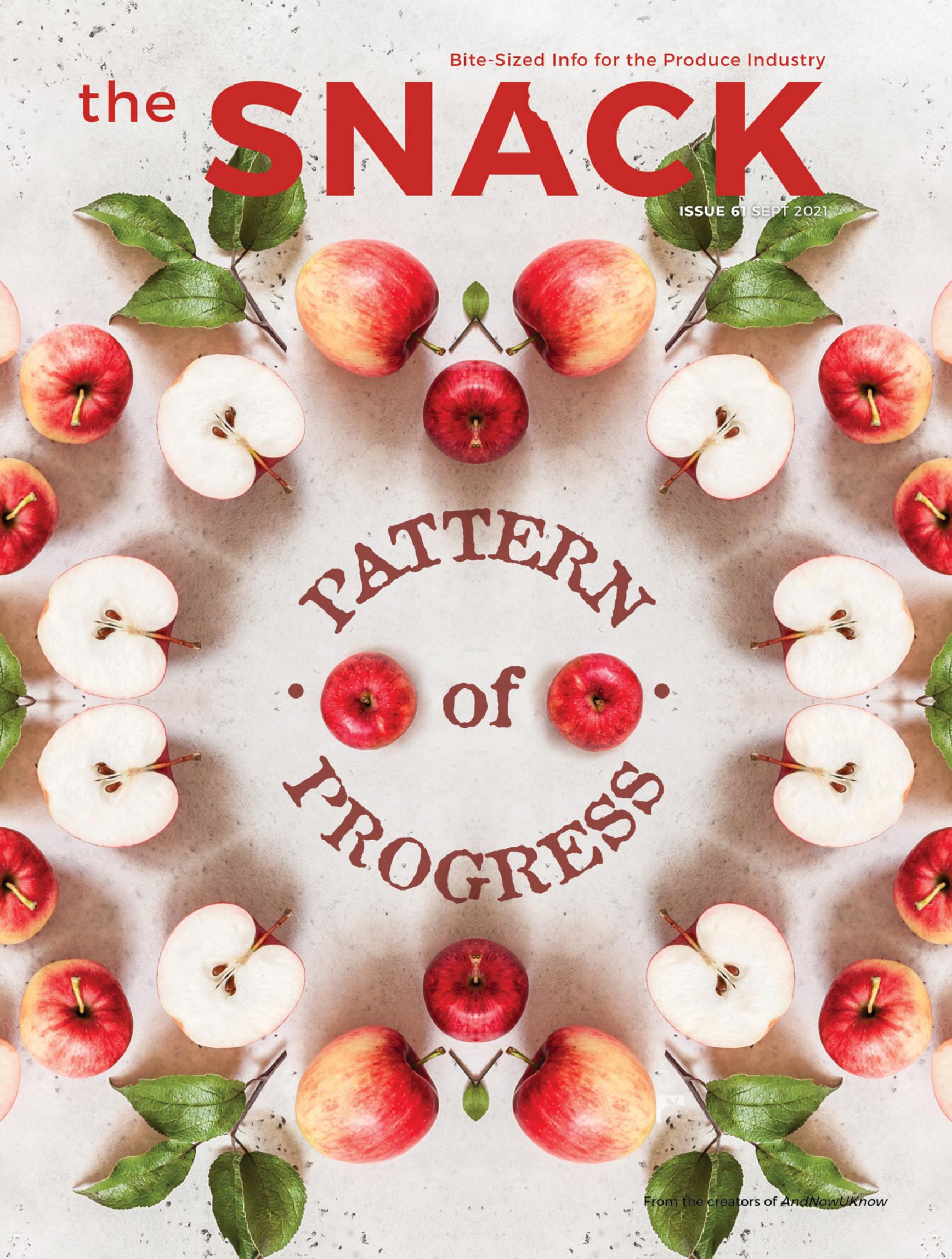


Bite-Sized Info for the Produce Industry

the

# SNACK

ISSUE 61 SEPT 2021

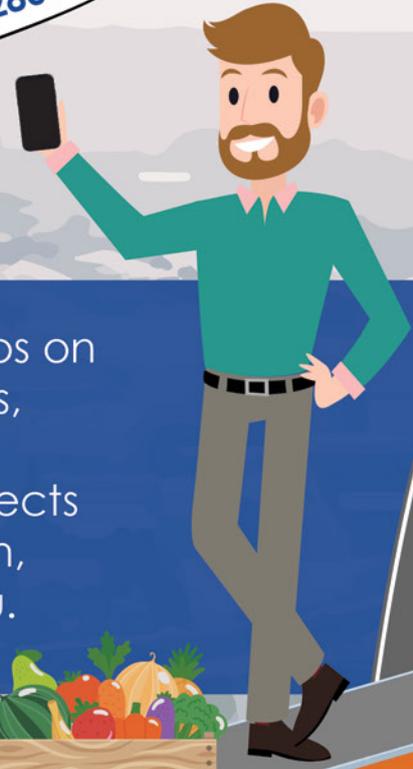


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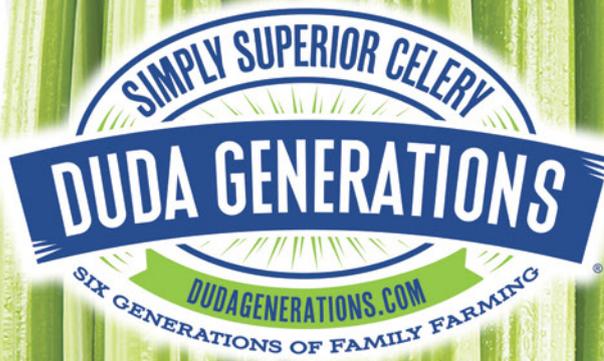
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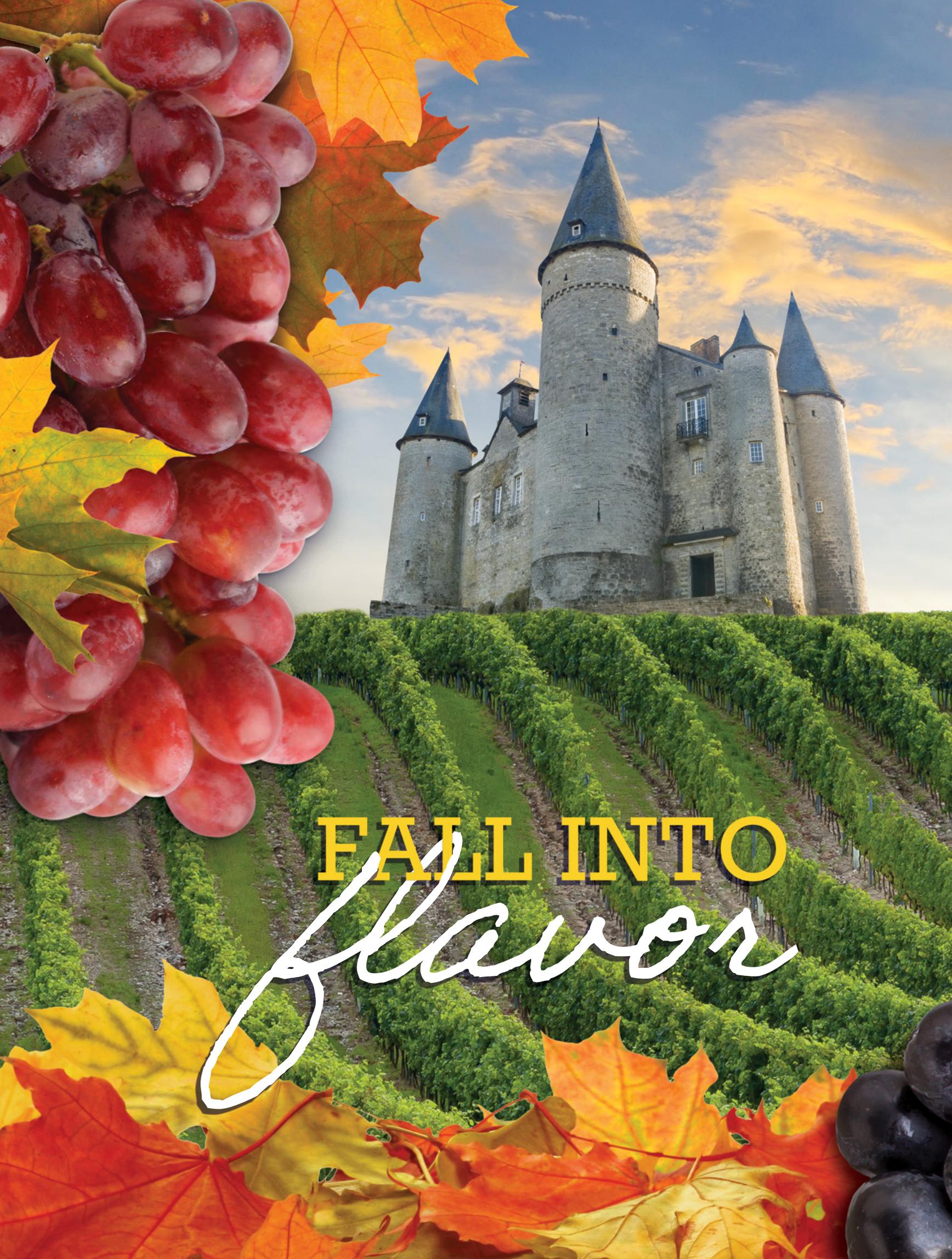
Social media portfolio, including photo gallery, variety information, and recipe posts



Video portfolio, including featured grower videos and how-to recipe videos



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**I WANT TO THANK THE VOICES IN MY HEAD TODAY.**

Before you assume I have had a complete break from reality, I want to share something with you. In a recent book I read, *You're Not Listening*, by journalist Kate Murphy, she collected and distilled a multitude of research and studies on ways in which we do and do not listen well and how that affects how we engage and navigate the world around us. In one section, she discusses inner speech and how we listen to ourselves and others. She writes the following passage:

*The research suggests that the more people you listen to in the course of your life, the more sides to an issue you can argue in your head and the more solutions you can imagine. Inner dialogue fosters and supports cognitive complexity, that valuable ability to tolerate a range of views, make associations, and come up with new ideas.*

I think most of us are already aware of this concept. It's where we get our values around open-mindedness, mental dexterity, and emotional intelligence. But, this idea is always important for me to read again. And again, and again. Because humans can have short memories.

In times of discomfort, it's easy to pull close only what is comfortable, safe, and soothing. When there is a disturbance in the force, I can find myself listening to the voices that sound like me, read stories that are thematically saturated with ideas that are familiar to mine, and don't disrupt my cosmetic peace. There are times and places for moments and periods like this—no doubt. But, the other side of the coin is that the less diverse the opinions, politics, and stories I consume, the less diverse my choices, my resilience, and my potential solutions. The less we listen to each other, the less we can identify growth opportunities.

So, how does this sync back up with our industry as my self-reflection stakes claim over more than half of this note?

Listening is what enables us to slide into change like a familiar second skin.

If writing is one of the most intimate forms of listening, then, what we get to do here at *The Snack* and *AndNowUKnow* is a gift. In this issue, and many before it, we have been able to write about transformation, change, and resilience (topics that will never get old, no apologies here), deep human connection and lineage, and, as always, breakthroughs and inspirations.

Not only do these guiding lights matter to me, but each story—sharing common themes—surfaces in different ways, wears a different set of lenses, sits as both mirrors and doorways for us to engage with.

It is this difference that I want to continue to honor. And finding more differences is what I want to promote.

These stories are as different and as diverse as our writing team, as well as the design team that creates the artistry you soak up with all your senses.

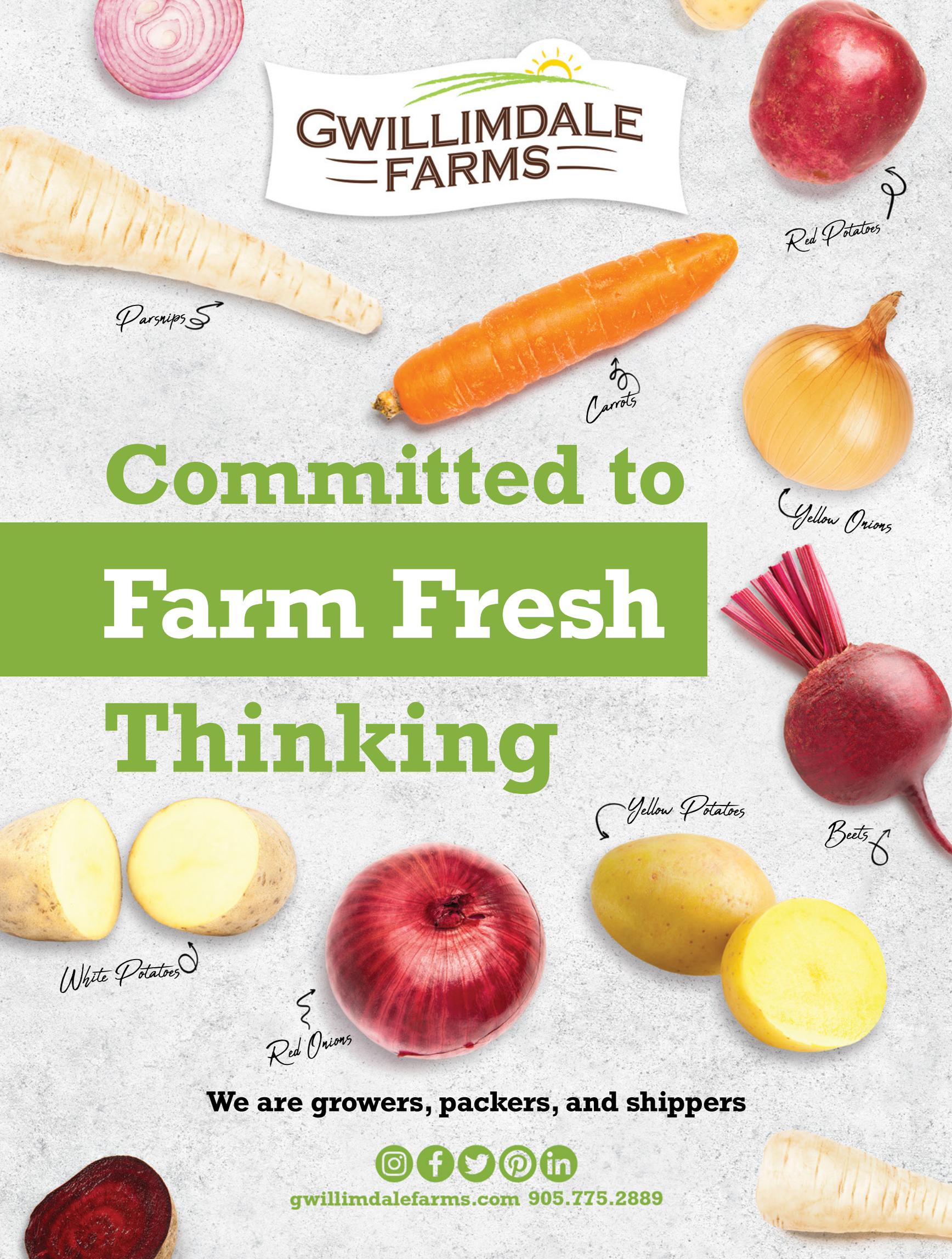
So, again, I thank the voices in my head that come from the diverse backgrounds and experiences that I have had the gift to read, hear, and write in this industry.

May we continue to broaden the voices we hear, and deepen this opening to each other. 



**Jordan Okumura**

Editor in Chief  
*AndNowUKnow* and *The Snack Magazine*



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# FEATURES

## PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL MARKETING

### BUILT FROM STRONG STALK

It takes multiple minds and hearts to answer the call that resonates through the soil, rooting into one vision of success. Stacey Claassen, Wils Johnson, and Max Yeater teach us how to navigate the noise...



### LIMONEIRA

#### STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Overcoming pressing industry challenges is one small feat when backed by a dynamic alliance of dedicated citrus stalwarts. Alex Teague breaks down how this complex global operation catalyzed the supplier's rise in the category...



### BOBALU

#### WRANGLING LIGHTNING

This legacy brand's revival has hit the ground running, prompting waves of demand, near-instant expansion, and boundless potential. Brothers and Co-Managing Partners RC and Bobby Jones dig into how to catch lightning in a clamshell...



### GIORGIO FRESH CO.

#### WELCOME TO THE KITCHEN

Join us at the kitchen counter as Greg Sagan rolls out the toolkit that brought the supplier's latest line to life. Read on to see how Giorgio is creating a whole new channel for plant-based demand...



### RED SUN FARMS®

#### BY THE FLIGHT OF A BUTTERFLY

With greenhouse as its guidepost, the grower flutters toward the future with a recently launched logo. Hear what Harold Paivarinta has to say about gaining and maintaining market momentum...



### PRODUCE PRO SOFTWARE

#### EVOLUTION THROUGH INNOVATION

Does change scare or inspire you? Marc Hatfield explains how the systems innovator is harnessing the power of transformation to keep our industry's evolution on the cutting edge...



### NEW YORK APPLE ASSOCIATION

#### WRITING THE NEXT CHAPTER

How do you expand on the legacy of a category as prolific as apples? Cynthia Haskins, President and Chief Executive Officer, explains how the organization is using its marketing prowess to continue the fruit's saga in this exclusive...



