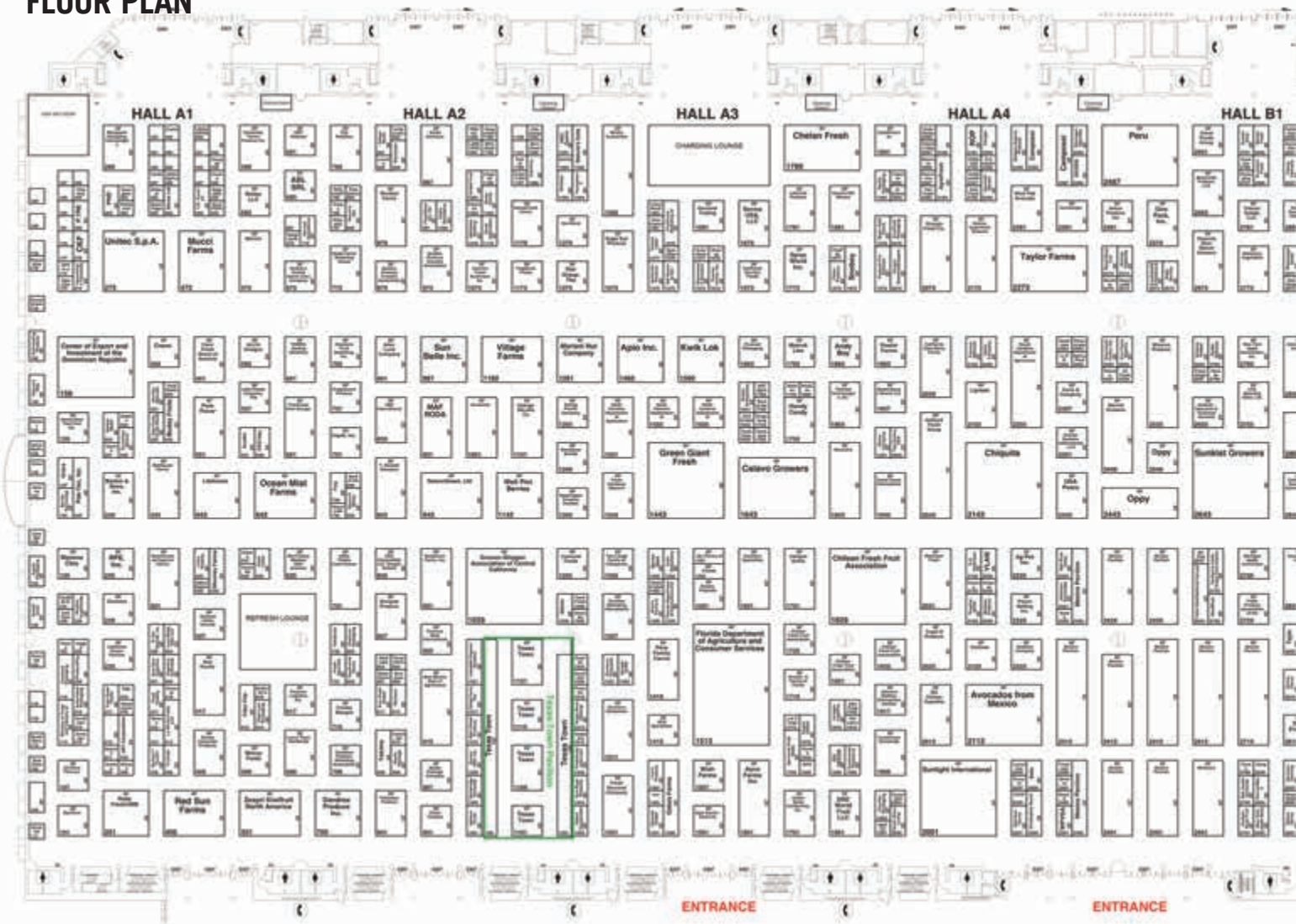
## INTRODUCING NEW YORK STATE GROWN & CERTIFIED.

Show New Yorkers that your produce meets farm-safe protocols and environmentally responsible practices by joining the New York State Grown & Certified program. Studies have shown that shoppers are more likely to purchase produce bearing the program's seal and may even pay more for it. To learn how you can join the program, visit [certified.ny.gov](http://certified.ny.gov)



Agriculture  
and Markets

# FLOOR PLAN



AISE 1900

**BOOTH #1901  
MIXTEC GROUP  
Glendale, CA**

As an executive search firm in produce, we are proud to have spent more than 30 years providing exceptional recruitment and leadership consulting to leading companies in our industry.



**BOOTH #2013  
DEL CAMPO SUPREME  
Nogales, AZ**



Diego Ley Senior started growing fresh produce on a few acres thirty years ago. Now this 3rd generation family business continues to deliver great tasting tomatoes and peppers year round.

**BOOTH #1903  
CHANTLER PACKAGING  
Mississauga, ON, Canada**

A leader in flexible packaging and engineered solutions for international produce. PrimePro reduces food wastage through shelf life extension in multiple simple-to-apply formats. EnduroPouch effectively packages produce for retail (effective gauge).



**BOOTH #2031  
ROBINSON FRESH**



**Eden Prairie, MN**  
Robinson Fresh is your premier fresh provider, executing your supply chain from seed to shelf. Combining cold-chain expertise, global reach and product supply, with extensive marketing services, and world-class account management, Robinson Fresh ensures your success in fresh.

**BOOTH #1943  
SEALD SWEET INTERNATIONAL  
Vero Beach, FL**



Seald Sweet was founded in 1909 as a grower cooperative of the Florida citrus industry. Through over a century of progress, Seald Sweet is a leading supplier of the citrus category, grapes, apples, pears, and more. Operating under the same values as parent company Greenyard, our produce is grown as near as possible but as far away as necessary, ensuring quality, freshness and excellent service.

**BOOTH #2043  
HOLLAND FRESH GROUP  
Zoetermeer, Zuid Holland**

Holland Fresh Group arranges and coordinates the worldwide international fruit and vegetables shows for the Dutch exporters and importers of fresh fruit and vegetables.



AISE 2000

**BOOTH #2001  
SUNLIGHT INTERNATIONAL SALES  
Mc Farland, CA**

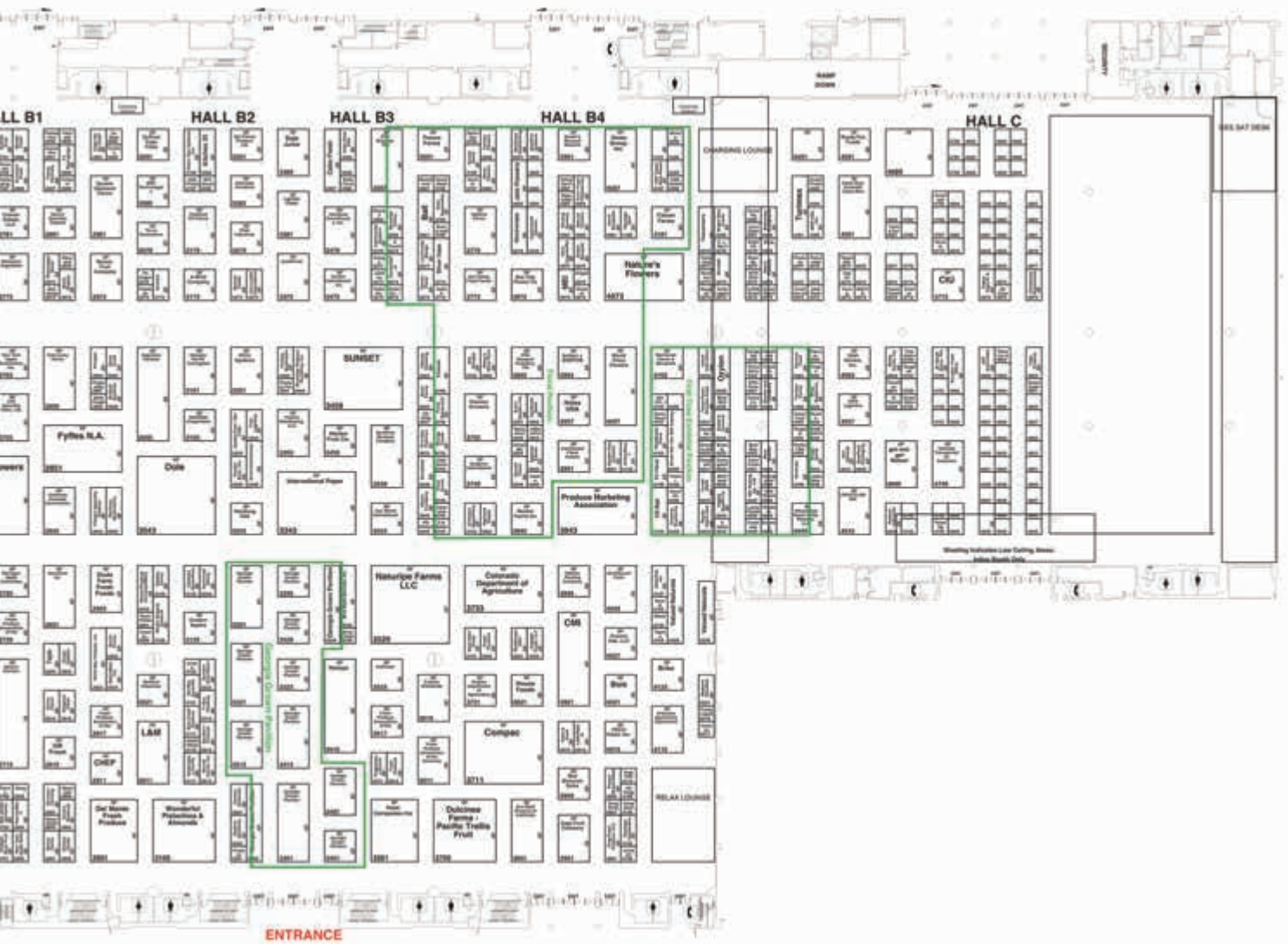
Sunlight International, a progressive packer and shipper of premium California table grapes grown by J.P. Dulcich & Sons, delivers quality table grapes worldwide.



**BOOTH #2059  
CALIFORNIA GIANT BERRY FARMS  
Watsonville, CA**

Making a difference one fresh berry at a time, we focus on best farming practices, best food safety practices, best quality assurance practices, best varieties for flavor and ultimately best overall business practices to ensure our consumer keeps coming back for more.





**BOOTH #2087  
HAMMONS BLACK WALNUTS**  
Stockton, MO

Hammons Products Company is celebrating 70 years in business. Since 1946, the Hammons have been stewards of the Black Walnut industry and continue to be the nation's primary processor, distributor, and marketer of Black Walnuts. This unique, American ingredient is enjoyed in everything from baked goods to savory entrees.



**BOOTH #2229  
PACON NETTING INC.**  
Baldwin Park, CA



Introducing the "Pacon Check" modular check weighing system. Designed to be flexible and fully customizable. An ideal solution for unique check weighing challenges.

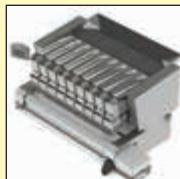
**BOOTH #2191  
ROP**  
Plainview, NY

ROP has more than 40 years experience working closely with produce growers, shippers, packers and retailers to tailor the flexible plastic packaging and films it produces to a specific solution for each vegetable, fruit and herb. Visit ROP at Booth 2191 to see the latest developments in produce shelf-life extending films and bags.

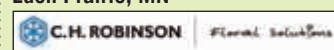


**BOOTH #2235  
AG-PAK, INC.**  
Gaspport, NY

Ag-Pak has proudly supplied industry leading produce packaging equipment for over 50 years. We have a committed team focused on supplying the best products with the best service. Stop by Ag-Pak's booth to see the market's fastest nine-head newer and C-Pack's new 1029 clipper.



**BOOTH #2135  
CH ROBINSON**  
Eden Prairie, MN



At C.H. Robinson, we believe in accelerating global trade to drive the world's economy. As one of the world's largest third-party logistics providers, we offer a portfolio of logistics services, warehousing, fresh produce sourcing, and cold chain expertise through our global network.

**BOOTH #2300  
CHRISTOPHER RANCH**  
Gilroy, CA

New crop California Garlic supplies of fresh, peeled look good! Christopher Ranch is the U.S.'s largest fresh grower, packer, shipper of California Garlic. Grown since 1956, from carefully selected seed to preserve exceptional flavor, quality. Produced with GAP, GMP, HACCP, USDA & FDA inspections. Variety of sizes and packs.



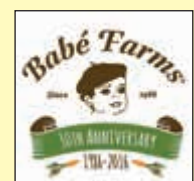
**BOOTH #2201  
GLORIANN FARMS**  
Tracy, CA

With 50-plus years and three generations of family history in agriculture, GloriAnn Farms is your source for premium fresh sweet corn all year long.



**BOOTH #2306  
BABE FARMS**  
Santa Maria, CA

The trendsetter in gourmet produce. Babé Farms is a premier grower/shipper of specialty vegetables located in the heart of the Santa Maria Valley.



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## PMA FRESH SUMMIT AISLE BY AISLE BOOTH REVIEW

### BOOTH #2309 FRESHWAY FOODS Sidney, OH

Freshway offers a variety of fresh-cut fruits and vegetables to meet all of your fresh produce requirements. From custom blends to sliced, diced and julienned fruits and vegetables, we have what you need when you need it. We also offer guaranteed cold-chain transportation and logistics to support your perishable distribution.



### BOOTH #2335 RED RIVER VALLEY POTATOES East Grand Forks, MN

The Red River Valley of North Dakota and Minnesota is the largest red potato-producing region in the United States. The 24,000 fertile acres of Red River Valley soil are irrigated by prairie rains to produce some of the best tasting potatoes in the world; potatoes that truly have "Nature's Flavor."



### BOOTH #2343 PEAR BUREAU NORTHWEST Portland, OR

Pear Bureau Northwest is a non-profit marketing organization promoting the fresh USA Pears grown in Oregon and Washington. Representing nearly 1,600 growers, the Pear Bureau develops markets for Northwest pear distribution.



### BOOTH #2449 STEMILT GROWERS LLC Wenatchee, WA

Stemilt Growers is a family-owned and operated grower-packer-shipper of fresh apples, pears, cherries, stone fruits, and organics. Stemilt is an innovator in new varieties and packaged consumer products like Lil Snappers kid-sized fruits and Fresh Blenders apples for juicing.



### BOOTH #2490 OKANAGAN SPECIALTY FRUITS INC Summerland, BC, Canada

Distinctly non-browning Arctic apples retain their fresh-cut flavor and appearance, no matter how you slice 'em! Imagine consumers tearing open a bag. Come bite into a slice!



### BOOTH #2555 MISSION PRODUCE Oxnard, CA

Mission Produce is the global leader in producing, distributing and marketing fresh Hass avocados. We provide customers all over the world with the complete packaged year-round supply, global availability and value-added services.



### BOOTH #2663 ALLIANCE RUBBER COMPANY Salinas, CA

Alliance Rubber Company has been creating quality rubber bands for 93 years. Alliance's work in the produce industry includes standard and imprinted rubber bands, as well as ProTape for securing fruit and vegetables.



### BOOTH #2683 BEACHSIDE PRODUCE Guadalupe, CA

Headquartered in Guadalupe, CA, Beachside Produce, LLC is a year round grower/shipper, and one of the leading producers and marketers of commodity packed broccoli in the U.S. In addition to numerous grown commodities, Beachside Produce provides a full line of vegetable consolidation for its customer base. Please visit us and see what we bring "From Our Family Farms to Your Family's Table."



### BOOTH #2709 TORREY FARMS Elba, NY

Torrey Farms Inc. is a family farming operation in its 12th generation of tilling the soil. Farming over 14,000 acres in Western New York, we grow, pack and ship cabbage, cucumbers, summer & winter squash, green beans, miniature pumpkins, yellow and red onions, and round white and yellow potatoes.



