Bite-Sized Info for the Produce Industry

the SNACK

ISSUE 25 JUNE 2017

no Risk, no Reward

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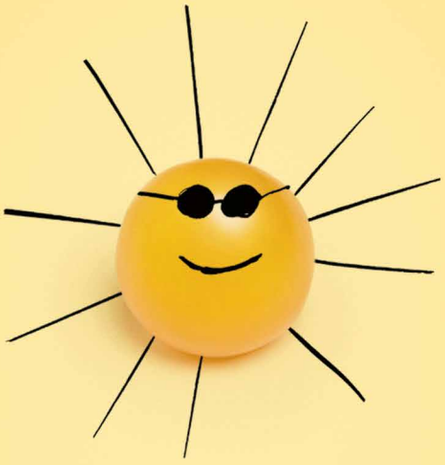

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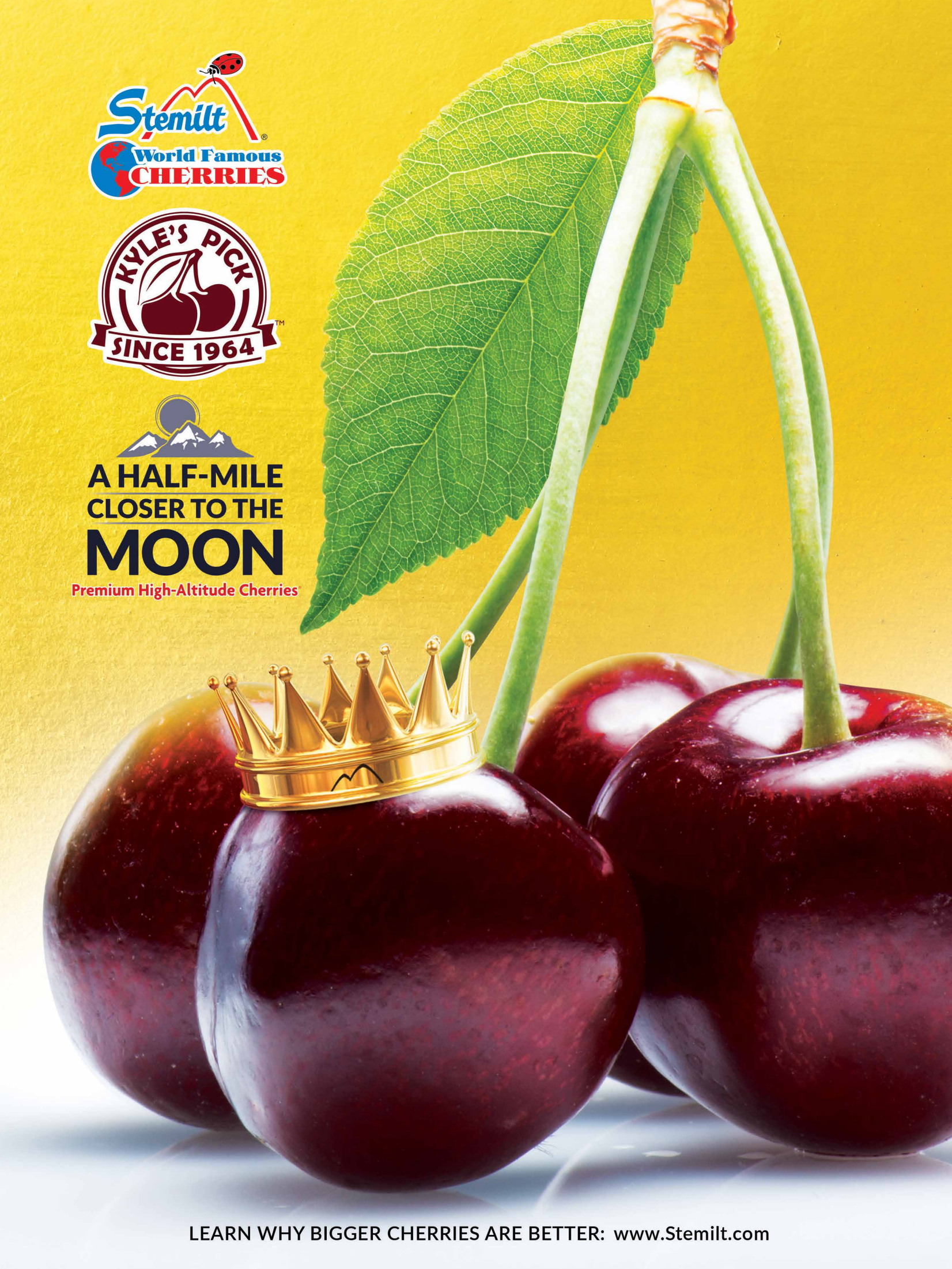
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HELLO, SECOND HALF OF 2017! We've made it. But of course, it is no time to sit on one's laurels. As many have said before me, including Robert De Niro, "You'll have time to rest when you're dead." We are hitting the ground running this June as we bring you a Snack issue that spans generations, categories, and concepts to give you a fresh look at where our industry has been and where it is headed.

If there is one thing that I have learned during my quick six years in this industry, it's that partnerships are key, and you are only as good as the people with which you surround yourself. That goes for our team here at The Snack and AndNowUKnow, and for those industry-leading companies that have helped to establish and raise the bar in fresh produce.

One of those stories bringing a symbiotic relationship and family narrative to the fresh produce stage is that of The Nunes Company and Peri & Sons. Situated on the fertile land of Yerington, Nevada, this partnership is helping to cultivate a category that is primed for growth: organics. In this 25th issue, David Peri and Tom M. Nunes (a.k.a T5), share their journey with us and how family values translate to their business model.

Bringing a fresh face and a fresh vision to the industry this summer is Corrie Hutchens, Senior Director of Marketing for Pete's Living Greens, formerly Hollandia Produce, along with the company's new CEO John Cochran, Executive Vice President of Strategy and Innovation Pete Overgaag, and Vice President of Sales Brian Cook, who discuss the change to a united front under the new name and innovating the living greens category. What does it take to bring brand-recognition to the next level? We asked the team, who pulled back the curtain on the company's produce lineup.

From Cuba to South Florida, Publix and The Fresh Market, Jonad Galan's produce journey has built a career of experiences which he now taps for Kansas City, Kansas-based Balls Foods. As the new Director of Produce and Floral, what initiatives will he be leading as the company revamps and fine tunes its fresh perspective? That is a question only the man himself could answer.

As we look to deepen our understanding of the evolving buyer-supplier dynamic, we look to Bruce Peterson, Founder and President of Peterson Insights and 17-year veteran of Walmart, to shed some light on an industry in constant flux. As a contributor in this June issue of The Snack, Bruce shares with us the challenges and concerns within the buying culture of today in Part 1 of this growing conversation.

With competition always alive and thriving in our industry, we took a moment to talk with Samantha Cabaluna, the new Vice President of Brand Marketing and Communications for Tanimura & Antle. Bringing a caliber of expertise to her new role that is destined to elevate T&A to the next level of industry success, she shares with us a few of her favorite things—so prepare to be surprised.

Spring has sprung and summer is upon us, bringing our storytelling team into the next phase of growth and adventure while we move through 2017. As the season heats up, we have much planned for your reading pleasure, from spotlights on industry greats and up-and-comers to those shooting stars and trend-makers that keep our industry on the leading edge of fresh.

Till then, enjoy this latest edition of The Snack Magazine and the fascinating people that inspire our stories.

Cheers,

Jordan Okumura
Senior Editor
AndNowUKnow and The Snack

DEPARTMENT HEADS

Robert Lambert/President and CEO
Whit Grebitus/Vice President of Sales
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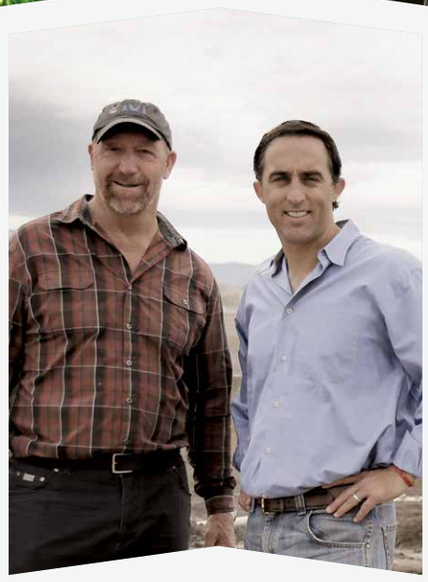

60 THE NUNES COMPANY AND PERI & SONS FARMS
NO RISK, NO REWARD

With a collective eight generations between the two families, how is this partnership taking the organic produce segment to the next level? Tom M. Nunes (T5), Vice President of Operations of The Nunes Company, Inc., and David Peri, Owner and Founder of Peri & Sons Farms, tell all…

BALLS FOODS
THE BALL'S IN HIS COURT

Jonad Galan has traversed the retail landscape from Publix to The Fresh Market and is now settling into his role as Director of Produce and Floral at this Kansas City-based retailer. What lies ahead for the Midwest chain? Jonad shares the journey to differentiation…

BRUCE PETERSON:
CHALLENGES & CONCERNS WITHIN THE PRODUCE BUYING CULTURE OF TODAY: PART 1

This issue's contributor has seen much of the industry change during his career. Between 17 years at Walmart and a position as President and CEO of Naturipe Farms, Bruce discusses how the buying dynamic has always been in flux. What insights does this industry veteran share as he takes a fond look back and fresh look forward? Find out in this issue…

MY FAVORITE THINGS
SAMANTHA CABALUNA: TANIMURA & ANTLE

With nearly 14 years at Earthbound Farm under her belt, this marketing leader is now helping to drive the evolution of T&A's marketing and communications program. Aiming to bring more delicious, premium, and fresh produce to retailers across the country, we just had to know: what are a few of her favorite things?

50 **SOUTHEAST PRODUCE COUNCIL**
SOUTHERN COMFORT

As it approaches the 15th anniversary hosting its signature event, Southern Exposure, how has the association changed and how has it remained steadfast in its mission?

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JOE PRODUCE: OPPORTUNITIES BOOMING

Wouldn't it be great if we could all hire a 40-year-old with 20 years of experience? They're perfect, right? They have 20 years behind them and 20 years or more ahead of them. Well, there are only so many of those folks to go around. In our business of supply and demand they're being careful to make smart and timely career decisions, as well they should.

However, what if I told you that the pool of talented and experienced people is greater than you're thinking? It is! In fact, it's much greater with even more experience.

Let me get to the heart of the matter. There are a growing number of "Baby Boomers" in their late-50s and early- to mid-60s who have all those attributes and more. They want to work and contribute. To pass along their knowledge gained through successes and failures.

Over the past year, I've had a number of conversations that have led me to this article. On one side, I'm speaking with a growing group of candidates who are frustrated with their challenges and apparent prospects of getting hired. Specifically, these are people with amazing experience, track-records, desire, attitudes, wisdom, relationships, and maturity. So, how does one achieve all that? Easy! You live and work long enough. It happens to all of us, *if* we're lucky.

Quite often, I find that this group has "climbed the produce ladder" to success for years, but now want to do the stuff that they really love. For instance, a salesman who worked his way up to VP of Sales and now wants to go back and do what he loves: sell!

On the flip-side of the equation are employers who want to hire someone for 20 years. Why invest in an employee who is going to leave in five to seven years? It's a good question to ask.

My contention is that we need to hold onto great "produce people" and make sure that we fully realize their value before they hang up their spurs and ride off into the sunset with all the valuable knowledge, wisdom, desire, and energy that they are aching to share.

The opportunity here can be approached first with an open and transparent conversation, and then a relationship with this person. Let's

call him “Joe.” So Joe, what are your long-term career goals? Where do you see yourself in five to seven years? How would you feel about participating in your succession? Would you help mentor this person or team to take your place? Can we agree to be transparent and work together to maximize your contribution and ultimate departure? (NOTE: Please be careful to not ask questions that can be considered as age discrimination when having this conversation.)

How refreshing this could be, right? I’ve run this scenario by five or six “Baby Boomers” who love the idea. They want to openly address the issue and be a solution, not a problem. They want to continue to contribute and perform.

Employers: Look around! Hiring someone for 25 or more years does not happen as much any more. 401(k)s are transportable, and attitudes are different. Look at the gap in talent and experience. Look at how long people are living, both active and healthy.

You’ll find that some of these people are looking at job titles and compensation that are less than what they had in the past. I’ve found that many want to do what makes them happy, and they’re perfectly okay with a lesser title and/or compensation. Again, talk about all this openly. This is an opportunity to tap into a great resource here!

Some employers are already thinking in this way. They are open to hiring experienced and talented people. Just recently, I’ve heard: “Find me a great guy who has even three years to go, and that can help us drive sales and mentor my group for the future.”

And I only expect to hear this sentiment more.

Rex Lawrence,
Founder & President of Joe Produce Search

Joe Produce® Search is the Executive Search division of Joe Produce®, comprised of experienced search consultants and produce professionals who offer a differentiated approach to Executive Search. Our talent placement experts find produce professionals who are as special as the organizations they serve, to ultimately build winning leadership teams for premier agricultural organizations across North America and beyond.

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MY FAVORITE THINGS

SAMANTHA CABALUNA

VP Brand Marketing & Communications, Tanimura & Antle

Following nearly 14 years at Earthbound Farm, Samantha joined T&A last year to help lead the evolution of the company's marketing and communications program. Working closely with Rick Antle, CEO and President, and Jeff Jackson, Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing, she is part of the trifecta driving growth across T&A. In addition to nurturing innovation and bringing more delicious, premium fresh produce to retailers across the country, we just had to know, what are a few of her OTHER favorite things?

"*Especially rockabilly and roots rock.*"

1

Hiking takes you into the belly of nature, where I feel renewed, even when arduous.

2

I'm lucky to live in Seaside, California, where I get to see them frequently. They are magnificent creatures.

3

Made for us by an artist friend.

4

To quote the New Yorker cartoon, "The two things that drew me to vinyl were the expense and inconvenience."

5

"*My Liverpool 350 sounds so jangly-gorgeous. It never goes out of tune, not even when I overuse the whammy bar.*"

6

"*I've been following them since I was a little girl, listening to the games with my dad and grandma. Baseball follows the rhythms of life: opens in spring–a time of renewal; ends in late autumn, and is dormant in winter.*"

7

I'm not too culty about it, but I do enjoy lifting heavy stuff and getting some pull-ups in with a great community of people.

8

Beautiful workmanship—the original pearl snap Western shirt.

9

1. Live Music
2. Hiking
3. Whales
4. Day of the Dead Elvis
5. Vinyl Records
6. My Rickenbacker Guitar
7. The San Francisco Giants
8. Crossfit
9. Rockmount Western Shirts

Challenges & Concerns Within the Produce Buying Culture of Today / PART 1

BY EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTOR **Bruce Peterson**

ONE THING you can always expect in this business is change, and the retail industry has seen it in spades. From the nature of relationships between the buyer and the supplier, to the diversification of the vendor landscape, I believe that a great way to understand and gain insight into today's retail climate is by looking at its rapid evolution over the past ten, even twenty, years. Much has changed during my career, and I have seen both sides of the buyer-supplier relationship beginning with my 17 years at Walmart, through my role as the company's Senior Vice President and GMM of Perishables, to my position as President and CEO of Naturipe Farms.

As a disclaimer, please understand that I am not bemoaning or criticizing the evolution of today's produce roles; I am simply offering my observations in hopes that we can all understand and adapt to this next chapter of produce retail.

So, let's dig in as I share some of my experiences in the changing retail arena today.

