

Bite-Sized Info for the Produce Industry

the SNACK

ISSUE 64 DEC 2021

The GIFT of PRODUCE



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Orange Spiced Coffee

ORANGE SPICED COFFEE INGREDIENTS

- 2 Sunkist® Navel oranges
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- 5 cloves
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- 1 dollop whipped cream, for garnish
- 1 ground cinnamon or nutmeg, for garnish

ORANGE SPICED COFFEE DIRECTIONS

1. Peel 1 Navel orange and add peels to coffee maker basket.
2. Top with ground coffee, cinnamon stick, and cloves.
3. Add filtered water to coffee machine and brew coffee.
4. Serve with cream and sugar if desired.
5. Garnish with whipped cream and orange zest.
6. If desired, sprinkle ground cinnamon or nutmeg on top.



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www.sunkist.com/recipes



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I LOVE THE IDEA OF MEETING PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE—finding the common ground and connections, empathizing to access experiences, and rooting out the similarities while honoring the differences. After all, too much sameness tends to stunt growth, at least for me.

2021 was one heck of a year in this respect, with a rising tide of people teaching me this lesson daily—from team members to industry friends and all the invaluable relationships in between. Today, meeting people where they are is a gracious hum that lulls me toward the center of things, especially during those times when it feels like the center will not hold.

At work, this surfaces as storytelling—our most intimate form of listening. Recognizing stories not as extensions of my own limited reality, but as separate vectors pointing to unknown truths just waiting to be excavated—this is what the storyteller in me lives for.

The ability to see people inside the uniqueness of their own lives, their struggles, careers, and their myths has been life-changing for me in 2021. Letting that potential energy, that kinetic possibility, reveal the need that lies inside a story—like a quiet and persistent ache—makes each writer simultaneously a student and a teacher.

I consistently see this showing up in the trade through the most influential marketers we know. I consider them soothsayers, not because they have a crystal ball, but because they know how to listen to the change before the pulse quickens. To meet others in their experiences and not transfer unverified expectations as truths. Bringing a product to market, creating a touchstone for the consumer, generating long-term success—these are the gifts of our marketers and, forgive me if I offend but, they deserve a more prominent pedestal.

These soothsayers find the opportunities within a whisper. Ones that most of us aren't aware of until it is a shout, a scream, a storm. But, by then, there are only coat tails left to snag. This rare bunch can pull apart frequencies and watch the unique sounds of the individual inform us on how to bring a product to life. Sometimes it is a simple gesture that accomplishes this. Like a sign outside of the Raley's on Freeport Boulevard in Sacramento, California, that reads "So mushroom in my heart." What might

Raley's be listening for? For those that love a little levity, but also believe food is truth. Edible truth.

Sometimes, meeting people where they are looks like an apple the size of a child's palm, or a tomato so full of intention that a recipe gets built around it, instead of the little fruit being used by the recipe. Sometimes, meeting people where they are is calling a consumer back on the phone where most consumer feedback gets shelved under "later." And we shouldn't just be meeting the consumer, but each other, where we find ourselves.

I know that, for my team, meeting them where they are in a business that thrives at the intersection of fresh produce trade news and editorial integrity means speaking to them as artists first, with the trade as the tools and the truth in their hands. Artists have an eye for truth-seeking, for excavating, for articulating what feels unspeakable.

As we wrap up a beautiful year of changing tides, meeting you where you are is what history tells me will help the center to hold. Each gesture we make should be a step closer together.

And with the gravity of 2022 pulling us toward the horizon, we mine the vein of opportunities that are already revealing to us that what you do now matters more than ever. That you are each a force of nature by choice and not by consequence.

This 64th issue of *The Snack* is our gift to you, our goodbye to a fantastic 365 days of meeting you where you are, but also our tidings for firm footing, for our undying support of you.

We will meet you where you are—at the center of everything. 🍄



Jordan Okumura

Editor in Chief

AndNowUKnow and *The Snack Magazine*

DID YOU KNOW?

All issues of *The Snack Magazine* are 100 percent recyclable. Only AQ coatings are used as opposed to laminates, allowing our magazine to be reused as fresh paper in its next life. The protective bag is also accepted by bag recycling centers. Please find the nearest available location if you wish to recycle this issue's bag. Keep it green!

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FEATURES

GILL'S ONIONS INNOVATIVE INROADS

Stepping into sustainability in ways unheard of before, this onion grower and value-added strategist takes environmental innovation to a new level. Steve Gill and Megan Jacobsen peel back the story here...



DICK SPEZZANO LIVING HISTORY

Join us as we flip through six decades of a produce maverick's trailblazing career, where he gives us a front-row seat to how one makes history, working alongside industry legends and cultivating the future. Experience the smarts and sass that is Dick Spezzano...