### BOOTH #2728 WESTROCK Norcross, GA

Whether it's a produce container, a shipper/display box or other innovative corrugated solutions, WestRock helps you manage costs, increase sales with dynamic graphics, mitigate risk, and improve your environmental impact.



### BOOTH #2732 CALIFORNIA TABLE GRAPE COMMISSION Fresno, CA

Grapes from California Delight your shoppers with bunches of flavor. Offering more than 85 varieties and grown for nearly two centuries on family farms, California grapes are always plump, juicy, and delicious.



### BOOTH #2735 MICHIGAN APPLE COMMITTEE Lansing, MI

The Michigan Apple Committee engages in marketing, research, education and communications for the benefit of Michigan's apple growers. Michigan ranks third in the nation in apple production.



### BOOTH #2755 LGS SPECIALTY SALES, LTD. New Rochelle, NY

What's orange, snack-sized and candy sweet? A Darling Clementine! Just one of the many premium LGS items paired with excellent service and top-notch food safety. Our full line includes Darling Clementines, Darling Citrus, Suavo Avocados and grapes.

See ad on page 114.



### BOOTH #2762 EDIBLE SOFTWARE Houston, TX



Edible Software is excited to present their new Mobile Sales App, Edible Cloud, and scanning modules such as, Edible Pick and Scan.

### BOOTH #2763 NEW YORK APPLE ASSOCIATION Fishers, NY

New York Apple Association represents NY apple growers helping to grow sales for consumer favorites such as McIntosh, Empire, Gala, Honeycrisp, Cortland, Fuji and many more!





## JIM PREVOR'S

PERISHABLE

PUNDIT

*Where the subject may be perishable  
but the insight isn't.*

### ***What is a Pundit?***

*Merriam Webster* — a person who gives opinions in an authoritative manner usually through the mass media.

### ***What is the Perishable Pundit?***

Just ask our readers —

"... providing substance, thought-provoking opinions and, at the very least, waking up many."

"Excellent commentary on the status of regulators' positioning on food safety for the produce industry."

"... bringing some common sense to the E. coli issue of late."

"... a lively and engaging forum for discussion of issues relevant to the produce industry."

"... thought-provoking commentary with robust dialog."

"... keeping the debate going..."

"... kind of an investigative reporter..."

"... extensive coverage leaves no subject without great healthy discussion, and no topic is too sacred."

"Your courage in stating your opinion and your reaction to criticism is respectful and honest."

"... focused on the complicated issues relating to food safety in produce."

"... teaching the industry quite a bit about the power of the internet."

"... an education for those of us who are still refining our computer skills."

"... a valuable service."

"... the most important journalism in the industry, and now we get them every day... you have become the 'voice' ..."

"Your analysis of the state of leadership in the produce industry past, present, and future is right on!"

"... a welcome part of the day that stimulates the mind and encourages us to think about and consider a different point of view."

"... writing with heart and insight..."

"... one of my 'must-read' e-mails everyday!"

"Our industry has traditionally not been associated with being 'deep thinkers', and you have definitely become our Thought Leader."

"... a resource that delves deeply into issues impacting our industry. Kudo's!"

"Keeps us thinking."

"... spreading your abundant common sense on a daily basis."

"... most refreshing."

"The Pundit does, in fact, incite reactions and cause good thinkers to think harder and longer on topics that are current and newsworthy."

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## PMA FRESH SUMMIT AISLE BY AISLE BOOTH REVIEW

AISLE 2800

### BOOTH #2800 NEW YORK APPLE SALES

Glenmont, NY

New York Apple Sales Inc., is the state's largest and diverse apple sales agency. The company teams with multiple growers and packing facilities throughout the state — located in all the major growing regions — to deliver the best selection, competitive pricing, and superior fruit, serving customers from the Rockies and eastward.



### BOOTH #2801 SETTON FARMS

Terra Bella, NY

Producer of "America's Best Tasting Pistachios," Setton Farms offers a full-line of California pistachios and proudly features 100 percent All Natural Pistachio Chewy Bites with whole pistachios, cranberries and agave nectar.



### BOOTH #2831 SENSITECH INC.

Beverly, MA



A provider of supply and cold chain visibility solutions ensuring food safety and quality throughout the supply chain. The TempTale GEO provides temperature and location data in real-time allowing full visibility, rapid decision making, and continuous improvement for all your perishable shipments.

### BOOTH #2843 CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION

Irvine, CA

Learn about the 2017 California Avocado season from the California Avocado Commission. We'll showcase our innovative marketing campaign and share the latest avocado research. Retailers, stop by to discuss customized support programs. SRDs, learn about tools available just for you.



### BOOTH #2873 BALL DESIGN

Fresno, CA

Every day at Ball Design we think about produce. How to design for it dynamically, advertise it creatively, promote it effectively. We have the experience and expertise to create innovative graphic design, advertising and online solutions for all your marketing needs.



AISLE 2900

### BOOTH #2901 DEL MONTE FRESH PRODUCE

Coral Gables, FL

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



### BOOTH #2904 AURORA PRODUCTS

Orange, CT

Aurora Products packages only the highest quality and freshest all natural and organic nuts, dried fruit, trail mixes, salad fixins' and granolas. Our products contain no preservatives, artificial colors or additives.



### BOOTH #2911 CHEP

Alpharetta, GA

As the leading pallet and supply chain solutions provider, CHEP is proud to be a part of the PMA Fresh Summit for the 18th consecutive year.



A Brambles Company

### BOOTH #2933 DUDA FARM FRESH FOODS

Oviedo, FL



Duda Farm Fresh Foods will celebrate the company's 90th anniversary by launching a new snacking line at PMA. The Dandy

Celery Snackers line has several new items that can fuel busy lifestyles with healthy and delicious snacks.

### BOOTH #2943 FRIEDA'S SPECIALTY PRODUCE

Los Alamitos, CA

Inspiring new food experiences for food lovers everywhere since 1962, our product mix and our fresh new brand makes life a lot sweeter for our retail, wholesale, and foodservice clients. Inspire. Taste. Love.



### BOOTH #2963 POMPEII

Longview, TX

Pompeii's unique line up has what you need! Pompeii juices have oil & essence which produce higher quality taste & aroma. Produce Enhancer mixes & Smoothies continue to grow. New this year: Mango Smoothie and Fruit Freeze dip. Select Food Service sizes available. Made in the USA for 38 years.



AISLE 3000

### BOOTH #3011 L&M

Raleigh, NC

L&M provides service for all your produce needs. We are committed to providing a wide range of premium produce, specializing in vegetables, potatoes and onions, apples, and western vegetables and melons. L&M is showcasing several new items this year including a Kansas onion program, micro-wrapped Gold potatoes, and Crimson Delight apples.



### BOOTH #3022 NATURESEAL, INC.

Westport, CT

NatureSeal has you covered for all of your fresh produce needs. From antioxidants to delay browning, to produce pre-washes to decontaminate, we have the solutions!



### BOOTH #3043 DOLE

Westlake Village, CA

Dole Food Company Inc. is the world's largest producer and marketer of high quality fresh fruit and fresh vegetables. Dole markets a growing line of fresh and sustainable organic produce, and is the industry leader in the nutrition education and research.

See ad on page 101.



### BOOTH #3062 SILVER CREEK SOFTWARE

Boise, ID



Accounting solutions for produce distribution, processing, inventory, sales, purchasing, traceability and financial management software. Windows-based for the produce industry.



# Nothing runs on empty.

Especially one in seven Americans who struggle with hunger. Join the Feeding America nationwide network of food banks to help end hunger. Act now at [HungerActionMonth.org](https://www.HungerActionMonth.org).

To donate fresh produce or to learn more about Feeding America, please contact us at **(800) 671-0088**



HUNGER ACTION MONTH™



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## PMA FRESH SUMMIT AISLE BY AISLE BOOTH REVIEW

**AISLE 3100**

**BOOTH #3111  
WASHINGTON  
FAMILY FARMS  
Union Gap, WA**

We are generations of heartfelt farming. We are proud of the excellent fruit we produce, our orchards and how we care for them, and the community we live in. Our farms may not be the biggest, but by working together we bring you what we believe is the best fruit in Washington State.



**AISLE 3400**

**BOOTH #3460  
RIVERIDGE  
PRODUCE MARKETING, INC.  
Sparta, MI**

Riveridge Produce Marketing, Inc. is Michigan's leading full-service apple marketer, grower, shipper and packer with 25-plus years experience in domestic produce and exports. Riveridge also ships Michigan-grown asparagus, sweet cherries and prunes.



**BOOTH #3529  
NATURIPE  
Salinas, CA**

Naturipe Berry Farms is an industry leader in producing healthy and delicious fresh berries and value-added berry products. With our wide selection, commitment to quality and food safety, year around availability and a focus on innovation, Naturipe Farms is perfectly suited to be your Total Berry Solution.



**AISLE 3800**

**BOOTH #3821  
HOUSE FOODS  
Garden Grove, CA**

Revolutionize the snacking experience with Go Umami, the first grab-and-go tofu snack bar! This new product is perfect for shoppers looking to enjoy the benefits of tofu in a convenient on-the-go snack. Each bar contains 5 grams of protein, and is vegan and gluten free. It is non-GMO Project Verified and Kosher-certified. Go Umami is available in: Savory, Orange Teriyaki and Hickory Smoke.

**BOOTH #3125  
UNITED CARGO  
Chicago, IL**

United Cargo delivers business-friendly service via the cargo capacity of world's most comprehensive route network — nearly 5,000 flights a day to 362 airports across six continents operated by United Airlines and United Express. United Cargo can quickly transport customers' shipments to and from virtually any city in the world.



**BOOTH #3473  
TEMKIN INTERNATIONAL, INC.  
Payson, UT**

Temkin International has been a domestic manufacturer of flexible film packaging since its start in 1980. Temkin provides the latest in patented CAP technologies, materials, and utilizes the most versatile and efficient machinery to provide packaging options that are fully adjustable for material, size and print.



**AISLE 3600**

**BOOTH #3673  
TEMKIN FLORAL  
Payson, UT**

Enhance your products with Temkin's fully customizable packaging for fresh cut flowers, potted plants, and more. Temkin has hundreds of trend forward patterns available with new designs added seasonally to provide you with the best solution for your floral needs. Let our experience and connections help you flourish!



**BOOTH #3855  
HAMPSHIRE PAPER  
Milford, NH**

Hampshire Paper is a domestic manufacturer of fine decorative packaging products for the horticultural, wholesale floral, and gift-packaging industry. For more than 35 years, we provided top notch service with our professional sales and customer service staff along with quick turnaround on quality products. We stock a variety of styles, sizes and colors but also specialize in custom product manufacturing.

**AISLE 3200**

**BOOTH #3201  
PRODUCE BUSINESS  
Boca Raton, FL**

PRODUCE BUSINESS is where industry leaders turn for information, insight and understanding. Editor-in-Chief Jim Prevor, whose work also appears online at PerishablePundit.com, will be at our booth. Visit us to learn about our other media properties.



**AISLE 3500**

**BOOTH #3523  
IT'S FRESH!  
Eden Prairie, MN**

It's Fresh! is a paper-thin, ethylene-removal technology that helps to naturally extend the quality of fresh produce — increasing consumer satisfaction. Our unique technology works throughout the entire supply chain.



**AISLE 3700**

**BOOTH #3733  
COLORADO  
DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE  
Lakewood, CO**

Colorado's warm days, cool nights, high plains and broad, dry plateaus give us some of the sweetest, juiciest fruit and crispest, most flavorful vegetables. Representatives for Colorado potatoes, melons, peaches, sweet corn, onions, carrots, juice products, dry beans and more will be on hand to take orders and answer questions!



**AISLE 3200**

**BOOTH #3285  
INTERSTATE CONTAINER  
Columbia, SC**

Interstate Container is a corrugated box manufacturer with a mission to make an impact through environmentally friendly packaging solutions and services. We created the pioneering Greencoat product line for like-minded partners looking to streamline their supply chain, reduce their carbon footprint, and offer smart solutions to their customers.



**BOOTH #3528  
ATLAS PRODUCE & DIST., INC.  
Bakersfield, CA**

Atlas Produce & Dist., Inc., is the shipper of the popular 100 percent California-grown Caramel Naturel Medjool Dates, Date Coconut Rolls, Date Almond Rolls and Table Grapes. Stop by to taste the amazing flavor of Caramel Naturel!



**AISLE 3700**

**BOOTH #3742  
C.H. ROBINSON FLORAL  
Eden Prairie, MN**

At C.H. Robinson, we believe in accelerating global trade to drive the world's economy. As one of the world's largest third-party logistics providers, we offer a portfolio of logistics services, warehousing, fresh produce sourcing, and floral cold chain management direct from the source.



**AISLE 3900**

**BOOTH #3901  
SAGE FRUIT COMPANY  
Yakima, WA**

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





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## PMA FRESH SUMMIT AISLE BY AISLE BOOTH REVIEW

### BOOTH #3921 CMI ORCHARDS Wenatchee, WA

CMI, one of Washington States' premier fruit growers, has a new face to represent the company's rapid growth. With exclusive brands such as Ambrosia, KIKU, Kanzi, Sweet Gourmet Pears and Daisy Girl Organics, CMI is proud to welcome Envy, Jazz and Pacific Rose into their manifest.



### BOOTH #3926 GRAPPLE FRUITS, LLC Wenatchee, WA

Grapple brand apples presents new this year: TART Grapples using Granny Smith Apples! Taste TART and SWEET Grapple brand apples at our booth.



### BOOTH #4014 LINKFRESH INC. Ventura, CA

Visit LINKFRESH ERP to discuss your supply chain visibility or produce traceability issues, and we'll show you how the latest information technology and ERP solutions from LINKFRESH could help you. You can see our latest software releases and our expert consultants will be there to answer your questions.



### BOOTH #4015 PECO PALLET Irvington, NY

PECO Pallet is simply the best rental pallet provider in North America, with a passionate commitment to quality and service.



### BOOTH #4027 CRUNCH PAK, LLC Cashmere, WA

See the latest from Crunch Pak at Fresh Summit. Crunch Pak is committed to providing the highest quality organic and conventional sliced apple products in the market.



### BOOTH #4150 ARIZONA EAST Minotola, NJ

The popularity of sites like Pinterest and Instagram sparked a new generation of Millennial plant lovers yearning to add touches of greenery to their everyday life. Our new magnetic wine cork succulent planters are an easy grab 'n grow impulse item that's low maintenance with mass appeal.



### BOOTH #4187 P&F COSTA RICA FLOWER FARMS Cartago, Costa Rica

Discover P&F's remarkable product portfolio! Since 1986, P&F has been known for its leadership in developing stunning European and tropical flowers and foliage. Its amazing lilies, rosellies, lisianthus, gerbers and anthuriums, together with the most diverse tropical foliage, provide the building pieces for its endless and spectacular bouquet compositions.



### BOOTH #4228 VALUED NATURALS Dover, NJ

Valued Naturals is a nut and snack line retail program designed for both grocery and convenience stores. Placement of our program at these stores are continuing at record pace. We believe in delivering high-quality products at a better value. Stop by our booth, chat and enjoy delicious beef sliders with pine nuts and sundried tomatoes!



### BOOTH #4248 FOWLER PACKING Fresno, CA



Fowler Packing Co. established an industry reputation for consistently offering the finest quality California grown fruit. This year, Fowler Packing presents Samsons Sorbet, a Clean, Crisp, Refreshing new table grape variety.

### BOOTH #4253 GROWERS ARE US Miami, FL

We are certified growers, packers and importers of the freshest Central and South American produce. Specialized in value-added programs and bulk produce. French Beans, Sugar Snaps, Snow Peas, English Peas, Baby Carrots, Broccoli, Broccoli Tenders, Asparagus. Visit us to get a special Guatemalan gift!