1 THE PRODUCE BUSINESS HAS GONE FROM A PRIVATELY-HELD, REGIONAL BUSINESS, TO A PUBLICLY-HELD INDUSTRY.

This is the big overriding concept for me—the observation that supermarket retailing has changed from privately-held, regional companies to a national and/or international publicly-held business. The produce industry has always had a history of being comprised of family-owned, or at least privately-held, types of enterprises. The produce buyer has evolved primarily because of the way the structure of retail companies has been evolving. Much of this has occurred through mergers and acquisitions, IPOs, and in Walmart's case, through organic growth. The demands that are put on a buyer today, and the responsibilities that the buyer is given, are different in many respects than the roles they may have held ten or twenty years ago.

2 THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PRODUCE BUYER HAVE CHANGED.

The previous point brings us to my observation that the buying and selling dynamic for today's produce buyer has changed immensely. At one time a produce buyer would not only negotiate price and quantity for goods, but they would establish the retail price for those goods, the location of those goods in the produce department, and decide how they were merchandised. They were as much merchants as they were buyers.

Walmart is a classic example of what has changed, but this is not limited to Walmart. Often, the person buying the goods isn't the same person pricing the goods, or the same person that decides where they

fit in the store modular or plan-o-gram. So, the buyer's responsibilities, and what they are held accountable for, have been evolving. In essence, as a supplier, you may not be dealing with a single "partner" anymore in your transactions, but a group of specialized individuals.

3 PEDIGREE PRIORITIZED OVER EXPERIENCE, FOR A PRODUCE BUYER, IS EMERGING MORE AND MORE.

Again, the key to addressing change is finding a way to adapt—and a large part of that is understanding the changes in how a buyer is brought into the fold. Clearly there has been an effort throughout most, but not all, of the publicly held retailers in the United States to appeal to a younger individual who is highly educated as opposed to training them from when they are "wet behind the ears." Educational pedigree is a very important qualification in hiring today's produce buyers, as is diversity in terms of gender and international exposure. For multinational companies like Walmart, we are seeing a very diverse group of people, which is wonderful, but what is sometimes being sacrificed is experience. At one time, having experience in the produce business was the number one criteria when you were hiring a buyer on the retail-side or a salesperson on the shipper-side of the business. Since experience is no longer the number one criteria for many large-scale retailers, we must develop and evolve our expectations to advance today's relationships.

4 THE ART AND ROMANCE OF PRODUCE MERCHANDISING IS CHANGING INTO A NUMBERS GAME FOR MANY.

Today, we have the most highly educated, diverse group of people I have ever seen managing the buying sector, but they cannot merchandise their way out of a paper bag.

I say this in good humor, but there is truth to the observation. Many of today's buyers are making their decisions almost exclusively on numerics and not necessarily on what is the prime-time for a given item or a given variety to be merchandised front-and-center in the produce department. As a result, some of these smaller independent and regional operations are developing a niche for themselves. They can respond more quickly to varietal and seasonal changes and can pivot on a dime, which gives them a competitive advantage in the mind of the consumer. Many folks say that managing retail needs to be a combination of art and science, knowing the numbers in partnership with the art of merchandising to create a response to an understanding of consumer insights and how to influence behavior. I am still of that school of thought today.

CONCLUSION

In Part 1 we began to pull back the curtain on the changes occurring in today's buying community. It is these types of changes in the role of the buyer, where the discussion will not only lead to the continued evolution and education of the produce buyer, but can lead to better ways to support the buyer-supplier relationship and redefine how we address today's retail dynamic.

As we move into Part 2 of this feature, I will discuss the advantages and benefits of mentorship in the rise of a produce buyer, how a story about Sam Walton helped me understand the importance of staying connected to the front lines, and the benefits of buyer-supplier collaboration. Till next time…

Bruce Peterson is the Founder and President of Peterson Insights, Inc., a consulting company specializing in helping fresh food companies successfully navigate through a wide variety of complex challenges. Bruce is a 45-year veteran of the produce industry and is best known for his role as Senior Vice President of Perishables for Walmart Stores, Inc. He joined Walmart as the Produce Director in 1991. During his 17-year career there, Bruce saw the company grow from six Supercenters to over 2,300; 117 Neighborhood Markets; and established 42 food distribution centers. He became Vice President of Produce/Floral in 1994, and in 1998 was made Senior Vice President of Perishables. In addition to his Merchandising and Procurement responsibilities, Bruce was the Chairman of the WalPac Advisory Group, which is Walmart's Political Action Committee (P.A.C.). He actively represented Walmart in Washington and lobbied on a wide variety of agricultural issues. Bruce retired from Walmart in 2007 and later joined Naturipe Foods LLC as its President and CEO, where he applied his retail perspective and business acumen to a grower shipper organization. In 2011, he took the responsibility of CEO for Bland Farms, a position he held through 2012. Currently, Bruce is a guest lecturer at six major universities and speaks at a wide variety of industry events. He currently resides in Bentonville, Arkansas, with his wife Maggie.

Bruce Peterson
President,
Peterson Insights, Inc.

RETAIL RUNWAY

*Sometimes, looks **do** mean everything...*

Check out what packaging concepts and products we believe pop on the shelf and can help drive traffic through the produce department.

1 SAMBRAILO *ReadyCycle*™

Going the extra mile to ensure your packaging is sustainable can be costly—but worthwhile. It turns out, however, that the label you put on the beautifully-recyclable plastic package could render it all for naught. Sambrailo's ReadyCycle™ is not only recyclable, but printable on all sides. Not to mention, the back-to-the-roots look of this clamshell alternative is both earthy and appealing.

5 PACKAGES THAT DID IT RIGHT

by MELISSA DE LEON

2 GIUMARRA COMPANIES *Grab & Go Totes*

When it comes to snagging attention in the store, convenience ranks high. This bag not only answers that call, but touts the ability to help reduce shrink while being 100 percent recyclable. Sustainable? Check. Cost-saving? Check. With a sales lift of up to 35 percent to boot, the question here seems to be: why wouldn't you want one?

3 CRUNCH PAK *Bag in a Bag*

It's a bag IN a bag. If you haven't picked up on it yet, convenience is a theme that is all the rage. This particular packaging takes the trend to its fullest extent. The first bag provides a prime vehicle for snacking, while the second ensures that retailers are able to maintain tonnage while delivering manageable amounts to consumers.

4 SOUTHERN VALLEY *Zucchini Noodles*

For those of you that picked up your May edition of The Snack and stopped to see brightly-colored noodles sprawled across the pages, you might be aware that veggie noodles are in. Southern Valley's approach is less spiralized, however, showcasing crisp-looking, french fry-like zucchinis with a window to show shoppers the freshness inside.

5 DEL MONTE® *Smoothie Kits*

Smoothies are a key way to convince consumers that their produce is dessert, and Del Monte Fresh has taken the push a step further. The company is providing shoppers with all the makings of a fresh smoothie, cup and all. It even lets the beauty of the fruit sell itself in the clear to-go container.

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INGREDIENTS

2 cups fresh Mucci Farms Cherto Gourmet Cherry Tomatoes

15 fresh Mucci Farms Naked Leaf Living Basil leaves, rolled and finely sliced

1 full-sized, good quality white or whole wheat baguette, sliced in half (2 long pieces)

5 cloves garlic, peeled and cut in half

5 oz soft goat cheese, divided evenly

¼ cup black olive tapenade

1 tbsp capers

Extra virgin olive oil (EVOO)

Freshly-ground black pepper to taste

Servings: 18 – 24 slices, or two half baguettes

DIRECTIONS

1. Move oven rack to second-highest position and preheat oven to broil, then line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Place sliced baguette on parchment-lined baking sheet and drizzle with olive oil. Place under the broiler for 3-5 minutes or until lightly toasted.
3. Combine black olive tapenade and capers, and set aside.
4. Remove sheet from the oven and rub each slice with fresh garlic.
5. Spread each piece evenly with goat cheese. Top with whole cherry tomatoes, dividing evenly between the sliced bread.
6. Scatter black olive tapenade mixture around tomatoes and place back in the oven to broil for another 5 minutes or until tomatoes start to split. Remove from the oven and place on a serving platter (or breadboard for longer pieces).
7. Drizzle with more olive oil, chopped basil, and cracked pepper.

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A Living Legacy

HOW WILL THIS COMPANY'S DEEPLY-ROOTED LEGACY FARE AS IT REBRANDS AND LAUNCHES A REVOLUTIONARY NEW PRODUCT TO CHANGE THE GREENS CATEGORY? CORRIE HUTCHENS AND TEAM SHOW US HOW THIS BRAND IS NOT ONLY LIVING, BUT THRIVING.

By Eva Roethler

CARRYING on a legacy is hard work, but Corrie Hutchens means business.

The new Senior Director of Marketing for Pete's Living Greens, formerly Hollandia Produce, is deliberate in everything that she does, and while the hydroponic greenhouse lettuce grower has big things lined up for 2017, Corrie is ready to rumble. With more than a decade of CPG marketing for household brands such as Nestlé, Ergobaby, and Little Tikes under her belt, she's stepping up to the plate in the world of produce and swinging for the fences.

She is not alone. The company's new CEO, John Cochran, whose claims to fame are the turnaround of Pabst Brewery and making the FIJI water brand universal, has combined forces with the team in the quest to redefine the leafy green category. His experience in leading companies through high growth periods makes him a force to be reckoned with as he takes the reins from Pete Overgaag, who recently stepped aside as CEO to focus on R&D as the Executive Vice President of Strategy and Innovation.

Alongside Brian Cook, Vice President of Sales, this is the dream team: Pete the innovator, John the strategist, Corrie the brand engine, and Brian the trailblazer. Together, they are launching the deeply-rooted company into a new era, under the new name of Pete's Living Greens, complete with a groundbreaking new patent-pending product line, one of Pete's first wins in his new role.

Pete's still very involved in the leadership of the company; he and John work closely together, literally sharing an office at the Carpinteria headquarters. However, he tells me that this new role at the helm of R&D encompasses all of his favorite elements of business. The "leave no stone unturned" mentality this dedicated, soft-spoken leader is known to espouse allows him to pour his passion into the innovation upon which the company has built its reputation—a reputation which Corrie is thrilled to amplify.

"Living greens offer another way for consumers to think about the foods they already eat in a way that may be more meaningful, providing a better value and eating experience," Corrie tells me. "I'm excited to be joining this family, and it was vital for Pete's Living Greens to find a perfect fit to take the marketing of these products to the next level. There is an amazing story to tell, and I'm here to help tell it."

When Corrie talks about joining the family, she means it genuinely. Farming is a tradition that has been passed down from Pete's grandfathers, and the company was founded in 1970 by Pete's parents, Art and Magda Overgaag, on three acres of greenhouses in Carpinteria, California. Under the leadership of their son, the company has laid down its roots in freshness, expanded to include two locations, and at more than 30 acres; Pete's Living Greens is now one of the largest greenhouse growers of hydroponic lettuce in the Western United States.

As the company grew, the culture grew along with it. Corrie tells me that the core values include excellence, safety, efficiency, growth, positivity, and respect. Small wins are celebrated, and achievements are rewarded as a group. The employees truly care about what they do, and there is a sense of pride in the products they offer.

"Pete and the team have done an amazing job growing the hydroponic lettuce market to what it is today," John adds. "We're excited to take this company in new directions, and

Pete Overgaag, Executive VP of Strategy and Innovation, Corrie Hutchens, Senior Director of Marketing, and John Cochran, CEO, showing off the new Living Strips products

look forward to partnering with our customers to lead the category for living greens."

Best known for its line of Living Butter Lettuce, the company has helped pave the way for living greens. Breaking onto the scene via heads of lettuce with roots still intact, the innovative product is packed in the award-winning 100 percent recyclable signature clear clamshell which serves as a mini-greenhouse to reduce damage, shrinkage, and contaminants. When the product first hit the market, living greens offered retailers a solution to extend product shelf-life, and provided consumers the means to enjoy farm-fresh flavor from the store.

With its past success, the company has been preparing for the shift in marketing strategy as it enters this next period of rapid growth. One of its initial steps was becoming employee-owned in 2016. Reflective of the family values, the move gave employees a stake in the success of Pete's Living Greens, increasing engagement, and ultimately, stock prices.

TODAY, the company's portfolio includes a range of varieties touting a several week shelf-life from pack. The Living Classics and Living Organics lines have helped make space on supermarket shelves for the living category—giving consumers an experience that is truly "Rooted in Freshness, Alive With Flavor" as the tagline communicates.

"The team has already done a great job of laying the foundation for the living greens category, building a solid platform to launch from as we continue growing while driving category and brand awareness," Corrie shares. "In this next phase, we're going to focus on building relationships with the consumers who go to the store and buy our products."

Corrie's first marketing task was leading the company through a rebranding—presenting a cohesive line of living greens to the industry under the Pete's Living Greens label. Where consumers might not have correlated all of the company's previously separate brands, this strategic move has seamlessly brought together the high-quality and consistency consumers know and love under the same brand. Corrie tells me that consumers can't get enough of the fresh, new look of the packaging.

"The rebrand was inspired by our mission to become the first nationally recognized brand of living greens by consumers, signifying growth and transformation," Corrie continues. "As such, every Pete's Living Greens package received a cosmetic makeover featuring newly-designed labels and a refreshed logo, along with other branded consumer elements. The modern, natural look draws attention to the freshness, quality, and longevity of each rooted green, allowing consumers to easily recognize the brand and know what Pete's Living Green's products stand for."

Every product from Pete's Living Greens is grown in state-of-the-art greenhouses where light, temperature, humidity, and nutrients are controlled, resulting in increased crop yields and year-round availability. The hydroponically grown greens use up to 85 percent less water and 70 percent less land than traditional growers. An important element in the brand relaunch is a renewed focus on consumer-centric innovation, and with the trend towards conscious consumerism, the brand offers a perfect fit in the retail landscape.

"Branding, specifically in packaging, is your first communication with consumers. The importance of understanding not just today's consumer but tomorrow's as well, is imperative to being successful."

-JOHN COCHRAN

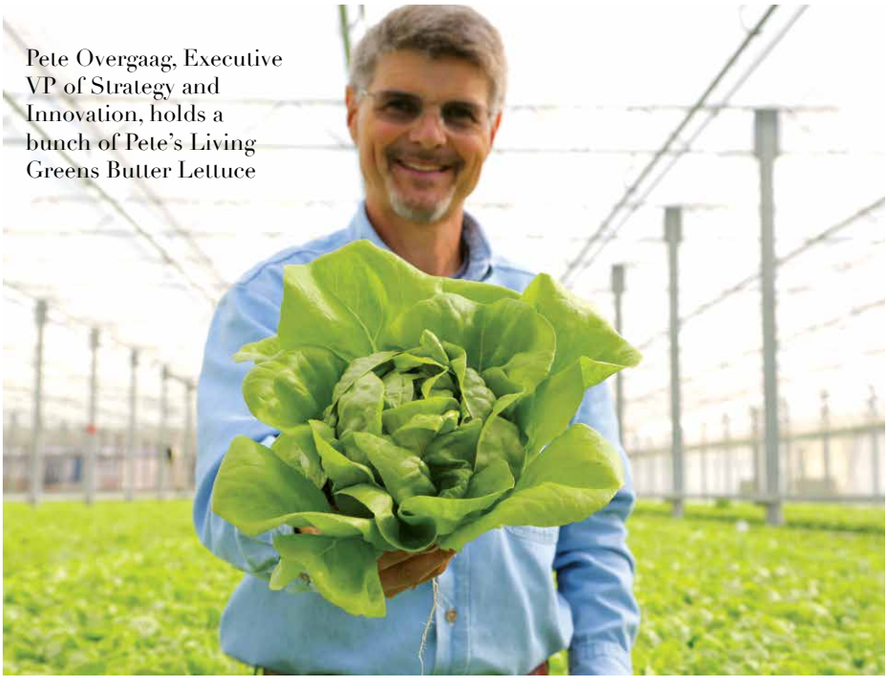
"It has been a long and arduous, but very rewarding, process. You cannot take walking away from a longstanding successful brand lightly," John notes. "Branding, specifically in packaging, is your first communication with consumers. The importance of understanding not just today's consumer but tomorrow's as well, is imperative to being successful."