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**DEPARTMENTS**

SEPTEMBER 2021  
ISSUE 61

**FRESH FOLK**



**THE IF LIST**  
VICTOR SAVANELLO, JR.



**MY FAVORITE THINGS**  
CORRIE HUTCHENS



**WHOLESOME HEROES**  
JORDAN MATSON

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**UP CLOSE**

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THE HOLISTIC PLATE

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# The Holistic Plate

By Peggy Packer





Level of  
Produce Intake



Level of  
Mental Well-Being



## Flavor Trend

**B**efore you embark on what I am hoping will be a beautiful journey through this issue of *The Snack*, I ask that you use this page as a moment to pause and take a deep breath—and maybe a bite, should your palate desire the same sustenance as your eyes receive from this magazine. Allow your mind to stray from all of today's many tasks and to-do lists and take in the world around you. Find a state of deep relaxation in your body, steady your breathing, and enjoy the momentary ease of your mind.

Far too often, we allow the hustle and bustle of our day-to-day lives to cloud our heads, reducing us to stressed-out shells encasing painfully overactive brains. After a tumultuous time period for many, it's no surprise that self-care and mental health have taken center stage, guiding people's everyday decisions all the way down to what they eat.

Now, consumers are seeking products that not only have physical benefits, but mental as well. Joining the likes of yoga and meditation, eating more holistically has become another ritual for relaxation, and it's a trend that everyone—especially retailers—will want to tap into.

As consumers make a shift in buying behaviors to favor physiological superfoods, the opportunity has arisen on both the buy- and supply-sides to optimize a new level of fresh produce potential by highlighting the mental and emotional benefits of the diverse offerings that fill retail displays. Creating vibrant visual tools to educate shoppers about the perks of fresh produce and cross-merchandising with other options that have vast mental benefits—like leafy greens or citrus, for example—will open their eyes to new categories, and the repeat purchases will pour in once they start feeling the rewards for themselves. You can even take it a step further by providing creative new recipes to help shoppers incorporate these produce players into their daily diets and inspire impulse buys.

Studies show that those considered to have a higher level of produce intake

also report an increase in mental well-being\*, feeling sensations such as happiness, higher self-esteem, and optimism, in addition to being able to maintain healthy relationships with others. Eating a sufficient amount of fruits and vegetables—such as berries, mushrooms, and more\*\*—can improve overall happiness, even reducing the risk of depression by 25 to 30 percent.\*\*\*

Why not help your shoppers find peace of mind in the produce aisle? If I could reduce all of the lessons we've learned over the past year and a half to one simple phrase, I'd say: mind over matter. **S**



\*<https://fruitsandveggies.org/stories/buzz-fruits-veggies-increase-mental-well/>

\*\*<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31906271/>

\*\*\*<https://fruitsandveggies.org/stories/buzz-even-moderately-improved-diets-influence-risk-depression>



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## » The **IF** List «

# Victor Savanello, Jr.

Regional Vice President, Produce and Floral, SpartanNash

With **Melissa De Leon Chavez**

**S**ome personalities shine in a crowd, drawing others to them. These are the memorable meetings, the ones who stand out, the voices that resonate. Few embody this as much as Victor (Vic) Savanello, Jr. Whenever I run into Vic, he meets me with a strong handshake and a warm smile. He has a sharp mind and, if possible, a sharper wit. And man, does he know produce and floral. As rich as these encounters are, they always feel as though I have only scratched the surface of Vic's personality. So, when presented with the opportunity, I had to ask him a list of "What *IFs*"...

» **IF you had to eat the same thing every day for the rest of your days, what would you eat?**

I would die.

» **IF you could be a character in any book, who would it be?**

Superman. I like comics.

» **IF you had to choose now, what would your last meal consist of?**

My wife's lasagna.

» **IF you could imagine yourself in a different industry, what would it be?**

Law, as an attorney. I seem to love to argue.

» **IF you could have dinner with anyone, dead or alive, who would it be?**

Walt Disney.

» **IF you could join a musician, dead or alive, on stage to sing along or play an instrument with, who would you choose and why?**

John Lennon, because he was a musical genius.

» **IF you could have any actor play you in a movie, who would you want?**

Keanu Reeves.

» **IF you were another species in the animal kingdom, what would you be?**

An eagle.

» **IF you wrote an autobiography, what would be the title?**

*Quintessential Consistency.*

» **IF you had to wear the same thing every day, what item of clothing would you pick?**

A New York Yankees hat.

» **IF you could make everyone watch a movie of your choosing, which movie would you want them to see?**

*Rudy.* I love the story of an underdog!

» **IF you could enhance one aspect of your intelligence, what part would you want to improve?**

My self-awareness, especially in my younger years.

» **IF you had a superpower, what would you want it to be?**

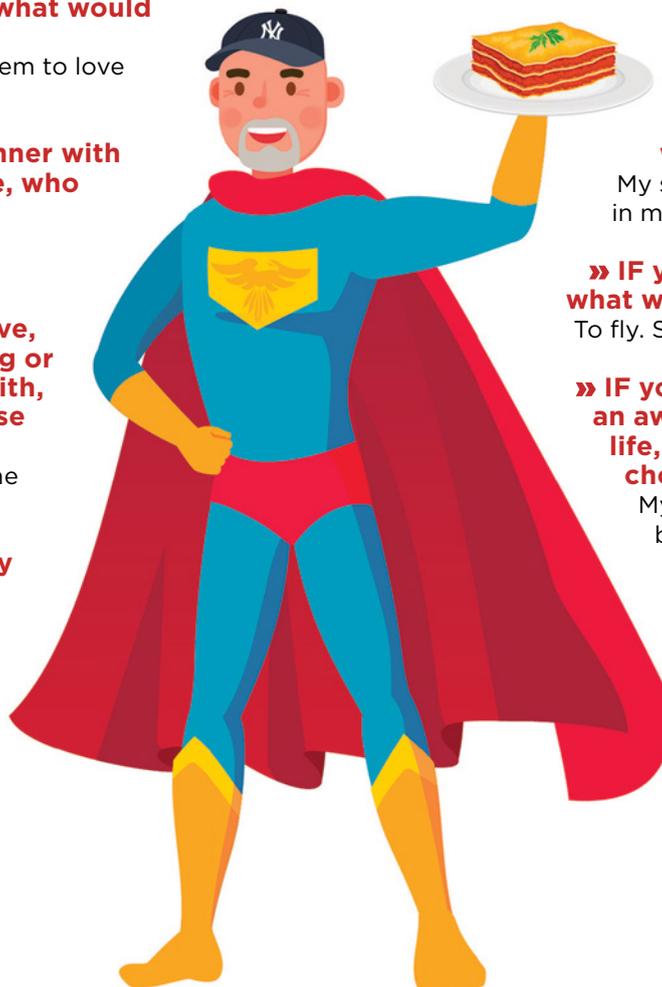
To fly. Superman!

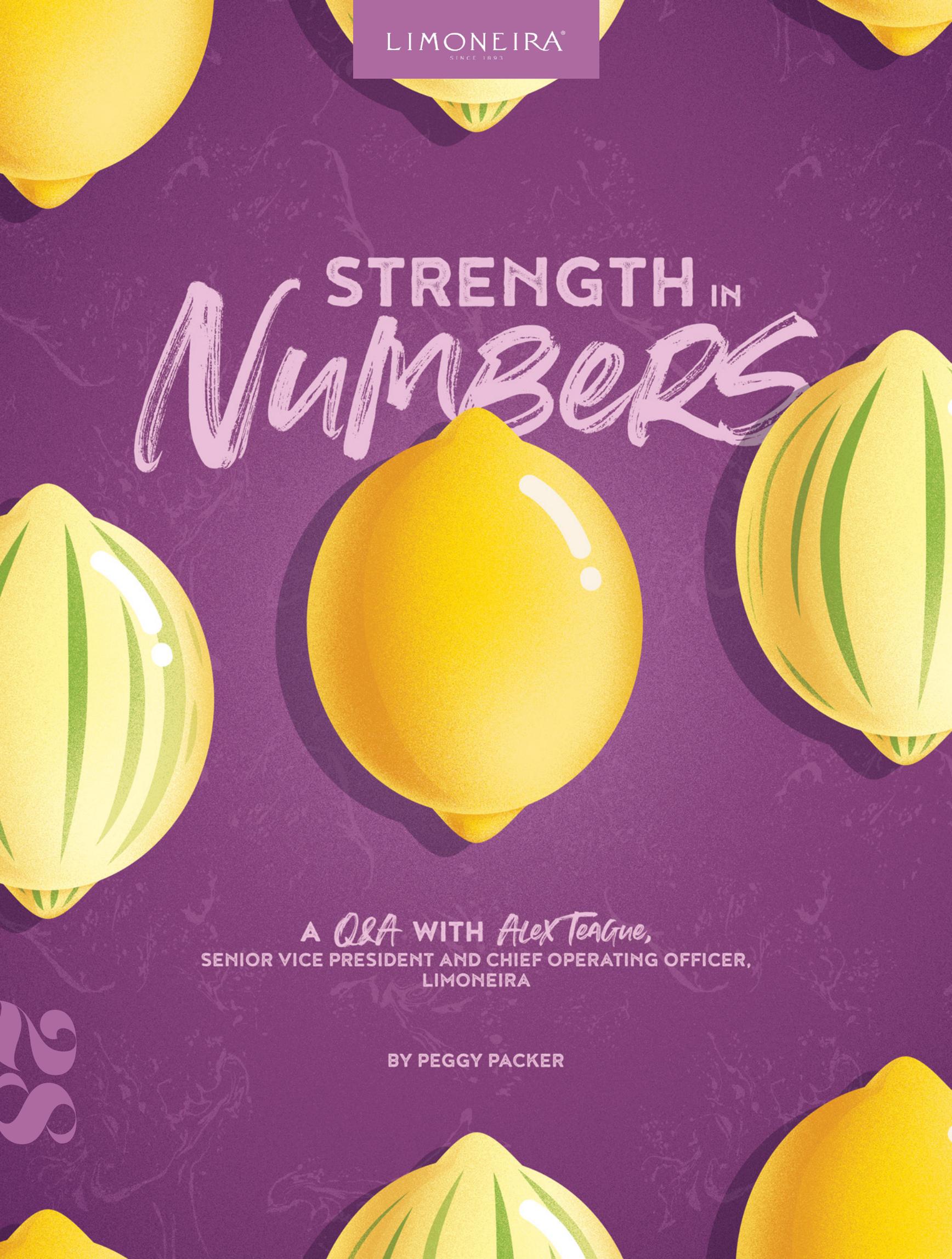
» **IF you could re-experience an awesome day in your life, what day would you choose and why?**

My wedding day. I would be smart enough to enjoy myself more.

» **IF you could give your younger self one piece of advice, what would it be?**

Make your own destiny. You can't anticipate or expect anyone else to! **S**





LIMONEIRA®  
SINCE 1893

# STRENGTH IN *NUMBERS*

A Q&A WITH *Alex Teague*,  
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER,  
LIMONEIRA

BY PEGGY PACKER

## EVEN CAPTAIN AMERICA CALLS FOR BACKUP.

It's no secret that collaboration has been the spark of many of the world's greatest creations and accomplishments. Just as the star-spangled superhero leans on the Earth's Mightiest Heroes to fight intergalactic crime, Limoneira has built a formidable team of expert suppliers to back its own Herculean effort to bring high-quality citrus varieties to produce departments around the world.

Wielding a diverse network of growers from key regions around the globe, the citrus provider's One World of Citrus™ program is a living, breathing depiction of what “strength in numbers” truly means in the fresh produce industry.

Reflecting on the program's colossal success since it was first established, Alex Teague, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, settles into the chair at his desk in Santa Paula, California, and shines a light on some of the driving forces behind the rise of this innovative citrus operation.



^ Limoneira has always harnessed the might of a vast network of citrus suppliers, making it well equipped to overcome challenges and meet the needs of its retail partners



### PEGGY PACKER:

The One World of Citrus program seems to be ever-expanding, with continued growth that shows no signs of slowing down. How has the

vision behind the program evolved since its inception over a decade ago?

### ALEX TEAGUE, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER, LIMONEIRA:

What started as a niche lemon and citrus business plan has matured into a 52-week one-stop shop of citrus supplies, which we fully expect to continue growing. This exciting platform has added global citrus items to all the world markets; our multi-source, multi-market platform enables maximum service to both our customers and the orchards.



On the distribution front, we continue to press quickly on our valued-added programs and forward distribution centers, which just makes the entire vision that much more dynamic—and, quite frankly, makes it fun and exciting for us. With the ability to add value closer to the customer, as well as have ready inventory for just-in-time delivery, we find a growing opportunity with many of our customers.

**PP:** I can only imagine how the success of the program has catalyzed growth on many different fronts for Limoneira. What advancements have you witnessed across both the team and Limoneira's vast network of suppliers?

**AT:** This has been one of the most satisfying aspects of the One World of Citrus program. As the years have progressed, our North American team, including our associate producers, packers, and shippers, have seen the benefits of working with the crew in the Southern Hemisphere and vice versa. It is the entire worldwide collective—from Chile and Argentina to South Africa, Peru, Mexico, and back here to the U.S.—that makes the complex work.

“...by building trust through open communication and real information that is generated from the field and not an office somewhere, we are able to better communicate with our customers and find solutions for everyone.”



Alex Teague,

Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Limoneira

All of us in the produce industry have one common partner: Mother Nature. To say she is fickle is a vast understatement. However, by building trust through open communication and real information that is generated from the field and not an office somewhere, we are able to better communicate with our customers and find solutions for everyone. While it is not perfect by its nature, we generally find that open dialogue from the tree to the customer yields the best return for all.

---

**PP:** Backed by an incredible alliance of grower partners, Limoneira has been put in a prime position for operational expansion. How has the One World of Citrus program amplified the company's production capabilities?

**AT:** We have grown from 5,000 acres of farming—packing and selling just over a million cartons of lemons alone—to over 15,000 acres of farming worldwide and selling over seven million cartons of lemons, oranges, mandarins, limes, grapefruit, and specialty citrus. Over

our 128 years of existence, we have discovered that teaming up with other producers who have a similar philosophy has really benefited not only the fruit we grow, but the fruit of our associate partners all over the world.

It is the entire citrus basket that services the customer's needs. While fresh produce is a supply-demand business, its daily activity is far from simple supply-demand theory. We have an internal expression of "simply complex." That oxymoron illustrates the intense coordination it takes between all of our team members, not only in North America but in every market around the globe.

As the program continues to evolve, we've made significant developments, expanding our plantings and supply around the world—including conventional oranges, lemons, mandarins, grapefruit, and limes—which help us fulfill our vision of being a 52-week specialty citrus supplier. Additionally, we have broadened our geographical footprint with the addition of partners and associates in the major growing regions of Chile, Mexico, South

Africa, and Argentina, as well as a new sales office in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, to better serve our customers in Asia in real-time.

---

**PP:** A crucial aspect of that connectivity, I imagine, is logistics. As this becomes increasingly tougher due to persisting challenges across the industry, how has Limoneira been poised to handle these inevitable bumps in the road?

**AT:** I think all of us in the entire produce industry—and all world trade for that matter—have seen logistics become really stressed over the last 18-plus months. What once was a tight truck or container situation is now exacerbated into a virtual crisis-in-the-making of the flow of goods around the world. With the movement of containers disrupted by the pandemic last year in China, we have seen what happens when that delicate balance is upended. Within a few short weeks of that occurring, our customers found it difficult to get space on ships headed to Asian markets. Luckily, the team was able to help in



**“We have an internal expression of ‘simply complex.’ That oxymoron illustrates the intense coordination it takes between all of our team members, not only in North America but in every market around the globe.”**



certain instances, but we missed market opportunities that we will never be able to get back. These logistical difficulties are not just on the seas; overland truck rates have skyrocketed as well.

With that in mind, we have begun to expand our transportation department as well as accelerate our forward distribution center plans. We have to get creative in finding the most efficient logistics to get to our customers. By teaming up with other citrus packers, we've found savings in that route.

Additionally, looking at long-term commitments and rates with national carriers is key for us to overcome the rising costs of logistics. Our dream is to have a rail system with sufficient service to be able to efficiently move fresh produce around the country. When it comes to citrus, we are lucky Mother Nature gave us a piece of fruit that is conducive to shipping long distances.

---

**PP:** It seems the vitality of this program has transformed Limoneira into a force to be reckoned with in the citrus sector. How does the One World of Citrus blueprint also promote the success of its buy-side partners?

**AT:** One World of Citrus has transported Limoneira into an international platform that has virtually unlimited growth. Every growing area in the world has difficulties. If it's not water, it's labor, or politics, or weather. The list is endless. However, by being present in virtually all the main citrus growing areas in the world, we are able to smooth out the highs and lows for everyone, including our buy-side partners. Those really high highs and really low lows do not help the supply-side nor the buy-side. With that in mind, we believe our model creates a win-win for everyone.

---

**T**he potential for Limoneira, its network of growers, and its buy-side partners to optimize the citrus set is limitless as this dynamic alliance of providers dons their capes to reach new heights in fresh produce—each bringing their own might to an already, dare I say, *marvelous* operation. 



^ As the One World of Citrus™ program continues to evolve, Limoneira has made significant developments, expanding its plantings and supply around the world to help fulfill its vision of being a 52-week specialty citrus supplier

# WTF DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

DelFrescoPure® Heirloom Tomatoes and Mini Mixers® Medley Grape Tomatoes ?