### BOOTH #4273 DOUGLAS MACHINES CORP Clearwater, FL

Douglas Machines expanded its line of Convoyorized Tunnel Washers to include designs to clean totes and lids for the produce industry. These washers save time, labor and water while producing consistent cleaning results time after time. Available with optional blow-off modules, these large volume workhorses clean several hundred containers per hour.



### BOOTH #4365 SYNGENTA CROP PROTECTION Moses Lake, WA



Syngenta is a leading agriculture company helping to improve food security through world-class science and innovative crop solutions.

### BOOTH #4457 GREENFRUIT AVOCADOS Newport Beach, CA



GreenFruit Avocados specializes in growing, packing, and shipping Hass avocados year-round. The advantages of being vertically integrated is that we are able to control the harvest, cold chain management, & traceability providing our customers quality and consistency in each and every case that we pack!

### BOOTH #4573 YOUNG PECAN Florence, SC

As a diversified and fully integrated grower, accumulator, processor and marketer on pecans, Young Pecan is transforming the industry. Our commitment to best practices, investment and re-investment ensures excellence from our orchards to you, and every step in between.



### BOOTH #4649 GET REAL. GET MAINE Augusta, ME

Visit the new State of Maine Pavilion with representatives from the Get Real. Get Maine! state agricultural program. Meet firsthand with a few of Maine's premier suppliers including: Irving Farms Marketing, Inc., LaJoie Growers, LLC, Northeast Packaging Company, Ricker Hill Orchards and Smith Packing Inc.



### BOOTH #4673 PASCO FOODS Spicewood, TX



Branded and private label solutions since 1991, for fresh and frozen Costa Rican pineapple and hearts of palm. Pasco Foods serves the global food industry by managing the supply chain from growing to distribution, meeting customer specifications in state-of-the-art facilities that are fully compliant with generally accepted food safety programs.



**From our growers  
to you, we produce  
the fruit you love!**



First in the produce industry under our  
category to be certified under SQF!\*

\* Category 35: Broker or Agent

# WISCONSIN POTATOES

The advantage of Wisconsin's niche in the market is its strategic location, sustainability efforts and availability of locally grown produce.

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

**W**isconsin may be nicknamed “America’s Dairyland” and famous for its cheese, but on the produce side, its potatoes are the top crop. In fact, the potato harvest in this Midwestern state soared to 3.2 billion pounds in 2015, according to a crop production summary released on November 10, 2015 by the United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service field office based in Madison, WI. This figure ranks Wisconsin third in the nation for potato production behind Idaho and Washington.

“The quality of the soil here and good growers means we are fortunate to have substantial acres dedicated to potatoes and availability is plentiful,” says Steve Jarzombek, vice president of produce merchandising and procurement for Roundy’s Supermarkets, Inc., a 150-store grocery store chain headquartered in Milwaukee, WI. “In addition, per capita consumption of potatoes here is good. Potatoes are in high demand by our customers.”

## INDUSTRY NICHE

Potatoes are cultivated on an average of 63,000 acres in Wisconsin. This year’s forecast is for 2.8 billion pounds with a \$350 million farmgate value, according to data provided by the Antigo, WI-based Wisconsin

Potato & Vegetable Growers Association (WPVGA). Shipments from the state’s small sheds continue through December and January, while larger sheds ship nearly year-round with lowest availability in August. The market reach of Wisconsin potatoes is primarily based in the Midwest and extends east of the Mississippi to the East Coast.

The advantage of Wisconsin’s niche in the market is its strategic location, sustainability efforts and availability of locally-grown produce.

“Our location enables us to provide next-day shipments to large areas of central and eastern U.S.,” says Gary Bula, president of Gary Bula Farms Inc. in Grand Marsh, WI.

Mike Carter, chief executive officer at fourth-generation-owned Bushmans’, Inc. in Rosholt, WI, agrees. “This allows us to be a retailer’s just-in-time potato supplier, which saves time and freight costs,” says Carter.

“We have a strategic logistical advantage distributing potatoes to customers in the Midwest and East Coast,” says Christine Lindner, a national sales representative for Alsum Farms & Produce, Inc., a Friesland, WI-based potato grower, packer and shipper as well as onion re-packer and wholesale distributor of a full line of fresh fruits and vegetables.

On the sustainability front, the WPVGA partnered with the World



PHOTO COURTESY OF GUMZ MUCK FARMS



Larry Alsum of Alsum Farms & Produce, Inc.



Rod Gumz of Gumz Muck Farms



Russell Wysocki of RPE, Inc.

Wildlife Fund in 1996 and later with the International Crane Foundation and Defenders of Wildlife to begin an eco-friendly initiative. In the early 2000s, the organization launched a green standard for growing potatoes called Healthy Grown.

“The Healthy Grown program allows participating growers to work with ecologists, conservationists and University of Wisconsin researchers on initiatives that restore natural ecosystems, prevent erosion, support native plants and animals and conserve water quality, to name a few. These points are highly attractive to retailers and consumers alike,” says Dana Rady, the WPVGA’s director of promotion, communication and consumer education.

Healthy Grown offers a unique niche in

the consumer world since it’s not organic or conventional.

“We’re growing four times as many potatoes as we did 25 years ago by using less land, energy, water and fewer emissions per acre grown,” says Alsum Farms’ Lindner, one of over half a dozen grower/shippers in the state who produce potatoes under the Healthy Grown label. “We have highlighted the Healthy Grown Program and our commitment to sustainable farming in our marketing messages to customers. Plus, we have utilized the Healthy Grown promotional and merchandising materials to help educate Wisconsin consumers and promote retail sales.”

In 2015, the WPVGA received a Buy Local, Buy Wisconsin grant from the state’s Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer

Protection, in Madison, WI, to promote its Healthy Grown program. The association works with shippers to provide “Buy Local” Kwik Lok tags and quarter-sized bins that feature the ‘Buy Local’ message. The smaller bins are ideal for endcaps and convenient for cross-promotional opportunities in stores.

“Marketing toward the locally grown aspect of Wisconsin potatoes is the perfect opportunity to work with retailers that support the ‘Buy Local’ movement,” says Randy Shell, vice president of marketing and new business development for RPE, Inc., in Bancroft, WI.

The “Buy Local” theme definitely carries weight in the state.

“We set out with the goal of making Wisconsin-grown potato sales No. 1 in the

## ■ LITTLE POTATO COMPANY OPENS US OFFICE AND PROCESSING FACILITY IN WISCONSIN

Bite-sized specialty potato varieties are a small yet growing niche in Wisconsin. This sector of the potato industry will get a big boost in January 2017 when The Little Potato Company Ltd., headquartered in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, opens its \$20 million, 130,000-square-foot facility and U.S. headquarters in DeForest, WI.

“We chose Wisconsin because it’s a great growing region for Creamer potatoes and we can take advantage of the local farmers’ expertise to accommodate increased demand for our potatoes,” says Sanford Gleddie, vice president of operations and global development for the 25-year-old company.

The company has contracted with Wisconsin growers to cultivate its unique proprietary Creamer varieties, which will in-

clude Baby Boomer and Blushing Belle in the first year. The new facility will have a state-of-the-art potato washing and grading line that has been customer-designed for small Creamer potatoes. An estimated 17 million pounds of potatoes are forecasted to move through the facility in its first year, with this number increasing substantially as more of the state’s growers come online. All potatoes processed at the company’s Wisconsin facility will be grown in the state.

“This additional capacity in a central shipping location will help us ensure our customers continue to enjoy the same reliable distribution and service they’ve come to expect from us – for years to come,” says Angela Santiago, president of The Little Potato Company Ltd.



pb



(L-R) Jim Stephan, Michael Gatz and Rick Kantner of Bushmans', Inc.



Dana Rady of WPVGA

state. We achieved this five years ago, and retail sales data verified it," says the WPVGA's executive director Tamas Houlihan.

#### VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF SALES


"Wisconsin has the most potato varieties of any state in the U.S.," according to Houlihan. "We always grew the big three: Russets, whites

and reds. We are seeing cutting-edge varieties among these, such as Russets with a high percentage of dry matter and reds with a deep color and good skin set, thanks to the top-of-the-line breeding program at the University of Wisconsin's Agricultural Research Station in Rhinelander, WI. In addition, yellow-fleshed varieties are becoming a larger part of the

state's production, as are specialty varieties like purples and Fingerlings. Smaller sizes and convenience packaging is becoming a larger part of our growers' product mix in the state."

There are 22 SKUs of Wisconsin-grown potatoes on display for customers at Tadych's Econofoods, a six-store chain based in Brillion, WI, according to produce supervisor Jim

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Weber. This includes Russet Bakers in bulk as well as 5- and 10-pound bags; 5- and 10-pound whites; Baby reds in bulk, as well as 3- and 5-pound bags; 5- and 10-pound bags of larger sized reds; and 5- and 10-pounds of yellows.

Also in the mix are 12 SKUs of Creamer potatoes from The Little Potato Company Ltd., based in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, which will be opening its U.S. headquarters in Wisconsin in 2017. [See related article on page 116.] These include 1-pound bags of oven/grill-ready and microwave-ready potatoes, as

well as 1.5- and 3-pound bags of triple-washed proprietary varieties.

“Russets are the majority of what we grow, but they’ve been declining in sales,” says Mike Finnessy, a sales representative for Okray Family Farms, a fifth-generation, 1,700-acre grower in Plover, WI. “We’re trying to figure out ways to get millennials to use more Russets.”

Gumz Muck Farms, a fourth generation 900-acre family operation based in Endeavor, WI, specializes in red potatoes. “We are



This fall, Alsum Farms & Produce, Inc. will introduce a new line of gourmet potato pouch packs starting with a new crop of Wisconsin potatoes. These include a 24-ounce Gourmet Blend Fingerling, 24-ounce Gourmet Blend Petite and 3-pound Gourmet Gold B-Size potatoes.

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fortunate in that the muck soil gives us really brilliant reds,” says Roderick Gumz, co-owner. “Small sizes are especially popular now in foodservice and retail. For example, B reds are now priced on the market at 50 percent more than As and Cs.

Small potatoes, Fingerlings and heirloom varieties are increasing in consumer demand, though they’re still a small percentage of overall sales, says Bushmans’ Carter. They aren’t cannibalizing sales of traditional Russets, reds and whites, but contributing to sales incrementally by offering customers another meal choice besides the typical rice or pasta.”

“In addition to conventional potato varieties for retail,” says RPE’s Shell, “we are seeing an increase in demand for organics that helps differentiate our customers from their competition.”

“Future trends,” says Gary Bula Farms’ Bula, “includes smaller portions that are faster and easier for consumers. We are growing a new specialty Creamer potato which will come in microwavable tray packaging with seasonings along with larger 3-pound bags.”



The Spudmobile, which is a 37-foot motor home that launched in 2014, is outfitted with eight interactive kiosks inside to show consumers how the state's spud travels from field to fork. It is Wisconsin's traveling billboard for the potato industry.

Several Wisconsin grower/shippers offer value-added products. For example, this fall Alsum Farms & Produce, Inc. will introduce a new line of gourmet potato pouch packs starting with a new crop of Wisconsin potatoes. These include a 24-ounce Gourmet Blend Fingerling, 24-ounce Gourmet Blend Petite and 3-pound Gourmet Gold B-Size potatoes.

"The value-added category will continue to experience growth in the future," says Alsum's Lindner. "Consumers are looking for convenience and new ideas on how they can prepare potatoes and other produce items that they love. In addition, consumers are looking for ways to eat healthier, and potatoes and other produce items fit this need."

#### MARKETING & MERCHANDISING BADGER-STATE STYLE

Wisconsin-grown potatoes are price-promoted on ad three of four weeks each month, and weekly during some months of the year at Tadych's Econofoods.

"For example, we had a 5-pound red in the ad last week; next week we'll have a 5-pound white and then a 5-pound yellow, with Baby B reds also in the rotation," says Weber. "In addition, we'll also put up to eight baby potato products on sale and line price them to encourage trial or promote them at a buy two save \$2 price."

Recipes are important too, Weber adds. "We have seven produce items on ad each week and we run a recipe in the circular as well as post it on the store's Facebook page. It's a good way to give customers ideas of different ways they can prepare potatoes. For example, one recipe was a Cheeseburger Potato Chowder."

Roundy's promotes outside their stores by featuring Wisconsin farmers, such as potato farmers, on highway billboards and in television ads. The chain also welcomes the WPVGA's "Spudmobile" into its parking lots in the fall for promotions, according to Roundy's Jarzombek.

The Spudmobile, which is a 37-foot motor home that launched in 2014, is outfitted with eight interactive kiosks inside to show consumers how the state's spud travels from field to fork. It is Wisconsin's traveling billboard for

the potato industry.

This year, the WPVGA will return to hosting a retail display contest with the prize of another one of Wisconsin's famous products — a 2015 Fat Bob Harley Davidson motorcycle.

"By the end of October, we are giving away the motorcycle to the retail store with the most creative Wisconsin potatoes display," says WPVGA's Rady. "The display should be up throughout the month of October, Wisconsin's Potatopalooza month. Retail stores should send pictures of their display to WPVGA." **pb**



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# Variety Is The Spice In Greater Potato Sales



PHOTO COURTESY OF REDNER'S MARKETS

This tasty tuber marks one of its highest benchmarks in household penetration.

BY CAROL M. BAREUTHER, RD

**M**oving the needle on potato purchases in the produce department might require a “slow-and-steady-wins-the-race” methodology, and grower/shippers as well as retailers say the answer is variety.

“Shoppers today want variety,” says Richard Stiles, director of produce and floral for Redner’s Markets, a Reading, PA-based chain with stores in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware. “That means Russets, reds, whites and yellows plus the purples, Fingerlings, Creamers and all the specialties. The more variety, the more usage opportunities, and the more sales.”

Preparation ideas, as well as different types of potatoes are important in variety solutions.

“A very important opportunity is to provide consumers with new and interesting ways to prepare potatoes,” says Ross Johnson, global retail marketing manager for Denver, CO-based Potatoes USA, which is a marketing organization for the 2,500 commercial potato growers operating in the U.S. “Most consumers

are in cooking ruts and state that they would prepare potatoes more often if they had new recipes.”

The variety angle for merchandising spuds creates challenges — such as shelf space constraints and education without clutter. On the flip side, a number of selling opportunities can be created in these areas as well.

## WHAT’S NEW WITH SKUS

“Potato category trends are focused on more varieties, a significant increase in organics and the expansion of smaller pack sizes,” says Randy Shell, vice president of marketing and new business development for RPE, Inc., in Bancroft, WI.

Consumers have a clear preference for different varieties, according to John Pope, vice president of sales and marketing for MountainKing Potatoes in Houston, TX. “If retailers would flip the script on variety, not look at varieties as specialties, they’d be blown away by the economics.”

The biggest opportunity in offering more of a selection is that growth in varieties doesn’t necessarily cannibalize traditional Russet sales, says Seth Pemsler, vice president of retail for Eagle, ID-based Idaho Potato Commission (IPC). “Since they often have different usages, you can increase overall potato sales by promoting varieties along with Russets.

Additionally, varieties offer increased margin and overall category profits.”

Russets contributed 44.7 percent to total potato sales dollars during the 52-weeks ending July 2, 2016, according to data provided by the Chicago, IL-headquartered Nielsen Perishables Group.

“Russet potatoes were down 3.5 percent last year compared to a decrease of 1.8 percent in the category overall,” says Don Ladhoff, director of fresh sales and marketing at Black Gold Farms, in Grand Forks, ND, citing Nielsen Perishables Group’s data. “Currently there are more Russets grown than are warranted.”