Nodding to her experience in product marketing, brand management, and consumer communication from companies inside and outside the realm of the food industry, this is the perfect task for Corrie, who is known for her ability to develop strategies that have accelerated growth for the impressive brands she's worked with. Pete's Living Greens is ahead of the curve in its innovation of the evolving living lettuce category, and the new brand identity illustrates how far the company has come in its nearly 50-year history, with an eye always looking to the horizon.

"We reviewed a lot of research surrounding 'tomorrow's consumer' and learned a lot about their values and how

they drive purchasing decisions," Corrie says. "This led the company to take a hard look at our values. It was evident that, while we've always had a purpose, we could do a better job at conveying that messaging to consumers."

Corrie plans to establish Pete's Living Greens as the first nationally recognized brand of living greens by the consumer—with the ultimate goal of stimulating demand and driving revenue growth across the entire product range. And, the new label with clarified messaging is going for a spin on the latest product from the company: the new Living Strips line.



Pete Overgaag, Executive VP of Strategy and Innovation, holds a bunch of Pete's Living Greens Butter Lettuce

The company is blazing the path to market with the groundbreaking Living Strips, offering the revolutionary Home Harvest Pack™ in a premium, patent-pending container for housing living salad strips, ensuring freshness, quality and taste with an impressive shelf-life. Its key feature is an innovative root compartment that keeps roots contained and countertops clean while consumers harvest their salad at home.

Living Strips Home Harvest Pack™ featuring an innovative Root Compartment

New Living Strips Baby Romaine

THE product has already made waves. At the time of this writing, the new line has been identified as a finalist for Best New Packaging in the 2017 United Fresh Innovation Awards. The revolutionary packaging was developed to specifically address consumer needs and concerns, while delivering the fresh picked flavor they love. The team is clearly eager to share this product with the industry.

"We are really excited about our new Living Strips, and the reaction from retailers has been overwhelmingly positive. There really is nothing like it in the market today, and it serves as a fresh alternative to bagged salad," Pete says. "This started with the idea to combine the best flavors and our long time roots-on advantage with a user-friendly packaging concept. The main motivation was to fill the need in the marketplace to reduce food waste

Brian Cook, VP of Sales, checks out the new line of Living Strips

both in-store and at home; the secondary benefit to our company is keeping our position as the leader in the living greens category."

Living Strips are available in Baby Romaine, Spring Mix, Italian Mix, Upland Cress, and Sweet Butter Lettuce, and are slated for a nationwide distribution this summer. And, the team tells me they are just the first of many innovative and game changing new products the brand plans to roll out in the future.

> "Pete's Living Greens will also begin investing in and building brand recognition, affinity, and engagement through consumer-focused programs within a category that hasn't historically seen this level of consumer-focused marketing."
>
> **-CORRIE HUTCHENS**

"I draw my input from many areas, but our starting point is always the consumer, including the mainstream shopper as well as professional chefs. We blend their needs with the capabilities of our own production systems, the organic movement, the greenhouse and hydroponic equipment industry, and the needs of retailers," says Pete.

Needless to say, Corrie, Pete, John, and Brian assure me that it's an exciting time in the company's history. Pete adds that the most rewarding part of launching these disruptive new products is the enthusiasm from buyers and consumers. As a company, introducing this new line of game-changers is promising for the future of Pete's Living Greens and its employee owners.

Corrie shares, "Our go-to-market strategy moving forward is really two-fold. We will continue to invest in building recognition and credibility with the trade. However, Pete's Living Greens will also begin investing in and building brand recognition, affinity, and engagement through consumer-focused programs within a category that hasn't historically seen this level of consumer-focused marketing."

NEXT on the agenda? The Pete's Living Greens vision is extending beyond the horizon, with national expansion in the works.

"We are excited to have plans in place that will allow us to bring Pete's Living Greens to east coast markets while still being locally grown," Corrie discloses about the expansion. "Our national expansion, innovation, and consumer marketing plans will not only help us to grow the Pete's Living Greens brand but will also help our retail partners to deliver growth for the category as a whole."

As the spearhead for this initiative, Brian steps in to tell me more about the brand's impressive plans for the move east. Drawing on his experience working with retail partners and carving out the living greens category, he's approaching this endeavor with fervor.

"It's very important for Pete's Living Greens to live our sustainability message across all aspects of the business," Brian shares. "For this reason, we've decided to tactically expand our operations to provide a regional source that can provide high-quality, voluminous heads of lettuce and strips to provide great value to the consumer."

Corrie, Pete, John, and Brian are clearly eager for what's in store at Pete's Living Greens; and with this A-Team in place, rest assured the legacy will live on.

Before Pete's Living Greens live in the supermarket, they are grown and nurtured in its state-of-the-art greenhouses

Carpinteria, CA

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UP CLOSE

牛油果先生
Mr. Avocado

A CLOSER LOOK AT MR. AVOCADO

As a category innovator, Mission Produce is bringing the ripe revolution to China with the latest brand in its global portfolio, Mr. Avocado. The professionally-crafted, ready-to-eat avocados have launched in the country following the opening of its first ripe center in Shanghai.

A product of the partnership between Mission Produce, its distributor Lantao International, and Pagoda fruit specialty stores, Mr. Avocado is thoughtfully being positioned as the pioneer in the ripe avocado category for Chinese consumers. Mission Produce has seen increased growth in the country in recent years, and offering the premium pre-ripened Mr. Avocado brand will only add fuel to the fire. With China's emerging middle class, studies have shown that higher incomes lead to higher spending on food, and consumption is expected to grow 9 percent per year through 2020, according to reports by the Boston Consulting Group. This means that Mr. Avocado's arrival in China could not come at a better time, offering Chinese consumers a taste of convenience through its pioneering brand.

The Mr. Avocado brand is a 100 percent ripe program, meaning that each avocado is packed at the source in Mr. Avocado brand boxes and shipped to Shanghai for ripening in the new facility, so that it is ready for consumption as soon as it goes on display.

The fruit comes with "Ripe, ready to eat" messaging and a scannable QR code on the individually hand-applied large red stickers, allowing the fruit to stand out in the produce aisle while nodding to the importance of the color in Chinese culture.

Positioned to become a leader in the category for the country, the vertically-integrated and always innovative Mission Produce is continuing to help forge the way in the ripe revolution around the globe.

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Bell Peppers

From stir-fry to fajitas, stuffed or on a sandwich, bell peppers lend their pleasant, peppy sweetness and crunch to cookery worldwide. Available in a half-dozen lively colors, this subtly spicy fruit is as charming on the shelf as it is in cuisine.

STATISTICS

Last 52 weeks ending March 19, 2017, Total U.S. Dollars.

CATEGORY TOTAL

DOLLARS	DOLLAR SHARE
$1,632.4 Mil	78.4%
LBS	
850.1 Mil	
PRICE/LB	**VOLUME SHARE**
$1.92	80.7%

FIELD GROWN

DOLLARS	DOLLAR SHARE
$1,068.0 Mil	65.4%
LBS	
610.3 Mil	
PRICE/LB	**VOLUME SHARE**
$1.75	71.8%

GREENHOUSE GROWN

DOLLARS	DOLLAR SHARE
$564.4 Mil	34.6%
LBS	
239.8 Mil	
PRICE/LB	**VOLUME SHARE**
$2.35	28.2%

VALUE-ADDED

DOLLARS	LBS	PRICE/LB
$23.3 Mil	6.2 Mil	$3.75

DOLLAR SHARE	VOLUME SHARE
1.4%	0.7%
DOLLARS, PRIOR YR CHG	**LBS, PRIOR YR CHG**
$3.2 Mil	0.8 Mil

BULK/WHOLE

DOLLARS	LBS	PRICE/LB
$1,609.1 Mil	843.9 Mil	$1.91

DOLLAR SHARE	VOLUME SHARE
98.6%	99.3%
DOLLARS, PRIOR YR CHG	**LBS, PRIOR YR CHG**
$60.3 Mil	61.4 Mil

Bell Peppers CONVENTIONAL

GREENHOUSE GROWN

DOLLARS
$542.3 Mil

LBS
233.8 Mil

PRICE/LB
$2.32

DOLLAR SHARE
33.2%

VOLUME SHARE
27.5%

FIELD GROWN

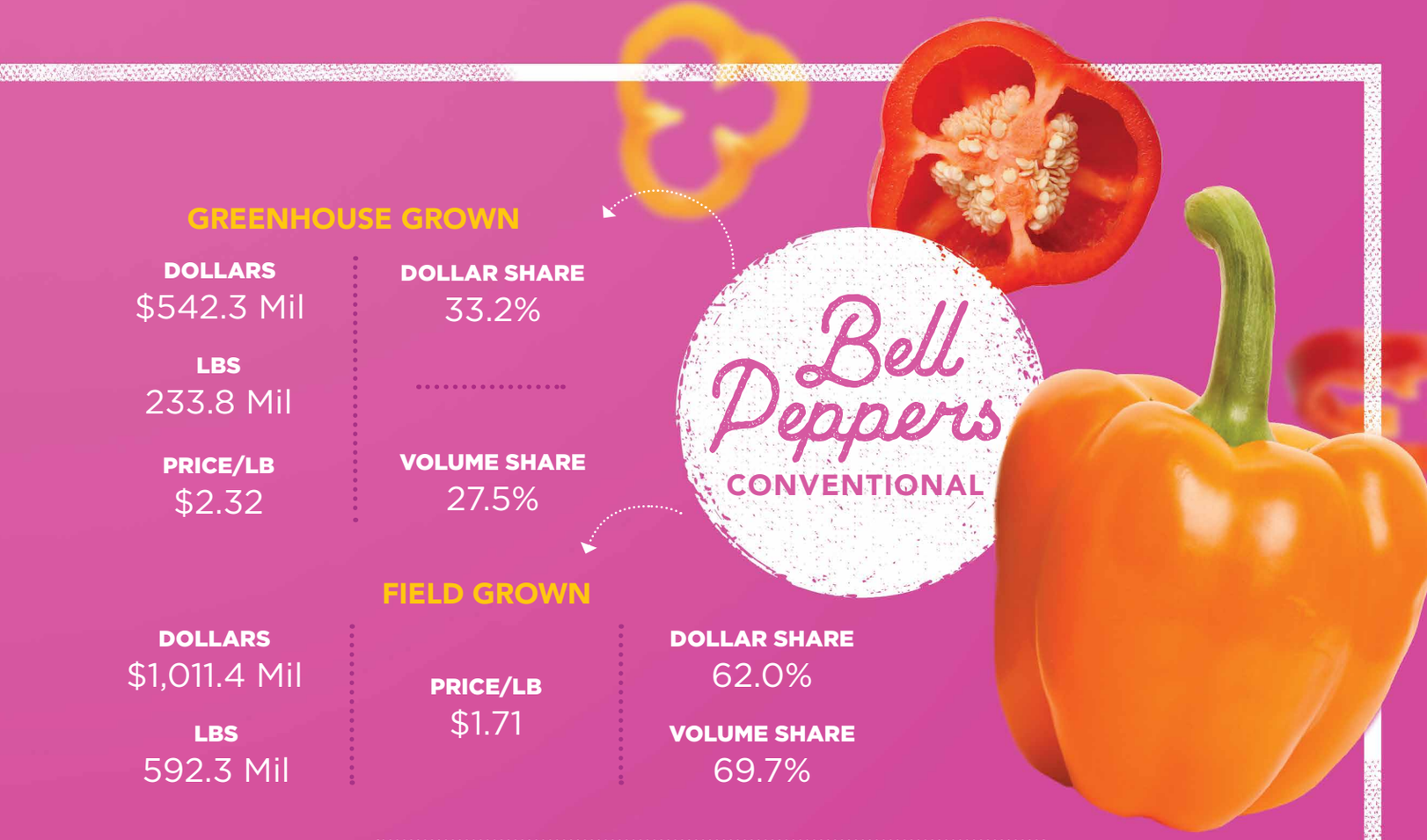
DOLLARS
$1,011.4 Mil

LBS
592.3 Mil

PRICE/LB
$1.71

DOLLAR SHARE
62.0%

VOLUME SHARE
69.7%



Bell Peppers ORGANIC

GREENHOUSE GROWN

DOLLARS
$22.1 Mil

LBS
6.0 Mil

PRICE/LB
$3.66

DOLLAR SHARE
1.4%

VOLUME SHARE
0.7%

FIELD GROWN

DOLLARS
$56.6 Mil

LBS
18.0 Mil

PRICE/LB
$3.14

DOLLAR SHARE
3.5%

VOLUME SHARE
2.1%

Bell Peppers are just one type under the sweet pepper category. See below for an expanded look.

CATEGORY TOTAL

DOLLARS	LBS	PRICE/LB
$1,840.7 Mil	909.5 Mil	$2.02

DOLLARS, PRIOR YR % CHG	LBS, PRIOR YR % CHG	PRICE/LB, PRIOR YR % CHG
3.4%	7.1%	-3.5%

CONVENTIONAL

DOLLARS	DOLLAR SHARE
$1,985.6 Mil	95.4%
LBS	
1,026.5 Mil	
PRICE/LB	**VOLUME SHARE**
$1.93	97.4%

ORGANIC

DOLLARS	DOLLAR SHARE
$95.9 Mil	4.6%
LBS	
27.2 Mil	
PRICE/LB	**VOLUME SHARE**
$3.53	2.6%

CONVENTIONAL (mini peppers)

DOLLARS	TOTAL POINTS
$191.7 Mil	3.4
LBS	
56.4 Mil	
PRICE/LB	
$3.40	

ORGANIC (mini peppers)

DOLLARS	TOTAL POINTS
$16.6 Mil	0.6
LBS	
3.0 Mil	
PRICE/LB	
$5.45	

CATEGORY TOTAL

DOLLARS	LBS	PRICE/LB
$208.2 Mil	59.5 Mil	$3.50

DOLLARS, PRIOR YR % CHG	LBS, PRIOR YR % CHG	PRICE/LB, PRIOR YR % CHG
1.5%	2.9%	1.4%

SOURCE | Statistics attributed to IRI

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MENTORS IN THE MAKING

Cory Reinle

By Melissa De Leon

FOR SOME, a passion for produce was not born in us, but a siren call. Cory Reinle followed that call from his high school agriculture class to the University of Florida, where he studied Ag Business and fell into his future.

"My then high school ag teacher, Dr. Stacy Vincent, ignited my passion for agriculture and agribusiness," Cory tells me of where his produce path started. "Dr. Vincent is a master of networking, knowing people all throughout the country relating to agriculture education and agribusiness. I learned a ton from him about how to meet new people, strike up conversations, and how to work hard in order to get ahead in my career."

This, I learned in my conversations with Cory, became something of a compass to that career. And a push off the social cliff didn't hurt either.

"I remember multiple times during conferences and meetings where Stacy wouldn't let me shy away from a group conversation," Cory recalls. "He would always make sure that I was engaged and a part of the conversation when meeting new people."