## TOMATO TART

### INGREDIENTS

**4** DelFrescoPure® Heirloom Tomatoes, of all different colors

**1 pint** Mini Mixers® Medley Grape Tomatoes

**1 package** pie crust

**1 cup** ricotta cheese

**1 tbsp** chopped fresh basil

**1 tbsp** chopped fresh chives

**½ tsp** lemon zest

**2** small zucchini

**1** egg

Salt and pepper to taste

**Prep Time:** 15 min

**Cook Time:** 30–40 min

**Servings:** 12

### DIRECTIONS

- 1** Preheat oven to 425° F.
- 2** Roll out both pie crusts to ⅛" thick then place on a parchment-lined baking sheet and set aside.
- 3** Combine ricotta cheese with basil, chives, lemon zest, salt, and pepper until just mixed. Then, split the cheese mixture between the pie crusts and spread evenly, leaving a 1" edge.
- 4** Cut heirloom tomatoes and zucchini into ¼" slices and cut grape tomatoes in half. Place tomatoes and zucchini on cheese mixture.
- 5** Fold the edges of the crust over to contain the filling, leaving the center uncovered.
- 6** Mix together the egg yolk and a splash of water and brush over the exposed crust.
- 7** Bake in the preheated oven for 30–40 minutes until the crust is deeply golden and vegetables are tender. Serve warm or at room temperature and enjoy!

**DelFresco**  
Pure®

To learn more about DelFrescoPure®, visit [www.delfrescopure.com](http://www.delfrescopure.com)

**HEIRLOOM**  
TOMATOES

**mini**  
MIXERS®  
GOURMET SNACKING TOMATOES

# CALIFORNIA

## TABLE GRAPE SNAPSHOT

By Chandler James

The sun shines brightly over California's seemingly endless miles of table grape vineyards. A drive across the San Joaquin Valley sends me searching for the little globes, and I can't help but imagine them sitting promptly at the center of retail displays. Adorning more than just tables, several of these flavorful varieties played a role in driving retail dollars this summer, and California isn't finished just yet...



### Summer Royal

**Season:** MAY-OCT

**Color:** Black

**Size:** Medium

**Shape:** Round to slightly oval

**Seeds?** No



### Midnight Beauty

SUGRATHIRTEEN

**Season:** JUN-SEP

**Color:** Blue-black

**Size:** Large

**Shape:** Elongated

**Seeds?** No



### Sweet Sapphire®

IFG SIX

**Season:** AUG-SEP

**Color:** Blue-black

**Size:** Medium-large

**Shape:** Elongated with dimple

**Seeds?** No



### Autumn Royal

**Season:** AUG-JAN

**Color:** Black

**Size:** Large

**Shape:** Oval, elongated

**Seeds?** No





## Arra Mystic Dream®

ARRA THIRTYTWO  
**Season:** SEP-NOV  
**Color:** Black  
**Size:** Large-extra large  
**Shape:** Oval  
**Seeds?** No

## Sparkle™

**Season:** JUL-AUG  
**Color:** Red  
**Size:** Large  
**Shape:** Elongated  
**Seeds?** No



## Flame Seedless

**Season:** MAY-OCT  
**Color:** Red  
**Size:** Medium  
**Shape:** Round  
**Seeds?** No

## Sweet Celebration®

IFG 68-175  
**Season:** JUL-DEC  
**Color:** Red  
**Size:** Large  
**Shape:** Oval  
**Seeds?** No



## Passion Fire™

ARRA TWENTYNINE  
**Season:** JUN-AUG  
**Color:** Fiery red  
**Size:** Large-extra large  
**Shape:** Oval  
**Seeds?** No

## Red Globe™

**Season:** JUL-JAN  
**Color:** Red  
**Size:** Very large  
**Shape:** Round  
**Seeds?** Yes



## Scarlet Royal

**Season:** JUN-JAN  
**Color:** Red  
**Size:** Large  
**Shape:** Oval  
**Seeds?** No

## Sweet Scarlet

**Season:** AUG-NOV  
**Color:** Vibrant pink  
**Size:** Medium-large  
**Shape:** Oval  
**Seeds?** No





## Crimson Seedless

**Season:** AUG-JAN  
**Color:** Red  
**Size:** Medium  
**Shape:** Cylindrical  
**Seeds?** No

## Holiday®

90-3618  
**Season:** SEP-DEC  
**Color:** Red  
**Size:** Very large  
**Shape:** Round  
**Seeds?** No



## Sheegene-20

ALLISON®, Fall Bliss™  
**Season:** AUG-JAN  
**Color:** Red  
**Size:** Large  
**Shape:** Oval  
**Seeds?** No

## Scarlotta Seedless®

SUGRANINETEEN  
**Season:** SEP-JAN  
**Color:** Red to dark red  
**Size:** Large  
**Shape:** Oval, elongated  
**Seeds?** No



## Arra Passion Punch®

ARRA TWENTYEIGHT  
**Season:** SEP-OCT  
**Color:** Pinkish-red  
**Size:** Large-extra large  
**Shape:** Oval  
**Seeds?** No

## Sweet Carnival®

**Season:** AUG-DEC  
**Color:** Golden  
**Size:** Large  
**Shape:** Elongated  
**Seeds?** No



## Jack's Salute®

IFG NINE  
**Season:** SEP-OCT  
**Color:** Soft red  
**Size:** Large  
**Shape:** Elongated  
**Seeds?** No

## Superior Seedless®

SUGRAONE®  
**Season:** MAY-SEP  
**Color:** Green  
**Size:** Large  
**Shape:** Oval, elongated  
**Seeds?** No



\*SOME FRUIT SOLD UNDER LICENSE AS SUPERIOR SEEDLESS



## Arra Sugar Drop™

ARRA THIRTY  
**Season:** JUN-JUL  
**Color:** Creamy green  
**Size:** Large  
**Shape:** Elongated  
**Seeds?** No

## Princess

**Season:** JUL-OCT  
**Color:** Green  
**Size:** Large  
**Shape:** Cylindrical  
**Seeds?** No

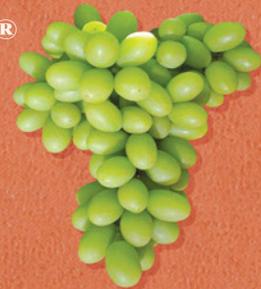


## Sheegene-21™

Ivory®, Sugar Crunch®,  
and Summer Crunch  
**Season:** JUN-NOV  
**Color:** Green  
**Size:** Large  
**Shape:** Round to oval  
**Seeds?** No

## Stella Bella®

**Season:** JUL-OCT  
**Color:** Green  
**Size:** Large  
**Shape:** Elongated  
**Seeds?** No



## Sweet Globe

IFG TEN  
**Season:** JUN-NOV  
**Color:** Creamy green  
**Size:** Medium-large  
**Shape:** Cylindrical  
**Seeds?** No

## Pristine®

BLANC SEEDLESS  
**Season:** JUL-DEC  
**Color:** Green  
**Size:** Very large  
**Shape:** Elongated  
**Seeds?** No

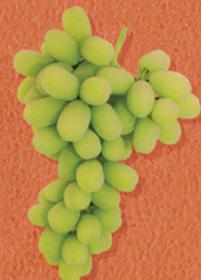


## Sweeties™

ARRA FIFTEEN  
**Season:** JUL-SEP  
**Color:** Bright green  
**Size:** Exceptionally large  
**Shape:** Elongated  
**Seeds?** No

## Autumn King

**Season:** AUG-JAN  
**Color:** Green  
**Size:** Very large  
**Shape:** Cylindrical to oval  
**Seeds?** No



# WTF DO I DO WITH Jasmine Vineyards Green Seedless Grapes?

{ what the fork }



## JASMINE GIN MULE

### INGREDIENTS

- 5 Jasmine Vineyards Green Seedless Grapes, halved, plus additional for garnish
- 4 oz ginger beer
- 2 oz gin
- 1 lime, plus additional for garnish
- 2-3 mint sprigs, plus additional for garnish
- Ice

**Prep Time:** 5 min  
**Servings:** 1

### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Cut lime in half. Muddle grapes with mint sprigs and the juice of one half of lime.
- 2 Add ice, gin, and ginger beer. Garnish with halved grapes, unsqueezed lime, and mint.
- 3 Stir and enjoy!

To learn more about Jasmine Vineyards, visit [www.jasminevineyards.com](http://www.jasminevineyards.com)



# WRANGLING LIGHTNING

*By Melissa De Leon Chavez*



“Looking back on how we started, maybe our company should have been named ‘Luabob’ for Lupe and Bob,” Bobby Jones laughs. Sitting in his office with his brother and Co-Managing Partner RC Jones, he points through the window behind me at the colorful fields of Oxnard, California, where the Jones family lays claim to some of the first strawberries planted in the now-flourishing growing region.

“The ranch we’re sitting on was where the first strawberries were planted, but our grandfather, Bob, was leasing those acres out to someone,” Bobby says. “He was happy to keep the land where it was, while Lupe, our grandmother, had a more business-like mentality and advised him to keep buying. She saw the potential for how big this could get. That potential became a berry business called Bobalu.”

In the tale that brought this brand to life, the woman does the rescuing—more than once, according to Bobby and RC.



*Bobby Jones,*  
**Co-Managing Partner,  
Bobalu**

strong work ethic and business savvy anchored Bob’s tenacious spirit, loaning her husband the capital from her own floral business to plant his first crop on the land he worked, I can’t deny that there were two leads in this tale.

As the saying goes, there are two theories to arguing with a woman; neither one works. This was as fortunate as it was true in the case of Bob and Lupe Jones when, together, they formed

“It’s the song, ‘Mamas, Don’t Let Your Babies Grow Up to be Cowboys,’ to a T,” RC chimes in.

They describe their grandfather, Co-Founder and the ‘Bob’ of Bobalu, as a cowboy in all the best (and worst) ways.

“When they married, he didn’t have any money, and he was a wild man,” Bobby laughs.

I’ll be the first to say that traditional Westerns didn’t usually favor a female protagonist. But, as I hear how Lupe’s

strong work ethic and business savvy anchored Bob’s tenacious spirit, loaning her husband the capital from her own floral business to plant his first crop on the land he worked, I can’t deny that there were two leads in this tale.

what eventually became Bobalu Berries. So, while it may have been a sweet gesture to add his wife’s name to the label, Bob Jones’ grandsons are quick to point out that the order could very well have been reversed.

With such a beginning, it’s safe to say that this wild Western of a story came with some twists and turns that eventually led the family to move into the background to grow for others. Now, an opportunity has inspired Bobby and RC to resurrect the brand their grandparents began more than six decades earlier.

“It was by pure chance,” RC tells me when I ask how the brothers made the decision. “We were growing for another marketing company when the Principals passed away two weeks before we were going to plant. We were offered the opportunity to acquire their leases, assets, and personnel.”

From a sheer roll of the dice, Bobalu virtually exploded onto the scene with strategic moves and, according to the Joneses, a bit of catching lightning in a bottle. Almost immediately, operations expanded further north in California to include the Santa Maria and Salinas areas, and further south into Mexico.

“Between these districts, we achieved year-round production and maintained decent volume for our customers,” Bobby shares. “We expanded not only our acreage but also our timeline coming out of the gate, so to speak. Becoming a 52-week shipper overnight meant we had to build up the staff from what we, as an exclusively Oxnard-based grower, were used to. The kicker is, we did it in one year.”

The magnitude of this can not be overstated, especially amid a continuously challenging labor market, leading me to believe that there must be a unique draw to the Bobalu methodology—or that Bobby and RC are actual wranglers of lightning.

Yet, while RC and Bobby point out that revitalizing the brand was important, equally so was having a sturdy foundation.

“Having a good environment for those who work for us and their welfare is really important to us. Some of our longest-tenured employees live in company-owned housing. They take care of

 **After growing up on the land where their grandparents planted some of the first berries in Oxnard, California, Bobby and RC Jones have revived the family legacy brand, Bobalu**

“We expanded not only our acreage but also our timeline coming out of the gate, so to speak. Becoming a 52-week shipper overnight meant we had to build up the staff from what we, as an exclusively Oxnard-based grower, were used to. The kicker is, we did it in one year.”

*Bobby Jones,*  
**Co-Managing Partner,  
Bobalu**



 In the past three years, Bobalu has become a 52-week strawberry shipper with sights on an even stronger autumn program

the land here, just as they would if they owned it. They know the ranches as well as any of us, if not better. So, having a really strong, bonded team is the key to what we continue to build,” Bobby explains.

To this, RC tells me Bobalu’s slogan: Family-grown, farmer-owned. In it, he says, is the intention to be a vertically integrated, top-down, bottom-up company owned by farmers, treating all who make a living there like family.



*RC Jones,*  
**Co-Managing Partner,  
Bobalu**

“There are a lot of marketing sales companies which get leveraged to a point where they’re putting money into crops, but they don’t necessarily have agronomic experience. They end up starving for supply over a given period of time, whereas we’re getting into the sales, marketing, distribution, and processing side so we can have total control of our destiny to be a completely vertically integrated strawberry enterprise,” RC points out.

To accomplish this, Bobby and RC sought out some big guns in the sales and marketing game, welcoming Anthony Gallino as Vice President of Sales and Cindy Jewell’s Jewell Marketing to handle branding.

“It’s been a breath of fresh air to have professional marketers and salespeople that know the business. Anthony, Cindy, and our Sales Leads Tom O’Brien and Jonathan Sparks, too, have been really pivotal in the growth we’ve experienced just in the short couple of years since they’ve joined us. We are two guys that are more farm production-oriented, so it was great to have the best out there come in to show us how to get the national and known retailers on board,” Bobby explains.

When I ask about the lure that could draw so much horsepower in such a short time, Bobby smiles as he looks back on the last few years.

“I think everyone who has joined us saw an opportunity to really help grow and recreate a brand that they’re just as passionate about as we are. From the beta phase to our big-scale growth—they’ve been influential in getting us there,” he says.

While it was certainly a quick rise, Bobalu was not built in a day. The Jones brothers explain how much of 2017–18 was spent doing a lot of heavy lifting to support the growth trajectory their family farms had cultivated. Luckily, doing so in the past few years meant putting into place strategies many more established companies can only accomplish through a complete overhaul.

“From the farm standpoint, sustainability and integrated pest management are very pivotal in what we’ve been doing from the get-go, as well as what we’re going to do in the future,” RC points out. “We are using predator mites to feed on the pests that are attacking the plants and ensuring we have as minimal waste as possible. Whether it’s berries that we’re culling for our processing plant or anything in general that we can do in the field to keep improving, being good stewards of the land is really important to us. It’s going to be important for the growth of our industry and how we’re perceived.”

While culling helps Bobalu’s plants stay clean, it also ensures that only the best berries go into clamshells for supermarkets. The remainder then goes to the processing plant where the company makes juices and purées.

“What’s unique for us is that we’ve been, more than anything, one grower/shipper. This way, we can really control quality because we have such a strong team that we trust and rely on in the field. We have guys that have been packing berries for a long time; they know how to manage the crews properly, setting our quality above most others,” Bobby shares.

Still, even amid the dawn's early light of success are the shadows of what any California grower must face.

"As much as we're fairly youthful and see a long future in this industry, there are going to be a lot of obstacles and hurdles to overcome 20 years—or more—from now," Bobby observes. "Something that more and more people, especially outside of the small growing regions, need to understand is that our biggest concerns for the future are labor availability, water, and increased regulations. All of these compiled together are very challenging and make our industry, and any ag business, more difficult."

As concerns mount, the necessity of providing food is becoming a high-speed chase toward the proverbial blown-out bridge in the distance.

"It's making it more and more challenging, and we should all be very concerned," RC agrees. "Unfortunately, the limited solutions available to us are to sell more berries and for retailers and consumers to buy them. On the operational side, most regulations start in Washington, DC, and go straight over to Sacramento, California. By the time they get to us, they make little sense."

Thus, a year-round program becomes not just a snazzy offering, but increasingly necessary. Luckily, in that vein, the Jones brothers can see the glimmer.

"We definitely want to continue expanding our fall production," RC says. "September through December is a window often lacking good promotional volumes for retailers. This is where we're focusing our attention and strategically positioning ourselves. That program is expanding as we speak."

When we discuss the horizon, Bobby's gaze shifts from the descendant Owner to the father, looking to what may be the next generation of the family legacy.

"My daughter just left for college, so we'll see if she wants to join the industry. She wants to get an MBA and a law degree, so she may be keeping me out of trouble," he laughs, sounding as if another 'Lu' has emerged in the family. "My son is 12 and has expressed interest. He is learning the name of every tool on the service truck in English and Spanish right now and has a handful down."

Even as a glimpse, it's a future far

beyond the humble beginnings Bob, and even Lupe, had in mind when getting into the strawberry business more than 60 years ago. Looking at the two who have taken up that mantle, it seems the spirit that sings in the Jones blood has only strengthened with time.

"We grew up out here. It's where we learned how to ride bicycles and motorcycles and drive tractors. Our father raised us here, and now Bobby is doing the same," RC reflects. "We put a lot of passion into our strawberries. Learning about customers in little towns and areas around the country that you never even knew existed has been more rewarding than we could have imagined. They're seeing our message and our family story, and it is gratifying to know we're doing it right."

Flying beyond fate's control is to make your own rules, and where else is that truer than in the wild West?

One thing I know, even as I put these last words to the page, is they are far from the last ones for the Bobalu story.