PHOTO COURTESY OF BLACK GOLD FARMS



**“Today’s consumers’ preferences are changing faster than how displays are changing in stores. ... There’s an opportunity to shift more square feet to better tasting higher-value potatoes like our Butter reds and Butter golds.”**

— John Pope, MountainKing Potatoes

However, “sales of organic Russets are getting stronger,” says Richard Leibowitz, president of Culinary Specialty Produce, in Watsonville, CA.

Red-skinned potato represented 18.7 percent of potato category dollars, while yellow-flesh came in at 11.0 percent, based on Nielsen Perishables Group statistics. Interestingly, figures provided by Potatoes USA for the 52-weeks ending April 2, 2016, showed red potatoes growing at 2 percent compared to the year prior, with yellow potatoes making double-digit gains at 15.4 percent.

“Year after year, red potatoes are increasing in demand and market share at the expense of round whites here on the East Coast market,” says Marc Turner, general manager of the Bushwick Commission Co., in Farmingdale, NY.

Rain and hail in the Red River Valley led to an estimated 25 percent-plus loss of the red-skinned crop in this prime growing area, according to Ted Kreis, marketing director of the Northern Plains Potato Growers Association (NPPGA), headquartered in East Grand Forks, MN. “On the other hand, we’re going to be over 10 percent of the crop as yellow-flesh this year, which is the largest it’s ever been.”

Specialty and purple potatoes collectively contribute 3.1 percent of potato category dollars, according to Nielsen Perishables Group. However, data from Potatoes USA shows Fingerlings grew at 4.1 percent.

“Fingerlings have become a necessity for a retailer who wants to be a one-stop-shop. The main reasons are flavor. That said, the most popular is a 1- to 2.5-pound pack of mixed Fingerlings with three or four varieties and colors including a purple for eye appeal,” says Culinary Specialty Produce’s Leibowitz.

Small-sized B- and C-sized potatoes are making bigger gains at retail.

“Customers really look for the little red and yellow Creamer potatoes especially in the fall and winter,” says Redner’s Stiles.

Likewise, “We’re seeing greater traction on sales of baby golds, reds and purples. They are volume items, but strong niche movers,” adds Alfonso Cano, produce director, of Anaheim, CA-based Northgate González Markets.

Small or baby-sized potatoes are extremely trendy, according to Robert Schueller, director

of public relations for Los Angeles-based Melissa’s/World Variety Produce. “Consumers are looking for potatoes that are much easier to cook. Baby potatoes have less than a third the amount of cooking time versus a larger regular-sized potato.”


Shippers say organically grown potatoes are on the rise across all varieties. During the 52-weeks ending July 2, Nielsen Perishables Group data shows organic potato sales accounted for 5 percent of total category dollars.

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“We started our organics program in 2000. Volume and sales dollars have doubled in the past five years,” says Christine Lindner, in national sales at Alsum Farms & Produce, in Friesland, WI.

There is still a large base of large or lower income families for which a 10-pound bag of potatoes is still appropriate. However, “household sizes are declining and retailers need to ensure they have sufficient package sizes to meet this changing customer,” says Mac Johnson, president and chief executive officer of Category Partners, LLC, in Denver, CO. “In addition, packaging is continuing to evolve. We’re seeing more trays and microwavable bags.”

This fall, Alsum Farms will introduce a new line of 24-ounce gourmet potato pouch packs. “The pouch provides a convenient grab-n-go concept for busy shoppers, it helps extend product shelf life, and it prevents contamination from consumer handling. In addition, the high-graphic pouch enables consumers to spot potatoes from a distance while allowing a viewing window of the product. The pouch offers better merchandising for retailers as it sits upright on the shelf,” explains Lindner.

### DISPLAY A BUFFET

“Having the right variety of potatoes in the produce department will give you the most positive impact to your potato sales,” says Potatoes USA’s Johnson. The operative

word is “right.”

“Today’s consumers’ preferences are changing faster than how displays are changing in stores. For example, if you look at a typical 18-foot table of potatoes, 70 percent are conventional Russets, and Russets represent less than half of category sales. There’s an opportunity to shift more square feet to better tasting higher-value potatoes like our Butter reds and Butter golds,” says MountainKing’s Pope.

Positioning can be as important as space allocation when it comes to sales. “Placing new value-added items at the beginning of the potato display will encourage consumers to try new offerings while also strolling down to see old favorites, such as the 5-pound bag of Russets,” says Alsum’s Lindner.

A huge buffet of potato offerings can be overwhelming and confusing to consumers. “There’s an opportunity to educate shoppers on the taste profiles and cooking uses for different varieties of potatoes — especially for Fingerlings, which people may not have experience using. Accomplish this with quick bullet points on a chalkboard sign like ‘all-purpose,’ ‘no peeling,’ ‘quick cooking.’ It doesn’t have to be a long explanation or extensive point-of-sale signage,” says Sherise Jones, marketing coordinator for Southwind Farms Inc., in Heyburn, ID.

Beyond these points, the basics of a good display always rule. “Proper rotation and

storage of potatoes is important, so their appearance remains good,” says Paul Dolan, general manager of Associated Potato Growers Inc., in Grand Forks, ND.

### THINKING OUTSIDE THE BAKED-BOILED-MASHED BOX

One of the biggest challenges in selling more potatoes, according to Category Partners’ Johnson, is overcoming the idea that potatoes are boring and they take too much time to prepare.

“Potatoes can be prepared so many other ways than just mashed or baked, and consumers, especially Millennials, are looking at new and different tastes. Those same consumers are also looking to get meals on the table faster. As an industry, we have to do a better job of communicating to these consumers that potatoes are much more versatile, and there are prep methods that can match today’s time constraints.”

There are several ways retailers can highlight these potato attributes. One way is secondary displays both in and out of the produce department.

“There’s an opportunity to cross-merchandise potatoes throughout the whole store. We do this regularly, and potato sales continue to increase due to impulse purchases,” says Redner’s Stiles.

In the produce department, there’s a double opportunity to show how potatoes can be healthfully prepared. “Cross-promote potatoes with healthful items to increase shopper’s understanding that potatoes are good for you. This includes salsa, mushrooms, avocados and guacamole as toppers. After all, it’s not the potato, it’s what you add to them,” says the IPC’s Pemsler.

Secondary displays in the meat case can lift sales outside of the produce department. “Consumers look at meat and potatoes as a natural meal solution and are more likely to purchase potatoes if they see ready-to-bake or grill potatoes paired next to steaks, pork chops or chicken in the meat aisle,” suggests Alsum’s Lindner.

The deli is another ideal place for potatoes. “Cross-merchandise small potatoes by rotisserie chicken. The fat from the chicken falls on them, cooks them, and they are delicious,” Culinary Specialty Produce’s Leibowitz. “Or, have the deli make a potato salad with our Harvest Moon (purple-skinned, yellow-flesh) potato. Then, while on display behind the case, put whole potatoes around the bowl so customers can see the potato used to make the salad and can recognize it when they see

PHOTO COURTESY OF BLACK GOLD FARMS



Smoking rather than grilling potatoes was a promotion Black Gold Farms offered over Father’s Day. The company purchased grills for participating stores. A poster showed shoppers in a four-step infographic how to turn their grill into a smoker along with a recipe for Smokin’ Red Roasties & Chili Rub Pork.

## “Show shoppers how to make homemade kettle chips from Fingerlings. This expands potatoes beyond a meal to a snack or appetizer occasion.”

— Sherise Jones, Southwind Farms

it in the produce department.”

Recipes are another great way to spur customers’ spud creativity in the kitchen. “On-trend potato recipes along with prepared images on packaging help inspire consumers with new ways to prepare potatoes,” says Alsum’s Lindner.

Show prepared images of potato dishes in circular ads, rather than raw potatoes, and accept signage from vendors and associations that offer recipes and/or quick preparation ideas, recommends the IPC’s Pemsler.

Millennial shoppers are especially looking for new and innovative ways to prepare America’s favorite vegetable, says Dana Rady, director of promotion, communication and consumer education at the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association, in Antigo, WI. “For example, use potatoes in place of bread for pizza crust or instead of noodles in lasagna. These two ideas are perfect if you have an allergy to gluten — given that potatoes are naturally gluten free.”

Tap into the kettle chip trend on foodservice bar menus, suggests Southwind Farms’ Jones. “Show shoppers how to make homemade kettle chips from Fingerlings. This expands potatoes beyond a meal to a snack or appetizer occasion.”

Smoking rather than grilling potatoes was a promotion Black Gold Farms offered over Father’s Day. The company purchased grills for a participating 80-store chain that positioned these units in front of the meat case. A poster showed shoppers in a four-step infographic how to turn their grill into a smoker along with a recipe for Smokin’ Red Roasties & Chili Rub Pork that featured red-skinned potatoes.

“The retailer saw an 86 percent increase in volume of red potato sales versus the week prior,” says Ladhoff.

Beyond store level, “we offer mobile-friendly recipes on our website that retailers can direct their customers too,” says Ralph Schwartz, director of category management and value-added marketing for Potandon

Produce, LLC, in Idaho Falls, ID.

The Monte Vista, CO-headquartered Colorado Potato Administrative Committee, is working with a television station in Denver to produce and broadcast recipe videos.

“This give shoppers ideas and shows them different ways to prepare potatoes before they arrive at the store,” says Jim Ehrlich, executive director.

Recipes are also a great way to encourage customers to purchase more than one variety of potato during a shopping trip.

“We’ll put baby reds for potato salad and Bakers for a dinner side dish on ad at the same time,” says Jim Weber, produce supervisor for Tadych’s Econofoods, a six-store chain based in Brillion, WI.

Suppliers, such as MountainKing, assist in spurring multi-purchases with its packaging. For example, the company’s Butter Golds show a photo of prepared mashed potatoes, its Seafood Market Reds are contained in boil-in-the-bag pack, and its Steakhouse Bakers suggest serving with beef. “It’s all about sugges-

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## merchandising review ▶ potatoes

tive selling,” says Pope of MountainKing.

Lastly, position potatoes as part of meal solutions.

“Consumers appreciate when retailers offer a meal solution by pairing items that have a high affinity rate. We know this is an opportunity for the potato category and are researching where these wins exist,” says Potatoes USA’s Johnson.

### IT’S MORE THAN JUST PRICE

Variety in promotions — price and non-price — is key.

“Price is always an important ingredient in potato promotions,” says Potandon’s Schwartz.

Potatoes on ad sell more rapidly than when not on promotion, agrees Alsum’s Lindner. “Ideally, promoting different varieties several times a quarter lifts volume and profits.”

As for the price itself, “We need to get retailers to price potatoes according to the changing market and pass price decreases along to the consumer rather than keep the pricing the same no matter what the market,” says Associated Potato Grower’s Dolan.

Ryan Bybee, sales manager at GPOD of Idaho, in Shelley, ID, agrees. “The fact is potatoes have been so cheap this year, and we have not seen the retail price drop accordingly.

With a large supply, the retailer could lower his price and move more volume which in turn would help bring the price back up for everyone including the farmer.”

There are always times where price is important, says RPE’s Shell, “but not every promotion should be strictly focused on price.”

One idea is to include potatoes in seasonal and holiday-themed promotions.

“For example, potato nachos for Super Bowl or potato kebabs during summer barbecue season lift the category,” recommends Alsum’s Lindner.

St. Patrick’s Day in March is another ideal potato-selling holiday.

“This year, we saw an increased number of retailers focused on promoting potatoes for St. Patrick’s Day, and as a result, we saw a significant increase in promotional lift,” says Potato USA’s Johnson.

“The greatest lift occurred with red and white potatoes. In fact, the percent subsidized volume, or the percent of volume that would have sold regardless of a promotion, decreased compared to last year. The data suggests the promotions were also more impactful by focusing on red potato promotions; for example, 5-pound bags instead of bulk reds,”



PHOTO COURTESY OF REDNER'S MARKETS

adds Johnson.

In addition, retailers can take advantage of promotional activities hosted by associations such as the IPC’s Potato Lover’s Month each February.

“We are partners once again with Hormel diced bacon. However, the big difference is the prize. In 2017, instead of cash, the first place winners in each category will receive a cruise vacation.

Finally, when it comes to promotion, whether it be based on price, different varieties or preparation suggestions, one thing is most important, says Category Partners’ Johnson.

“Keep potatoes up front and on the top of consumer’s mind to get them in the basket more often.” **pb**

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# Annual Idaho Potato Contest

Retailers get consumers excited by creating a sales-driven product display with custom point-of-sale materials and recipes.



The team at Northgate González Markets in Los Angeles poses with its 'Couch Potato' entry.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NORTHGATE GONZÁLEZ MARKETS



1-5 Registers  
Cristian Rodriguez of  
Grocery Depot,  
Williston, FL



6-9 Registers  
Julie Bolton of Kroger,  
Elkhart, IN

Celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, Idaho Potato Commission (IPC) evaluates display-contest submissions from across the nation for its annual Potato Lover's Month.

The criteria this year focused on building an attractive and memorable Idaho Potato display along with Hormel Real Bacon Bits and Country Crock. The websites of the three brands must be incorporated into the displays. The creative masterpieces needed to be displayed in the produce department for at least one week during the contest period (January 11 – March 11).

“We enjoy participating in display contests,” says Alfonso Cano, produce director of Los Angeles-based Northgate González Markets. “This one seemed a natural since potatoes are a shopping list item for our customers. Plus, potatoes are practical and a lot less perishable than most other items. We

used the 10-pound bale sacks as the base of the display, which allowed us to accumulate a large tonnage in a small amount of space. It took us eight hours to build. The theme of the display was 'Couch Potato.' We built 10 couches around the outside of the display using 10-pound Idaho potato bags. It was a lot of fun."

The attention-grabbing 103,000-pound display featured nearly a dozen varieties of Idaho-grown potatoes supplied by shipper

members of the Eagle, ID-headquartered IPC and Los Angeles, CA-based specialty supplier, Melissa's/World Variety Produce. The entry received recognition in the 10-plus-register category.

PRODUCE BUSINESS congratulates all the winners with this pictorial of the retailers that received top honors in each category. We applaud the IPC's ongoing initiative to celebrate the Idaho potato in such an engaging and entertaining way. **pb**



10+ Registers  
Michael Dyer of Raley's #108,  
Reno, NV



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Karen Caplan, President & CEO, Frieda's, Inc.

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# Demand For Peruvian Onions Continues To Escalate

Sweet flavor keeps American consumers coming back for more. BY HOWARD RIELL



**P**eruvian onions satisfy a lot of needs, wants and desires for American consumers, and they are showing their appreciation.

“Peruvian sweet onion sales continue to grow each year,” says Sloan Lott, sales manager for Bland Farms in Glennville, GA. “They are still sold mostly in a 60/40 split: 60 percent being bulk 40-pound cartons, and 40 percent consumer bags. The consumer bag sector has been growing rapidly over the years.”

Lott believes Peruvian onions should be promoted as “the premium sweet onion” during the fall and winter months. “Peruvian sweet onions can be cross-marketed with potatoes, salads, hamburgers and more. We also cross-market with our Vidalia brand items throughout the winter.”

Bland Farms’ senior sales manager Jeff Rhoden points out there is strong demand from consumers for sweet onions year-round. “We believe Peruvian sweet onions are one of the best sweet onion options available once the Vidalia sweet onions are finished. Most retailers reduce the shelf space for sweet onions once Vidalias are finished, but they keep sweet onions available for their customers.”

“The sweet onion crop in Peru is coming in nicely, with adequate volume and size of onions for our core business,” reports Martin Kamer, president of Keystone Fruit Marketing, Inc. in Greencastle, PA. “Demand and high-quality sweet onions from Peru are expected to be excellent throughout the fall and winter selling season.”