It's this fervor that likely made an impression at Cory's first annual PMA Fresh Summit in Orlando, which Cory's advisor at the University of Florida recommended he attend.

"He told me he thought this would be a good opportunity, and it was at that first show that I got involved with the PMA Center for Growing Talent," Cory shares.

Cory Reinle
Program Business Manager, L&M Companies

And this produce leader-in-training was hooked. While there, he was first introduced to one of the men he now credits with a great deal of how much he's thrived: Hurley Neer. Just how much of an impression he made, however, comes later in this story.

Young Cory, still about to embark on his final year in college, first found himself in need of a summer job. His connections made at that first Fresh Summit and, to my immense amusement, a little millennial networking via Twitter landed him an internship with Duda Farm Fresh Foods.

"I sent out a Tweet to the Foundation for Industry Talent asking for pointers on an internship, and they retweeted it saying 'Who wants this rock star,'" Cory laughs as he remembers the 2011 Internet encounter. "Duda was one of the responders."

After what he looks on fondly as both a fun and informative experience, he returned to the University of Florida to finish out his degree. Then, it was social media again that helped him find his professional foothold. This time, via Facebook, he messaged a grad school friend who gave him a tip that retailer Winn-Dixie was looking for produce buyers.

I laugh when he tells me that he started on the buy-side right out of college. "I know, I worked my way backwards," he says, without any need for explanation. "I started in retail and worked my way back as a replenishment buyer, and then came into my own when working in the middle of the supply chain."

The mentors

Dr. Stacy Vincent
Professor, University of Kentucky

Here is what they have to say about Cory Reinle...

"Cory was a student of mine when I was still teaching high school agriculture back in the day. He was a joy to teach, and there was never a day that he wasn't making his classmates laugh. There was never a time where I or anyone I saw had a dispute with him. He's a brilliant mind, and a selfless mind that will find humor in any situation. A talent of Cory's was always being able to see the bigger picture. For example, he now lives in North Carolina and still comes to Kentucky to help teach youths in the events and competitions he was very passionate about. These are the events that I would say inspired him to pursue the career he is in now, and he comes back to pass that on.

When it comes to how he stands out as a leader, Cory is a creative mind—a big thinker whose enthusiasm is addictive to those around him. These are qualities that young middle and high schoolers are drawn to. He's a good mentor that is young, vibrant, with so much to come, and his energy level, as many who have met him can attest, is through the roof.

I have no problem seeing him be a mentor to youths and even those starting in their produce careers for years to come. I think the absolute world of him and his new bride. I'm very excited to see where this road takes him."

Center for Growing Talent by pma

Sponsored By JOE PRODUCE

His next stop, and next key impression, was Pero Family Farms. There he worked with Jeff Shills, who helped Cory cross the bridge over to the supply-side.

"Jeff helped me transition from a retail buyer atmosphere to working on the grower/shipper side of the produce industry," Cory shares. "He was always willing to teach me new things about how a grower/shipper operates, and consistently gave as much responsibility as I was willing to take on. It was during my time working with Jeff that I became a true manager...he let me run my desk as its own business. I grew a lot professionally under his mentorship."

As many of us in the industry know, there is no clock to punch in and out of in produce, which Cory says is why many key relationships are personal as well as professional. His connection with Jeff too became a friendship as the mentor helped him navigate and find a balance.

"Jeff understood that produce is a 24/7 industry, and understood my goals both professionally and personally. He always did his best to set me up for success in the long run," Cory shares.

And then, as life often does, circumstances swept Cory up again, moving him to a new state and calling again to the web for assistance.

"For a third time, my contacts and my start at that first PMA Fresh Summit helped me find my place," he says. "I had met John Oxford of L&M at my first show, and I reached out with an email to see if he might have a spot for me."

The journey might have brought him to a new zip code, but in his career it brought him full circle in working for the next person he credits his success with: his PMA Center for Growing Talent mentor, now-boss, Hurley Neer.

"It's crazy looking back now that I've ended up here, that I would be working for Hurley," Cory marvels, explaining that Hurley, like himself, was not with L&M when their paths first crossed. "I love working with Hurley at L&M. We have developed a very candid and honest professional relationship. Hurley challenges me with strategy, management, and becoming an all-around better produce professional. He allows me to take part in training opportunities, conferences/expos, etc., which allows me to be engaged with others throughout the industry. In turn, I gain insights that can be brought back to L&M. Like Jeff, Hurley understands my current strengths and weaknesses as a young manager and is mentoring me for long term success in the industry."

As Cory walks me through this journey and how far it's taken him in our industry, we talk about how consistently maintaining relationships seems to be a theme in his growth.

"Absolutely," he says, telling me that the catalyst to his future, that same high school agriculture teacher, now a professor at the University of Kentucky, also attended his wedding in May. "I realize more and more each day the value of staying in touch with people. The longer I've stayed in the industry, my contacts have become more and more important, and more and more personal."

It's a lesson Cory is trying hard to make sure gets passed on to other sprouting industry influencers, remaining involved not only with the Center for Growing Talent, but also going back to his home in Kentucky to judge the state FFA competition.

"It's so interesting to hear the new ideas surrounding fresh produce, and every year it seems to diversify more," Cory says excitedly.

Clearly, there is a lot more to see from this mentor-in-the-making. With a contagious passion spanning both sides of the industry, and an eagerness to share with the incoming generation what he himself has fallen in love with, I have a feeling his journey in produce is just beginning.

Hurley Neer

Sales and Operations Manager, Eastern Vegetables, L&M

Jeffrey Shills

Partner, Florida Export Exchange, Inc.

Cory Reinle and I originally met when we were paired up together in the PMA Career pathways while he was finishing up his Master's degree at the University of Florida. I was immediately impressed with his maturity, character, energy, and excited interest about joining the industry—characteristics we certainly hope to see from students enrolled in the PMA program. Last year, Cory and I were reunited at L&M Companies where we now work together daily, and he still exudes that same passion for the industry. He has many strengths, but I'm most impressed with his ability to keep an even temperament in stressful circumstances. It's that maturity and clear-headed thought process that will enable him to continue to learn, grow, and develop into a leader within our company here at L&M, and within the industry, hopefully for many years to come.

I was immediately impressed with Cory when he came into the interview at Pero Family Farms. From day one he was very eager to learn and his skills were strong in most aspects behind the desk. He came in with many ideas, some that worked and some that didn't, but he was always willing to try something new for the better of the customer.

I trained him in a very difficult category in which Pero was quickly growing by leaps and bounds, and we became a solid procurement team. In any team situation there will be strengths and weakness on both sides. Part of turning these into a success is to be able to play off of those to make the most efficient outcome for your customers. In the end, I feel that Cory's and my chemistry accomplished this task. Through early morning calls, running production numbers, navigating complex situations—Cory adapted well and took it all in stride.

In one of the most exciting and fast-paced industries around, Cory is able to form relationships quickly and is never afraid to pursue information. Produce is comprised of, at times, an intimidating pool of personalities; from 30-plus year industry vets to high-intensity college grads; but Cory will always dive right in and find a common ground to forge a relationship. Quite simply, he is a go-getter.

Inside and out of work, he is a great guy and a tremendous leader—I have truly enjoyed seeing him grow into a well-rounded man. It was not just a working relationship but a friendship that will undoubtedly last for a long time to come.

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WTF DO I DO WITH Stemilt Growers Skylar Rae® Cherries ?

{ WHAT THE FORK }

Serve atop your favorite grilled meat or fish. Pictured here: Barbecued teriyaki chicken topped with Skylar Rae® Cherries and served alongside a cup of jasmine rice.

SKYLAR RAE® CHERRIES-WHITE NECTARINE-PINEAPPLE SALSA

INGREDIENTS

2 cups Skylar Rae® Cherries quartered, stemmed, and pitted

2 cups diced white nectarine

2 cups diced pineapple

⅓ cup sliced green onion

⅓ cup chopped cilantro, loosely packed

1-2 limes, juiced

Servings: 6 cups

DIRECTIONS

1. In a large bowl, combine all ingredients.
2. Mix thoroughly and serve immediately.

Note: To prevent fruit browning while prepping, drizzle individual cuttings with lime juice as you add ingredients to bowl instead of waiting until end to add juice.

For more delicious, healthy, & easy-to-prepare recipes visit *www.stemilt.com/recipes.*

Stemilt® World Famous Fruit™

Each year, the appearance of cherry blossoms in orchards, gardens, and along avenues ushers in spring and with it the promise of delicious drupes. From golds to vibrant reds to deep dark tones that approach black via violet, these sweet stonefruit varieties—and their sour, confection-bound cousins—are a boon to produce departments in late spring and summer. Let's take a look at cherries...

STACCATO®

SIZE: Large
COLOR: Vibrant, deep red to mahogany
FLAVOR: Super sweet profile

SKYLAR RAE®

SIZE: Large
COLOR: Golden yellow with a partial to full orange-red blush
FLAVOR: Very firm and "the sweetest cherry you'll ever eat"

GARNET

SIZE: Medium to large
COLOR: Bright red
FLAVOR: Firm and sweet

CHELAN

SIZE: Large
COLOR: Dark red
FLAVOR: Sweet with moderate firmness

MAY

Bing
Brooks
Coral
Garnet
Rainier
Tulare

JUNE

Bing
Brooks
Chelan
Lapin
Rainier
Sequoia®
Skylar Rae®

JULY

Bing
Lapin
Orondo Ruby™
Rainier
Skeena
Skylar Rae®
Staccato®
Sweetheart

AUGUST

Skeena
Staccato®
Sweetheart

BROOKS

SIZE: Large and uniform
COLOR: Dark red skin
FLAVOR: Firm and sweet flesh that varies from red to pink

CORAL

SIZE: Large
COLOR: Rich red with glossy finish
FLAVOR: Very sweet with low acidity

SEQUOIA®

SIZE: Large
COLOR: Dark red
FLAVOR: Sweet, rich flavor

SKEENA

SIZE: Large
COLOR: Dark red, nearly black
FLAVOR: Very firm and sweet

SWEETHEART

SIZE: Medium to large, heart-shaped
COLOR: Deep red with purple hints
FLAVOR: Firm and sweet; mild acidity

LAPIN

SIZE: Large
COLOR: Mahogany
FLAVOR: Sweet with underlining acidity

TULARE

SIZE: Oblong and symmetrical
COLOR: Red
FLAVOR: Firm and sweet flesh that varies from red to pink

BING

SIZE: Large, one of the most recognized varieties in the United States
COLOR: Deep mahogany red
FLAVOR: Firm, sweet, and juicy

ORONDO RUBY™

SIZE: Extra large
COLOR: Golden yellow with high levels of red blush
FLAVOR: Dessert sweet with a crisp bite

RAINIER

SIZE: Exceptionally large
COLOR: Distinctively golden colored cherry with a red blush
FLAVOR: Delicately sweet with extraordinary sugar levels

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MELON SNAPSHOT

From the firmly-fleshed cantaloupe to the crisp, juicy watermelon, these sweet, fleshy fruits—botanically speaking, outsized berries—are prized by consumers each summer for their refreshing taste and texture.

Data is through the 52 weeks ending March 19, 2017

CATEGORY TOTAL

DOLLARS
$2,748.9 Mil

LBS
4,461.4 Mil

PRICE/LB
$0.62

MINI SEEDLESS

DOLLARS
$215.4 Mil

LBS
315.8 Mil

DOLLAR SHARE
7.8%

PRICE/LB
$0.68

VOLUME SHARE
7.1%

WATERMELON

DOLLARS
$1,562.6 Mil

LBS
2,966.8 Mil

DOLLAR SHARE
56.8%

PRICE/LB
$0.53

VOLUME SHARE
66.5%

SOURCE | Statistics attributed to IRI

HONEYDEW

DOLLARS
$137.0 Mil

LBS
127.6 Mil

DOLLAR SHARE
5.0%

PRICE/LB
$1.07

VOLUME SHARE
2.9%

MIXED

DOLLARS
$134.0 Mil

LBS
40.02 Mil

DOLLAR SHARE
4.9%

PRICE/LB
$3.35

VOLUME SHARE
0.9%

CANTALOUPE

DOLLARS
$651.2 Mil

LBS
955.9 Mil

DOLLAR SHARE
23.7%

PRICE/LB
$0.68

VOLUME SHARE
21.4%

ALL OTHERS*

DOLLARS
$48.5 Mil

LBS
55.2 Mil

DOLLAR SHARE
1.8%

PRICE/LB
$0.88

VOLUME SHARE
1.2%

* Including piel de sapo, golden honeydew, Crenshaw, canary, etc.

CONVENTIONAL

DOLLARS
$2,735.9 Mil

LBS
4,448.1 Mil

PRICE/LB
$0.62

DOLLAR SHARE
99.5%

VOLUME SHARE
99.5%

ORGANIC

DOLLARS
$12.9 Mil

LBS
13.3 Mil

PRICE/LB
$0.97

DOLLAR SHARE
0.5%

VOLUME SHARE
0.3%

VALUE-ADDED

DOLLARS
$1,135.9 Mil

LBS
480 Mil

PRICE/LB
$2.36

DOLLAR SHARE
41.3%

VOLUME SHARE
10.8%

BULK/WHOLE

DOLLARS
$1,612.9 Mil

LBS
3,980.7 Mil

PRICE/LB
$0.41

DOLLAR SHARE
58.7%

VOLUME SHARE
89.2%

SOURCE | Statistics attributed to IRI

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Mary Fagundes
PRODUCTION MANAGER
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SOUTHERN COMFORT

Approaching Two Decades of Southern Hospitality

BY ROBERT SCHAULIS

In just under two decades, the Southeast Produce Council (SEPC) has grown from six visionary founders to an organization 2,500 strong. From the Gulf Coast to the Chesapeake, the Florida Peninsula to the Piedmont, the council's members and its leadership are growing the profile of fresh fruits and veggies—and doing so with a flourish.

Next spring the SEPC will host its 15th annual Southern Exposure trade show in Tampa, Florida. In 15 short years, the trade show has become an unmissable event for many in our industry, and the anniversary promises to be an auspicious occasion for an organization that prides itself on its signature event.

"I believe the SEPC is a great organization and is driven to support its members in the industry. The SEPC provides real value for its members by offering several programs including scholarships, training, networking, and one of the best trade shows in the industry," notes **Dave Lessard, Vice President of Produce and Floral for Ahold USA and SEPC Board Member**.

As I hear from those involved in the organization, a theme emerges; the SEPC is about more than trade shows. It's a network of rich personal and professional connections, exemplified as much by the enduring character of the friendships formed as by its outstanding trade events.

"The SEPC is an organization that truly cares for its members," **Al Finch, President of Florida Classic Growers and former SEPC President**, tells me. "We're a band of brothers and sisters! We're so much more than a couple of trade shows twice a year."

These are the sentiments **Teri Miller, current SEPC President and Senior Category Manager for Fresh Market**, shares with me, as well. The council recently celebrated another milestone when, after seven years of service within the organization, Teri was named President of the SEPC last September—becoming the first woman to hold the office.

"The SEPC is an organization that puts people first," Teri notes, citing the organization's impressive slate of charitable contributions and professional development projects. "To me, the SEPC is more than an association. This is a group of individuals that welcomed me, taught me, coached me, and loved me. They are my family."