This is not 'The End.' Not even close. **S**

**“We definitely want to continue expanding our fall production. September through December is a window often lacking good promotional volumes for retailers. This is where we’re focusing our attention and strategically positioning ourselves. That program is expanding as we speak.”**

*RC Jones,*  
**Co-Managing Partner, Bobalu**

 **From growing and sustainability methods to team morale and a familial approach, multiple layers go into ensuring Bobalu packs only its best berries**



# WTF DO I DO WITH Bako Sweet® Organic Sweet Potatoes ?

{ what the fork }



## MAPLE SWEET POTATO PANCAKES

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 (14 oz)** Bako Sweet® Organic Orange Sweet Potato Steam Bag
- 1¾ cup** almond milk
- 2 tbsp** maple syrup
- 2 tbsp** melted coconut oil
- 1 tsp** apple cider vinegar
- 1 tsp** vanilla extract
- 2¼ cups** oat flour
- 1 tbsp** baking powder
- 1½ tsp** cinnamon
- ½ tsp** salt
- ¼ tsp** ginger
- ⅛ tsp** nutmeg

### MAPLE CARAMEL SAUCE

- ¼ cup** almond butter or peanut butter
- 3 tbsp** maple syrup
- 1 tbsp** melted coconut oil
- Pinch of salt

**Prep Time:** 10 min

**Cook Time:** 10 min

**Servings:** 4

### DIRECTIONS

- Using one 14 oz Bako Sweet® Organic Orange Sweet Potato Steam Bag, follow instructions to steam sweet potatoes. Allow the sweet potatoes to cool completely, then peel the sweet potato skins.
- Add the peeled sweet potatoes to a bowl and mash them together. Measure ¾ cup mashed sweet potato.
- Add the ¾ mashed sweet potato, almond milk, maple syrup, melted coconut oil, apple cider vinegar, and vanilla extract to a blender. Blend ingredients until smooth.
- Add oat flour, baking powder, cinnamon, salt, ginger, and nutmeg to the blender. Blend ingredients until smooth. The batter should be very thick and will thicken further while resting.
- Warm a nonstick skillet on medium heat. Scoop and spoon the batter onto the skillet, forming round pancakes. Cook each pancake until bubbles begin to form on the surface, about 2–3 minutes. Flip to cook the other side for an additional 1–2 minutes. Repeat until all the batter is used.

### MAPLE CARAMEL SAUCE

- Add all sauce ingredients to a bowl and whisk until smooth.
- Drizzle over Maple Sweet Potato Pancakes and enjoy!

To learn more about Bako Sweet, visit [www.bakosweet.com](http://www.bakosweet.com)



▶ MY FAVORITE THINGS ◀

# CORRIE HUTCHENS

Co-Founder, Girl Crush Brands, and President, Brandbeat Consulting



With **Lilian Diep**

It takes great skill to perform the tasks assigned to you, and it takes a true brand aficionado to do that for multiple companies. Enter Corrie Hutchens, Co-Founder of Girl Crush Brands and President of Brandbeat Consulting in addition to heading up marketing for Pete’s and Pacific Trellis Fruit. Deftly weaving her prowess and deep industry understanding, Corrie tackles the challenges laid in front of her to meet the needs of varying categories. But how does the fresh produce marketing trailblazer fuel her workday? Dive in as we explore some of her favorites...



**1** *Watching my kids play competitive softball and baseball is amazing.*



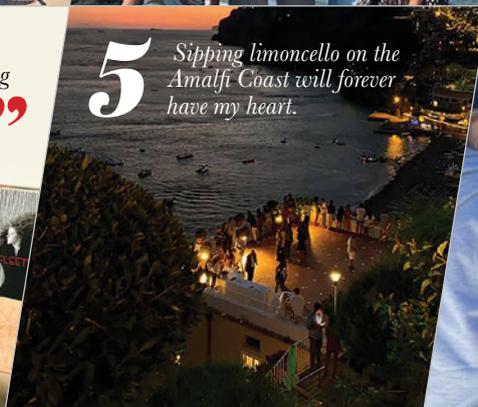
**2** *Traveling with my husband and kids is wonderful.*



**3** *“Spending time with my furry friends, Cherry and Stevie.”*



**4** *“Love this band enough that I even named my dog after one of the singers.”*



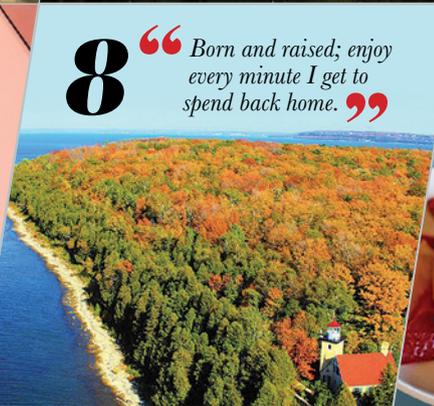
**5** *Sipping limoncello on the Amalfi Coast will forever have my heart.*



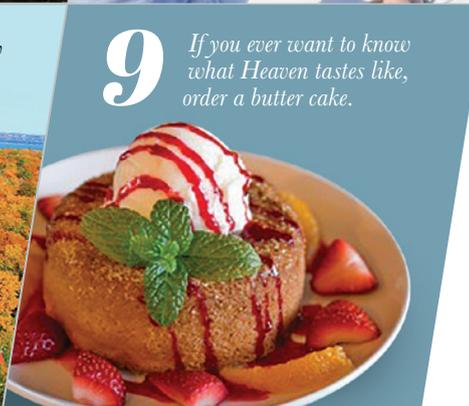
**6** *Soaking up time on the ocean and checking out sea life at California’s Channel Islands is a great pastime.*



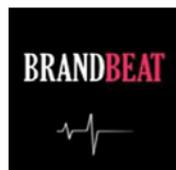
**7** *I enjoy margaritas so much that I just started a side hustle crafting and selling them.*



**8** *“Born and raised; enjoy every minute I get to spend back home.”*



**9** *If you ever want to know what Heaven tastes like, order a butter cake.*



- 1** Youth Sports
- 2** Traveling with My Family
- 3** My Animals
- 4** Fleetwood Mac
- 5** Positano, Italy
- 6** Boating
- 7** Spicy Margaritas
- 8** The Midwest
- 9** Butter Cake

# The Next Normal



## Post-Pandemic Pivots as an Employer: Part II

By *The Snack* Editorial Contributor Julie Marcik, Senior Director, JOE Produce Search<sup>SM</sup>

**T**he employee market is tight. The demand for talented employees far exceeds the supply. As employees wish to continue having more balance and/or flexibility, employers have a lot to consider.

As we talk with people every day, both at work and in our personal lives, we hear many expressing the desire to work remotely or not go back to the office full-time. Employees have had time to reflect, and we are finding they are looking for work-life balance and a better, or different, company culture. Many feel they have experienced success working out-of-office through the pandemic, and they have adjusted their lives accordingly. For the most part, we are not hearing employers complain (yet) about performance in the remote environment. In many cases, leadership has adjusted to working this way themselves.

### So, what does this mean for the future of our businesses?

We need to look to the next normal. As we do, we need to honestly assess the needs of the business. We have to think about whether we risk losing good people if we don't adjust. Of course, that is not all we have to think about. The latest trends may or may not be conducive to all of our businesses, and we have to assess several aspects:

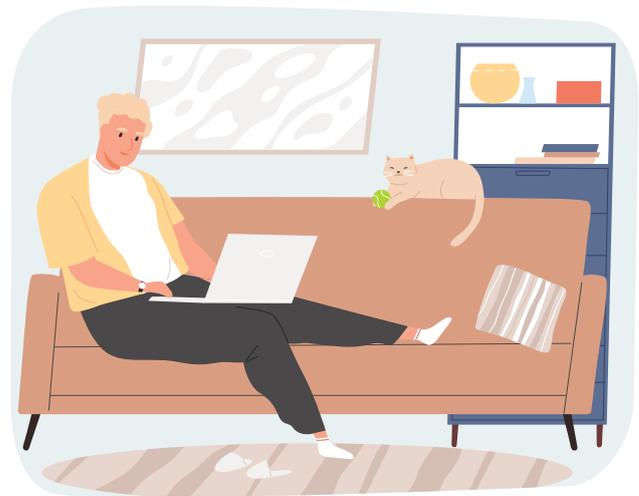
- How much are we really getting?
- Is productivity the same or better than when the team worked together in an office?
- Are we able to sustain long-term success with the changes we are considering?

The whole picture should be considered before making permanent business-altering decisions.

### Points to consider:

- Performance and results need to be considered with every decision; you cannot choose permanent adjustments at the detriment of your business
- Assess the “when” instead of the “if” when considering the practicality of remote working. “It works when...” versus “it works if...”
- Different roles require some to be in person every day. When they don’t, can you let them go remote?
- Consider hybrid schedules where appropriate, which seems to be a reasonable compromise for everyone
- Listen to your team members as they share thoughts and ideas. Regardless of what decisions are ultimately made, keeping open lines of communication on all levels, considering new ideas, and showing you care are key components of maintaining a positive workplace
- Be sensitive to employees’ feelings. Collectively, we have been through a lot. Our lives changed dramatically, plans changed, and many lost loved ones. Whatever your post-COVID-19 workplace looks like, lead with compassion
- As always, you and your Human Resources leadership need to stay up to date and informed on laws, liabilities, and other issues

However you decide to progress to the next normal, we recommend that you have a solid and well-communicated plan in place which people can prepare for. Be positive. Be clear. Making this plan will help you think through the details and the potential impact to your business. Of course, we all want to keep our team members and keep them happy.



We also need our businesses to thrive for everyone’s sake. Once you carefully think this through, the plan should include details of your next normal.

### Some details to consider:

- Why is it important for your business and team to outline the next normal?
- What will the office environment look like? For example, are masks required, have workspaces moved, etc.
- When will you be face-to-face again, and how will it be determined who travels, if anyone at all? Will you be attending shows and events?
- What are your vaccine requirements? Check the laws and guidelines and act accordingly
- How will people remain connected, developed, and supported?
- How will new hires be acclimated to the team and set up for success?
- Which positions will be required to return to the office full time and which, if any, will have the ability to work hybrid or fully remote schedules?

Most importantly, know when new changes will go into effect. It is important to give people a reasonable amount of notice so they can be ready both mentally and practically. Thorough planning, a thoughtful approach, and a clear communication strategy should help us all enter this next era with our best foot forward. Time will tell if we have made the right decisions and, as always, we will be nimble and ready for what comes our way. 

Julie Marcik leads the JOE Produce Search team, leveraging more than 20 years of experience in executive search.

Produce is not a job, it’s a lifestyle. Once you “check the boxes” on skills and experience, the real job becomes matching the people with the culture of the business and leadership. This takes time, expertise, and a robust process Julie and the JOE Produce Search team know well.

JOE Produce Search is composed of experienced search consultants and produce professionals. Placements range from middle management to C-level positions throughout North America, covering a wide range of produce and produce-related businesses.

**JOE** Produce Search™



**Julie Marcik,**  
Senior Director,  
JOE Produce Search<sup>SM</sup>

# SWEET — ON — CITRUS

Domestic Varieties  
Available This Fall



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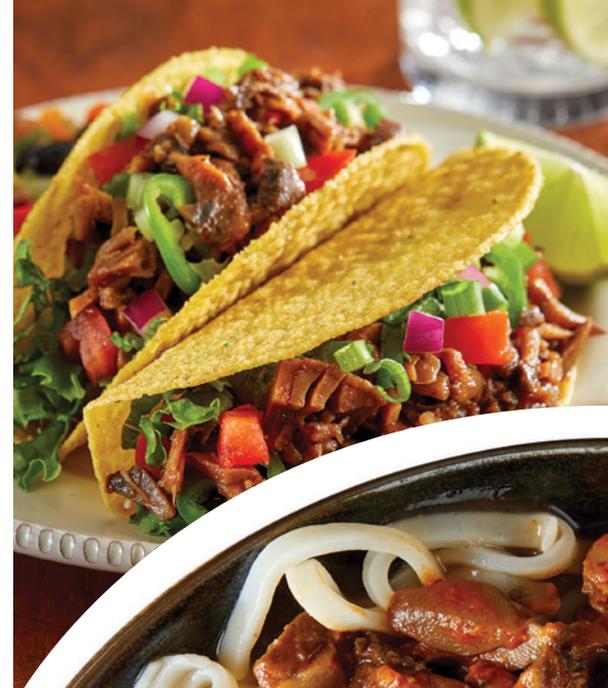
Giorgio.

Welcome to the  
**KITCHEN** By Chandler James

Please join me at the counter  
and roll up your sleeves.

Today, we are cooking with fire.





First, we'll gather our tools, which include a mushroom category cookbook dating all the way back to 1928. Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Giorgio Fresh Co. Greg Sagan turns the page to a chapter that, I am delighted to learn, is still being written.

The narrative zooms in on a newly launched, value-added brand—Giorgio's Kitchen™—of which one of the primary products is a line of shredded Portabella mushrooms.



**Greg Sagan**

Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Giorgio Fresh Co.

“This new plant-based meat-alternative meal solution made from America's Favorite Mushroom® is healthy, nutritious, and delicious,” Greg begins, already infusing this recipe with an energizing profile. “The barbecue flavor boasts a delicious

blend of meat-like textured Portabella mushrooms in a savory barbecue sauce; the Sriracha flavor offers a little spice for those looking to kick things up a bit!”

The line is already giving off heat in the industry, hitting many consumer must-haves at the grocery store: plant-based, unique flavor, convenience, and versatility. Each of these flavor profiles provide a myriad of opportunities for home chefs to get creative in the kitchen, meaning buyers can count on consumer demand.

Giorgio truly hit the nail on the head in terms of satisfying the needs of the market, and that is certainly not by chance.

“We have a firm commitment to leading the category with innovative products,” Greg continues. “We are actively investing in research and development and consumer insights to bring new ways for them to enjoy the nutritious and delicious benefits of umami-packed mushrooms. The first two flavors being brought to market are deemed to be the most popular amongst shoppers today.”

In addition to flavor, many modern consumers are seeking plant-based recipes to add to their menus. By giving them convenience-forward, value-added items on several different shelves in the produce aisle, the basket share for fresh will only continue to go up. Because, not only are shoppers looking to place fresh produce at the center of the plate, they are looking for a product they can come back to time and time again.

“Mushroom-based innovations are well-poised to satisfy the recent market trends surrounding plant-based protein consumption. Consumers are looking to supplement or increase their protein through plant-based sources for multiple reasons: nutritional health benefits and emerging lifestyles being two of them, which call for cutting out animal-based foods,” Greg explains.

As we in fresh produce know, we are battling for shelf space at some of the more traditionally formatted retailers, especially as the move toward e-commerce continues to eat up market share. Even so, Greg tells me that plant-based proteins are holding their own against meat contenders, leading me to believe that the time is now for produce

suppliers to target sales in this sector.

“Plant-based alternatives are actually outpacing animal-based counterparts in a wide range of meal occasions,” he says. “We have found that refrigerated plant-based options are performing well across the store, with a 62 percent increase in growth. We have also seen research that says one in four Americans cut down their meat consumption during the pandemic.”



“Plant-based alternatives are actually outpacing animal-based counterparts in a wide range of meal occasions.”

*-Greg Sagan,*

Executive Vice President of Sales and Marketing,  
Giorgio Fresh Co.

profiles for each product,” says Greg. “We are happy with the final product and are excited to bring it to market.”

Initially, the line will only be available on retail shelves, but Greg divulges that foodservice applications are also on the menu. I, for one, would be the first in line for a Sloppy Joe with barbecue Portabella shreds piling over the edges.

As Greg and I continue peering into the ingredient cabinet of Giorgio’s Kitchen, I can almost see the nearly century-long list of fresh applications and industry innovations that decorate the company’s history. With this, I am reminded of the original vision behind this brand—one that places fresh produce excellence above all else.

It is this exact vision that brought Giorgio into the culinary hall of fame in the first place. Now, the team sits at the head of the plant-based table, rolling out the table cloth, and even helping others find their chairs.

“We believe that this product will help consumers meet their desires for cleaner, meat-free meal solutions, and, ultimately, will take retail plant-based sales to greater heights,” Greg emphasizes, reminding me of the ultimate goal that Giorgio’s new brand aims to achieve. “More consumers are looking for healthier plant-based meat-alternative options, and our shredded Portabella product truly is a great substitute.”

As I asserted earlier in this article, the chapter called Giorgio’s Kitchen has only just begun to be written. I cannot say what Greg and his team will be cooking up next, but if it is anything at all like this initial launch, produce buyers

may soon have a whole new channel of demand on their hands—one Giorgio is not just responding to, but creating.

I don’t know about you, but my kitchen has plenty more room for mushroom-based innovation.

And, if my time in the industry has taught me anything, your shoppers’ kitchens will, too. 🍄

Putting pen to paper (or perhaps, I should say, putting product to plate) was a feat all its own, as Greg tells me. Identifying the top trends was the first step in Giorgio’s plan. Next came the true test of innovation—the dare to bring market-leading flavors to a traditionally untapped format.