Over the past several years, Kamer continues, demand for sweet onions has been steadily increasing. “This demand has been fueled by increased consumer awareness and growing popularity of sweet onions. For a period of time, the available supply of authentic sweet onions was



PHOTO COURTESY OF KEYSTONE

lagging behind the demand. Today, a reliable steady supply of year-round authentic sweet onions is available to meet increasing demand.”

Over the past year, Reidsville, GA-based Shuman Produce Inc.’s RealSweet Peruvian sweet onions have enjoyed a banner season with good yields and excellent quality, which president John Shuman says enabled the firm to keep up with record-setting consumer demand.

“While it’s still too early to make estimates of this year’s crop in terms of volume,” says president John Shuman, “sweet onions remain the onion category driver and account for a third of total onion sales.”

Recent trends, he adds, show sweet onions are a staple in many consumers’ kitchens and a popular ingredient in some of the most creative home-cooked meals. “They’re valued for the mild, sweet flavor and inherent versatility in a variety of dishes.”

## ‘GO BIG’

According to Kamer, fall/winter is a great time to create impulse sales by building large displays of sweet onions. “Go big to capitalize on one of today’s hottest trends — fresh produce — which is healthful, colorful



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**“Many retailers strive to take advantage of cross-merchandising by strategically placing onions near products that can be utilized with sweet onions.”**

— Martin Kamer, Keystone Fruit Marketing, Inc.

and bursting with freshness. Nothing says buy me like big, prominent bulk and consumer bag displays.”

Due to increased demand of sweet onions, many retailers found it advantageous to carry bulk or loose jumbo sweet onions as well as consumer bags of medium sweet onions. Endcaps, standalones, value-added product offerings, multi-size strategies and bagged displays offer consumers multiple buying options and ensure sales lift.

When it comes to value added, Kamer points out onions are processed for fresh

consumption — peeled, sliced, diced and chunked onions, “which also goes directly to the foodservice industry. Fresh onions are used to enhance flavors in a wide range of recipes, including salads, soups, stews, and casseroles, as well as used as a garnish in sandwiches, wraps and in classic Mexican or Italian cuisine.”

Approximately 15 to 18 percent of onions are processed for use in prepared food items such as salsa, soups, and appetizers.

Cross-marketing can be a powerful retail strategy. Sweet onion usage “is very diverse, and cross-merchandising opportunities are limitless,” says Kamer.

“Many retailers strive to take advantage of cross-merchandising by strategically placing onions near products that can be utilized with sweet onions. The sweet mild flavors of onions make them fantastic on a hamburger or in a fresh salad; simply slice and enjoy.”

As an ingredient, he says, they are guaran-



teed to enhance favorite recipes. “Sweet onions will take any menu offering to a whole new level. They are perfect with steaks, burgers and kabobs ... grilling promotions are always a hit. Don’t forget the fresh fruit baskets; sweet onions are terrific with fresh fruit.”

Sweet onions present an opportunity for incremental produce sales if cross-merchandised, says Kamer. “The health and flavor benefits are an easy sell for consumers looking to cook tasteful food without salt and cholesterol.”

Today’s innovative packaging includes usage tips, recipes, and nutrition details. Growers, shippers and retailers continuously work to develop state-of-the-art packaging and displays to catch consumers’ eyes while at the same time providing information on nutrition and utilizing products to boost retailer sales year-round.

Indeed, says Kamer, Peruvian onions help make availability of year-round sweet onions possible. “Consumers respond to brand recognition. Consistently purchasing the highest-quality sweet onion brands from only reputable industry leaders is the easiest way for retailers to provide consumers with confidence that they are buying the highest quality, safest, freshest and most flavorful sweet onions.”

**SEAMLESS TRANSITION**

Shuman says his RealSweet Peruvian sweet onions are part of a year-round program, “and provide consumers with a high-quality sweet onion with a similar shape and flavor profile to the Vidalia onion during the fall and winter months.

“Peruvian sweet onions increased in popularity because they follow directly after Vidalia onion season,” says Shuman. “The transition is seamless from Vidalia onions to their Peruvian counterparts.”

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## ■ CONSUMER COOKING TRENDS

Food TV, celebrity chefs, cooking shows, and all forms of media bring awareness to all fresh fruits and vegetables, and onions are a big part of this awareness as a staple ingredient.

"The sweet mild flavors of onions make them fantastic on a hamburger or in a fresh salad or with steaks and kabobs — simply slice and enjoy," says Martin Kamer, president of Keystone Fruit Marketing, Inc. in Greencastle, PA. "As an ingredient they are guaranteed to enhance favorite recipes. Sweet onions will take any menu offering to a whole new level."

Many promotions target the consumer, he adds, displaying tips on how to use onions to include recipes when possible. Imported sweet onions can be one of the key ingredients used in many holiday recipes.

"Product differentiation gives consumers reasons to buy with confidence," says

Kamer. "Emphasizing the quality, flavor, and nutrition differences of authentic sweet onions over regular cooking onions will promote higher rings at the cash register. The top two reasons people eat fruits and vegetables are taste and nutrition. Product education and tasting demos allow consumers to experience products and always generate sales lifts."

Promotional efforts are increased through ad programs focusing on special pricing during holiday periods or special events.

"Most consumers use them in salads," says Sloan Lott, sales manager for Bland Farms in Glennville, GA. "Also, in hamburgers and any other items where they would use regular yellows."

"Sweet onions are valued for their sweet, mild flavor and their inherent versatility and everyday use in so many rec-

ipes and ethnic cuisines," says John Shuman, president of Reidsville, GA-based Shuman Produce Inc.

"Consumers who purchase RealSweet sweet onions are likely to be fresh and healthy premium shoppers who prefer home-cooked meals, purchase specialty items, and are more likely to buy products commonly used in ethnic cuisines, specifically Mexican or Italian-influenced meals."

Sweet onions also add a new flavor profile to tailgate classics and soups in the fall, as cooler weather becomes the norm.

Shuman cites research conducted by the Chicago-based Nielsen Perishables Group in 2015 that shows an increased consumption of fresh foods by adults aged 18 to 34. "Today's consumer is becoming more educated on the versatility of sweet onions and using them in a wide variety of recipes." **pb**



same variety grown in the sandy soils of the Vidalia region, explains Shuman.

"Research we conducted with Nielsen Perishables Group indicates sweet onions drive sales of a variety of items — especially when marketed together. For example, consumers with sweet onions in their carts are more likely to purchase produce such as peppers, celery, tomatoes, mushrooms and bagged salad as well as fresh meats such as beef and chicken."

In addition, Shuman Produce remains engaged with consumers through its website and social media outlets by promoting its year-round sweet onion availability.

Shuman executives recommend that their retail partners stock both bagged and bulk product, and customize offerings to meet their customers' demands. Production of bagged sweet onions continues to grow, and now account for nearly half of the total annual

volume shipped to market. Shuman Produce provides RealSweet Peruvian sweet onions in a variety of packs and sizes to meet the needs of

all demographics. Bags, bins and boxes provide bright colors and imagery — making them easy to merchandise.

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“Merchandising sweet onions alongside additional products that can be combined to produce an easy meal solution draws consumers in and raises the ring at the register.”

—John Shuman, Shuman Produce Inc.

Shuman and his team approach added-value as an opportunity to make purchasing sweet onions as easy as possible, and suggest placing sweet onions in the center of the produce department for maximum effect.

“Merchandising sweet onions alongside additional products that can be combined to produce an easy meal solution draws consumers in and raises the ring at the register,” says Shuman. “For example, a display including sweet onions, tomatoes and avocados could be used to create a flavorful promotion.”

Demand for Peruvian sweet onions continues to grow as consumers recognize their high quality and mild, sweet flavor. Regardless of regional demographics, sweet onions continue to drive onion category sales as well as sales of other produce items.

In fact, a basket containing sweet onions is 40 percent larger than the average produce basket, according to Shuman. RealSweet sweet onions pair well with numerous items inside and outside of the produce department, says Shuman, and drive sales of many other products.

“That’s why they continue to drive the onion category,” says Shuman. “Retailers should consider displays outside of produce to maximize sales during the fall months when grilling and tailgating are top of mind. RealSweet Peruvian sweet onions “make the perfect pairing for burgers, sausage and chicken on the grill, and research shows merchandising them together increases sales of both products.”

As his retail partners know, displays drive sales “and that’s why we provide bags, bins and boxes that work to complement each other ... and featuring product with bright colors and imagery draws consumers’ eyes and attention,” explains Shuman. He also recommends secondary displays during peak season and holiday promotions to take advantage of the incremental sales during these periods. **pb**

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To assist retailers in managing the category, (PAIA) has developed the 2016/2017 Fresh Asparagus Category Statistics and Trends, available from the association office – [prestige@1scom.net](mailto:prestige@1scom.net)

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PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHIGAN APPLE COMMITTEE

# MICHIGAN APPLES

## Capture Hearts With Taste And Local Element

Clearing two highly coveted features, apple sales for the state's crop thrive from rich breeding grounds and geographical advantage.

BY CHRIS AUMAN



**A**pples are an important part of Michigan's agricultural mix. They lead the state for tree fruit in terms of sales and generate in excess of \$800 million in annual economic activity for the "Mitten State," according to Belding, MI-based marketer, BelleHarvest Sales, Inc. Michigan's 9.2 million apple trees make it the third largest apple producing state in the country, according to Lansing, MI-based Michigan Apple Committee. There's a simple reason for this. They taste great. Michigan apples are sweet, crisp, juicy and available fresh every fall. Not only do Michigan varieties have a great flavor profile, they also enjoy a high profile as a locally grown commodity throughout the Midwest, and the health benefits of apples have been firmly established.

## A CONSUMER FAVORITE

“Michigan still grows the best-tasting Honeycrisp, Fuji, and Jonagold, according to our consumer research,” says Diane Smith, executive director of the Michigan Apple Committee. This preference for Michigan apples is reflected in the focus groups the committee conducted in the fall of 2015. Consumers in Schaumburg, IL, and Troy, MI, ranked Michigan Honeycrisp at No. 1, and both groups placed the Michigan Fuji and Michigan Jonagold varieties in the Top 5.

The apples used in the group were purchased from retailers within 50 miles of the testing site and within 24 hours prior to the tasting. Half of the apples were purchased bagged, and the other half were packaged in trays. The tests revealed what many already know about Michigan apples: they taste great. Participants enjoyed the balance of sweet and tart, the crunch and juiciness as well as the smell, look and texture. “Because of Michigan’s unique climate and geography, we have ideal conditions for growing apples,” says Smith. “Plenty of sun, moisture, proximity to the Great Lakes, and nutrient-rich soil — all these factors contribute to superior flavor.” Smith also credits the state’s apple growers for their hard work



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**“For folks who haven’t eaten Michigan apples with regularity, we want to try to encourage them to seek them out, because they will have a better eating experience.”**

— Chris Sandwich, BelleHarvest Sales

in apple cultivation.

Chris Sandwich, vice president of sales and marketing for BelleHarvest Sales, also credits climate for the success of the fruit. “For apples that are grown in Michigan, one of the great things we have going for us is the climate. We have a real diversity in our temperatures throughout the year, which promotes flavor development. We grow really high-flavor apples here. For folks who haven’t eaten Michigan apples with regularity, we want to try to encourage them to seek them out, because they will have a better eating experience.”

### A BOUNTIFUL SEASON

All signs indicate the 2016 season will be a good one for Michigan’s apple crop. A warm summer is a major contributing factor. “I expect the Michigan crop to be around 20 percent larger than last year,” says Scott Swindeman, vice president, All Fresh GPS based in Sparta, MI. “It very well could be the largest fresh apple crop in the state’s history.”

According to Tom Labbe, domestic sales manager for Jack Brown Produce based in Sparta, MI, the 2016 crop won’t be notable simply for its size. “Not only will the crop be larger than recent years,” he says, “it’s shaping up to be a better quality crop as well. We had a few scares there where the temperature went below where we wanted it to, but it never really maintained a low temperature.”

Sandwich also anticipates a good crop of apples this year. “Mother Nature has been kind to us,” he says. “We should have a similar crop to last year in volume, but our mix continues to evolve. We’ll have a few less of the older varieties, and more Gala, Fuji, and HoneyCrisp. Those three varieties really represent the new backbone for our business.”

Don Armock, president, Riveridge Produce Marketing based in Sparta, MI notes the warm summer’s effect on the 2016 crop. “We had a much warmer summer than we’ve seen, certainly in the past two growing seasons,” says Armock. “That [factor] played into making our individual fruit size a little bigger, and the crop size a little bigger. We have bigger crops of Honeycrisp, Gala, Fuji and Jonagold.”

### VARIETAL CHANGES

In addition to old favorites, new ones were added to the mix. Matt Thiede, partner at All Fresh GPS, explains, “Over the past five years there has been a large investment in new plantings with a focus on the big three varieties (Gala, Fuji, and Honeycrisp), resulting in Gala production outpacing Red Delicious. Additionally, many growers are making investments in early strains of Pink Lady and EverCrisp, and select growers are planting managed varieties like SweetTango, Kiku, and Kanzi.

With so many varieties to choose from, there is confusion on the part of some consumers regarding which variety offers what taste. Riveridge’s Armock attributes consumer decisions to their age and where they grew up.

“People make decisions on varieties based on what they were brought up eating, and when they start making their first choices as they move out of the house; playing to those customers’ preferences is very important,” he says.

The inability for consumers to distinguish between varieties means display will be the primary driver in decision-making. According to Armock, “There are people who are probably a bit more interested in trying different taste profiles. There are a lot of people who look at store displays and don’t know one from the other, because it’s very difficult to differentiate, so they make a decision on what looks good at the moment.”

### DISPLAYS AND MARKETING

Attractive bulk displays remain a preferred method of display to get apples from bushel baskets to shopping baskets. Smith at the Michigan Apple Committee explains how social media is playing a part in marketing as well. “We are working on some fun social media ideas to educate consumers about identifying Michigan Apples in the marketplace. We are emphasizing the themes of flavor, and of course, the health benefits of apples.”

The committee found social media to be a highly effective tool for reaching target audiences and to get them talking about Michigan Apples. “It’s such a great tradition in our state,”



says Smith. “People get really excited about the new fall crop each year.”

The fall apple crop doesn’t just appeal to Michiganders. Local means different things to different people, but for apples, Michigan is considered the backyard for many of the surrounding Midwest states from Minnesota and Iowa, to Illinois and Indiana.

“What we found regarding local is apples have a broader definition, and regional is probably a better way to categorize local,” says Sandwick of BelleHarvest. “We’re regionally relevant for quite a few states up here. Origin in food is certainly something that is increasingly important to folks, so we always try to help our retail partners put Michigan on the displays, and I think we’re seeing more folks who are willing to do that as their customers care more about where their food is coming from.”

Calling out Michigan as the source of apples is a great way to boost sales. “Locally grown has been a big driver,” says Armock of Riveridge, “but I’d say within a seven or eight state area, we’re recognized as the locally or regionally grown varieties, but we market well outside of those boundaries”

Thiede at All Fresh recommends retailers

**“Locally grown has been a big driver, but I’d say within a seven or eight state area, we’re recognized as the locally or regionally grown varieties, but we market well outside of those boundaries.”**

— Don Armock, Riveridge Produce Marketing

emphasize local as well, saying, “Michigan has a strong position as the local apple in the upper Midwest.” Thiede suggests produce executives: “Distinguish Michigan’s quality differences from other states (e.g. crispness, juiciness, and hardness), capitalize on local, and take advantage of the vast offering of varieties grown in the state.”

Jack Brown’s Labbe also recommends

retailers take advantage of the already large following Michigan apples throughout the Midwest. “People understand the quality of a Michigan apple, so I think just utilize the message of Michigan freshness every day everywhere. It says everything. We’re known for a lot of our commodities up here, but people know they’ll always have a great taste profile whenever they pick up a Michigan apple.”