Like many families, the SEPC has humble beginnings. In 1999, six individuals—Terry Vorhees of the California Tree Fruit Agreement, Tom Page of SuperValu, William Watson and Heidi McIntyre of the National Watermelon Promotion Board, Ken Lanhardt of Cub Foods, and Cathy Carney of the Zeigler Apple Cider Company—came together to found the SEPC. The council's mission, though simply stated, was expansive in its vision. The SEPC wanted to create a southeastern-based produce organization that would become

the premier produce resource for the region, providing opportunities for education, networking, and community outreach.

The organization held its first meeting at the Atlanta Farmers Market in August of 1999, and by October of that year, the SEPC held its first-ever event—a reception during that year's PMA Fresh Summit. Approximately 75 industry members attended the event, and by June of 2000, the council was ready to hold its first formal meeting, at which time Mark Hilton was elected the first President of SEPC.

"As one of the two retailers that founded the SEPC, I was able to meet the decision makers of the grower/shipper community face to face," remarks **Tom Page, SEPC Co-Founder**, **formerly of SuperValu Inc.** "From our first meeting in Atlanta to our last meeting in Orlando, I have always been able to learn from our members."

It wasn't until 2004, though, that the organization would host its first Southern Exposure trade show at the Lakeland Civic Center in Florida. This inaugural event, comprised of 87 booths and 300 attendees, would grow in a short time to the event it is today: the premier produce expo for the Southeast, with 283 booths and nearly 2,400 industry members attending each year.

"For many, Southern Exposure is a sort of family reunion," says **Garry Bergstrom, recently retired Director of Produce/ Floral at Publix** and 2017 recipient of the SEPC Lifetime Membership Award. "A reflection of the man Terry [Vorhees] was and what he had in mind when he started the organization. Yet, this not a sappy affair. Serious business people enjoy the intimate environment of Southern Exposure and have found great success at the event over the years."

Now approaching its 15th anniversary, the event has become one of the most anticipated gatherings in the produce industry—and for exhibitors, one of the most sought-after spaces for its intimate atmosphere and ideal ratio of buyers to suppliers. And while the SEPC may be about more than events, its enduring success is certainly bolstered by the efficacy of its trade shows and their enormous value as a professional resource.

"As a grower/shipper, the SEPC events are one of the best values," **Rick Estess, former President of SEPC and Regional Sales Manager for RPE Inc.** says. "The quality of decision-makers attending these events and the time you get with them is outstanding."

While SEPC membership may be about the people, it certainly doesn't strain one's business sense. In fact, many members tell me, the organization provides an exceptional value in both growing bottom lines and strengthening produce business acumen.

"The SEPC has always been the most effective Produce Council in supporting my professional business growth needs—whether for retail, wholesale, or grower/shipper," **former SEPC President Mark Daniels, Sales and Business Development, General Produce LLC,** notes, when I ask about the impact of the council on his career.

SEPC Board of Directors Presidents

Teri Miller: 2016 - 2017
- First female President of the SEPC

Mark Daniels: 2014 – 2016

Andrew Scott: 2012 – 2014

John Shuman: 2010 – 2012

Tom Page: 2008 – 2010

Al Finch: 2006 – 2008

Rick Estess: 2004 – 2006

Larry Narwold: 2002 – 2004

Mark Hilton: 2000 – 2002
- First SEPC President

Founding Members (1999)

Terry Vorhees: California Tree Fruit Agreement

Tom Page: SuperValu, Inc.

William Watson: National Watermelon Promotion Board

Heidi McIntyre: National Watermelon Promotion Board

Ken Lanhardt: Cub Foods, Inc.

Cathy Carney: Zeigler Apple Cider Company

And **SEPC Vice President and Dimare Fresh Sales Manager Faye Westfall** echoes these sentiments, noting that the council's professional development resources are second to none.

"I am proud to be a member of SEPC, an organization based on trust, integrity, and passion," Faye tells me. "I have built great professional relationships through SEPC. The council continues to provide the industry with all the latest innovations. The educational aspect is second to none. It now provides me a venue to give back to those coming into our 'World of Produce.'"

Through its various scholarship programs and professional development programs like STEP-UPP, STARS, Produce Inspection Training, and Southern Roots, the council is working to develop the next generation of produce professionals and ensure the continuing success of its members.

And Ahold's Dave Lessard notes that the organization is committed to the well-being of communities throughout the region and is active in a number of programs designed to improve the lives of the disadvantaged: "SEPC is focused on giving back to Southeast communities through generous charitable programs such as Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. As a member of the board, I am surrounded by produce professionals who are truly passionate about making a difference."

With contributions to organizations like Rockin' Appalachian Mom Project (RAMP), Society of

The Southeast Produce Council was originally formed by six members who saw a vision for a southeastern based produce organization. The organizational meeting took place at the Atlanta Farmer's Market **August 1999**.

SEPC Timeline of Milestones

1999

The first event for the council was a reception held during the PMA convention in Atlanta, Georgia, in October of 1999. There were approximately 75 in attendance.

2000

The first formal meeting of the Southeast Produce Council was held on June 13th in Charlotte, North Carolina, with 100 produce professionals from across all areas of the industry in attendance.

2004

First Southern Exposure was held March 7-9 at Lakeland Civic Center in Florida with 87 booths and 300 in attendance.

2007

Southern Exposure was held February 21-24 in Tampa, Florida, with over 150 booths and more than 600 in attendance.

SEPC Contributions

TOTAL in scholarship/charitable contributions: **over $1.4 million** as of 5/16/2017.

Benefiting Charities:
Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children, Orlando, Florida
Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, Atlanta, Georgia
Paul Anderson Youth Home, Vidalia, Georgia
Society of St. Andrew, Orlando, Florida
RAMP

Scholarship Opportunities:
SEPC Member Scholarship
STARS Scholarship
Terry Vorhees Vision Scholarship

Total charitable donations to date:
$950,550.03

Total scholarship contributions to date:
$502,500.00

St. Andrews, Paul Anderson Youth Home (PAYH), and the Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children, the council is making an enduring impact on the Southeast.

"I have been honored to be in the SEPC from almost the very beginning. I still have the original membership card that states I was member #17," **SEPC Executive Director David Sherrod** shares. "Over the years, we have been defined only by Southern Exposure, but those of us that have chosen to be involved know that the SEPC is truly so much more than that. The SEPC has always strived to provide a business-centric environment for our members to achieve their company's goals. We are about community involvement, educational opportunities, and cutting-edge innovations in our industry, as well as the best networking events in the industry today. These four pillars are at the root of what drives us as an organization."

And with a new trade show format set to debut this year—the Southern Innovations Organics and Foodservice Expo, held September 28-30 at the Westin Hilton Head Island Resort & Spa in South Carolina—the organization is growing its already outsized impact on our industry.

With one foot rooted firmly in the past—in the organization's founding principles—and the other striding forward to meet the evolving demands of our industry, we can't wait to see what's next for the Southeast Produce Council.

Upcoming shows:

Southern Innovations Organics & Foodservice Expo
September 28–30, 2017
Hilton Head, South Carolina

SEPC Southern Exposure
March 1–3, 2018
Tampa, Florida

2010
John Shuman was elected President of SEPC.

Southern Exposure was held in Tampa, Florida.

2014
Southern Exposure was held at Caribe Royale in Orlando, Florida, with 267 booths and over 1,800 in attendance.

Mark Daniels was elected President of SEPC.

2016
Teri Miller was elected President of SEPC.

Southern Exposure was held at the Diplomat Resort in Hollywood, Florida, with 275 booths and 2,400 in attendance.

2017
13th Annual Southern Exposure was hosted at the Walt Disney World Swan and Dolphin Resort in Orlando, Florida, with 283 booths and 2,322 in attendance.

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STRAWBERRY Snapshot

There's no forgetting the vibrant red hues of this distinguished berry. Crossing nearly every boundary, the fruit is grown on shores far from its native France to now entrance palates across the globe. Though cultivars may vary in size, shape, and blush, the sentiment remains the same; its sweet taste and unmistakable appeal make for an experience that has been heralded across the ages, with many more to come...

CRACKERS TOPPED WITH FRESH SLICED STRAWBERRIES

KYLA OBERMAN

Director of Marketing, Naturipe Farms LLC

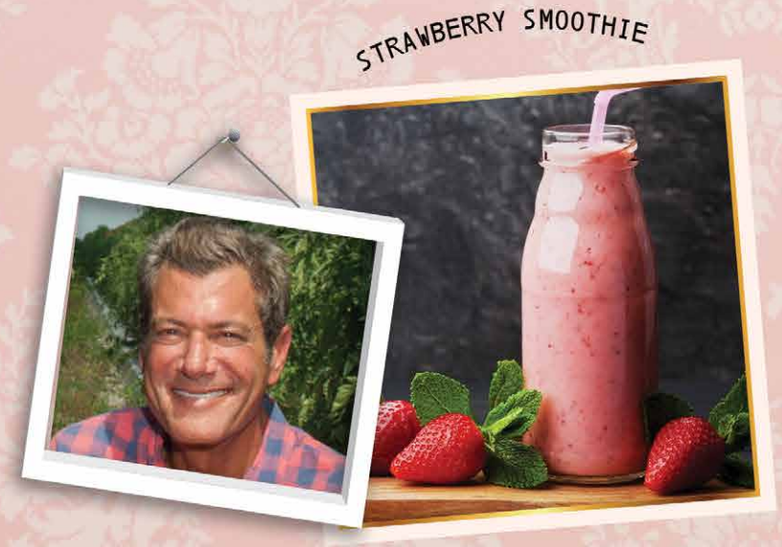
"I love strawberries, always have! The smell, the color (red is my favorite), and the sweet flavor that makes you smile because it tastes so good. My daughter has strawberries just about every day in her oatmeal, yogurt, quinoa, or with edamame. My go-to appetizer that is a proven crowd pleaser is water crackers topped with honeycomb, blue cheese, and fresh sliced strawberries. And a new favorite entrée includes zucchini noodles, shrimp, spinach, and fresh strawberries in a sesame dressing—yum!"

JON ESFORMES

CEO, Sunripe Certified Brands

"Strawberries are probably my favorite fruit. They speak for themselves. There isn't anything I've ever eaten that wasn't made better by adding strawberries. Want our go-to strawberry recipe? Sure...whatever you're cooking—add strawberries!"

STRAWBERRY SMOOTHIE



CHOCOLATE-DIPPED STRAWBERRIES

CINDY JEWELL

VP of Marketing, California Giant Berry Farms

"Asking a strawberry person how they like to eat strawberries is a tough one. First and foremost, straight off the plant! However, since I take them with me to parties and events, my go-to recipes are fresh jalapeño strawberry salsa, and chocolate-dipped strawberries. When serving them at home for family and guests, I always lean toward the 'build your own shortcake bar' complete with fresh cream, brownies, biscuits, and any other berry types I might have in the fridge."

STRAWBERRY PANCAKES

KARIN GARDNER

Marketing Communications Manager, Oppy

"My parents are from Holland, and when I was growing up my mom would make fluffy Dutch pancakes for us on Sunday mornings. In the summer, she'd slice a huge pile of fresh strawberries over the pancakes as an extra special treat. Now that strawberries are always available, we can enjoy this breakfast at our house year-round. It's my go-to after long early morning bike rides—thinking of those cool, sweet berries often gets me through the last hard miles!"

STRAWBERRIES WITH ANGEL FOOD CAKE

CARRIE ROBERTSON

Marketing Manager, Veg-Fresh Farms

"When it comes to enjoying strawberries, my favorite way is as dessert! I love to cut them up and toss them alongside fresh blueberries and blackberries, and pair them with an angel food cake (easy to pick up at the store) and homemade whipped cream. My mom always made this treat growing up, and now I like to make it for my family. It's a really simple and totally satisfying dessert that is perfect for family barbecues in the summer. And it looks really pretty too!"

STRAWBERRIES, BROWN SUGAR, AND SOUR CREAM

DAN CROWLEY

Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Well•Pict

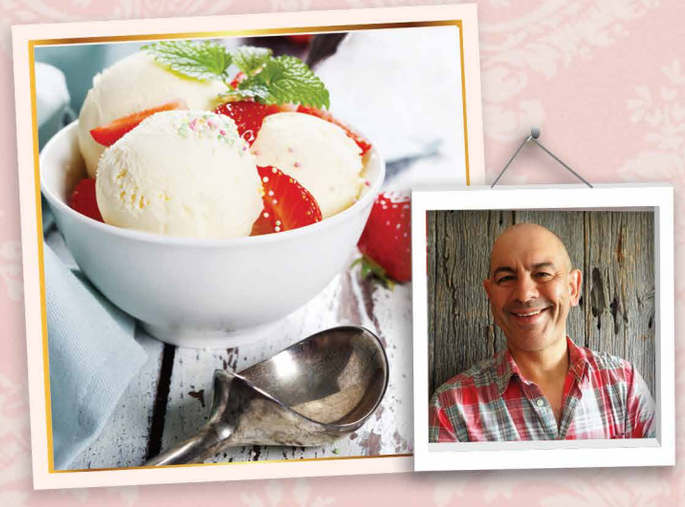
"My first memories of strawberries will always be tied to my dad bringing them home from his job. For me, strawberries are all about the flavor. I always bring them with me to a social event, and you'd think I'd brought a pot of gold with the way they light up a room. A strawberry rolled in sour cream and brown sugar is my favorite fun treat."

SIMON MAJUMDAR

Food Writer

"The first strawberries of the season are something of a British tradition. Think of Wimbledon, where plump strawberries served with clotted cream and a glass of chilled champagne are the perfect accompaniment to the sound of the cheering crowds, as tennis balls are smashed around the grass courts. My own favorite way of serving strawberries, however, is to warm them through gently with a little sugar and aged balsamic vinegar and serve them over simple vanilla ice cream with a crack of black pepper on top. An odd but winning combination."