“Creating the perfect flavor profile was a bit of a challenge. We went through several iterations to get unique, savory



# WTF DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

4Earth Farms™ Organic  
Green Beans and Organic ?  
Sugar Snap Peas



## 4EARTH FARMS™ ORGANIC GREEN BEAN AND SNAP PEA SALAD

### INGREDIENTS

**12 oz** 4Earth Organic Green Beans, trimmed  
**8 oz** 4Earth Organic Sugar Snap Peas  
**1 cup** 4Earth Organic Cherry Tomatoes  
**¼ cup** fresh English peas  
**4 oz** Baby Spring Mix Lettuce, (about 2 handfuls)  
**¼ cup** pickled red beets, sliced into thin strips  
**¼ cup** red onion, coarsely chopped  
**½ cup** pine nuts  
**½ cup** chives, for garnish  
Burrata cheese, for garnish  
Lemon wedge, for garnish  
Olive oil  
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

### GREEN SAUCE DRESSING

**1 cup** 4Earth Organic Cilantro Leaves with tender stems  
**3 tbsp** white miso  
**3 tbsp** fresh lemon juice  
**3 tbsp** fresh lime juice  
**2 tbsp** olive oil  
**4 tsp** tahini  
**1 tbsp** apple cider vinegar  
**2 tbsp** honey  
**1 cup** fresh basil  
**½ cup** chopped chives  
**1½ tsp** peeled ginger  
**1 tsp** ground coriander  
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper

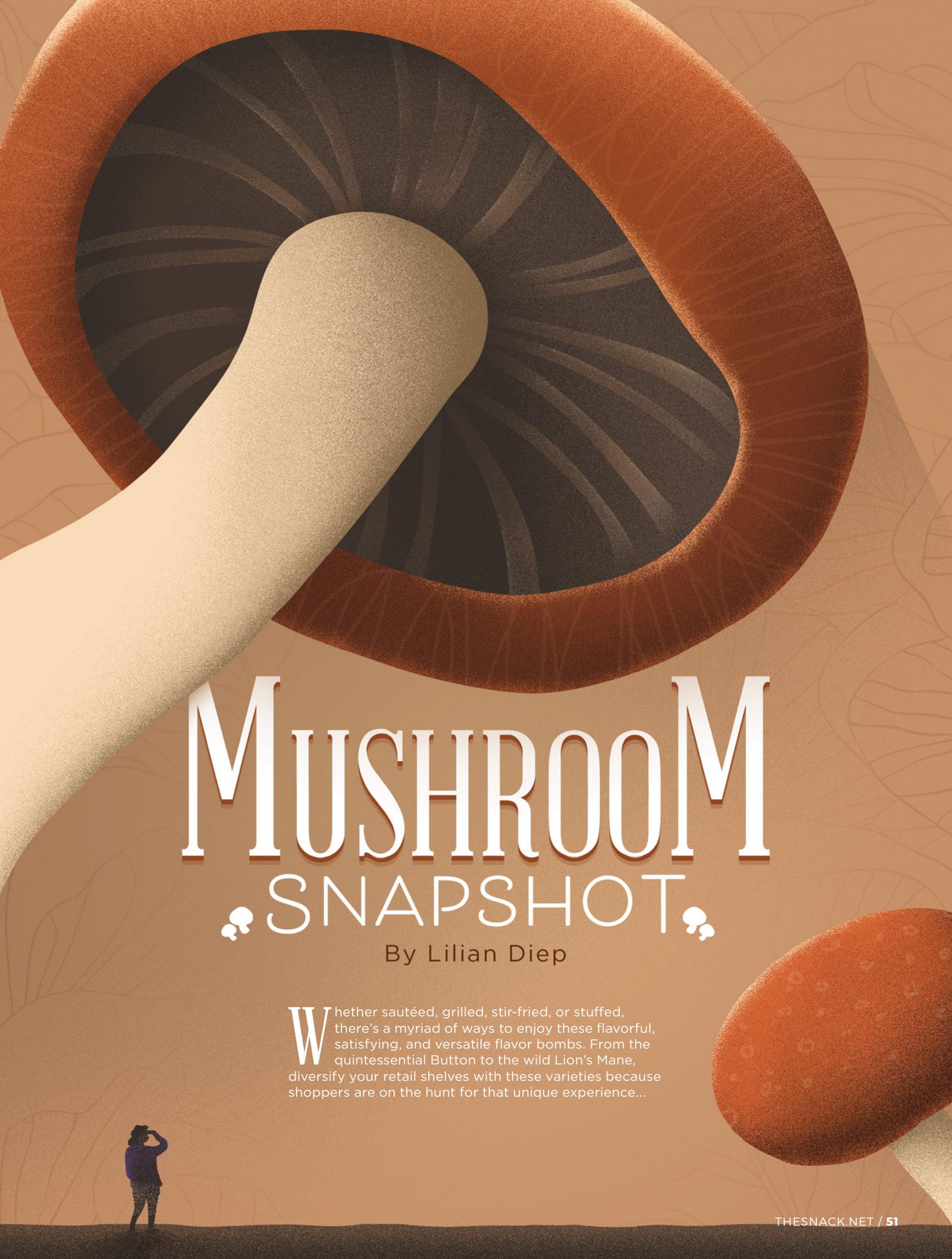
**Prep Time:** 30 min  
**Servings:** 4

### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Fill a large pot with water and bring to a boil.
- 2 Prepare an ice bath by filling a large bowl with ice and water.
- 3 Blanch green beans, Sugar Snap peas, and English peas separately for 3 minutes or until tender, then immediately stop the cooking process by cooling them in the ice bath. When chilled, drain, pat dry with a paper towel, season with a dash of salt, and set aside.
- 4 In a nonstick frying pan, coat the bottom with olive oil and heat pan on a medium flame. Cut cherry tomatoes in half and place face-down in pan. Cook tomatoes until soft and the faces begin to brown. Carefully remove from pan and set aside.
- 5 Wipe oil from frying pan with paper towel and reheat pan over a medium flame. Add pine nuts and toast, tossing them often. Remove when pine nuts start turning a light caramel brown.
- 6 Prepare dressing by pulsing miso, lemon and lime juices, oil, tahini, vinegar, and honey in a food processor. Add cilantro, basil, chives, ginger, and coriander, and pulse until the herbs are finely chopped. Season with salt and pepper.
- 7 Combine all salad ingredients in large bowl. Slowly add dressing and toss until lightly coated.
- 8 Dress plate with some green sauce dressing, burrata cheese, chives, and a light grind of fresh pepper. Garnish with a lemon wedge.

To learn more about 4Earth Farms,  
visit [www.4earthfarms.com](http://www.4earthfarms.com)





# MUSHROOM SNAPSHOT

By Lilian Diep

Whether sautéed, grilled, stir-fried, or stuffed, there's a myriad of ways to enjoy these flavorful, satisfying, and versatile flavor bombs. From the quintessential Button to the wild Lion's Mane, diversify your retail shelves with these varieties because shoppers are on the hunt for that unique experience...





## WHITE/WHITE BUTTON

**APPEARANCE** Varies in color from creamy white to off-white

**FLAVOR** A fairly mild and woodsy taste; flavor intensifies when cooked

**USES** Very versatile and equally tasty fresh or cooked; use raw in salads, with dips, sautéed with side dishes, breaded, or as an ingredient to enrich sauces, soups, stuffings, or entrées; excellent for blending with ground meat

## KING OYSTER

**APPEARANCE** Thick, white flesh that is firm-textured and meaty, with a blunt cap

**FLAVOR** Very savory, with a chewy texture

**USES** Best sliced and sautéed



## PORTABELLA/PORTABELLO

**APPEARANCE** Tan or brown caps; measure up to six inches in diameter

**FLAVOR** A deep, meat-like flavor, with substantial texture

**USES** Serve whole or sliced, grilled, baked, or deep-fried; a delicious vegetarian alternative as a meat substitute in stir-fry dishes, sautéed, and sauces

## SHIITAKE

**APPEARANCE** Tan-dark brown with broad, umbrella-shaped caps, wide open veils, tan gills, and curved stems

**FLAVOR** Rich and woodsy when cooked; they add a meaty flavor and texture to stir-fries and pastas

**USES** Cook before eating; excellent cooked in soups, stir-fry dishes, and traditional sushi plates



## BEECH

**APPEARANCE** Petite in size, with either all-white or light brown caps

**FLAVOR** Mild, sweet, and nutty, with a crunchy texture

**USES** Best enjoyed cooked, either whole or sliced; add to stir-fry dishes, soups, stews, or sauces



## LION'S MANE

**APPEARANCE** Large, white, shaggy mushrooms that resemble a lion's mane as they grow; also called Hedgehog, Bear's Head, Old Man's Beard, Bearded Tooth, Sheep's Tooth, and Pom Pom Mushrooms

**FLAVOR** Hearty, slightly sweet, with a meaty texture

**USES** Can be enjoyed raw, cooked, dried, or steeped as a tea



## BABY BELLA/CRIMINI

**APPEARANCE** Light tan to rich brown cap; same variety as traditional Portabellas/Portobellos, differing only in size

**FLAVOR** A deeper, earthier flavor than whites and firmer in texture

**USES** An excellent addition to beef, wild game, and vegetable dishes; sauté, broil, microwave, or cook almost any way



## OYSTER

**APPEARANCE** Can be gray, pale yellow, or even blue, with a velvety texture

**FLAVOR** A very delicate flavor

**USES** Sauté with butter and onions to bring out their flavor



*Wholesome Heroes*

represents individuals who are making a positive impact in their community through their work, volunteer efforts, sustainability, or health and wellness initiatives.



**WHAT MAKES JORDAN A WHOLESOME HERO?**

No task is too big or too small for Jordan. This *Wholesome Hero's* fuel for life comes from his many acts of community service. Jordan spends his time working 24/7 between innovating new and efficient processes at Matson Fruit and volunteering in his local community of Yakima, Washington.

- 1 POWER DATA NERD
- 2 COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
- 3 TAKING INITIATIVE
- 4 FOSTERING EDUCATION
- 5 DEDICATION

**RAINIER® FRUIT CELEBRATES WHOLESOME HEROES**

# Jordan Matson

*Owner, Matson Fruit*

YEARS AT MATSON FRUIT:	YEARS IN PRODUCE:	FAVORITE PRODUCE ITEM:
20	20	<i>Apples</i>



Quite literally raised in the industry, 6-year-old Jordan was known for falling asleep in sales meetings his father brought him to. Though he was steeped in the culture growing up, this didn't stifle his creativity for his work. Jordan was the first in the industry to implement automated cold storage technology, a system that uses robotic cranes guided by lasers in place of forklift drivers.



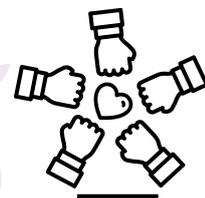
Jordan serves on multiple boards and committees representing many aspects of the fruit industry, such as food safety, data, and education. He also presents the impacts of legislation on the fruit industry to the State Capitol. The self-proclaimed nerd uses the Starship Enterprise as his background for Zoom calls while sporting Star Trek uniforms.



When Jordan isn't playing virtual reality games, he can be found working to improve his community of Yakima, Washington. Currently, he's serving as key lead for a playground expansion project with partners Yakima Rotary and Yakima Greenway.



When many students and families were forced to restructure and reorganize for at-home learning, Jordan brought his passion for teaching his own kids and fostering education to help build over 190 desks for Dayton Elementary School students.



"The Yakima community is always giving, and I get to spend part of my time giving back. I'll use my evenings and weekends, or take my vacation time to volunteer and be out in the community helping with whatever current project needs to be done. Being a member of this community is an honor, and one that I don't take for granted."



# Hands of HARVEST



APPLES, PEARS, CHERRIES & BLUEBERRIES



56

# By the Flight of a Butterfly

By Chandler James

**G**reenhouse—we've watched it take root in fresh produce, grow rapidly as a sector, and even set new industry standards, influencing all areas of the food chain from growing practices and retail shelves to consumer kitchens.

Fluttering across the big, blue sky that is the greenhouse category is one determined butterfly.

Its name is Red Sun Farms®.

“Our high-tech greenhouses deliver exceptional flavor, quality, and innovation, providing 646 acres of year-round supply in the tomato, pepper, and cucumber categories. There are many benefits to greenhouse-grown produce, including sustainable practices, food safety, and consistency in the products,” says Senior Director of Sales Harold Paivarinta, painting me a clear picture of this airborne category.

Fitting of its forward-looking vision for greenhouse innovation, Red Sun launched a brand-new logo earlier this year. The central focus? A vibrantly colored butterfly.

Not only does it reaffirm the brand's commitment to continued metamorphosis, but it symbolizes a deep connection to, and understanding of, the Earth. The new logo, in other words, is a physical representation of the greenhouse industry—and Red Sun has given it flight.

“We've updated our logo with a modern refresh that reflects growth and innovation to reinforce a positive and progressive identity,” Harold adds. “The team has already begun the process of rolling out the new packaging and is receiving positive retailer feedback. The logo offers clarity and transparency, which are two essential purchase drivers for present-day consumers.”

Elevated by these packaging qualities that Harold speaks of, a focus on sustainability becomes the natural progression for retail shelves. Red Sun has that flight pattern memorized, utilizing sustainable practices in water recycling, yield optimization, and minimizing food waste.

“Red Sun Farms is a proud industry leader in sustainable agriculture, closely working with packaging suppliers to

develop new and sustainable options,” Harold continues. “Over the last six to seven years, the team has also challenged our packaging suppliers to push sustainable technology, helping to commercialize recyclable flow wraps, increase recycled content in clamshells, fiber punnets, compostable PLUs, and labels with washable adhesives.”

There is still much more opportunity for sustainable improvements through technology, Harold assures me, and Red Sun is continuously working to bring new solutions to the market.

One such advancement has been made through light technology, which the grower began implementing at its greenhouses in the latter half of 2020 as it pushed for year-round Canadian supply.

“We will begin planning for the second season of our winter pepper crop with this one-of-a-kind LED technology,” Harold explains. “This unique, innovative growing method recreates and modulates the full spectrum of the sun’s natural light, essentially enabling the farm to eliminate seasonality for these crops.”

Red Sun originally turned to this ingenuity to meet continuous demands for access to local produce year-round, and the need became even greater as pandemic-related challenges persisted.

“In the past year, as food insecurity has become a more common reality for families in North America, we have come to believe that providing fresh and nutritious produce year-round is critical in building healthy communities. Ensuring that our supply is not interrupted makes certain that we can do our part in providing nutritious options to retailers and consumers,” Harold shares.

On top of consistency and quality, flavor is a chief contributor to the greenhouse category.

“Retailers and foodservice operators strive to exceed their customers’ expectations,” Harold asserts. “They know that consumers have many choices in-store, online, and in restaurants, and greenhouse programs ensure they will hit those deliverables each visit in order to maintain shopper loyalty.”



“...we have come to believe that providing fresh and nutritious produce year-round is critical in building healthy communities.”

*-Harold Paivarinta,*  
Senior Director of Sales, Red Sun Farms®



Harold states that demand for greenhouse-grown produce continues to rise year over year, with a focus on specialties, snacking, and organics. Consumers are seeking nutritious options that don't compromise on flavor and quality, and Red Sun has several options at the ready.

Its Sweets Family brand, for example, quickly made a name for itself on the shelf, with Sweetpops effectively redefining Red Sun's snacking tomato standards.

"This variety is all about delivering an explosion of flavor in a snack-sized product. It has already established a dedicated following of consumers who have connected with the brand, creating new expectations for sweetness in tomatoes," Harold says. "The packaging on this new variety was designed with the millennial generation in mind, making an exploration of this tomato a complete experience."

This experience, in my eyes, is a journey akin to the migration of a butterfly. It may look different to everyone, but where that journey begins and ends is always the same: from the seed to the plate.

With this carefully curated process serving as the company's value proposition, Red Sun takes ownership of every step in the supply chain, from hand-selecting its seeds, implementing propagation at its farms, overseeing greenhouse operations, as well as harvesting, packing, and distributing. This vertically integrated Seed to Plate business model meets the demand for quality, safety, flavor, and year-round supply.

"The master growers at Red Sun Farms have hand-selected varieties of organic tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers that will delight and exceed customers' flavor expectations," Harold expresses. "Our vertically integrated operations have helped us realize our vision of owning farms in Mexico, the United States, and Canada, with supporting distribution centers throughout these regions."

Earlier in 2021, Red Sun revealed growth across its Mexico and Ontario greenhouse operations. As this new acreage completes its first season, Harold teases that the team is assessing further needs to grow crops to meet new customer demands.

Red Sun Farms is working on expansions in Pharr, Texas; Dublin, Virginia; and Kingsville, Ontario, to support growth plans that will take the company to a total of 788 acres in 2022. This includes 223 acres (52 lit) in Ontario, 537 acres in Mexico, and 28 acres (10 lit) in the United States.

Expansions like these will play a critical role in Red Sun maintaining its position as a category leader. Because, as Harold reiterates, greenhouse isn't going anywhere.

"The role of high-tech greenhouses will become even more important in the coming years due to their sustainable practices, the growing demand for fresh produce year-round, and the desire for that produce to be locally sourced," Harold concludes.

It appears as though Red Sun is well-poised to hold its weight, laying claim to all of the innovative characteristics that make greenhouse a category not to be overlooked.

And to think...it is all carried on the wings of a butterfly. 