In terms of display, “bulk is still the primary driver,” says Sandwick. “We grow big, beautiful apples that display best bulk on the shelf, but we’ve seen the growth of the stand-up pouch with a grab-and-go handle that — when displayed properly — gives a little more billboard space. For these newer varieties, we have an opportunity to grab the consumer’s eye.”

BelleHarvest offers retailers secondary displays to hold a case of apples in pouch bags, which can be set up in the candy aisle, with chips, or near the registers to promote healthier eating throughout the store.

Space is limited and highly coveted, so gaining more for produce is always a struggle as packaged goods dominate. “It’s not an easy battle,” admits Sandwick, but Michigan’s apple growers will continue to fight for it. **pb**

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# St. Louis Projects Image Of Tradition And Loyalty

HERITAGE MEETS TRENDY IN THIS PRODUCE MARKETPLACE.

By Mindy Hermann, RD

Located on the western bank of the Mississippi River and on the border between Missouri and Illinois, St. Louis has enjoyed a long history as an inland port city and gateway between eastern and western states. St. Louis is home to nearly 20 Fortune 1000 companies, and it ranks as the 20th largest metropolitan area in the U.S.

Compared to the average U.S. household, St. Louis households are slightly smaller, with a higher median household income and greater percentage of household members with a bachelor's degree or higher.

According to the most recent census figures, metropolitan St. Louis is racially diverse, with similar percentages of whites and blacks and small percentages of Asians and Hispanics/Latinos.

Like many other U.S. cities, St. Louis is enjoying a resurgence of its downtown, gentrification of nearby areas, and emergence of a vibrant food and beverage scene.

St. Louis projects an image of tradition and loyalty. Among its top-grossing retail chains are 75- and 100-year old brands. Soulard Farmers Market, which is among the oldest farmers markets in the U.S., traces its roots to colonial years and continues to sell direct to shoppers and chefs today. Produce Row, the city's terminal market, houses many wholesalers who have been in the business for more than a century under multiple generations of family ownership. The importance of value for the dollar is reflected in the strong market position of chains such as Wal-Mart, Super-valu-owned Save-A-Lot, and membership warehouse stores; it also puts significant price pressure on retailers and wholesalers alike.

## WHOLESALE STRIVE TO STAY RELEVANT

St. Louis' Produce Row terminal market once served as the hub for produce coming into the city and continues to provide a transfer point and short-term storage for wholesalers.



Its main buildings on 35 acres house a total of 98 units, with 2,000 square feet of floor space per unit, although not all are occupied. Today's wholesalers represent a mix of long-time suppliers and newcomers, some of which supply either retail or foodservice but not both.

Ole Tyme Produce, in the business for more than 40 years and located in Produce Row, supplies only foodservice categories, including hospital, higher education, K-12, casual dining, and white tablecloth.

"Quality is our company legacy, and we leave a lasting good impression," says Joan Daleo, president. "We meet specs for high quality and use quality shippers. If we can't get the quality we require, we won't buy."

Ole Tyme, a Pro\*Act member, sources nationally and globally through grower/shipper along with a local component.

Midstate Produce, also on Produce Row, recently was purchased from a longtime owner by two chefs who "aim to treat chefs the way we would want to be treated," explains Chef Joseph Sanders, president and co-owner. "Midstate is a one-stop shop for produce for restaurants; if we don't have it, we find it. We always look for unique items and the best produce to meet the needs of the culinary revolution in St. Louis restaurants. We buy local and home-grown as much as possible but the cost has to make sense." The company also differentiates itself on safety, traceability, and sustainability.

The George A. Heimos Produce Co. has been in business since 1913 on Produce Row and is under fourth-generation management as a full-service wholesaler covering a 250-mile radius.

"We are known for tailoring our deliveries to the many needs of our customers," says Jim Heimos, president. "Our current customer base is about half retail. We serve small and larger grocers ranging from independents

to Lucky's and Fresh Thyme to Dierdorf's and Schnucks with local, conventional, and commodity items."

On the foodservice side, the company supplies large companies such as Middendorf and US Foods.

Charlie Gallagher Jr., president of United Fruit and Produce on Produce Row, says the company stays nimble by "relying on our talented young buyers/sellers working with our experienced produce people. We are really impressed with our young people's energy, ideas and ability to close."

Away from Produce Row, Front Row Produce services both retail and foodservice customers of all sizes. The company differentiates itself by specializing in repacking and overwrapping of tomatoes and a broad line of vegetables.

"We have a big, food safety-certified facility for handling the repacks that others are not doing because of food safety concerns and liability," explains Tony Pupillo, president.

Central Illinois-based Cusumano & Sons exemplifies an increasingly common wholesale player, a supplier headquartered outside of metropolitan St. Louis. Through its area representative Keith Omura, Cusumano is a primary or secondary supplier of home-grown produce — defined by Cusumano as grown within a 200-mile radius — to independent grocery stores and chains such as Lucky's Market.

Wholesalers note that the rapidly changing marketplace is changing the produce environment in St. Louis, starting with the diminished dominance of the terminal market concept.

"First, terminal markets are facing pressure to modernize with food safety and temperature upgrades," observes Omura. "Second, specialists don't exist in large numbers the way they did years ago. In the '50s, for example, Produce Row had 20 or 30 specialist companies. Third,

## ST. LOUIS MARKET PROFILE

retailers increasingly buy direct and large companies have taken over restaurant supply, so less product goes through the terminal market. Fourth, companies from 300-plus miles away are saturating the market with products sourced from their point of origin. Product is coming into St. Louis, but not originating in St. Louis.”

“The industry changes year after year, leading to fewer vendors and wholesalers,” says Heimos. “Larger chains go direct and cut out the middlemen. That is why it is so important to keep relationships going and change with the times.”

Front Row Produce’s chief operations officer Eric Schriever points out that a changing marketplace offers opportunities.

“While some customers in St. Louis still pick up their orders, distribution is a growing area. Because foodservice increasingly does its own contracting and pricing, wholesalers need to evolve into distributors.”

Gradually increasing cultural diversity also will affect demand. “With more Hispanics moving into St. Louis, I am seeing more demand for Hispanic items,” says Omura, of Cusumano. “Asian markets too are growing in number and variety of produce offered.”

Food safety impacts the wholesale environment in St. Louis as it does across the country.

“Food safety is the biggest concern and a top priority of restaurants,” says Schriever. “They have to purchase from companies with a safe supply chain and that can execute in the event of a recall.”

Competition for customers will continue to escalate as “big companies get bigger and little guys go away,” says Omura. “Companies are coming into St. Louis, so St. Louis firms need to go out of their territory to survive. In retail, entry is aggressive, but it is without the population growth to support it. Companies are gaining market share by taking from someone else.”

## NEWCOMERS JOIN HERITAGE BRANDS IN RETAIL

For years, two chains dominated the St. Louis retail marketplace. Schnuck’s — the top-grossing chain according to the *Chain Store Guide’s* 2015 Market Share report (with 25 percent of the market) — opened its first St. Louis store more than 75 years ago. Today supports 69 area stores.

Dierbergs, also a longstanding St. Louis supermarket chain (with 10 percent market share), traces its heritage back to the mid-1800s.

Straub’s, a four-store local chain dating back to the early 1900s has a fraction of the sales

of Schnuck’s and Dierberg’s but maintains a loyal customer base.

“Then, as now, Straub’s is known for high quality, great customer service, and a large selection of locally grown items,” says Greg Lake, Straub’s produce manager in Clayton, MO. “In response to customer demand for convenience, we continue to expand our selection of fresh-cut, fruit platters, and vegetable trays. The more we can do for our customers, the more they like it.”

Lake points out that St. Louis is becoming saturated with retailers who are competing for the same customer. Recent years have seen the entry into St. Louis of specialty retailers Fresh Thyme Farmers Market, Whole Foods Market, and Lucky’s Market, which drives out mom-and-pops, notes Heimos of The George A. Heimos Produce Co.

Increased competition at the higher end forces heritage retailers to ramp up their selection of local and organic produce.

The strong presence of Wal-Mart and Save-A-Lot, the No. 2 and 3 retailers, along with warehouse clubs, Aldi, and dollar stores puts pressure on price and value. The Fresh Market closed its St. Louis store earlier this year and additional shake-out in retail can be expected. **pb**



The advertisement for United Fruit & Produce Co. features a circular logo at the top left with the text "UNITED FRUIT & PRODUCE CO." around the perimeter and "UFP" in the center, with the tagline "IF IT'S UNITED, IT'S FRESH" below. To the right of the logo is a photograph of several clear plastic containers filled with fresh-cut fruits and vegetables, including strawberries, kiwi, and bell peppers. Below the logo and photo, the company name "United Fruit & Produce Co." is written in a large, stylized font, followed by "Whole Sale • Fresh Cut • Repack Logistics • Warehouse Distribution" in a smaller font. At the bottom, there are two more photographs: one showing packaged produce bags and another showing fresh produce like asparagus and bell peppers. The text "Family Owned and Operated" is written in a script font, followed by the website "www.UnitedFruitAndProduce.com" and the phone number "(314) 621-9440 • 55 Produce Row • St. Louis, MO".

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# Lucky's Market

THE NATIONAL CHAIN SEIZES QUALITY AND VALUE-BASED OPPORTUNITIES.

By Mindy Hermann, RD

**“W**e are the store for cool kids looking for good food, inexpensive produce, and quick meal solutions,” says Steve Oates, vice president, produce and floral of Lucky's Market, which has headquarters in Niwot, CO, and two stores in the greater St. Louis area (Ellisville and Rock Hill, MO).

“We offer a full produce department, with a lot of value-added options, along with a salad bar with 10 different salads and ready-made meals to take home.”

Lucky's shoppers enter the store through the produce department, which occupies approximately one-third of the store and accounts for 25 percent of business — “double the industry average,” notes Oates.

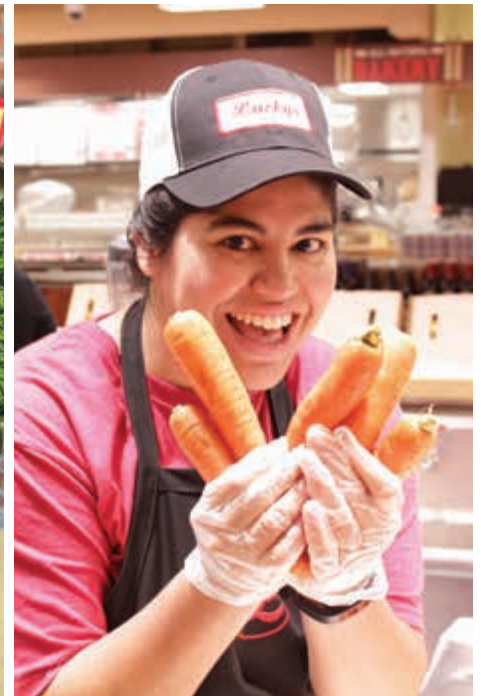
Approximately 50 percent of the produce department is stocked with conventional produce; 35 percent with organic; and 15 percent with local — depending on the season. Up to 15 associates staff the department.

“What makes us unusual is that we carry full lines of conventional, organic, local, and specialty fruits and vegetables rather than limited selections of certain items,” says Oates. “Our customers like choice, so we make sure that we carry everything — especially local.”

Lucky's purchases from a variety of suppliers, grower/shippers, local farmers, importers, Amish farms and auctions.

Lucky's competes with higher-end retailers on selection and with value chains on price. “Our goal is to sell the best possible, top-quality product we can for as little as we can (but at a level that keeps the bosses happy),” explains Oates. “We like to say that we offer organics for the 99 percent of shoppers who are not in the top 1 percent. We are willing to lose money on some items by pricing them to move.”

Produce is actively marketed and cross-merchandised throughout the store. Themed displays pair fruits and vegetables with likely partners: apple and pears with cheese, avocados with chips, and others. Responding to shopper interest in area farmers, Lucky's hosts meet-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LUCKY'S MARKET



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the-farmer events, inviting growers to the store to mingle with customers and answer questions.

Stores also post the names and locations of farmers at point-of-sale. Lucky's reaches out to its “foodie” base with in-store active and passive demos in the department and recipes on the store website.

Supplementing its in-store promotions are a weekly ad flyer, with double ad days on Wednesdays, and a strong social media presence. “Millennials shop online so that is how we reach out to them,” says Oates.

Lucky's has seen changes in its two years in the St. Louis marketplace that could portend retail and wholesale shakeouts.

“Retail prices dropped across all markets, but customers are putting pressure on retailers for local, which is more expensive,” says Oates.

“The terminal market is changing. While large wholesalers and smaller players still are there, a lot of chains buy directly from grower/shippers, and both technology and transportation are eliminating the middleman,” he says.

pb

# Prasino

THIS ECHO-FRIENDLY RESTAURANT PRIDES ITSELF ON SUSTAINABILITY AND LOCAL SUPPORT FROM FARMERS.

By Mindy Hermann, RD

**A** lively restaurant scene turned St. Louis and surrounding cities into destinations for food lovers. For example, St. Charles, a city west of St. Louis and on the other side of the Missouri River, “is on fire in terms of restaurants,” notes Joan Daleo, president of St. Charles, MO-based wholesaler Ole Tyme Produce.

St. Louis chefs have become strongly loyal to local, even with the city’s four-season climate. “Living in St. Louis, we have access to a lot of great produce, but we also have to cook with the seasons,” says chef Gerard Craft, recipient of the James Beard Best Chef: Midwest award and owner of Pastaria, Porano Pasta, and Sardella. “Due to our changing weather of hot, humid summers and cold winters, we had to learn to utilize what I call humble ingredients — carrots, potatoes, root vegetables — in new and interesting ways.”

Seasonality also creates excitement and a sense of urgency. Chef Craft notes, “at our restaurants, we appreciate our short seasons for spring and summer produce, and we highlight those products on our menus. One ingredient can be featured in a multitude of ways from pickled to dehydrated to grilled to raw. We also look for ways to preserve and ferment those products into the other seasons.”

According to Jennifer McDaniel, MS, RDN, spokesperson for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, St. Louis, restaurants in the city (such as Schlafly Bottleworks & Taproom, Sidney Street Café, Katie’s Pizza and Pasta, and Element Restaurant & Lounge) go beyond just using local items and grow their own.

“It is not uncommon to see a farmer’s name or farm location on menus when dining out in the Lou,” says McDaniel. “When restaurants use local produce, they educate diners and heighten the awareness of supporting local farming. At the same time, with extreme seasonal conditions of St. Louis, local produce

Lobster Avocado Small Plate



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is not always available in large enough quantities for restaurant use.”

From the chef’s perspective, St. Louis markets are following the lead of restaurants in their creativity. Executive Chef Tony Marchetto of Prasino points out that Dierberg’s is proud of its growing percentage of local produce items, many of which may have been introduced on the menus of St. Louis restaurants.

Chef Marchetto, proprietor of Prasino, St. Charles, is so committed to fruits and vegetables that he received a Produce Excellence in Foodservice Award, honoring chefs for their innovative and influential use of fresh produce in the culinary arts, from the United Fresh Produce Association in 2015.

Having trained in restaurants that focus on local sourcing, Chef Marchetto believes in purchasing close to home. “I want to support the farmers that I love — farmers that I have known for 12 years,” he says. “We’ve grown up together. I remember, for example, when St. Isidore Farms in Moscow Mills, MO, grew just tomatoes. Now it takes the farmer an hour to read me his list of available items.”

Prasino purchases from a close circle of sources rather than a classic middleman. One of the restaurant’s suppliers, Crop Circle, offers produce from several local farms. Additionally, Chef Marchetto often works with Ole Tyme Produce’s Daleo to bring more farmers into local sourcing for area restaurants.