VANILLA ICE CREAM WITH STRAWBERRIES

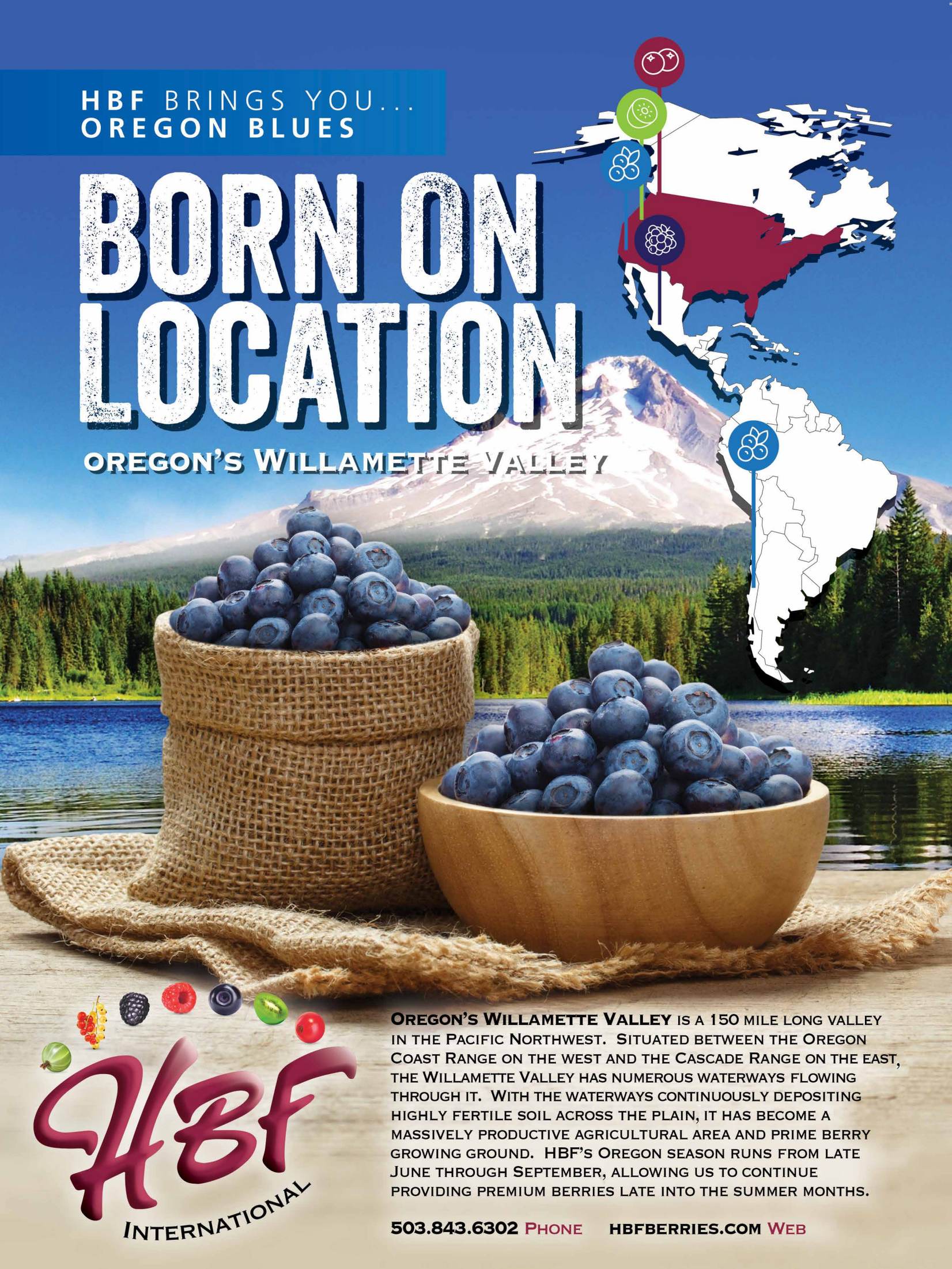


STRAWBERRY SHORTCAKE

FRANCES DILLARD

Director, Marketing, Driscoll's

"For me, nothing says summer sweetness like an incredible bite of strawberry shortcake. Driscoll's has created a great range of recipes available on our website that put a twist on the classic recipe. Because fresh strawberries taste so great, you can keep the combinations simple and easy using store bought pound cake and a dollop of whipped cream. If you have more time, it's great to experiment with orange-flavored whipped cream or a chocolate salted caramel cake base. We have a popular Double Strawberry and Rose Mini-Shortcake recipe that was specially created for Driscoll's by award-winning author Dorie Greenspan. That is a WOW—in flavor and presentation—when you have company."



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- Dandelion Greens
- Dill
- Endive
- Escarole
- Fennel
- Golden Beets
- Green Cabbage
- Green Chard
- Green Kale
- Green Onions
- Green Leaf Lettuce
- Iceberg Lettuce
- Italian Parsley
- Lacinato Kale
- Leeks
- Mustard Greens
- Napa Cabbage
- Parsley
- Radishes
- Rainbow Chard
- Red Beets
- Red Cabbage
- Red Chard
- Red Dandelions
- Red Leaf Lettuce
- Red Kale
- Romaine Hearts
- Romaine Leaf Lettuce
- Spinach
- Sweet Baby Broccoli

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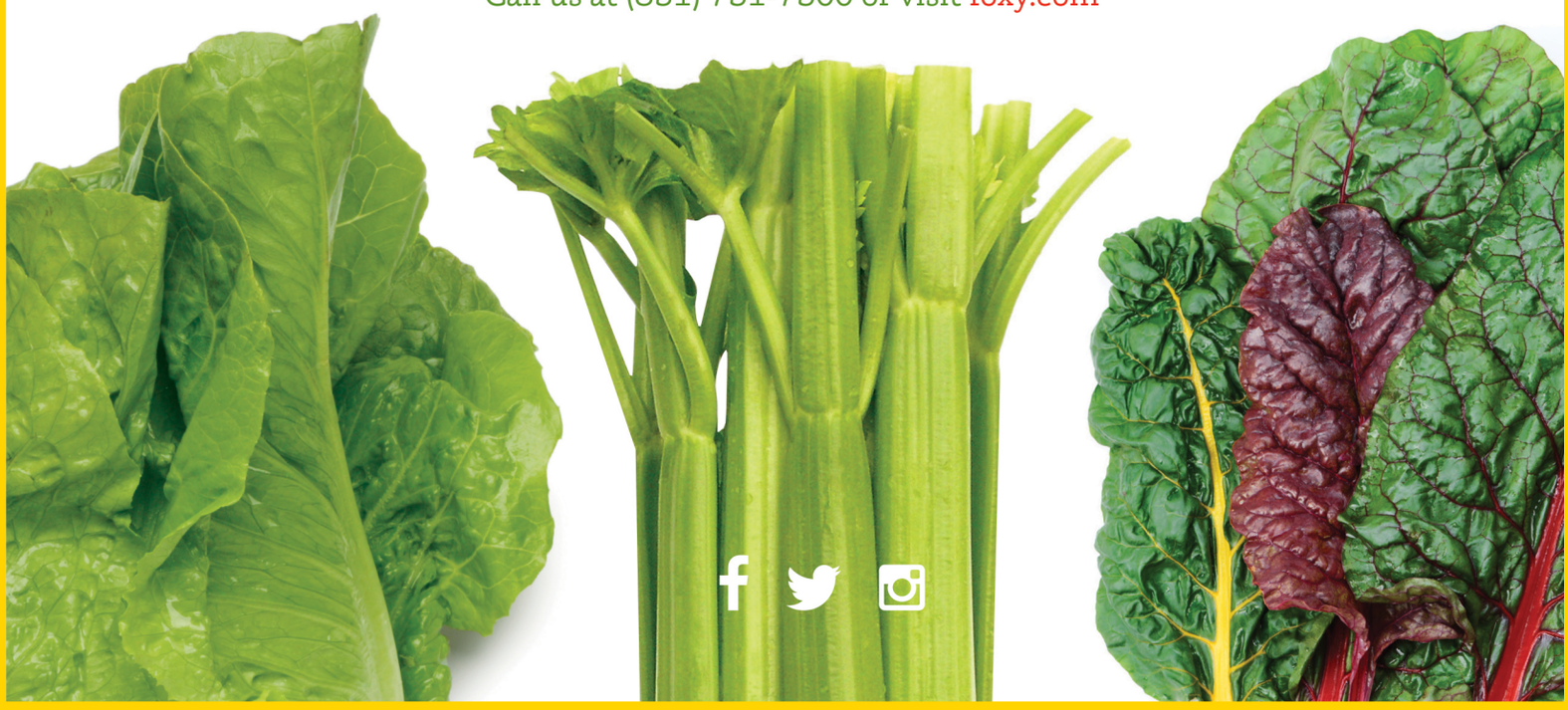
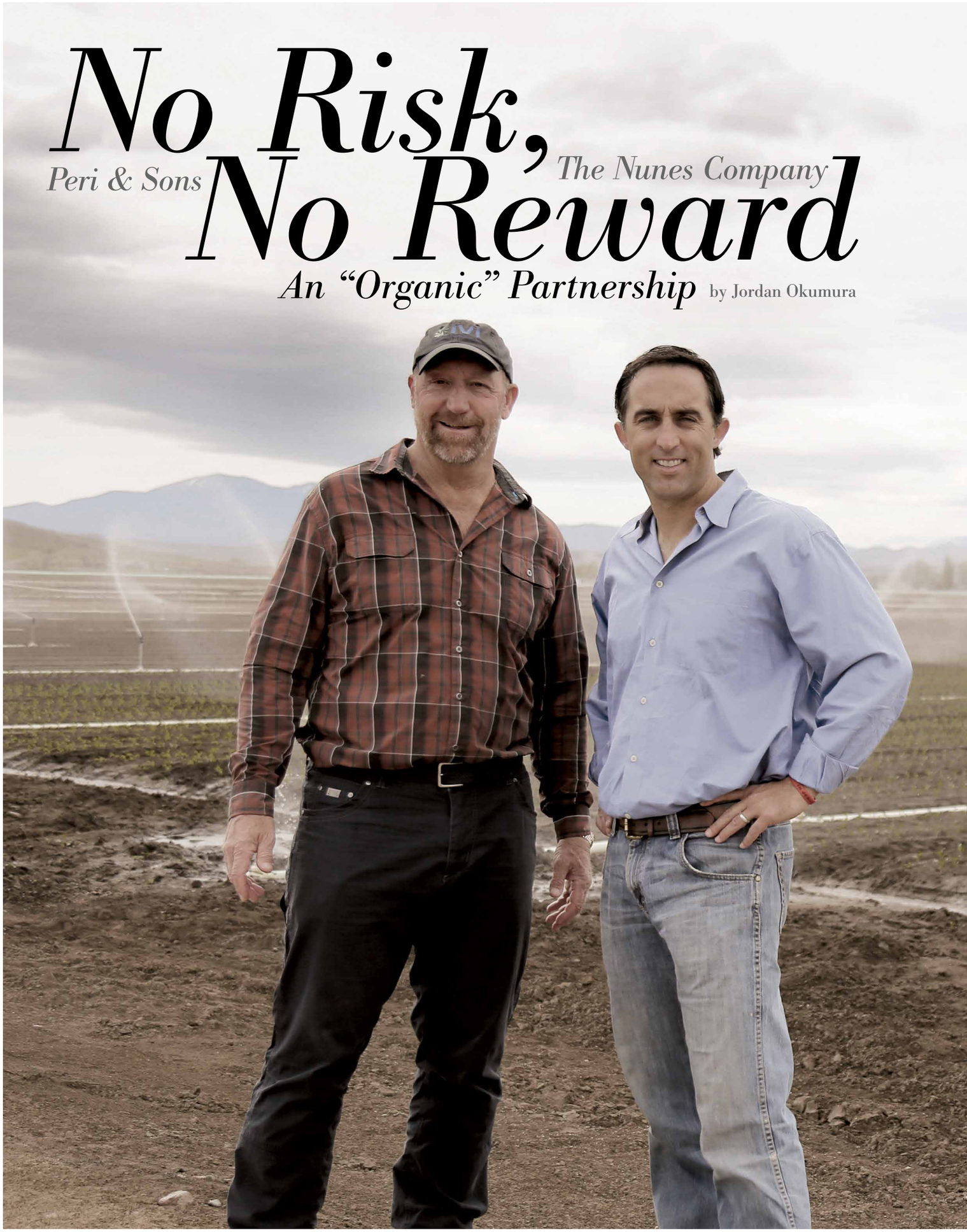


No Risk, No Reward

Peri & Sons | The Nunes Company

An "Organic" Partnership

by Jordan Okumura



David Peri (left) and Tom Nunes (T5)

Fresh produce is an industry of families—from the multigenerational and established, to those digging their fingers into that first bit of earth. Both stewards of the land and industry pioneers, The Nunes Company Inc. and Peri & Sons Farms are two of these leaders taking family to the next level as they guide their burgeoning partnership forward to the leading edge of the organic industry.

With the partnership entering its ninth summer this year, the roots of Nunes and Peri & Sons now collectively span eight generations, as well as a joint venture in the fertile soils of the cool desert climate of Yerington, Nevada, and a new state-of-the-art distribution center. With this new facility in Nevada, the two families will be able to produce more than 20 different organic categories across 3,500 acres together. It's easy to see that the future looks more than bright for these companies; it looks downright fruitful.

The Nunes Company, Inc. Founders Bob and Tom Nunes

With their fingers on the pulse of organic growth, Tom M. Nunes (also know as T5), Vice President of Operations of The Nunes Company, Inc., and David Peri, Owner and Founder of Peri & Sons Farms, join me in Yerington, Nevada, to discuss the lay of the land and how a partnership is not a compromise, but an advantage.

"This joint-venture has strategically positioned us to build on the strengths of our individual companies and provide unrivaled service for our customers," Tom shares with me. "The opportunities to continue building and developing our resources, operations, and distribution footprint began eight years ago, and this new facility truly solidifies our efforts today. This partnership provides us with the opportunity and ability to respond to the demands of today's customers and consumers alike."

The new facility, Walker River Cooling, was opened in May of 2017 and services retailers, wholesalers, processors, and other buying organizations throughout North America. Nevada-based Peri & Sons, one of the country's largest onion growing operations, and Salinas, California-headquartered The Nunes Company, one of the nation's largest grower/shippers of organic fresh produce marketed under the Foxy Organic brand name, are a match made in produce heaven. Starting with 16 acres just eight years ago, the two companies will grow and ship more than 25 million pounds of organic baby greens and 40 million pounds of organic, fresh vegetables this year.

"In 2008 our Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Mark Crossgrove, and I went and visited Peri's Nevada operations," Tom says. "We were looking for diversification in the organic land base and Peri was looking to grow in the fresh vegetable and leafy greens arena. The rest is history."

So, what is it that makes Yerington an ideal location for growing organic fresh vegetables? To start, the mild climate during the summer months, the elevation which situates Yerington at 4,390 feet, the quality and quantity of the ground water, fertile soil, and of course…the partnership itself.

"From the moment I first observed the fields being grown by David Peri, I had a feeling our relationship would be long-term," Mark says of the experience. "The quality of product being produced and harvested by David and his team was exceptional, and I knew it would fit in perfectly with our future organic sales and marketing growth plans."

"The quality of product being produced and harvested by David and his team was exceptional, and I knew it would fit in perfectly with our future organic sales and marketing growth plans."

-Mark Crossgrove

But it is more than just a strategic move that brings these two powerhouses together, as Tom shares with me.

"The decision, on our part, to enter into this partnership with Peri & Sons was an easy one. The Peri & Sons family are hard-working, honest, progressive, and innovative people who are unbelievably committed to our industry, the land, and sustainable growth. Fundamentally, that is an incredible basis for building a partnership," Tom tells me. "Their skill-set is a great complement to ours, and their culture and values align with our own as well. There has been a lot of common ground between our two companies. Over the last eight years, since this partnership really found its footing, we have developed a strong relationship with not only David Peri, but his wife, Pam, his family, and their dedicated and highly-valued team."

David amd Pam Peri

To say that the admiration between the two families is mutual is more than an understatement. David takes a moment to reflect, and echoes Tom's same sentiment on the unique gravity of the partnership and its impact on the purchasing customer and the consumer.

"It is amazing how quickly our partnership took hold," David tells me. "In 2009, we planted romaine for the Nunes team. I personally asked folks in the veg industry about the Nunes family and was told nothing but good things. I learned that their family was just like ours, because we had the same level of integrity and shared common core moral values. I just knew it would only be a matter of time before we would become the perfect partnership. For us, farming is personal and we have a passionate, hands-on approach to every aspect of growing, from the seed to the table. That shared vision is what has kept us thriving for almost a decade."

What does this collaboration look like as Nunes and Peri & Sons get their summer organic program underway in Yerington? Peri & Sons will focus on the farming and production side of the operation, as well as the personnel side to a degree. In addition, the infrastructure tied to harvesting and cooling, as well as some of the management in conjunction with both companies' personnel, will be a joint effort. As for the sales and marketing side, Nunes is taking that bull by the horns.

When I ask David what he believes created the need for the partnership, he tells me that for starters, he wouldn't call it a need.

Yerington, Nevada

"It has been more like a natural progression of two family companies coming together to become smarter and more efficient. Our operations completely complement each other," he says. "As partners, we believe the team effort and cohesiveness of the two companies will be difficult, if not impossible, to replicate by other veg companies in the industry. The Nunes family possesses the same work ethic as our family does. They are hardworking, honest leaders and innovators that care about the industry. Their level of expertise in harvesting,

"The infrastructure, time, and money we've spent collectively between Peri & Sons and ourselves will allow us to ship an even higher quality product with this facility and partnership."