Red Sun Farms began implementing LED light technology at its greenhouses in the latter half of 2020 as it pushed for a year-round Canadian supply

# WTF DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

Shuman Farms  
RealSweet® Premium  
Sweet Onions



## BACON SWEET ONION JAM WITH BAKED BRIE

Recipe and photography by Jodi Danen of Create Kids Club

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 RealSweet® Premium Sweet Onions, sliced
- 1 lb bacon
- 1 tbsps unsalted butter
- ¼ cup red wine vinegar
- ¼ cup whiskey
- ¼ cup water
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 1 tbsps Dijon mustard
- Balsamic vinegar (such as espresso- or fig-flavored balsamic vinegar) for drizzling
- 1 wheel Brie with the top crust sliced off

**Prep Time:** 5 min

**Cook Time:** 1 hr

**Servings:** 4



### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat the oven to 350° F.
- 2 In a Dutch oven or cast iron skillet, cook the bacon until crispy, then remove from the pan, reserving 2 tablespoons of bacon grease. Discard the rest of the grease.
- 3 To begin making the bacon sweet onion jam, add the 2 tablespoons of reserved bacon grease as well as the butter to the drippings in the pan. Warm over medium heat.
- 4 Add red wine vinegar, whiskey, water, brown sugar, and Dijon mustard. Stir and bring to a simmer.
- 5 Stir in sweet onions and cover. Cook on medium heat for 15 minutes. Remove cover, stir, and continue to simmer for 30 minutes.
- 6 Carefully transfer ⅔ of the bacon jam into a food processor or blender. Purée until just chopped, then stir in the other ⅓ of the jam.
- 7 Place Brie into a medium-sized oven serving dish with edges (cheese will spread after cutting into it). Top with bacon jam and bake for 15 minutes.
- 8 Drizzle generously with balsamic vinegar.
- 9 Serve immediately with crackers or bread. Enjoy!

To learn more about Shuman Farms, visit [www.realsweet.com](http://www.realsweet.com)



# EVOLUTION *Through* INNOVATION

A Q&A with Marc Hatfield,  
National Sales Manager,  
Produce Pro Software



By Jenna Plasterer

## Change.

As many have said before, it is one of the only constants in life. Depending on how you slice it, it can be overwhelming or it can be a chance to thrive.

Luckily for us, the luminaries across the fresh produce industry do not buckle under the weight of evolution. Instead, they embrace change as a catalyst for transformation; the driving force behind a relentless pursuit of innovation.

This mindset is what sets our industry apart from others.

Over the past year-and-a-half, this ethos has enabled us to strap in, put

our collective experiences and our minds together, and get down to business, ensuring that fresh produce would come out ahead even amid the most trying of times.

Throughout the chronicles of fresh produce, we have struggled. However, we have always emerged more dynamic and inventive, harnessing an even greater appreciation for hard work and a new vision for the future of our industry.

As I've written and scoured countless stories about our advancement as a sector, one key aspect stands out that may not shock many of you: technology. Moving ahead in a world

of online ordering, automation, and computer optimization, it makes sense that fresh produce would embrace these aspects to streamline efficiencies as we continue to offer high-quality products to consumers.

One company helping lead this charge toward technological invention and operational efficiency is Produce Pro Software, which is why I sat down with Marc Hatfield, National Sales Manager, to see what the innovator has in store for the future and how it is helping to usher in modernization across the backend of the produce industry.



**Jenna Plasterer:** Marc, Produce Pro Software recently celebrated a three-decade milestone. In your opinion, how has the business evolved since its inception?

**JP:** By now, I think we have all seen how challenging change can be at times, especially when it comes to converting operations and moving to new technology. With that being said, how can you guarantee the implementation of Produce Pro Software will be a success?



**“Our consultants are experts in produce operations and many have been working in this industry for decades. . . . .”**

**Marc Hatfield:** Produce Pro Software has continued to grow and adapt with our customer base over the last thirty years. As the market ebbs and flows, so do the needs of our customers who may require certain functionality to meet their specific needs.

**MH:** Thirty years of implementing Produce Pro Software into some of the best-run companies in the perishables industry has allowed us to successfully guide organizations through a proven step-by-step process from start to finish.

Built from the ground up, the changes needed by our customers are then integrated into our systems. This allows us to be flexible for our customers.

Helping to ease the transition, it is not just the technology that drives Produce Pro Software but the people behind it. Our consultants are experts in produce operations and many have been working in this industry for decades. We have seen the ups and downs and understand the nuances of perishables while bringing an added level of knowledge to every project.

During the last year, for example, we have continued to support our clients, whether it be working with them on the USDA Farmers to Families food box programs or enhancing buyer to consumer (B2C) functionality to allow them to bring in additional revenues. If anything, companies have realized the need to stay technologically competitive in this volatile market, especially after the changes caused by the pandemic. That is where Produce Pro Software comes in, and we are ready to help take businesses to the next level not only to sustain, but to grow.

With a dedicated project management team, lead trainers, and lead technical consultants, our customers will have support every step of the way during implementation. Our team will not rest until our clients are up and running. And, our help does not end there. After a few months, our Account Managers take the reins and assist our customers for the life of their businesses. It is very critical to have a smooth transition which, ultimately, drives the success of our partnerships.



**We have seen the ups and downs and understand the nuances of perishables while bringing an added level of knowledge to every project.”**

*- Marc Hatfield,*  
**National Sales Manager, Produce Pro Software**

# “...Produce Pro Software has been, and will continue to be, an all-in-one software solution as our industry continues to evolve.”

**JP:** Over the last few decades, we have all seen the major shift toward advanced technology and online systems. Besides staying on the cutting-edge, why is it important for produce companies to implement more advanced systems? How has Produce Pro Software answered this need?

**MH:** Our core philosophy is to develop an all-in-one Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software solution specifically tailored to all business types in the produce industry. This eliminates the need for integrating multiple systems right off the bat. And, this growing trend, ultimately, ends up being less costly and easier to manage from an operational perspective.

Since the pandemic hit, we have actually seen an uptick in prospective customers choosing Produce Pro Software because of the countless benefits of an all-in-one solution. From the start, it makes their lives easier, focusing on just one system instead of many moving pieces. Our customers trust us and our software to run their operations so they can concentrate on their core business—selling perishable products.

Staying true to our roots, Produce Pro Software has been, and will continue to be, an all-in-one software solution as our industry continues to evolve.

**JP:** As we move into a world impacted by moves like the 2020 shutdown, what other aspects of the Produce Pro Software system can add value to fresh produce operations and how will these systems help ease the transition into a new way of operating?

**MH:** The ability to work remotely has had a huge impact on our customers and how they operate, and as we move forward with post-pandemic hopes, it remains a must.

Although this functionality was already in place before the pandemic hit, now companies are taking advantage of being able to access their system anytime and anywhere. Giving our clients this ability, Produce Pro is designed to operate for quick ease of use, doing away with drop-down menus and offering our customers everything they need at their fingertips, which is a huge time saver and provides visibility into all aspects of an operation. Another facet of the system that has become increasingly important is accurate inventory; knowing what is going on with your inventory at any given movement is a direct reflection of dollars and cents.

Through our system, companies can quickly navigate through interactive screens such as recall entry, forecasting, sales board, work orders, dispatch window, load arrival, and lot settlement. These screens make their jobs simpler, allowing them to do more with less—efficiency is key!

**JP:** Lastly, Marc, as the fresh produce industry keeps moving toward a new, more technologically driven future, what is on the horizon for Produce Pro Software?

**MH:** We are fortunate that our business has grown significantly over the past couple of years, which, in turn, has allowed us to add new functionality to our system. Our customers are evolving based on market conditions, and because of our business model, we build our software from scratch, providing flexible and tailored solutions for each individual customer. No two customers are exactly alike—we acknowledge and account for that, which allows us to meet the changes in the industry and demands of our customers.

So, I would say that the future for Produce Pro Software looks bright! We are venturing into new markets and look forward to helping many more companies drive results with increased organizational efficiency, minimized waste and loss, reduced operating costs, and real-time data.



**A**s our vision of the future demands we remain steeped in technological advancements and modern evolutions, one thing is certain: We will have to continue embracing change to drive our industry forward. Although it can be intimidating and confusing at times, with decades of expertise at its back, Produce Pro Software is an optimal partner, taking us by the hand—even if it is a virtual one—and guiding fresh produce through these pivotal transitions. 



# WTF

## DO I DO WITH

Pure Flavor® Cloud 9®  
Bite-Sized Fruity Tomatoes ?

{ what the fork }



### GRILLED TOMATO AND FETA PIZZA

Created by: Abby Harris

#### INGREDIENTS

**1 dry pint** Pure Flavor® Cloud 9®  
Bite-Sized Fruity Tomatoes

**1 lb** pizza dough

**4 oz** feta cheese

**1** red onion, sliced

**2** cloves garlic, chopped

**½ cup** olive oil

**1 tsp** red pepper flakes

**1 bunch** fresh basil

Salt and pepper, to taste

**Prep Time:** 10 min

**Cook Time:** 20 min

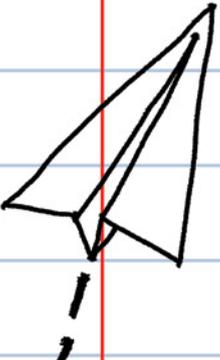
**Servings:** 2



#### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Place dough on lightly floured surface and press down on center from heel of your hand, gradually spreading it out while retaining it. Continue until you have a rectangle.
- 2 Make a boat out of tinfoil and add in  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the tomatoes. Cut remaining tomatoes in half and set aside. Add chopped garlic, red pepper flakes, a few basil leaves, 1 tbsp olive oil, salt and pepper, and mix. Fold foil to cover and set aside.
- 3 Heat grill to 450° F. Brush olive oil on both sides of dough and pizza stone or baking sheet. Cook for 5 minutes or until crust is firm and remove from grill.
- 4 Place tomato boat on one side of the grill. After 10 minutes, they should be roasted and ready.
- 5 Add sliced onions and feta cheese to the crust. Add back to the grill and cook for 5 minutes.
- 6 Remove and top with grilled tomatoes, halved fresh tomatoes, and fresh basil leaves. Slice and serve!

To learn more about Pure Flavor®, visit [pure-flavor.com](http://pure-flavor.com)



# BACK-TO-SCHOOL

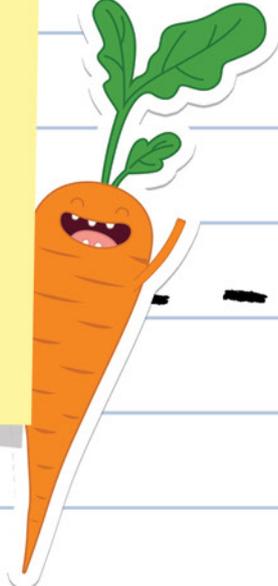


## SNACKCHAT



BY LILIAN DIEP

**A**fter more than a year of remote or distance learning, how school looks may still be in flux, but the need for portable nutrition is not. Whether it's within the four walls of a classroom, at a home desk, or in an office, snacks play an important role in fueling the day for kids, parents, and teachers as classes get back in session, and our fellow industry snackers can attest to that...





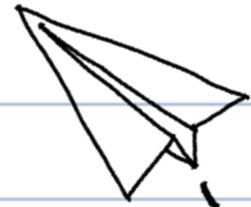
## LORINDA OSCARSON, MARKETING COORDINATOR, CHELAN FRESH

“Rokit™ is the world’s first miniature apple! It is incredibly crisp, deliciously sweet, and naturally grows in the perfect snack size for kids—and the kid in everyone. This apple is a healthy alternative to sugary snacks and the ideal addition to lunch boxes or as an after-school snack. The 3 lb tub is made from recycled plastic and features a fun back-to-school graphic label that is convenient to take along for after-school or weekend activities.”

## NICHOLE TOWELL, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND PACKAGING PROCUREMENT, DUDA FARM FRESH FOODS

“Back-to-school season doesn’t have to end when August does! Parents will continue to look for items to stock their students’ lunch boxes, it’s important to give them convenient, time-saving options to help with the new school year rush! Duda Farm Fresh Foods proudly offers fresh-cut celery sticks and ready-to-eat radish coins that make it fast and easy to prepare those sack lunches. Our products pair perfectly with any and all dips, so we recommend retailers cross promote in-store or offer snacking recipes to keep these items top of mind. We also offer celery snackers that come pre-packed with peanut butter, making it even easier to throw into a lunch box or take as a snack on-the-go!”





## LISA MCNEECE,

VICE PRESIDENT OF FOODSERVICE AND INDUSTRIAL SALES, GRIMMWAY FARMS

“Regardless of what the school year looks like—whether students are at home, in-person, or somewhere in between—we think there’s potential for consumption of value-added, fresh produce snacks to grow. Packaged baby carrots and other snack-sized veggies are valuable solutions for parents and school administrators since they offer a long shelf-life and are pre-prepped, meaning they require less handling and meet all food safety standards. Our carrots have always been a back-to-school favorite for their sweet taste and crunchy texture, portioned to meet school nutrition requirements. As families transition into busier schedules this fall, we anticipate a rise in demand for fresh produce snacks and we’re positioned to respond with value-added offerings suitable for menus at school and after-school snack plates at home.”

## CHRIS VEILLON,

CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER, PURE FLAVOR®

“Snacking needs to power you through your day; whether it be in between meals or like the hot new trend of ‘snack meals,’ they need to be nutritious and plentiful. With kids heading back to school, their lunch boxes need to be full to carry them through the chaos of their busy school day. Convenience is key; bite-sized items in appropriate formats that are resealable give parents the flexibility they need to change up their little ones’ lunch boxes (and their own too!). Pre-packaged items like the Mini Munchies Tomato Snack Pack give parents four snacks in one, easy-to-breakaway, 4 oz peelable container that fits right inside a lunch box.”





## BRIANNA SHALES, MARKETING DIRECTOR, STEMILT

“Now that school is back in session, it’s time to return snackable items—like Lil Snappers® apples or pears—to the lunchbox. These products are ideal tie-ins to back-to-school promotions because they offer parents convenient packaging and delicious fruit in the right size profile for kids. We’ve found an array of shoppers are purchasers of Lil Snappers because the smaller fruit size fits with their snacking needs. Retailers can have a lot of fun introducing new and inventive ways to snack on fruits like apples and pears to consumers. We encourage simple recipes that match a few produce items or utilize different fruits and veggies in bento boxes to showcase how easy it can be to snack on these items, whether you are at home or on-the-go.”

## CINDY SHERMAN,

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, INNOVATION,  
AND INSIGHTS, FRIEDA’S

“With a kindergartner and third-grader at home, we know all about back-to-school. As a consumer and marketer, it’s the perfect time to press the reset button on healthy lunches. Bento/lunch box-friendly displays are a great way to take the mental energy out of packing ahead, so we recommend including colorfully kid-friendly items like Rambas™ Rambutans, Honey Dragons® dragon fruit, and watermelon radishes. In our house, Stokes Purple® Sweet Potato Power Bites is an easy lunchbox recipe must have. It’s so delicious, the kids don’t even realize we’ve snuck in another serving of vegetables!”



# WTF DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

## Progressive Farms Asparagus

?

*Recipe created by Mel Stahl, wife and amazing mom of two creative and energetic kiddos*



### MOMMA MEL'S ROASTED GNOCCHI WITH ASPARAGUS AND SWEET ONION

#### INGREDIENTS

- 1.5–2 lb** Progressive Farms Asparagus, trimmed and cut into thirds
- 1** Mayan Sweet Onion, cut into 1/4" chunks
- 1** Progressive Farms Baby Lemon
- 2 small** leeks, trimmed, halved lengthwise, and sliced 1/2" thick
- 24 oz** fresh, pre-cooked gnocchi
- 4 tbsp** olive oil
- 2 tbsp** unsalted butter, melted
- 1 cup** frozen peas, thawed
- 1/2 cup** Parmesan cheese
- Salt, to taste
- Black pepper, to taste
- Italian seasoning, to taste
- 1/4 cup** fresh chives or parsley

**Prep Time:** 25 min

**Cook Time:** 1 hr

**Servings:** 4



#### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 425° F.
- 2 Using a ziplocked plastic bag, combine the gnocchi with 2 tbsp olive oil and 1 tbsp butter. Season with salt and pepper. Seal plastic bag and shake to mix. Pour gnocchi onto a large baking sheet.
- 3 Using the same plastic bag, combine asparagus, leeks, and sweet onion with remaining 2 tbsp of olive oil and 1 tbsp of butter. Season with salt, pepper, and Italian seasoning. Seal the plastic bag and shake to mix. Pour the mixture onto a second large baking sheet.
- 4 Place both pans in the oven, vegetables on top rack, gnocchi on bottom. Roast vegetables for 20–25 minutes, tossing once. Add peas to the vegetables sheet pan when the vegetables have 5 minutes left. Roast gnocchi for another 30–35 minutes, tossing once, then leaving undisturbed until they are golden on one side.
- 5 Combine vegetables and gnocchi in a large bowl. Toss with grated lemon zest, a squeeze of fresh lemon juice, 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese, and chives or parsley. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Divide into bowls for serving, top with a little more Parmesan, and a sprinkle of chives or parsley.

*Tip: To clean the leeks, put the slices in a bowl filled with water, stirring them to remove sand and grit. Let sediment fall to the bottom of the bowl, then strain, making sure to leave sand behind in the bowl.*

To learn more about Progressive Produce, visit [www.progressiveproduce.com](http://www.progressiveproduce.com)

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# WRITING THE NEXT CHAPTER |

BY JENNA PLASTERER





## “New York’s legacy of apple growing is multigenerational, and part of our strategy includes telling the apple industry story,”

says **Cynthia Haskins** of New York Apple Association (NYAA).