The restaurant, open since spring 2013, offers an eclectic menu driven by sustainability. Chef Marchetto describes the menu as “all over the place” with dishes such as sushi, omelets, and steaks that nonetheless remain united in their presentation of local and organic ingredients whenever possible.

Historically voted among the best breakfasts in St. Louis by patrons, Prasino’s breakfast

menu features vegetable-filled omelets and a variety of fruits. Included on the summer lunch menu are house-made slaws and pickles. Nearly all dinner items incorporate vegetables and several desserts pair fruit with cake.

“Prasino is known for its salads filled with locally sourced lettuce, mixed greens, Lolla Rosa, Black kale, and other greens; the only thing I buy non-local is organic watercress,” says Chef Marchetto. “We chop the greens fresh every morning. We like to say that our patrons bite into a farm when they eat our salads.”

Chef Marchetto cultivates new menu ideas by bonding with farmers over “all the crossbred heirloom seeds that farmers geek out on. They enjoy growing certain foods that chefs like me go nuts about, like heirloom potatoes and funky varieties of squash,” he says. Farmers want to see what they can grow and introduce to the marketplace and encourage chefs to use, items like wild spinach, varieties of arugula, and less-common herbs.”

Produce-centric restaurants like Prasino look for innovative sources of vegetables during the off-season. “Farmers are growing inside tunnels and underground, exploring hydroponics, and building indoor farms to extend their growing season year-round and better meet the needs of the vibrant St. Louis restaurant scene.”

At Prasino, Chef Marchetto is highly committed to green initiatives. He seeks out vendors that demonstrate “responsible stewardship of the environment. The ranchers and farmers we partner with additionally practice sustainability of their land.”

In 2015 and 2016, *Saint Louis Magazine* recognized Prasino among its “Faces of Green Dining.” *The Saint Louis Post-Dispatch* named Prasino “Best in St. Charles brunch and farm to table restaurant in 2015.”

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# Pistachio Wave

Growth areas are abound for the beloved nut.

BY LARRY BERNSTEIN



**H**istorically, pistachios basked in the benefits of heart health, sporting-event snacking and convenient eating. With a bumper crop on the horizon and consumers' desire to snack healthfully, marketers are preparing to wow pistachio lovers and convert the skeptics.

## CONVERTING CROP TO CASH

Bob Klein, manager of the Pistachio Research Board, expects this year's harvest to be 750 million pounds, which is a record crop. The large crop is both exciting and challenging from a sales and marketing perspective.

"We have a strong retail and export customer base that is anxiously awaiting the 2016 pistachio crop, says Beth Sequeira, sales and marketing with Avenal, CA-based Keenan Farms. "Global demand for pistachios is strong and continues to grow with the abundance of positive health research supporting the nutritional benefits of pistachios in a daily diet."

"We have our work cut out for us as we have to sell through the largest pistachio crop in our history, which is quite an exciting challenge to have," says Adam Cooper, vice president of marketing, Wonderful Pistachios & Almonds.

The grower and processor is widely known for its iconic advertising campaign, "Get Crackin.'" Cooper says, "As we approach our next crop year, we look forward to debuting another memorable campaign that reaches our target consumer on multiple platforms through advertising, digital, public relations and sales."

A new pistachio campaign is good news for Dan Dvor, manager of independent grocer, A&N House of Produce in the Germantown section of Philadelphia. Dvor notes sales of pistachios at A&N have been flat the past few years. At A&N, pistachios are sold in a grab-and-go, 8-ounce container. According to Dvor, most customers munch on them while they are driving.

Jay Schneider, produce director of Acme Markets, Inc., which has 177 stores and is based in Malvern, PA, agrees that pistachio sales flattened out, but he has pack suggestions on ways consumers like to eat pistachios.

One example Schneider mentions is a bin display with a 12-ounce bag, which he considers a "sweet spot" on retail and to be a good value versus the smaller 8- to 10-ounce bag.

While Schneider says in-shell will always be more popular, "if the costs are good this year, unshelled can be a big sales lift to the category."

## NOT JUST FOR SNACKING

Dan Baron is the chief executive and owner of International Foodsource's Valued Naturals brand, one of the largest suppliers of nuts, dried fruit and snack items in the Northeast. Baron believes pistachios have continued growth potential as there continues to be an advance toward healthy snacking.

While the in-shell market is ten times the shelled market, shelled pistachios offer an alternative for those who are less inclined to go to the effort of removing the shells. However, shelled pistachios are a high-priced item, and they are primarily used for cooking.

Joseph Setton also sees shelled pistachios as part of recipes as an area of growth. Setton is the vice president of domestic sales for Setton Pistachio, one of the largest pistachio processors in the U.S.

"Shelled pistachios are a natural non-GMO product and are a delicious way of incorporating a great taste and beautiful green color to any recipe," says Setton.

For example, shelled pistachios are frequently used to make pestos and dips and most recently used for nut butters and even pistachio milk. Setton believes that pistachios are versatile and can be displayed beside a



multitude of products and almost anywhere in the store in addition to produce and serve as endcaps or by the checkout counter.

While Setton says pistachios have been traditionally viewed as only a snack nut, “We are working hard at educating the consumer and retailer that — besides the great taste of pistachios — they are extremely healthy and great alternative to unhealthy snacks.”

The company strives to encourage its retail partners to promote pistachios throughout the year with not just the traditional beers and snacks but with healthy and versatile meal enhancements.

Chad Hartman, director of marketing at Charlotte, NC-based Truly Good Foods, says flavoring shelled pistachios gives them a great flavor. While today, flavored pistachios are an area offering growth, years ago, people never considered flavoring a shelled nut. Truly Good Foods is in testing mode and will soon offer some bold flavors that stick well to the pistachio and give it an even better taste.

Wesley Edwards, senior key account manager for Edison, NJ-based Woodstock Farms, concurs about the trend in flavored commodities. Woodstock Farms introduced organic seasonings for organic commodities last year. The company offers a number of interesting seasonings that can be added to pistachios and other commodities.

“It’s totally custom,” he says. “For example, if customers want Organic Apple & Honey Pistachios, we can make it for their brand.”

## PACKAGING

Truly Good Foods is also seeing pistachios used in interesting ways. According to Hartman, the company had success with small packs of shelled pistachios used as a salad topper and for baking (used as a topping on cookies). Therefore, the company encourages retailers to consider using pistachios as an endcap in the grocery aisle and not limit it to the produce department.

Truly Good Foods believes pistachios have become an impulse, Hartman says he also encourage retailers to build displays and sell them individually.

Packaging is also key to marketing of pistachios. Current packaging trends are clear gusset bags that are re-sealable.

“Customers want to see what they are buying, especially if it is natural or organic,” says Woodstock’s Edwards.

Hartman agrees about the packaging and notes that Truly Good Foods encourages retailers to put pistachios in a clear package/tub. “Consumers can look at the product, see



what they are buying and know how high the quality is,” says Hartman.

“Prepacked display shippers provide our customers an easy way to display pistachios and draw in consumers looking for a healthy snack,” says Sequeira of Keenan Farms. “We offer a variety of displays, themed for key periods, to increase sales and ensure a permeant home for pistachios in the produce department.”

## HEALTH BENEFITS

The Fresno, CA-based association, American Pistachio Growers, aims to grow the pistachio market. “One way to increase sales is through awareness of health benefits,” says Richard Matoian, executive director of American Pistachio Growers. “According to recent studies, focus groups still view pistachios as a

salty snack that has a lot of fat. However, the amount of salt on a kernel is in many cases low enough for pistachios to qualify for the heart health symbol. Plus, the fats found in pistachios are good fats.”

A good deal of research is focused on what specifically pistachios can do for you if included in the diet. Pistachios can reduce blood sugar levels, which assists those who have diabetes. By eating pistachios at the same time as consuming sugary foods, one’s sugar level will not spike as high.

In addition to reminding people of the health factors, there’s also advertising. With the Olympic Games in Rio, many pistachio brands participated in the marketing game. According to Matoian, both the U.S. Olympic men’s and women’s water polo teams were pistachio ambassadors.

As ambassadors, “they know and extol how pistachios are good for them in their life and training,” says Matoian. During the Olympic games, members of the water polo team shared information about pistachios online and through social media. Elite cyclist Mark Cavendish also served as a brand ambassador. “The athletes appeal to customers who strive to be fit and live an active lifestyle,” he says. **pb**

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# Food Recovery Versus Food Waste

BY DON HARRIS

**T**he subject of food waste is becoming a more important topic throughout the food industry — including produce. Retail management has long felt that the proper way to attack the food waste problem is to donate excess food from the stores, and occasionally from the warehouse, to food banks and other organizations that feed the hungry. While this act is certainly a noble initiative and represents philanthropy at its best, there are certain faults that should be addressed.

Management, when approached about food waste, highlights the efforts of their operation to donate to causes that feed the hungry. In the world of produce, this doesn't work as well. Management, however does not see this difference, and once again, "they just don't get it!"

In the world of agriculture in the United States, there is a large amount of waste. Figures vary from 6 to 8 billion pounds, and up to 40 percent of the total crops produced are wasted according to various research conducted by the USDA and the Environmental Protection Agency. Either way, these numbers are very large and represent an untapped opportunity for the produce industry to make a substantial contribution to eliminate hunger in the United States.

Retail programs for donating excess or out-of-date product to food banks are certainly helpful; however, the need for nutritious, healthy food is higher than ever, and produce can help eradicate food insecurity. The paradox in this situation is that when food banks pick up from retail stores, the quality of the produce is questionable at best.

The vast majority of retailers (maybe all of them) bill the produce department for the produce that is shipped to them from the warehouse. This factor means the store is responsible for the value of the produce. Naturally, each business will do everything possible to try to sell that product to recoup the investment.

Unsold product counts against the operation as "shrink." It is standard for produce managers to keep product until it is absolutely not salable before discarding it. Unfortunately, this is the type of produce that ends up being donated along with the other products from the store to the food banks. In most cases, this cycle simply transfers the disposal of produce from the store to the food bank.

I have personally seen much of this donated produce, and it is very difficult to recover any of the usable food in this poor quality product.

The answer is to get produce donated before it becomes unsalable and unusable. Perhaps an enlightened retailer might establish a solution to credit the store for the donations made to food banks — thus offsetting some of the produce departmental loss. However, this

solution would be difficult to track and would have several questions from management about people abusing the practice.

The best way to eliminate food waste and allow for more food recovery would be to train produce personnel to order more accurately — thereby generating less waste. The second, and more important, way of assisting with food recovery and providing more fresh produce to feed the hungry requires innovative programs at the headquarters' level.

The best way to assist in the elimination of food waste would be to partner with relief organizations, such as Feeding America (which represents more than 200 food banks across the country on the various contracts they make with growers for the product they need).

As an example, by making a contract with a grower to utilize discarded product and establishing quality standards and packaging specifications for shipments to local food banks, the results will culminate in an improved process as well as quality food.

It is a win-win situation: the grower gets better utilization of his crop and his off-grade product is used to feed hungry people. The retailer gets the benefit of the charitable publicity as well as potentially better costs as the grower can receive additional revenue from the food banks for the product.

This process is known as PPO (Pick and Pack Out), which is a nominal fee paid to the grower by Feeding America to help offset the costs of harvesting this off-grade product. While Feeding America is engaged in this type of activity with growers

directly, a partnership with a retail operation would make even more of this nutritious food available for those people in need of food.

It is an embarrassment for the United States that there are 48 million people who are considered food insecure not knowing where their next meal is coming from or having to make hard choices between other necessities of life and food. This type of resourceful action and others are ways to enhance food recovery, reduce food waste, and improve the situation hungry Americans.

**pb**

**Retail programs for donating excess or out-of-date product to food banks is certainly helpful; however, the need for nutritious, healthy food is higher than ever, and produce can help eradicate food insecurity.**

*Don Harris is a 41-year veteran of the produce industry, with most of that time spent in retail. He worked in every aspect of the industry, from "field-to-fork" in both the conventional and organic arenas. Harris is presently consulting and is director of produce for the Chicago-based food charity organization, Feeding America. Comments can be directed to editor@producebusiness.com.*



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# A Guide To On-Board Training

BY ALAN SIGER

**D**espite professional experience or education, every industry has a learning curve. Employee on-boarding in produce should specifically entail a “rules of the road.” A full understanding of trading terminology and procedures is vital to one’s success as a buyer or seller. Mistakes due to misunderstanding trade terms can be costly, and could very well damage a relationship with a trading partner.

Beyond the basics of an IT system overview or a facility tour, orientation for new hires should offer more value. To help a new-hire get the lay of the land, consider partnering him or her with an experienced and exemplary employee as a mentor.

In addition to basic on-boarding and establishing an opportunity for a mentorship, find out if new employees have a basic understanding of the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA). Just because someone has work experience does not mean they have an idea about how the produce industry operates.

The USDA offers an excellent comprehensive training course available online where one can learn basic trading terms or brush up on their knowledge of PACA. You might want to consider having all of your traders review the site to ensure they are updated on any recent changes.

Shortly after I started with my company in 1973, I recall a buyer asking me on a conference call about New Jersey “grass” and when it would be available. Having been raised in the 1950s and 60s, my first thought was not asparagus; fortunately, my mentor was also on the line and he caught on before I embarrassed myself. In this case, my mentor helped me to understand informal industry jargon. It’s important we remember that what is second nature to those of us with ample experience may not be so obvious to someone that’s new.

Now that I’ve given you information on how to educate new hires on formal terminology and customs, I think it’s appropriate for me to give you a few tips that you’ll never find in a USDA publication. With my tongue firmly planted in cheek, I offer you the following guide to understanding what produce people mean when they tell you something.

**The Meaning of ‘Fresh.’** A seller tells you that an item is “fresh.” In this situation, fresh is defined as, “product that may have been here a while, but the seller is willing to ship it and hopes your quality control receiver won’t reject it.”

**When ‘Soon’ isn’t Soon Enough.** An over-the-road trucker (or

truck broker) tells you the load will arrive “soon,” “shortly,” or “in a couple of hours.” In this case, the truck broker or dispatcher has no idea where the truck is, and they hope it gets in soon so you will quit calling them.

**How Late is Late?** A shipment is two hours late, and you call your wholesaler to find out where your order is. The wholesaler tells you, “The truck just pulled out and is on its way.” This means the wholesaler’s operation is running behind, your order has not yet been picked, and they will get to your order when they are able to. In this case, it’s probably a good idea to call your customers and let

them know your trucks will be late too.

**You’re Really Not as Special as They Say!** A shipper tells you, “The market is up \$3, but we are only raising your price \$2.” This is the old, “You’re special” routine. If it makes you feel better, then great; but you’re probably still priced \$1 over the market. Seriously, don’t fall asleep on pricing on a commodity. Always have more than one supplier on high-volume items.

**Making it Up.** You’ve been hurt by a market decline or a similar situation out of your control, and you ask your supplier for a price adjustment on the order. The supplier tells you, “I can’t do anything on this order, but I’ll make it up to you on the next one.” Translation: “No adjustment for you on this invoice, give me another order, so I can leave you hanging on that one too.” I was in this business for more than 40 years, and there is no such thing as making it up to you on the next order.

**Actions Speak Louder Than Words.** Lastly, when someone says, “Trust me,” that means, “Look out.” A person who you trust will not ask you to trust them; they already know that you do. Trust between two people is built over time; it is not by request, but by actions towards others. I am very appreciative of the many solid relationships I built over the past 43 years. Many of my strongest relationships led to lifetime friendships, and the key to these successful partnerships is mutual trust.

pb

**Employee on-boarding in produce should specifically entail a “rules of the road.” A full understanding of trading terminology and procedures is vital to one’s success as a buyer or seller.**

*Alan Siger is chairman of Siger Group LLC, offering consulting services in business strategy, logistics, and operations to the produce industry. Prior to selling Consumers Produce in 2014, Siger spent more than four decades growing Consumers into a major regional distributor. Active in issues affecting the produce industry throughout his career, Siger is a former president of the United Fresh Produce Association.*



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# What Does Brexit Mean For The US Fruit Export Sector?