- Tom Nunes (T5)

cooling, sales, and marketing is unsurpassed. Our combined set of skills, along with our great people, truly create the perfect match."

Each company brings a set of unique strengths, talents, resources, and perspectives to the table. Their ability to work so well together as a team and to communicate and execute on shared goals and objectives is key to that ongoing success, as Tom reinforces.

Tom Nunes (left) and David Peri discussing plans for the Nevada facility

David Peri (left) and Tom Nunes on site

Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval has shared his thoughts on the venture in recent months, noting this project is a great example of the success he is witnessing across Nevada: "I am proud to congratulate and thank this hometown company for investing in the region and bringing good paying jobs to Lyon County. The commitment of these two family-run companies shows their ability to creatively and strategically meet the demands of the marketplace. Nevada is proud to be a part of this vision and the positive impact it will have on our community."

The combined operations of the two companies have brought more than 800 jobs to Lyon County to date, with additional job growth projected upon completion of the new distribution facility.

Construction of the new Walker River Cooling facility broke ground in early September, with the foresight and planning to allow the companies the capability of growing and expanding.

"We incorporated only the latest-and-greatest from a technology, product-flow, and efficiency standpoint," Tom says. "Our goal is to use our more than 40 years of cooling experience and industry knowledge to bring to market the best of class in terms of cooling mechanisms, temperature control, product flow, industrial safety, and food safety."

Having more space will also allow them to consolidate and put loads together, an option that makes sense for their customers, while offering a heightened level of quality and consistency. The 20-week harvesting window, from May through October, complements Nunes' and Peri & Sons' 52-week programs, bringing customers a diverse portfolio of offerings and an unsurpassed level of customer service.

"It is Nunes' focus to grow the right crop, in the right place, at the right time, to give us the highest quality product 52-weeks a year," Tom shares, adding that Nevada's 20-week window is a huge component to the current land base structure the company currently has in its fold. "The infrastructure, time, and money we've spent collectively between Peri & Sons and ourselves will allow us to ship an even higher quality product with this facility and partnership."

In the competitive environment of organic fresh produce where most companies are vying for their own piece of the pie, The Nunes Company and Peri & Sons are sitting back and enjoying the fruits of their labor. Together.

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Onion SNAPSHOT

Julia Child once noted: "It's hard to imagine a civilization without onions." Onions have been cultivated since antiquity and are available in several varieties—among them, red, white, and yellow—with a range of characteristics from sweet and mild, to acidic and earthy. Let's peel back the layers and examine this varied and vibrant category.

Totals

DOLLARS
$2,148.4 MIL

LBS
2,806.2 MIL

PRICE/LB
$1.19

Conventional

LBS
1,750.1 MIL

DOLLARS
$2,065.2 MIL

VOL SHARE
96.9%

$ SHARE
96.1%

PRICE/LB
$1.18

VOL SHARE
3.1%

$ SHARE
3.9%

DOLLARS
$83.2 MIL

Organic

PRICE/LB
$1.48

LBS
56.2 MIL

VARIETIES

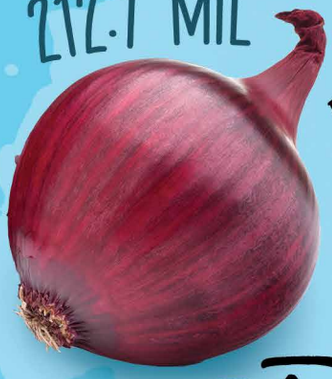
Yellow & Brown

LBS
734.8 MIL

DOLLARS
$671.8 MIL

PRICE/LB
$0.91

Red



LBS
212.7 MIL

PRICE/LB
$1.46

DOLLARS
$310.8 MIL

White

DOLLARS
$227.7 MIL

LBS
201.4 MIL

PRICE/LB
$1.13

Shallots

LBS
8.8 MIL

DOLLARS
$35.1 MIL

PRICE/LB
$3.98

Vidalia

DOLLARS
$157.8 MIL

LBS
147.8 MIL

PRICE/LB
$1.07

ONIONS

Green & Scallions

LBS
109.0 MIL

DOLLARS
$292.3 MIL

PRICE/LB
$2.68

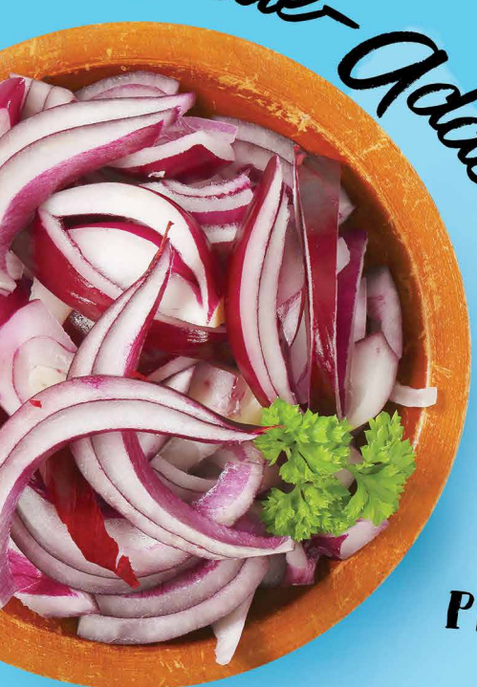
Non-Vidalia Sweet Onion

LBS
320.5 MIL

DOLLARS
$359.5 MIL

PRICE/LB
$1.12

Value-Added



LBS
29.5 MIL

DOLLARS
$87.1 MIL

PRICE/LB
$2.95

Bulk & Whole

LBS
1,776.8 MIL

DOLLARS
$2,061.3 MIL

PRICE/LB
$1.16

SOURCE | Statistics attributed to IRI

WTF DO I DO WITH Pete's Living Greens Red Butter Lettuce ?

{ WHAT THE FORK }

CAULIFLOWER TABBOULEH IN LETTUCE CUPS

INGREDIENTS

1 head of Pete's Living Greens Red Butter Lettuce

1 head cauliflower (or **2** bags florets)

2 large tomatoes, chopped

1 cup parsley, chopped

¼ cup mint, chopped

3 tbsp lemon juice

¼ cup extra virgin olive oil (EVOO)

Sea salt

Black pepper, freshly ground

Servings: 8 lettuce cups

DIRECTIONS

1. Pulse cauliflower in a food processor, or chop by hand until it is in small bits resembling grains.
2. Toss with chopped tomatoes, parsley, mint, lemon juice, and EVOO.
3. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
4. Spoon into the butter lettuce cups and serve.

Recipe credited to: Chef Nancy Waldeck of Taste and Savor

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UP CLOSE

A CLOSER LOOK AT MANN PACKING'S SLAW BLENDS

It all started 25 years ago, when Mann Packing turned a vegetable by-product, broccoli stems, into an overnight cult sensation. The original Broccoli Cole Slaw not only created an entirely new category—vegetable-based salad blends—but it is still the undisputed leader in that space today. In fact, 46 percent of the broccoli cole slaw sold in the U.S. comes from Mann Packing.

The instant popularity of Broccoli Cole Slaw sparked many imitators, but none of them had the technology or expertise behind it to provide the flavor, quality, or status of the Mann's product. Today, the company has continued its tradition of innovation by expanding its lineup of veggie slaw blends to five products in its award-winning portfolio. Nutrient-dense, crunchy, and colorful, Mann's slaw blends are more than just a salad, designed to empower home chefs to create healthy meals. Tossed in a stir fry, blended into a smoothie, or giving boost to a grain bowl—their applications are endless.

To celebrate their versatility as well as the 25th anniversary of Broccoli Cole Slaw, the entire line of blends has recently undergone a package redesign that promotes health and creativity in the kitchen by calling out usages with simple violators; Toss–Blend–Cook.

The newest member of the team, Organic Super Blend, rounds out the portfolio. Its combination of colored carrots, kale, broccoli, and green cabbage looks great and tastes even better.

In addition to Organic Super Blend, Mann Packing's vegetable slaws are available in the original Broccoli Cole Slaw, Rainbow Salad, Power Blend, and Kale Beet Blend—creating its own category in the value-added vegetable section in produce.

WTF DO I DO WITH Kingman Watermelon ?

{ WHAT THE FORK }

TRIPLE CROWN WATERMELON SPLASH

INGREDIENTS

1 Kingman seedless watermelon

2 oranges

2 lemons

2 bottles Folktale Sangiovese Estate Rosé or other good Monterey County rosé

¼ cup super-fine sugar

1 cup light rum

2 cups white grape juice

28 oz carbonated water, chilled

Lemon-lime soda to sweeten to taste *(optional)*

DIRECTIONS

1. Cut the watermelon in half and then into quarters.
2. Remove rind and cut melon into small cubes.
3. In a large pitcher or bowl, place the watermelon and smash slightly, *do not* pulverize.
4. Slice one orange and one lemon into ¼ inch rounds, place with watermelon. Squeeze the remaining orange and lemon over the watermelon.
5. Add the sugar, wine, rum, and grape juice. Stir to dissolve sugar; chill for 2 hours.
6. Just before serving, divide mixture into 2 pitchers.
7. Slowly add chilled carbonated water.
8. You can use lemon-lime soda to add a sweeter finish to this refreshing, adult punch!

Recipe credited to: Chef Todd Fisher, VP of Culinary Operations, Folktale Winery

For more juicy details, visit *www.sakatavegetables.com*

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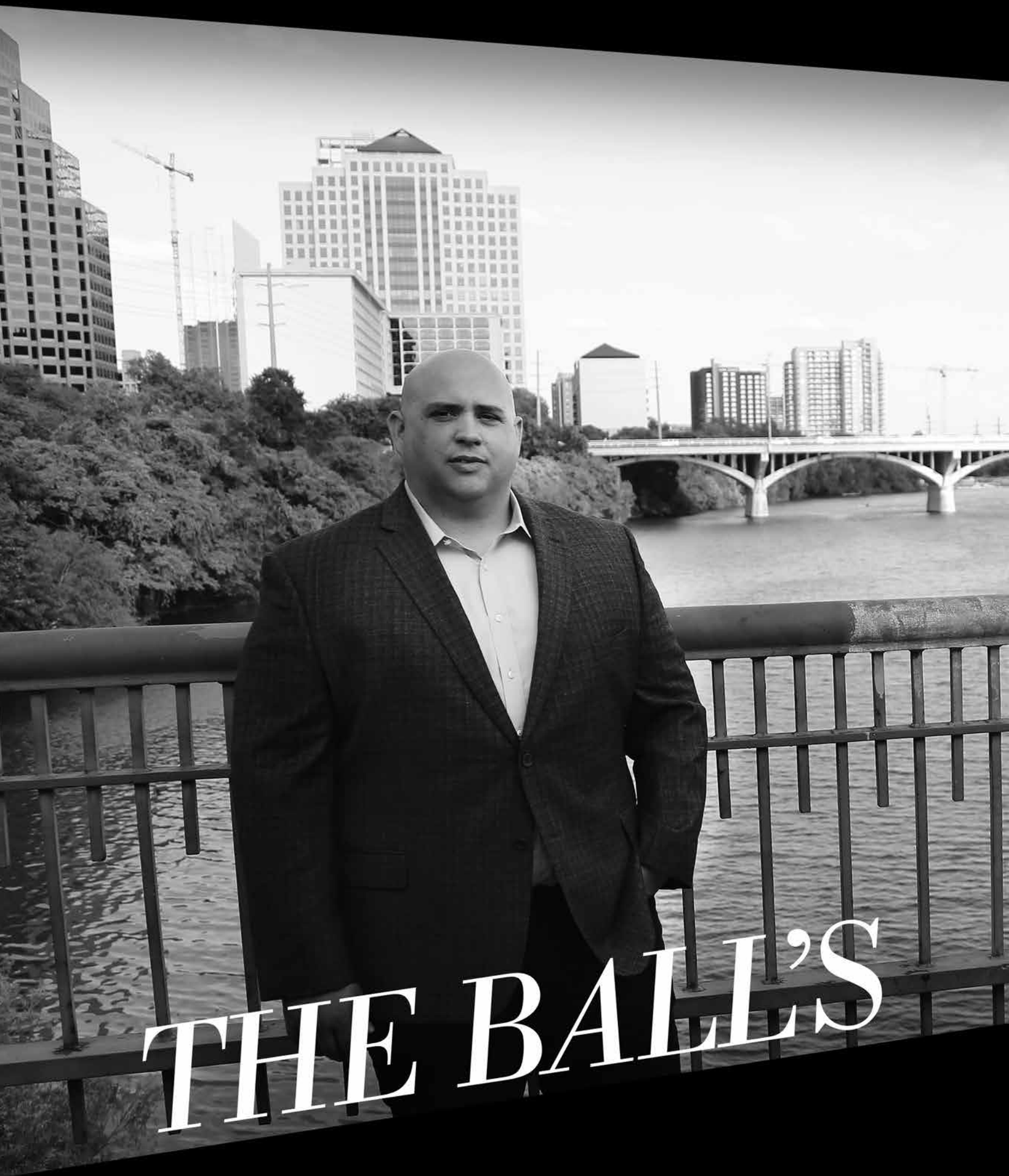
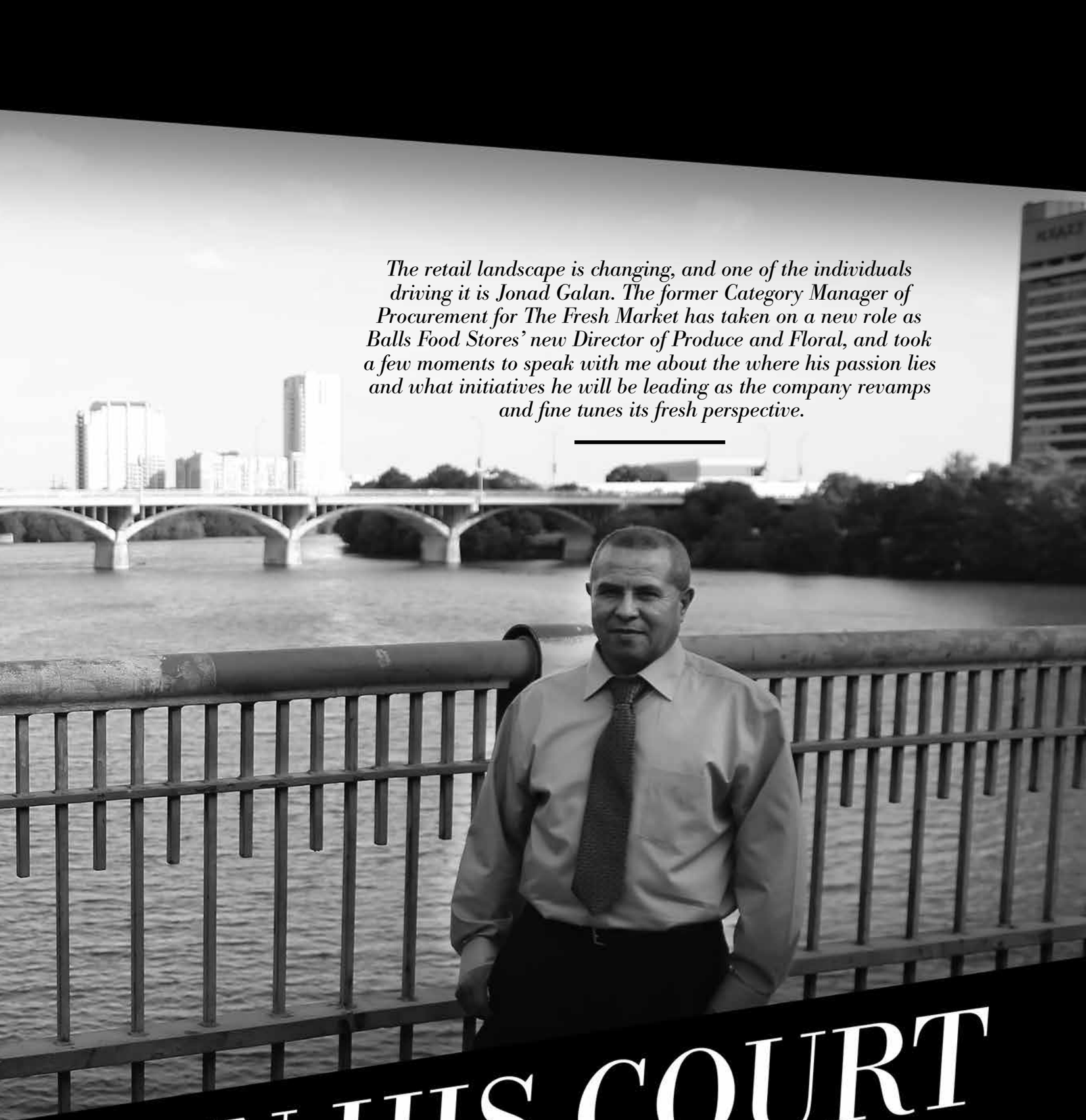


THE BALL'S



The retail landscape is changing, and one of the individuals driving it is Jonad Galan. The former Category Manager of Procurement for The Fresh Market has taken on a new role as Balls Food Stores' new Director of Produce and Floral, and took a few moments to speak with me about the where his passion lies and what initiatives he will be leading as the company revamps and fine tunes its fresh perspective.