I hear a smile in her voice sparked by her passion for the category and the growers and suppliers behind its success. As President and Chief Executive Officer at NYAA, she plays an integral role in continuing the tale of the prominent fruit.



And, oh, what a story it is.

Ingrained in science, art, and myth, apples have a narrative that is intertwined with human history. From the fateful falling apple said to have inspired Sir Isaac Newton’s theory of gravity to the fabled golden apple that famously sparked the Trojan War, the fruit has earned a mystique that still intrigues cultures around the world.

With such a rich history championed by the most prominent and alluring figures, how can one expand on the legacy of the apple? NYAA

has taken this charge in stride, showcasing the power of the category as it acts as a conduit for human connection and togetherness, as well as a tool for buyers to inspire a new generation of shoppers.

You may ask how NYAA plans to do this, and the answer is simple: marketing.

Through modern-day forms of storytelling, the association is creating the next chapter in the saga for not only the apple category, but the industry of apple growers.

“This year, we have an aggressive trade and consumer media plan. Our objective is to continue to build awareness of all our apple varieties through television spots, out-of-home advertising, and online marketing, in addition to making digital assets available to retail partners,” Cynthia explains. “We are also producing two new

commercials to further connect with consumers. They will focus on the enjoyment that comes from eating New York apples and the growers who make it possible. Farmers are trusted, and we are proud that we can spotlight them as consumers continue to support New York apple growers.”

The exciting new commercials will air through traditional media outlets including television and radio and will also be viewable on social media in specifically targeted markets relevant to NYAA’s retail partners.

To garner additional excitement for the apple season, one of the commercials will be aired during the 50<sup>th</sup> Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) New York City Marathon, an event for which NYAA has been a decades-long sponsor.

By broadcasting during the highly anticipated, widely viewed event, NYAA will be able to reach millions of consumers, including spectators watching the race from the sidelines, viewers cheering from home



As part of its multimedia marketing campaign, New York Apple Association will be rolling out new packaging and displays, including high-graphic paper and poly tote bags, pouches, and classic poly bags

worldwide, and volunteers lining the streets—effectively sharing the story of New York apples on a global scale.

Building off the publicity and consumer exposure created through these commercials, the organization wants to showcase to buyers and shoppers how adding New York apples to their lives will benefit them across the board. An essential step in convincing someone to embrace a product is showing them the ethos behind it, where it comes from, and why supporting the New York apple legacy is so impactful—all of which NYAA is spotlighting in its new ads and merchandising tools for retailers.

“Consumers want to know where their food comes from, and NYAA believes it is important to tell that story, along with those of New York apple growers. To do so, we have designed new packaging, displays, and companion pieces that showcase New York apple orchards so shoppers can identify with us and our retail partners,” Cynthia elaborates.

As this year’s harvest season kicks off, NYAA will be rolling out

*“Consumers want to know where their food comes from, and NYAA believes it is important to tell that story, along with those of New York apple growers.”*

- Cynthia Haskins, President and Chief Executive Officer, New York Apple Association

new high-graphic paper and poly tote bags, pouches, and classic poly bags. Adding to the launch, the association will also unveil convenient pop-up merchandisers, tri-wall orchard bins, and point-of-sale signs to further share the messaging of NYAA and its growers, as well as pique the interest of shoppers in-store.

Currently, NYAA offers a widespread portfolio of multimedia marketing assets, including photo galleries, apple variety information, and recipe posts. Along with its commercials, the association boasts a video assortment featuring farmers and how-to recipe recordings to inspire consumers

to use New York apples as they expand their culinary repertoire.

“Our job is to make our buyers’ and retailers’ jobs easier,” adds Cynthia. “The New York Apple Association’s merchandising support brings the fresh-picked flavor of New York orchards to produce departments, and that’s something we celebrate.”

Part of bringing that fresh-picked flavor to the produce aisles includes pulling back the curtain for buyers, revealing how New York apple growers, shippers, and packers are taking state-of-the-art approaches to advance the sector and provide top-quality products for their shelves.

“We feel it is important to show our longstanding and new partners how thoroughly New York growers have invested in top-of-the-line infrastructure and safety protocols. Our 600 apple orchards are family-owned, their production is diverse, and each one has high standards for growing practices, storage and handling, food safety, sustainability, and environmental responsibility,” voices Cynthia. “A key piece of this narrative is our stewardship story. Our growers have always depended on the land and resources in their respective regions to produce delicious apples year after year, and their commitment to maintaining those resources is something we know our retail partners and consumers care about.”

From cutting-edge packing houses and packing lines to precision-controlled cold-storage rooms

monitoring temperature and oxygen, New York’s apple-growing network is establishing high-tech foundations to guarantee that the storied history and legacy of apples remain inspiring and untarnished.

To highlight these major investments and innovations to the shopper as well as to its buyers, NYAA is transitioning its media focus to include social media outreach. With far-reaching capabilities, the organization plans to utilize online platforms and a high-tech approach to stay ahead of marketing trends that will enable the story of New York apples to amass a greater following, especially with a growing base of “tech-native” consumers.

“As an association, we are shifting our focus from bringing consumers to us to reaching out to consumers,” shares Cynthia. “We want to meet

people where they are in terms of the places they hang out, the things that they’re doing, what their interests are, how their diets are trending, and how we can complement their choices.”

Taking this strategy up a notch, NYAA has an ace up its sleeve as Cynthia shares the cutting-edge aspect of its marketing plan that will give the association and its buy-side partners an added boost.

“NYAA’s retail promotional program will be heavily focused on geo-targeted advertising to support our retail partners,” she explains. “Promotions will include a range of relevant, targeted content that will result in increased engagement online. We will also be expanding our geo-targeted social media ad program, reaching users in specific regions where we have a market presence.”



*“Our growers have always depended on the land and resources in their respective regions to produce delicious apples year after year, and their commitment to maintaining those resources is something we know our retail partners and consumers care about.”*

As she tells me this, I think of the success that I have already seen from other companies using this advertising technique.

By now, we have all witnessed the wonders of targeted marketing on our own phones and computers. Maybe we’ve been influenced to purchase an item or two—or ten, if you’re anything like me—based on how simple it is to engage with the ads.

With its ability to set the bar for retail innovation and its online success, I can think of few better to help build out this program than Amazon, with which NYAA has partnered this year. In doing so, the association will drive forward its targeted ad strategy while making inroads in the retailer’s extensive online marketplace and strong shopper base. Through Amazon, NYAA will have access to immense audience targeting capabilities and

will be able to tap into its advanced inventory tracking system.

Adding another key piece to NYAA’s media campaign is its social media reach, targeting the upcoming generation of produce (and apple) shoppers to give them crucial knowledge about the more than 25 varieties of apples grown in New York. These include classics like McIntosh, Gala, Empire, Ginger Gold, and Honeycrisp; managed apple varieties like EverCrisp® and Sweetango®; and New York-exclusive apple varieties like SnapDragon® and RubyFrost®.

Through its online channels, the association will share coveted grower stories that put faces to the New York apple-growing community. NYAA will also feature New York’s apple varieties, their different flavors, and usage ideas; and the many positive impacts that the category can have on nutrition

and a healthy lifestyle, meeting the rising demand from consumers for healthful, better-for-you options to inspire their eating habits.

Building off research-backed techniques, a strong growing region, meticulous attention to detail, and a dedication to the community and the apple category, I’m not left guessing why NYAA is perfect to help share in the modern history of this storied fruit, and therefore, a vital partner for buyers.

So, as this new chapter is written, know that NYAA is one of the authors behind the keyboard, weaving the legacy of the apple into the modern age—a story that traces back to the very first apple tree. A fateful piece of fruit that, once tasted, would form an auspicious, history-spanning connection between the legendary category and the consumer. 



Honeycrisp



EverCrisp®



Sweetango®



SnapDragon®



RubyFrost®

# A Closer Look at Bako Sweet<sup>®</sup> Organic Sweet Potato Tray

By Anne Allen

**S**triking packaging is only half the battle when it comes to driving a consumer to purchase. Not only should it be eye-catching, it should house a product to match it in renown. Add to that a near-expectant need to be sustainable, and you are looking for a knock-out in the produce department.

For Country Sweet Produce and its Bako Sweet<sup>®</sup> brand, this product is none other than its Organic Sweet Potato Tray. The simplicity of the packaging highlights one of its most attractive features. Of course, I mean the potatoes themselves, but I'm also thinking of the tray they sit on. 100 percent recyclable and compostable, the tray offers key factors that drive

consumer purchase. Emblazoned with a simple green rectangle that draws the eye to the organic label, consumers will immediately know what's really center stage: the sweet potatoes themselves, which CSP takes great pride in. Surprisingly consistent while delivering a sweet, earthy flavor both smooth and fibrous, they practically sell themselves.

The choice of green is also more indicative than you might think, as the pack is the most sustainable of the current Bako Sweet lineup.

Buyers will be happy to spotlight these trays because the Bako Sweet brand has made product ease-of-

use part of its marketing. Nutritious superfoods have never been easier for consumers to get their hands on—especially if retailers put these sweet potatoes front and center in the department.

As we come up on the winter holidays, these trays also offer an ideal portion size to those hosting family feasts. We as an industry are slowly seeing a return to normal, so expect this year's holiday meals to consist of larger produce purchases!

A one-two punch of simple yet effective packaging and quality flavor makes this product a must-have. **S**

# UP CLOSE



# WTF DO I DO WITH Farm2You™ Peaches?

{ what the fork }



## PEACH CAPRESE SKEWERS

Photos and recipe by Alyssa Justice, RDN with [welnourished.com](http://welnourished.com) and [@alyssakayle](https://www.instagram.com/alyssakayle)

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 yellow Farm2You™ Peaches
- 12 fresh basil leaves
- 8 grape tomatoes
- 8 mozzarella pearls
- Balsamic glaze, *optional*
- 4 skewer-style sticks

**Prep Time:** 10 min

**Servings:** 4 skewers

### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Wash and slice your peaches into large slices.
- 2 To arrange as pictured, skewer in this order: Peach slice, basil leaf, grape tomato, mozzarella pearl, basil leaf, peach slice, basil leaf, grape tomato, mozzarella pearl, and peach.
- 3 Drizzle with balsamic glaze to add some extra flavor and enjoy!

*Tip: Feel free to buy more ingredients and get creative with your placement on the skewers—there's no right or wrong way to enjoy this dish!*



To learn more about Trinity Fruit, visit [www.trinityfruit.com](http://www.trinityfruit.com)



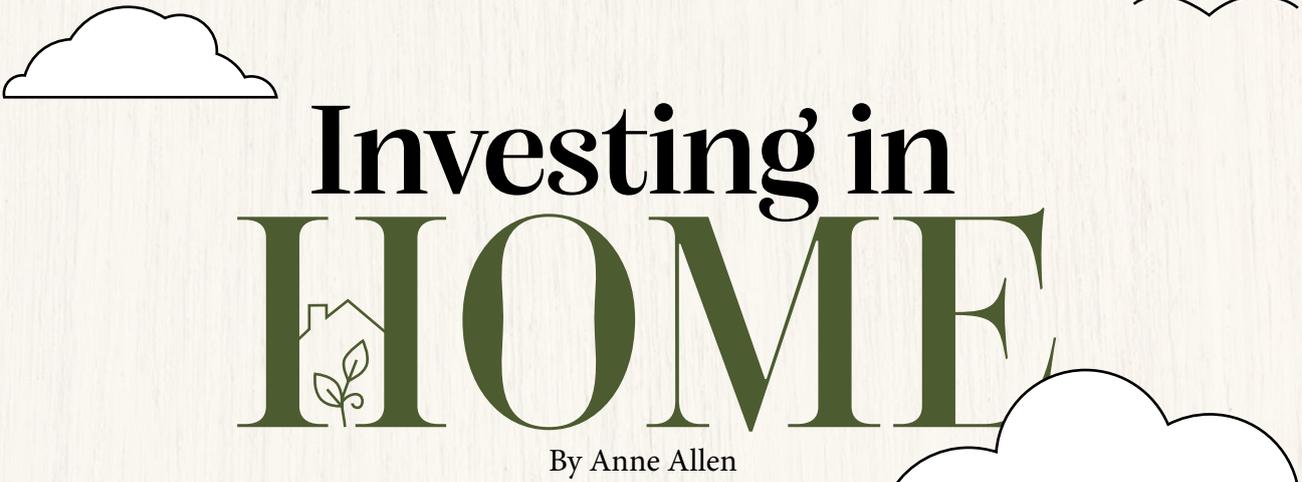


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[www.naturefresh.ca](http://www.naturefresh.ca)

A decorative header area with a white cloud on the left, a bird in flight on the right, and another white cloud on the right side. The title "Investing in HOME" is centered, with the letter 'H' containing a small house and plant icon.

# Investing in HOME

By Anne Allen

One of the concepts we cannot look away from in our industry is change. To do so would be a disservice to those who live and breathe the word, who know that change is simply par for the course. In life, in love, and most especially in business. Couple that with an industry constantly battling weather, market trends, and more, and change is a foregone conclusion.

When I was little, change frightened me, as I'm sure it frightened many. With time, it became akin to philosophical expansion, to self-improvement. The positives outweigh the negatives ten to one.

As Scott Mabs, Chief Executive Officer, tells me, companies are like children—so change is inherent. You nurture them carefully, celebrate their successes, and then, when it comes time to let them spread their wings, you do so.

This is precisely how John and Cindy France, who founded Homegrown Organic Farms in 1998, see the beautiful intertwining of evolution and adaptation. Recently announcing the company's transition to an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP), the two Founders have placed the care of their child in the hands of people who care for it: the employees.

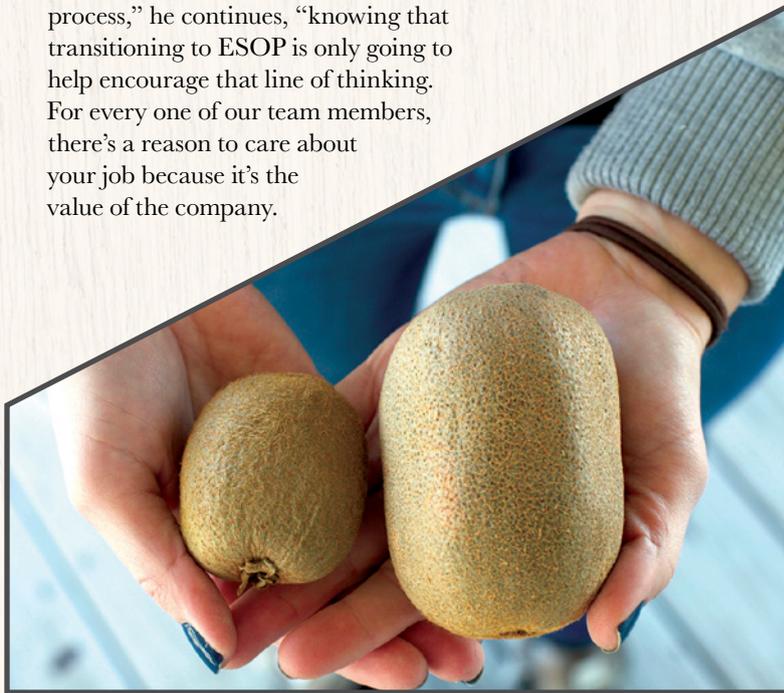
A decorative footer area featuring a stylized green house with white windows and a door, surrounded by various green leaves and plants. A large number "79" is centered above the house.

79

“How well those team members execute their day-to-day jobs, and how much effort and care they put into their jobs, has a massive impact on whether or not the company continues to succeed,” Scott immediately imparts to me.

I curse my home WiFi network as the screen freezes for a moment—my poor connection. Although I can see both Scott and Cherie France, Marketing Manager, on the other line, they can’t see me nodding along.

“That was a part of that decision-making process,” he continues, “knowing that transitioning to ESOP is only going to help encourage that line of thinking. For every one of our team members, there’s a reason to care about your job because it’s the value of the company.



- Above: Mammoth Kiwis are said to be 50 percent larger than the typical variety common to the U.S. market
- Below: John and Cindy France Founded Homegrown Organic Farms in 1998



It is directly related to your ownership value as a member of the ESOP.”

Homegrown Organic Farms is a testament to being both stewards of the land and champions of its people. The ESOP transition, as both Scott and Cherie explain it, is yet another testament to the Frances’ dedication to seeing their employees well-taken care of.