BY JOHN GILES, DIVISIONAL DIRECTOR, PROMAR INTERNATIONAL

**T**he decision made by the U.K. to leave the European Union after a referendum back in June has taken many by surprise, not least maybe in the U.K. itself. As a result, however, there is now a series of impacts that will be felt first and foremost in the U.K., and then in many other places around the world. The reality is that with so many areas still uncertain, there are probably more questions than answers at the moment. There are some indicators where, with a bit of lateral and logical thinking, it is possible to start developing a view of how the future might begin to look.

A recap of what happened might be a sensible place to start. The vote was 52 to 48 percent in favour of leaving the EU. Much of the debate in the run up to the referendum was centred around key issues such as: migration from the rest of Europe (and beyond) to the U.K., the impact of new financial streams being available to areas, such as health and education, rather than being allocated to the EU Commission in Brussels, and the ability of the U.K. to re-determine its own laws and regulations as opposed to being subject to these being decided on by organisations such as the European Parliament. The vote across the U.K. was split in terms of geography — with Scotland and Northern Ireland voting strongly in favour to remain, and Wales (as well as large parts of England) opting to leave.

For the U.K. to now formally leave the EU, the government has to trigger the so called *Article 50*, which would give the U.K. up to two years to negotiate its exit from the rest of the EU. When the U.K. government actually does this is not clear, but as time goes by, it will come under increased pressure to make a final decision on what it has been mandated to do. It has been argued that for the time being, over the next two years; therefore, that not much might change. This seems to be wishful thinking.

A number of things are almost inevitable. The first, from a U.S. export point of view, is currently the Pound reached its lowest level against the US\$ for a generation — making imports from the U.S. more expensive. The U.S. also has the import tariffs it pays set at a European-wide level. By leaving the EU, the U.K. will have to negotiate its own trade deal with the U.S. It might be that, ultimately, this looks a lot like what is already in place. But no one knows for sure.

The whole situation is complicated by the fact that the U.S. and the EU have for some time already been involved in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (T-TIP) talks. These are by no means finalised, but are at some form of advanced stage of discussion. The appeal for the U.S. of having to start all over again with the U.K. in a separate trade agreement might be somewhat dampened. Much will also depend on the outcome of the U.S. election in November. Where there is a will, there is a way, of course, but even negotiating a relatively simple trade deal might take some time. If an agreement cannot be reached in the two-year period, it will be likely that basic WTO (World Trade Organization) tariff rates will be adopted between

the U.S. and the U.K.

The other consequence is U.K. farmers will no longer be subject to the rules of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). This makes payments of some US\$4 billion per annum to British farmers. These are split between so called Pillar I and II payments for production and environmental subsidies respectively. The view of the U.K. Treasury has, for some time been, that Pillar I payments do not fit with current U.K. government thinking.

While these would probably not be phased out altogether, it is possible that they might well be reduced over a period of time. Across the board, U.K. farmers might well be less subsidised than in the past. Payments for good environmental practice are likely to remain in place. Farming organisations will oppose cuts in payments to farmers, but the demands of other sectors of the economy will see increased competition for government funding.

Theoretically, there should be more market opportunities for the U.S. — provided these American companies can meet all the other technical and commercial requirements of the U.K., which include price. The U.K. market will be no less competitive than in the past. Just having a competitive price does not guarantee market success. The opportunities will also be open to others — not just the U.S. Reduced CAP support will increase the basic opportunity for a less protected market.

Some routines won't change though. The U.K. is still a big import market, whether it is in the EU or not — some 65 million people. We still like U.S. fruit, although we also like fruit from Chile, SA, NZ, Peru and other EU countries such as Holland, Spain, Italy and France. Supermarkets will still drive the overall market, but growth will still come from the development of more discount stores, online shopping and the convenience sectors. The U.K. will still have high commercial and technical standards to adhere to for all suppliers — including those in the U.S. who want to deal with British customers, in either the retail or foodservice sector.

At this stage, it is still too early to tell what will happen in terms of the final detail. The real action will begin when *Article 50* is activated. What is clear is some aspects of life in Britain will never be the same again. The decision to leave the EU will have far reaching consequences for our relationship with the rest of Europe, and then the rest of the world for years to come, and this includes our relationships with the U.S.

**pb**

*John is Divisional Director at Promar International, the value chain consulting arm of Genus plc. He has worked extensively in the fresh fruit sectors and this includes work in the UK, the US, Latin America, South Africa, Oceania and Asia. He can be contacted at the following email: john.giles@genusplc.com. He is the current Chair of the Food, Drink & Agricultural Group of the Chartered Institute of Marketing.*

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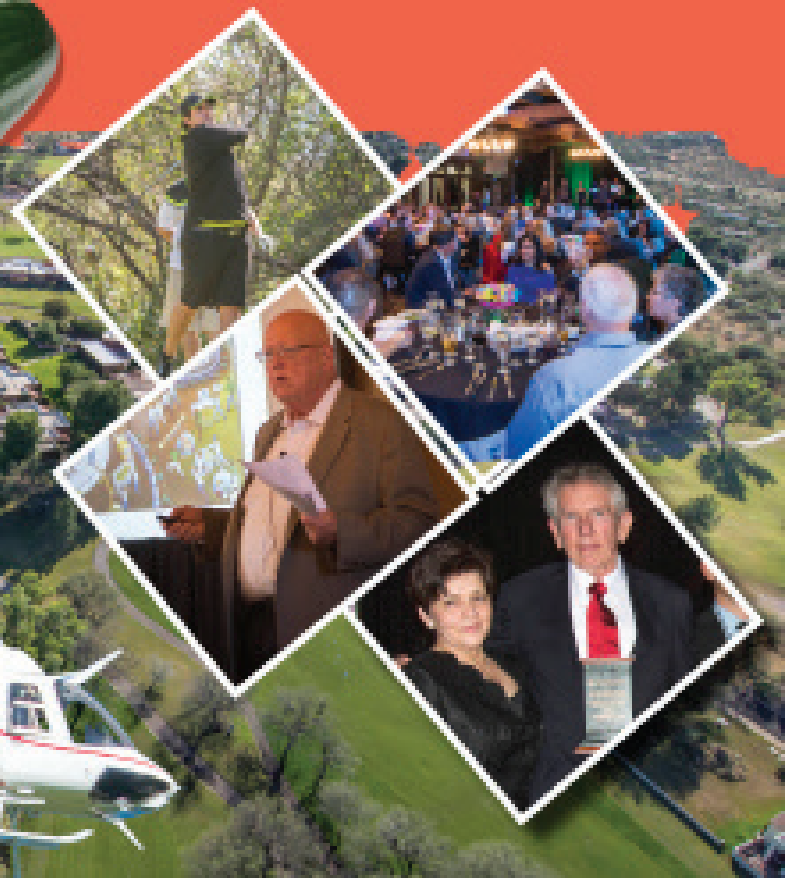
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# My Love Affair With Leafy Greens

BY AMY MYRDAL MILLER

I love leafy green salads. My husband Scott and I eat them almost every evening during the spring, summer, and fall. Sometimes they are the star, an enticing entrée salad, and sometimes a simple side salad will play a supporting role. In the winter months, I rarely make leafy green salads. They just don't seem as appealing when the weather is colder. Part of this may be explained by my childhood and our family traditions.

I grew up on a farm in northeast North Dakota, about 30 miles from the Canadian and Minnesota border. Each summer, our family would eat Butter lettuce salads at dinner that my mom dressed with a simple mixture of cream, fresh lemon juice, lemon zest, and sugar. That sweet, lemony dressing paired perfectly with the tender, yet flavorful, lettuce from my mom's garden.

I wasn't introduced to other types of lettuce until I went to college in California. The salad bars at UC Davis always had a large bowl of Iceberg with a small amount of Romaine that formed the base for a mish-mosh of toppings — canned tuna, sunflower seeds, black olives, maybe a few broccoli florets — and some awful dressing like a cloyingly sweet raspberry vinaigrette. I missed my mom's salads, but I was trying to fit in and eat what others were eating.

Years later I enjoyed an incredible salad at Lucques in Los Angeles that made me think differently about my home cooking and the potential for leafy green salads. The salad contained just three ingredients: mint leaves, cilantro leaves, and a lemon vinaigrette. It was so incredibly flavorful and so memorable. I still crave that salad nearly 15 years later.

Fast forward to my work at The Culinary Institute of America where Chef Joyce Goldstein was a frequent guest chef at conferences. The author of *Mediterranean Fresh: A Compendium of One-Plate Salad Meals and Mix-and-Match Dressings*, Joyce taught me how to create a salad that made sense, a salad where all the ingredients work together to create fantastic flavors and textures.

Joyce has done a lot of consulting with campus dining operations to help them create salad bars that offer choice, but also ingredients that make sense when combined. One example is a salad bar stocked with ingredients for a Greek salad. The chopped Romaine is followed by diced tomatoes, cucumbers, and bell peppers, sliced red onion, Kalamata olives, crumbled Feta cheese, and a basic vinaigrette enhanced with garlic and oregano. As you build your salad you can vary the amounts or omit certain ingredients if you like, but you'll end up with a great Greek salad. I wish Joyce had been consulting

at UC Davis when I was a student there.

Lately, I've started adding radicchio to our salads. I love the bitter bite of radicchio, and I have a fun time getting my super-taster husband to eat the radicchio without complaining about the bitterness. I typically salt the radicchio and let it sit for a few minutes before adding it to the salad, which helps tame some of the bitterness. A well-balanced, not-too-acidic vinaigrette also helps. And if we're grilling, I'll use the heat and smoke of the grill to further tame the bitterness.

There is one leafy green I hate. Kale. Ugh. I'd much rather eat spinach, arugula, Swiss chard, endive, or escarole. Earlier this summer, I asked a waiter if the coleslaw on an astoundingly good fried chicken sandwich contained kale. He said "yes," and I said, "Oh my God, I wish I knew this earlier. I can't eat kale!" to which he replied, "What? Do you have a mental allergy?" I laughed and agreed that's what it was. But seriously, kale has gotten an unfair amount of attention the past few years. There are many other leafy greens with "super food" powers that deserve our attention in both home and professional kitchens.

I love cabbage! That too is likely due to my childhood on the farm. While we were harvesting and eating the Butter lettuce for a few weeks in June and July, the cabbages were quietly growing, waiting a later harvest and then storage in our basement refrigerator. I ate a lot of coleslaw in the fall and winter as a child, and today I make coleslaw at home at least once a week, typically as an accompaniment to fish or *carnitas* tacos. I also love adding cabbage to mashed potatoes in the winter, Irish Colcannon potatoes with green cabbage. Never with kale!

On that note, I'm heading into my kitchen to make a salad for lunch. Spring mix will combine with red onion, a little Blue Cheese, a few slices of the New York steak we grilled, but couldn't finish last night, and a little radicchio. The dressing? A simple red wine vinaigrette with a small amount of garlic. I think Joyce would approve. Bon appétit!

**pb**

Amy Myrdal Miller, MS, RDN, FAND is a farmer's daughter from North Dakota, award-winning dietitian, culinary nutrition expert, known kale hater, and founder and president of Farmer's Daughter Consulting, Inc. You can learn more about her business at [www.farmersdaughterconsulting.com](http://www.farmersdaughterconsulting.com) and you can follow her insights on food and flavor issues on Twitter @Amy-MyrdalMiller

**Kale has gotten an unfair amount of attention the past few years. There are many other leafy greens with "super food" powers that deserve our attention in both home and professional kitchens.**



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Produce Marketing Assoc.	FL-11	302-738-7100	growingtalentbypma.org
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Progressive Produce	133	323-890-8100	progressiveproduce.com
Rice Fruit Company	138	800-627-3359	ricefruit.com
Riveridge Produce			
Marketing, Inc.	137	800-968-8833	riveridgeproduce.com
Robinson Fresh	49	855-350-0014	robinsonfresh.com
RPE, Inc.	119	763-595-1059	rpeproduce.com
Setton Pistachio			
of Terra Bella, Inc.	145	559-535-6050	settonfarms.com
Shuman Produce, Inc.	129	912-557-4477	realsweet.com
Sierra Seed Co.	92	520-281-9420	sierraseedco.com
Sigma Sales	91	520-281-1900	sigmasales.com
SlowFlowers.com	FL-12	844-756-9356	slowflowers.com
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Southern Specialties	132	954-784-6500	southernspecialties.com
Spice World, Inc.	43	800-433-4979	spiceworldinc.com
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United Fruit & Produce Co.	140	800-325-7180	unitedfruitandproduce.com
The USA Bouquet Co.	FL-3	800-306-1071	usabq.com
John Vena, Inc.	76	215-336-0766	johnvena.com
Wholesum Family Farms	33	520-281-9233	wholesumharvest.com
Wonderful Company	6-7	661-720-2500	wonderful.com
Wonderful Company	9	661-720-2500	wonderful.com
Yakima Fresh LLC	61	800-541-0394	yakimafresh.com



## JERSEY APPLES ON PHILLY MARKET LONG BEFORE 'LOCAL' HYPE

**T**he current Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market traces its roots all the way back to colonial Philadelphia on the Dock Street market. In this vibrant, bustling business venue, local farmers sold or consigned goods to Dock Street merchants for hundreds of years.

In the early 1950s, the city of Philadelphia saw a need for a more modern approach and created the Food Distribution Center in South Philadelphia. In 1959, the Philadelphia Regional Produce Market opened on Galloway Street in that facility. Almost all perishable food distribution and wholesale activity was moved to these new facilities — at the time considered a state-of-the-art “terminal market.”

John Vena’s unit on South Galloway Street at the Food Distribution Center is featured in this photo. On the far left is Phil Dorfman, a longtime customer of both the Dock Street and Galloway Street markets. In the center is Phil’s helper at the time, Mr. Suelke. On the far right is John J. Vena, son of the founder of John Vena, Inc. (and the father of John Vena, the company’s third-generation and current owner).

In the mid-1960s, when the photo was taken, John Vena, Inc. was very involved in local produce, and apples were a key item.

“Most of the apples we handled were from southern New Jersey, and many of those farmers also raised vegetables in season,” says John Vena. “Baskets were still used, and my father would fill the store and empty it almost every night from Sunday until Thursday. When I joined the firm in 1976, the baskets were replaced by cartons. Many of our growers had even begun packing retail bags.”

Vena received 10 to 12 pallets of apples in 3-pound cello bags

packed 12 per case, three or four nights a week, along with tray-packed cartons of all sizes, and sold out every day.

“By the late 1980s, all the South Jersey apple growers we worked with had either retired, sold out to developers, pulled out the apple trees or dedicated their production to cider,” says Vena. “Due to improved cultivation practices and better transportation, they couldn’t compete in the fresh market with fruit from the larger growers in the Northwest or the Northeast any longer.

“We continued to handle fruit from Pennsylvania, including peaches, plums, nectarines, apples and pears into the 90s. At that point, we were moving more into greenhouse grown, ethnic products and specialties of all kinds, and we moved away from commodity products.”

This distribution center offered a new concept in American produce marketing facilities — including trailer-height loading docks, which was a key feature leading national produce districts far beyond horse-drawn wagons.

Warehouses behind the market’s loading docks and sales areas were also refrigerated, another innovative concept at the time. The unique plan gathered dozens of competitive wholesale produce merchants in a central location, offering easy access for widely-ranging customers.

The Galloway Street market functioned for 50 years until market merchants saw the coming need for more advanced facilities. In June 2011, a new state-of-the-art facility opened on Essington Avenue; once again laying claim to establishing the highest global standards for distributing premium-quality, fresh produce with the Philadelphia Wholesale Produce Market.

**pb**

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