IN HIS COURT

by Jessica Donnel

Pictured: Jonad Galan and Antonio "Tony" Albor

"I don't want to sit around and react, I want to lead—I want to be the one creating the change. It's about quality, freshness... and a little bit of the unexpected." This is how the new Director of Produce and Floral for Balls Foods, Jonad Galan, introduces me to the modern update that he has brought to the retailer's produce program.

Having just joined the Kansas City, Kansas-based retailer last summer in his first ever Director role, Jonad's knack for bringing out-of-the-box ideas to the produce department is what inspires me to expect big things from a program just finding its stride.

"Evolution requires innovation and change," Jonad declares with a conviction that makes you confident he knows exactly what this entails. "Balls Foods has always aimed to exceed its customer's quality expectations and provide the freshest product, and we've increased our promotional activity to deliver great value. We want to amaze our customers through key sourcing and grower/vendor partnerships that allow for a 'wow factor,' such as Jet Fresh peaches and nectarines for Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays—both of which have never been seen in the Kansas City market before."

Taking the reins of a produce department for the first time, all eyes are now on Jonad and how he plans to revitalize the Balls Foods program. A fan himself of the near century-old retailer, Jonad's plans don't lay in a rebranding or expansion, but rather in fortifying the core of what the business does well, refreshing and remodeling current stores, retraining teammates, visiting all locations, and carefully reviewing that the team has all the tools to make them successful, one store at a time.

Jonad's eagerness for this task is evident as we chat about his future plans for Balls Foods. When I ask Jonad what about this industry makes him so passionate, he shares that as a produce professional, he has had an opportunity to directly impact a marketplace and the consumer eating experience.

"It brings me lots of joy to see our customers experience the sweetest grapes they have ever eaten, the freshest and crispest greens for their salads, a December peach that reminds them of summer and

"Evolution requires innovation and change."

- Jonad Galan

makes our guests want to bake a pie," Jonad smiles and says. "My passion is simply delivering joy through produce."

Jonad seems to have it all down to a science, or more specifically, the alphabet. He shares with me that it circles back to the ABCs of his program: apples, berries, and cherries. These key segments help drive growth, impulse purchases, and cultivate loyalty with repeat shoppers. These categories also offer differentiation if you can access the right varieties, consistent quality, and vendor partners.

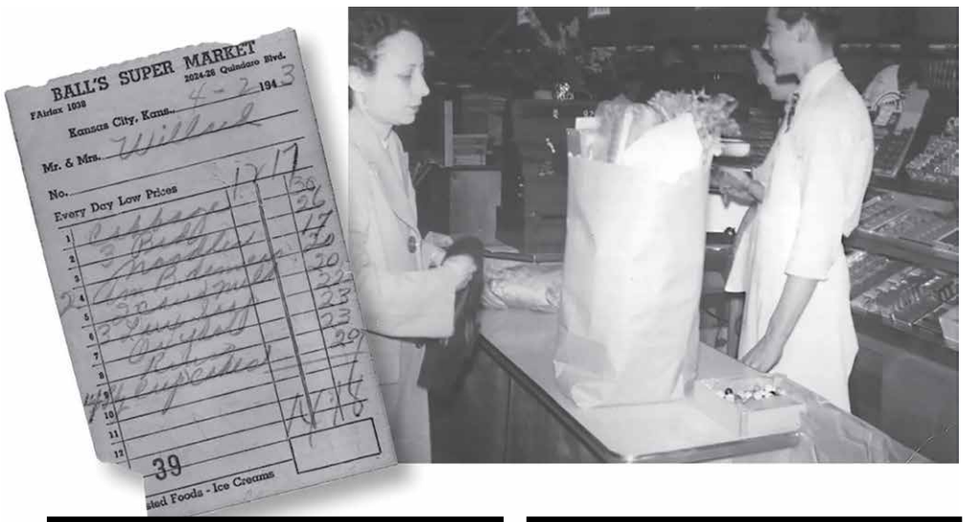
And one member of the produce team Jonad works particularly closely with to make these words a reality is right hand man Antonio "Tony" Albor. Tony is the Produce Merchandiser for Balls' Hen House and Sun Fresh banners. With the company since 1993, Tony rose up the ranks from Produce Clerk, touching on roles with the salad bar, bulk food, and the floral department. Taking various management roles until 2012, he was then given the opportunity to shine as a Produce Specialist for all the Hen House and Sun Fresh stores. When I ask him what it's like working with Jonad and the Balls Foods team, he quickly mentions the company's deep commitment to the end consumer.

"I think what really sets the Balls Food's produce program apart from others is the connection that we all have with the consumer. We have our Buy Fresh, Buy Local program, where we choose to sell local product because not only are we providing fresher products to our customers, but we're also supporting local customers," Tony says.

Along with Tony in Jonad's premier produce family is Chris Franklin, Merchandiser for the Price Chopper banner and CJ Harle, the company's Director of

Produce department at one of the company's Hen House banner stores

Customers paid their bill once a month at the first Balls Store



The first store at the corner of 16th and Stewart Streets

An early Balls Foods produce department

Sidney and Mollie Ball, circa 1920

"When I think about our team, I think of how important it is to teach the future generations of our industry that bringing healthy food to consumers' plates is a privilege and a responsibility."

- Jonad Galan

Produce Procurement and Distribution. Chris has been a teammate for 40 years as of this May, and CJ is a one of the key leaders in keeping Balls Foods at the forefront of the Kansas City marketplace, with a knack for acquiring high-quality, great tasting product at fair costs.

"Each teammate plays such a big role. Working for Balls Food's and Jonad really makes me feel like I'm working for my own company. This is a family company through and through, and in my case, I started a family here, and now my whole family is working for Balls Food's company," he laughs.

Established following World War I, and a survivor of The Great Depression, Balls Foods is a company familiar with beating the odds. Sidney and Mollie Ball, newly married in 1923, were able to scrape together $1,000 for a building on the corner of 16th and Stewart Streets in Kansas City, Kansas. This would become the foundation for a company that would eventually span four banners—Price Chopper, Hen House, Payless Discount Foods, and Sun Fresh—and 30-some-odd locations throughout the Kansas City area. Throughout the decades, the dynamic Ball duo, and later generations Fred and David Ball, were able to bring new innovations to the area's retail landscape—things like cash and carry buying, large scale supermarkets, streamlined warehouse-style shopping, and its Buy Fresh, Buy Local produce program.

Just like that of the family that started Balls Foods, Jonad's story is filled with ambition. After immigrating from Cuba to South Florida in 1995, his career in the industry started in 1998 at Publix Supermarkets during his high school and university years. In 2005, a great opportunity presented itself with The Fresh Market as Jonad took on his first Produce Manager role. In this position, Jonad had the opportunity to become a Produce Certified Trainer, opening several new stores throughout the East Coast during some of the company's fastest growth years. He was then promoted to Category Manager of Retail for the South East region, wrapping up his most recent role with The Fresh Market as the Category Manager of Procurement.

During his tenure at The Fresh Market, Jonad was able to work under two men who became his mentors during his produce

Deli department at one of the company's Hen House banner stores

journey. One was the much lauded Lee Arthur, the then Merchandising Vice President for Produce, Floral, Gift, Candy, Coffee, and Bulk, and the other was Art Beaudet, the retailer's Senior Procurement Manager.

"Learning under Lee's leadership was a lot of work," Jonad laughs. "He is a very hands-on coach, and I was able to learn a lot about the strategic view of things. He knows this industry back and forth, and from him I learned to plan ahead and be proactive. This is where I learned I want to lead. Art, on the other hand, has an incredible memory and access to so much information. From him I really learned to pick up the mentality of what's important—how to get the most valuable information during vendor meetings and conferences, and how to develop and grow business relationships. Working with that team was incredibly valuable."

Under the guiding principles of these two mentors, Jonad learned an appreciation for spreading knowledge to the next generations of produce professionals. Balls Foods has a rich company culture that values each and every one of its staff. In fact, the company doesn't even use the word employee, but instead 'teammate,' as a way to show appreciation for each and every cog and linchpin in the well-oiled machine.

"We call our people teammates, because without them we can't have our support office; we can't have anything. They are truly part of the team, and we wouldn't be able to accomplish anything without the hands-on service our teammates provide in the stores," Jonad explains. "I feel like I owe it to the future of the industry to work with everyone on a mentorship level. When I think about our team, I think of how important it is to teach the future generations of our industry that bringing healthy food to consumers' plates is a privilege and a responsibility."

And taking the Balls Foods team under his wing is no easy task. Working with four different banners is no doubt difficult, but Jonad is answering the call. In fact, one thing I love about Jonad is that he refers to his trusty truck as his office—meaning he's always on the road traveling back and forth between store locations to make sure each teammate is well-trained, and both merchandise and market are tailored to meet shopper's needs.

Fresh produce juicing in-store

"During the past few months working together with the Produce Team and Merchandisers, I have gained local market knowledge of our customers, seen the reaction on promotions, and continue to learn the key triggers that get customers excited under the different retail formats," Jonad shares with me. "We have also established spec differentiations between banners, what products go where, and proper merchandising to provide the best shopper experience."

Jonad tells me the Balls Food Stores' vision is "To be the best-run, friendliest supermarkets in town, where teammates are passionate about providing excellent customer service and where customers love to shop." And that vision is lived daily, he assures. These words are not just letters on a paper or a frame hanging on the wall—they are embraced and practiced by the company's highest leadership and results in the great experience found at each store.

"From my time here, I can gather that Balls Foods has been, and still is, heavily involved and invested in our community. We are innovators in programs to make produce more accessible to those customers that need it the most, pioneers of local agriculture back before it was a trend or movement, and now we are continuing that philosophy with ideas such as local kombucha on tap and creative store layouts that exceed customer expectations," Jonad says. "These are all ways we are addressing functional aspects for efficiencies, and catering a positive, fair, and functional work environment for our teammates."

Jonad is a prime example of the possibilities yet to come from this next generation of Produce Directors implementing their strong and fresh perspectives. And as he comes into the fold at this already pioneering retail family, there's no doubt in my mind that big things are in store.

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WTF DO I DO WITH South African Oranges

{ WHAT THE FORK }

ORANGE CRÉME CARAMEL

INGREDIENTS

4 South African oranges
1¾ cup sugar
¼ cup water
3¼ cups whole milk
3 whole eggs
3 large egg yolks
Raspberries, for garnish
Fresh mint, for garnish

Servings: 8

DIRECTIONS

1. Finely zest 3 oranges, then squeeze the juice from orange to measure 1 cup. Pour juice through sieve into saucepan to remove pulp. Add water and 1¼ cup sugar to saucepan with juice. Bring to a boil over medium heat, only stirring to dissolve sugar. Once boiling, DO NOT STIR. Continue boiling and brush any crystals that form on the sides of pan with a pastry brush that has been dipped in cold water. This will stop sugar from crystallizing.
2. Swirl mixture in pan until color turns golden, then to an amber color. Immediately divide caramel between eight 6 oz ramekins. Set ramekins aside.
3. In a separate saucepot, bring milk and zest to slight boil over medium low heat, then turn heat off and let zest infuse into milk for 10 minutes.
4. Whisk whole eggs, yolks, and remaining ½ cup sugar in a bowl. Ladle warm milk into egg mixture and combine. Pour mixture through a sieve to remove zest. Divide mixture among the caramelized ramekins and place ramekins into a roasting pan.
5. Add just enough hot water to the roasting pan to come half way up the ramekins. Place roasting pan in the oven. Close oven door and bake for 45–55 minutes until custard is set. Lift ramekins from roasting pan onto a cooling rack. With a towel in hand, carefully run a knife around side of ramekin to loosen, then allow to cool completely.
6. To serve, invert molds onto plate. Leave ramekin inverted on plate until custard falls out on its own with caramel sliding down the sides. Garnish with raspberries and fresh mint.

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Melissa's Picks

CPMA 2017

When I wasn't fangirling as my 12-year-old self to well-known Canadian band Barenaked Ladies, I was enjoying new celebrities-in-the-making on the country's produce stage: the annual CPMA Convention and Tradeshow. Here are some of the stand-outs I saw.

1 **The Smitten™ Apple |** If you're a horse-betting kind of buyer, this one has the nice lines you want to see. It's a cross between crowd favorites Gala, Braeburn, Falstaff, and Fiesta, conceived by the same New Zealand breeder of Envy™ and JAZZ™. The blush catches the eye, but it's the crunch consumers will likely come back for.

2 **Mann Packing's Bacon Maple Delight |** I will be the first to admit I'm the woman that orders my bacon separate from my pancakes so as to keep the syrup away. But the kale, kohlrabi, Brussels sprouts mix topped with bacon and maple is sure to recalibrate my thinking. If I can be converted, your shoppers can, too. Who else can't wait to get their hands on this?

3 **Litehouse Pourables |** Litehouse has expanded on the success of its OPA Greek Yogurt dressings by upping the stakes and bottling them up in a pourable, no-mess vehicle. This sleek, curvy bottle—combined with the dressings that have skyrocketed since their initial launch last year—will likely be a perfect complement to the produce department.

4 **Nichols Farms Pistachios |** Organic. Roasted. Salted. The first two are descriptions consumers look for on both packages and menus, and the third captures my sodium-obsessed heart. The resealable bag is spoil-proof and klutz-friendly, while pistachios continue to garner fans spanning all generations, from Boomers to Generation Z.

5 **Mucci's Veggies To Go |** While I may not be the demographic the packaging designers had in mind, my inner child was thrilled with this product. Additionally, the convenience-seeking adult was happy about the ability to eat in the car (never while driving, of course!). I'm thinking other adults and their children, both inner and otherwise, will feel the same.

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