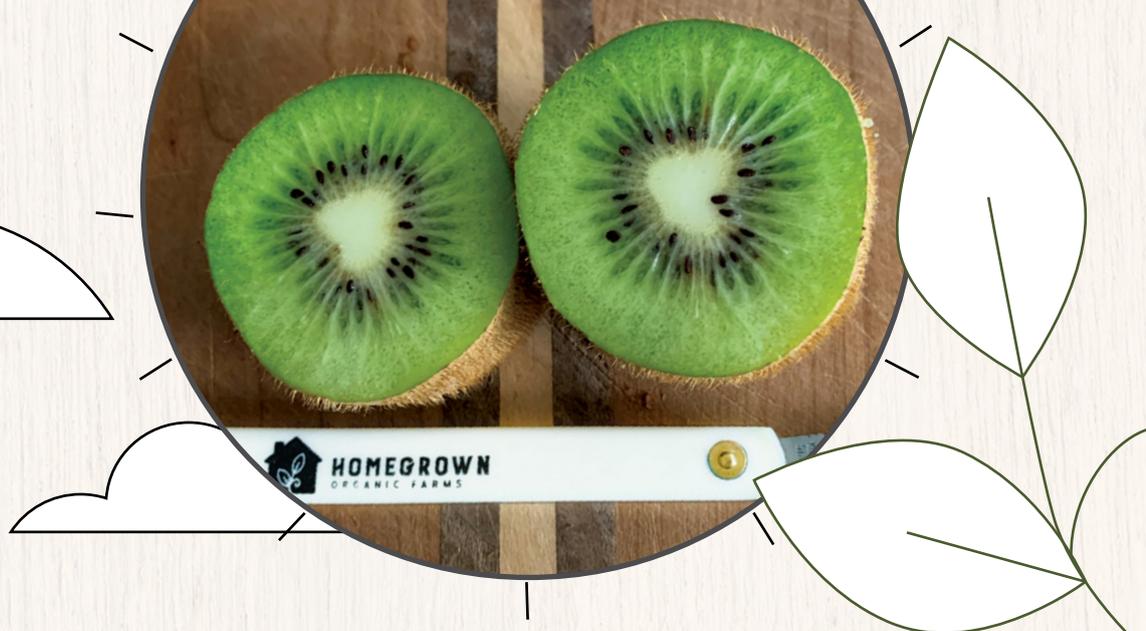
“Retaining the company culture and providing continued benefit to the employees were the foundational drivers behind the decision,” Scott shares. “They wanted to do something rather than take a check from a venture capitalist company and move on. This is their baby. The company has continued to grow and yes, we’re moving to a different reality now, but it’s still their baby.”

We joke that it’s similar to sending your kids off to college, an analogy that is particularly apt. I can wax poetic about change all I want—I am, after all, a writer. But there is something about the notion I haven’t touched on. It is inevitable, and channeling that inevitability into a maneuver that better the whole of something is worth celebrating.

“It’s a company vision,” Scott declares, and I once again wish he could see my emphatic nodding. “It’s very exciting because this isn’t one person leading the charge. It’s all of us thinking of new ideas and ways to operate that will help us grow as a business.”

As the ag industry continues to change tremendously, Scott sees exciting potential where some might see daunting upheaval.

“Whenever there’s change like that, there’s incredible opportunity. I think that providing a platform that lets our team critically focus on how to take advantage of



the opportunities coming our way means we're going to succeed," Scott asserts. And I immediately connect the dots to a recent milestone.

An easy benchmark of success is already upon Homegrown, as the company announced earlier this year its foray into branded offerings. The Mammoth Kiwi, an extraordinary variety from Greece, is nearly 50 percent larger than the standard Hayward variety common to the U.S. market. Grown in partnership with Jerry and Jerin Kliewer, the farmers currently in charge of this new variety, the Mammoth Kiwi is about as exclusive of a variety as you can get. The Kliewers partnered with the Greek breeders behind the Mammoth variety and maintained the exclusive rights to its genetics in the U.S.

"We're incredibly excited about this launch," Cherie notes. "I think the idea behind differentiating ourselves stems from bringing organic varieties like this to market. I also think that this variety specifically will speak to consumers and retailers alike."

Scott remarks that Homegrown Organic Farms also saw a demand in the market and rose to meet it.

"The kiwifruit market in the United States is underdeveloped," he explains. "As we looked at this, we asked ourselves, 'How do we help continue to grow and build that category out?' For many, many years, it's been a fairly stagnant category, where you've got Hayward kiwifruit and that's about it. Now, there are things happening within that category, and we want to continue building that marketplace."

I prod to see if I can get another tidbit regarding other branded offerings, but Cherie merely replies that there will be more in the months to come—I will certainly be watching for these developments like a hawk.

Throughout our conversation, Scott and Cherie's enthusiasm for the team has been palpable, if not outright infectious. Their pride in what the company has accomplished in less than a quarter of a century is overflowing.

"We've always had a commitment to being sustainable and making sure that any work, from the field to the packing shed, is done in a responsible manner. We partnered with Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) in 2020, and now our stonefruit program is 100 percent EFI-certified, with our blueberry program close behind," Scott comments.

As we watch this company take on its next chapter, I dare anyone to say change is unwelcome.

If anything, it should be celebrated. 



 Above: Placing the care of the company into the hands of its employees, Homegrown Organic Farms is transitioning to an Employee Stock Ownership Plan (ESOP)



**"It's all of us thinking of new ideas and ways to operate that will help us grow as a business."**

- Scott Mabs, Chief Executive Officer, Homegrown Organic Farms



# WTF DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

Mucci Farms Zukies  
Mini Zucchini ?



## MUCCI ZUKIES ZOODLE BOWL

### INGREDIENTS

**6–8** Mucci Farms Zukies Mini  
Zucchini, sliced as thinly as possible

#### DRESSING

**1 large** clove garlic, finely chopped

**1 tbsp** Dijon mustard

**½ cup** red or white wine vinegar

**½ tsp** salt

**½ tsp** freshly ground black pepper

**½ tsp** honey

#### GARNISH

**1 tsp** each fresh basil, thyme or  
rosemary, and parsley, finely  
chopped

**½ cup** pine nuts

**½ cup** grated Parmesan cheese

Black pepper, to taste

**Prep Time:** 15 min

**Cook Time:** 2–3 min

**Servings:** 2–3

### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Place zucchini slices in a bowl and set aside.
- 2 In a separate bowl or Mason jar with a lid, mix or shake dressing ingredients until completely blended. Sample and modify seasoning to taste. Toast pine nuts in a dry frying pan, stirring for 2–3 minutes or until golden.
- 3 Pour half of the prepared dressing over zucchini slices and toss gently. Sprinkle with chopped herbs of choice, toasted pine nuts, and Parmesan cheese. Add dressing as needed, store surplus in the fridge for up to one week.
- 4 Add additional freshly ground black pepper to taste. Enjoy!

To learn more about Mucci Farms, visit [www.muccifarms.com](http://www.muccifarms.com)



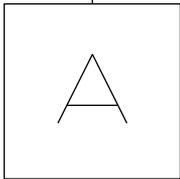


— BUILT FROM —

# STRONG STALK

BY JORDAN OKUMURA

It takes multiple minds and hearts to answer the call that resonates through the soil, rooting into one vision...



s the Earth awakens most mornings in Salinas, California, there is an echo across the cool brightness that marks the start

of the day. It is an echo of intention that sounds like the low hum of harvest tools; smells like water working toward roots; and looks like Pacific International Marketing’s dedicated team members walking rows of Brussels sprouts, infusing care, passion, and a grower-centric vision into the soil by their very presence.

These are the marks of the company’s abundant presence in the fresh produce industry, conveying a drive that knows no clock, limitation, or unachievable demand.

That grower-centric vision we speak of, which proves to be the guiding light at Pacific International Marketing, carries through each of the company’s organic and conventional vegetable programs, generating value, excellence, and differentiation in an evermore competitive fresh produce environment.

Listening for that echo of intention sparked at daybreak helps the company sustain itself. This echo is a deliberate part of what drives the Pacific

International Marketing team to be stewards of the land. The lifeblood of the company’s success, as Sales Executive and Commodity Manager Stacey Claassen reveals, is also in the company’s ability to honor its vast family of grower partners, while excelling in, thriving with, establishing, and nurturing vital relationships.

“The foundation of our company started with a strong vision to bring the finest

vegetables Mother Nature has to offer to market, including our Brussels sprouts,” Stacey reflects, simultaneously considering the ground beneath her feet and the distant horizon line. “We have offered Brussels sprouts for close to a decade. But, over the last few years, we have built up the program by incorporating new growers in multiple regions of California, as well as Mexico. By making key partnerships in Santa Maria, California, and Mexico, we can



*Stacey Claassen,*

Sales Executive and Commodity Manager,  
Pacific International Marketing

“Our company culture thrives because of our growing partners and the **STRONG, LASTING RELATIONSHIPS** we have with each of them. This positively and directly impacts our ability to bring Brussels sprouts straight from the fields to the market.”



*Wils Johnson,*

General Manager and Sales Executive,  
Pacific International Marketing

“Our vision for Brussels sprouts going forward is three-fold. **ONE**, to focus on growing and harvesting best-in-class quality under our existing year-round program. **TWO**, expand and diversify our acreage base to ensure steady supply. **THREE**, foster strategic co-packing relationships to provide our customers with value-added items year-round.”

now offer Brussels sprouts as a year-round program rather than a seasonal offering.”

These prolific partnerships have also supported Pacific International Marketing’s ability to control its volume throughout the value chain and have allowed it to offer new SKUs, tailored programs, and defining advantages to the buy-side. To achieve such high standards, Pacific International Marketing sees its people as the driving force, elevating its own like a rising tide.

“As the company has evolved, we’ve added new team members—one being Co-Founder Dave Johnson’s son, Wils Johnson,” Stacey shares with me. “Using the groundwork laid before him, Wils has taken on a leadership role at Pacific International Marketing, continuing to build the Brussels sprouts program in our Santa Maria region, as well as creating new relationships with growers in Mexico. Our company culture thrives because of our growing partners and the strong, lasting relationships we have with each of them. This positively and directly impacts our ability to bring Brussels sprouts straight from the fields to the market.”

With an expansion of the Pacific International Marketing vision at hand, Wils’ ability to help build and execute leading-edge strategies is, without a doubt, in his DNA. But, it is also in his

own established and nurtured vision of the company where he hopes to contribute and drive progress.

“Our vision for Brussels sprouts going forward is three-fold. One, to focus on growing and harvesting best-in-class quality under our existing year-round program. Two, expand and diversify our acreage base to ensure steady supply. Three, foster strategic co-packing relationships to provide our customers with value-added items year-round,” Wils, General Manager and Sales Executive, reveals.

With multiple minds and hearts leading the charge and sounding the call of excellence, Pacific International Marketing has been able to address the challenges that are inherent in growth and expansion—while taking the risks head-on as a team with the tools to succeed.

“As demand for Brussels sprouts from our customers increased over the years, we ran into issues around scalability and quality control. This was primarily due to a lack of visibility into harvesting and growing. These issues drove us to seek those long-term partners in Santa Maria and Mexico. We cultivated these partnerships with a focus on transparency and control throughout the value chain, which has resulted in growth across volume, SKUs, and, most importantly, quality,” Stacey shares.



*Stacey Claassen*

“I love being part of the Pacific International Marketing team and look forward to many more years here. Having grown from a Sales Assistant to managing the Brussels sprouts program as a Commodity Manager as well as doing sales has been one of the **GIFTS OF THIS INDUSTRY** and this company.”

As the organization has expanded through its grower partnerships, the company built out its SKUs and increased its acreage. This allowed Pacific International Marketing to approach some of its largest customers with year-round Brussels sprouts volume and stalk volume for the holidays.

“Overall, Brussels sprouts add one more item to our lineup, meaning we’re bettering our program to provide a well-rounded commodity list to fit our customers’ needs,” Stacey says, noting the expanse the program is taking on.

With operations straddling the major U.S. West Coast distribution channels, Pacific International Marketing has primed its customers to be an extension of its own growth as well. Currently, the company has four cooling and consolidation facilities in California and Arizona to support its buy-side partners’

increasing needs for a one-stop shop, consolidated loading solutions, and quality that differentiates them.

For the company, quality is not just a marketing term or language choice used across its labels. It is a lens through which the team conducts each step of its organization from the field to the sales desk to the fresh produce department.

“We rely on our quality and production teams to put up the best pack for our customers. Our grower partners have implemented industry best practices to ensure that high-quality product carries our vision to our partners and to the consumers’ kitchens,” Stacey says.

Pacific International Marketing is focusing on offering additional field packs and pre-washed ready-to-eat SKUs as well as further growing the Brussels sprouts destinations of its

customers as quality echoes past the supply chain and into its partners’ vision. Currently, the company is designing a field-pack cut and rinsed 2 lb bagged item for customers focused on freshness and reducing carbon footprint and food miles.

As the Brussels sprouts program makes headway across the operation’s retail programs, it has also ramped up in the foodservice sector during a time when diners are ready to dive back into the dining scene. This initiative and investment is helping take the company’s value proposition skyward.

And, the team’s depth of dedication and expertise have played a huge part in differentiating this space.

Pacific International Marketing understands that in every foodservice segment, consistency of both supply



From left to right: Ashleigh Lombardi Young, Marketing, Communication, and Development; Dave Johnson, President and Sales Executive; Stacey Claassen, Sales Executive and Commodity Manager; and Kim Fellom, Sales Executive and Marketing Manager

and quality are the key drivers in a successful partnership. This incredible ability to exceed foodservice customers' expectations starts at the heart of the operation: with the company's committed grower base and vast growing areas. And, it is not just about retaining relationships. Exceeding expectations is the means by which the company grows in product excellence, unparalleled service, and customer and consumer loyalty.

These elements are a part of each team member's individual vision and deep sense of ownership. The Pacific International Marketing commitment is part of that reverberating echo that rises from the team each day and its application of these values in foodservice is not only natural but also intentional, from growing practices to product innovation.

The company currently offers a standard iced/iceless 25 lb pack and 18 lb RPCs for its foodservice customers. This fall,

Pacific International Marketing will also offer full and half Brussels sprout stalks just in time for the holiday push. These product choices and launches reflect the company's unwavering commitment to listen to what its partners need and not only support them today, but help them create solutions for the future. Such an ability to be flexible in a program as expansive and established as this one is why customers keep coming back and why Pacific continues to grow.

And what a beautiful gravity Pacific International Marketing has. Stacey was drawn to the team for just these reasons, which are only a handful of the many factors why she is so dedicated to the people and the program.

"When I joined the company 12 years ago, I had the opportunity to work with a previous co-worker who has since retired. I was also going through a change in my personal life, and it brought me into the Santa Maria office when I was ready to pour myself into my career," Stacey tells

me. "We wake up early in this industry, and some days it is really important to know what gets you up and keeps you going. Family is very important to me. I grew up in an agricultural family, which led me to work in this industry. I love being part of the team and look forward to many more years here. Having grown from a Sales Assistant to managing the Brussels sprouts program as a Commodity Manager as well as doing sales has been one of the gifts of this industry and this company."

This overwhelming sense of gratitude, of connectedness to the land, the work, and, ultimately, to each other—these are the resounding reflections and reverberations of a company past the brink of becoming, but instead arriving. To sit in such light, whether break of day or golden hour, is truly a gift that keeps on giving.

And in this case, it is an echo. 

# WTF DO I DO WITH DOLE® Plantains ?

{ what the fork }



*Inspired by  
Princess Aurora  
from Disney's  
Sleeping Beauty*

## WAKEY WAKEY VEGAN HASH

### INGREDIENTS

**1** green DOLE® Plantain, peeled and chopped  
**1 large** DOLE® Sweet Potato, peeled and chopped  
**1½ cups** sliced DOLE® Mushrooms  
**2 cups** loosely packed DOLE® Baby Spinach  
**1½ tbsp** olive oil  
**1 medium** red bell pepper, chopped  
**½ medium** yellow onion, chopped  
**3** cloves garlic, minced  
**½ tsp** kosher salt  
**¼ tsp** ground black pepper  
**½ cup** roasted salted pepitas  
Hot sauce and vegan sour cream,  
for serving, *optional*

**Prep Time:** 15 min

**Cook Time:** 18 min

**Servings:** 4 main entrées, 6 servings  
as a side dish

### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat.
- 2 Add potato, cover, and cook 6 minutes, or until almost tender, stirring occasionally. Next, add plantain and cook uncovered for 2 minutes, or until almost tender, stirring occasionally. Add bell pepper and onion, and cook 4 minutes, or until tender, stirring occasionally. Then, add mushrooms and cook for 4 minutes, or until tender, stirring occasionally. Add garlic, spinach, salt, and black pepper and cook 2 minutes, or until spinach is wilted and garlic is fragrant, stirring frequently.
- 3 Serve hash sprinkled with pepitas, topped with hot sauce and sour cream, if desired.

*This recipe is in honor of Dole's total-wellness tribute to Disney Princesses.*

To learn more about Dole's Disney-Inspired Recipes,  
visit: [www.dole.com/Disney](http://www.dole.com/Disney)



# A Closer Look at Sambrailo Packaging Closed Dry Pint

By Anne Allen

When architect Louis H. Sullivan coined the phrase “form ever follows function,” he might not have had produce in mind. But, as always, innovators within this industry took this notion to heart and crafted packaging that is beautiful in its simplicity and ingenious in its design.

One such innovator is none other than Sambrailo Packaging.

Pushing the envelope in packaging design, the company announced new additions to its ReadyCycle® product line earlier this year. These included a ReadyCycle 1 lb clamshell with removable film covering, a half-pint open basket, a 6 oz closed basket, and a closed dry pint.

When I first saw the products, I was particularly struck by the closed dry pint, which features cardboard panels that are fully customizable to allot for print messaging. Just look at how those colors pop! The diamond viewing window allows an optimum view of the product while also protecting it from falling out. With September marking a prime tomato season, the closed dry pint offers the industry packaging that is functional and eye-catching.

You can see why I was inspired by the blend of form and function, as the closed dry pint is an intuitive and sustainable option for consumers. Shoppers want products that look familiar but break fresh ground, and this packaging would look at home at their local retailer.

As architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe stated, “God is in the details.” Sambrailo Packaging may very well be on its way to becoming a packaging deity in its own right. 

# UP CLOSE



\*Packaging courtesy of A&A Organic Farms

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