BEE SWEET CITRUS CLOSING THE DISTANCE

Monique Bienvenue shows us how produce becomes personal under the citrus titan's roof, and how the company's unrelenting, people-driven passion has forged a new channel of growth for the supplier...



D'ARRIGO NEW YORK

AN ORGANIC METAMORPHOSIS

Witnessing its own unique transformation in real-time, the wholesaler's Gabriela D'Arrigo and Eric Mitchnick highlight ambitious plans to take its organic program to new heights...



MASTRONARDI PRODUCE® AN INNOVATIVE SPELL

Weaving together a heady mix of adventure, passion, and research, the greenhouse grower's Julia Shreve unveils how its Wild Wonders™ line continues to ramp up its overall innovation game...



DOLE PLC

A WELLSPRING IN-HAND

Merging a household name with a powerhouse operation, what can we expect from the new deal struck by Dole and Total Produce? Johan Linden, Chief Operating Officer, walks us through the evolution...



FOX PACKAGING AND FOX SOLUTIONS

THE EYE OF THE STORM

Cool, calm, and collected are exactly the words we use to describe these fierce innovators. Leaders from the two packaging aficionados offer a reprieve from the noise of a tumultuous two years...

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 <p>EVERCRISP® AVAILABLE: OCT-APR</p> <p>What do you get when you cross two of America's favorite apples, the Honeycrisp and the Fuji? The Evercrisp®—something twice as sweet!</p> <p>WE LOVE 'EM FOR: 🍏🍏🍏🍏</p>	 <p>SNAPDRAGON® AVAILABLE: OCT-FEB</p> <p>Bursting with juice and a hint of spice that create its extra sweet, artisanal flavor, this apple is known for its monster crunch.</p> <p>WE LOVE 'EM FOR: 🍏🍏🍏</p>	 <p>GALA AVAILABLE: AUG-JUN</p> <p>A great choice for a simple snack—the mild, vanilla-y flavor appeals to even the pickiest of eaters.</p> <p>WE LOVE 'EM FOR: 🍏🍏🍏🍏🍏</p>
 <p>KORU® AVAILABLE: OCT-JUL</p> <p>Crisp, crunchy, sweet, and juicy. Plus, they're slow to brown, meaning you can slice up and leave out.</p> <p>WE LOVE 'EM FOR: 🍏🍏🍏🍏🍏</p>	 <p>RUBYFROST® AVAILABLE: DEC-JUN</p> <p>Like a strong half-moon pose, RubyFrost® apples are the perfect balance of sweet and tart. Their hearty crunch and crisp texture add a unique twist on the classic Northeast flavor profile.</p> <p>WE LOVE 'EM FOR: 🍏🍏🍏🍏</p>	 <p>FUJI AVAILABLE: SEP-JUN</p> <p>This antique apple is super sweet, wildly juicy, and extremely crisp.</p> <p>WE LOVE 'EM FOR: 🍏🍏🍏🍏🍏</p>
 <p>HONEYCRISP AVAILABLE: AUG-APR</p> <p>Amazingly crisp, honey-sweet, and a touch of tart that keeps you coming back for more.</p> <p>WE LOVE 'EM FOR: 🍏🍏🍏🍏</p>	<div> <div>KEY</div> <div>  Baking  Charcuterie  Cooking  Juicing  Sandwiches/Salads  Saucing  Sipping  Snacking </div> </div>	

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DEPARTMENTS

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS
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Apples & Pears on a Mission

Wholesome Heroes

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



WHAT MAKES THE APPLES & PEARS ON A MISSION PROGRAM SIGNIFICANT?

December is often the season of giving, both to loved ones and to those less fortunate. Companies like Rainier Fruit and Hanes® are doing their part to keep those in need front of mind. Aligning missions in their long-standing partnership, Rainier is spotlighting the 4th edition of its Apples & Pears on a Mission program, bringing a little warmth and nutrition to this holiday season and beyond.

- 1 WHAT IS THE PROGRAM?
- 2 HISTORY OF THE PROGRAM
- 3 REBRAND AND EXPAND
- 4 NEW OPPORTUNITIES AT RETAIL



The Apples & Pears on a Mission program is a rebrand of Rainier's long-standing *Pears for Pairs* campaign. It is now extended, allowing retailers to bring the initiative into their stores any time of the year, and it is open to utilizing both apples and pears.



Over the past four years, Rainier and Hanes have donated over 65,000 pairs of socks and are looking to expand that number and the type of clothing donated this year.



The rebrand brings a new look in addition to expanding the program's donation items to include clothing essentials. These donations help those in need in local communities on behalf of partnering retailers.



Rainier will ship the fruit to retailers in branded, message-focused packaging. For every pear or apple purchase, Rainier will donate clothing essentials to a local charitable organization of the retailer's choice.

SWEET THINGS IN STORE

Rainier
FRUIT



APPLES, PEARS,
CHERRIES & BLUEBERRIES

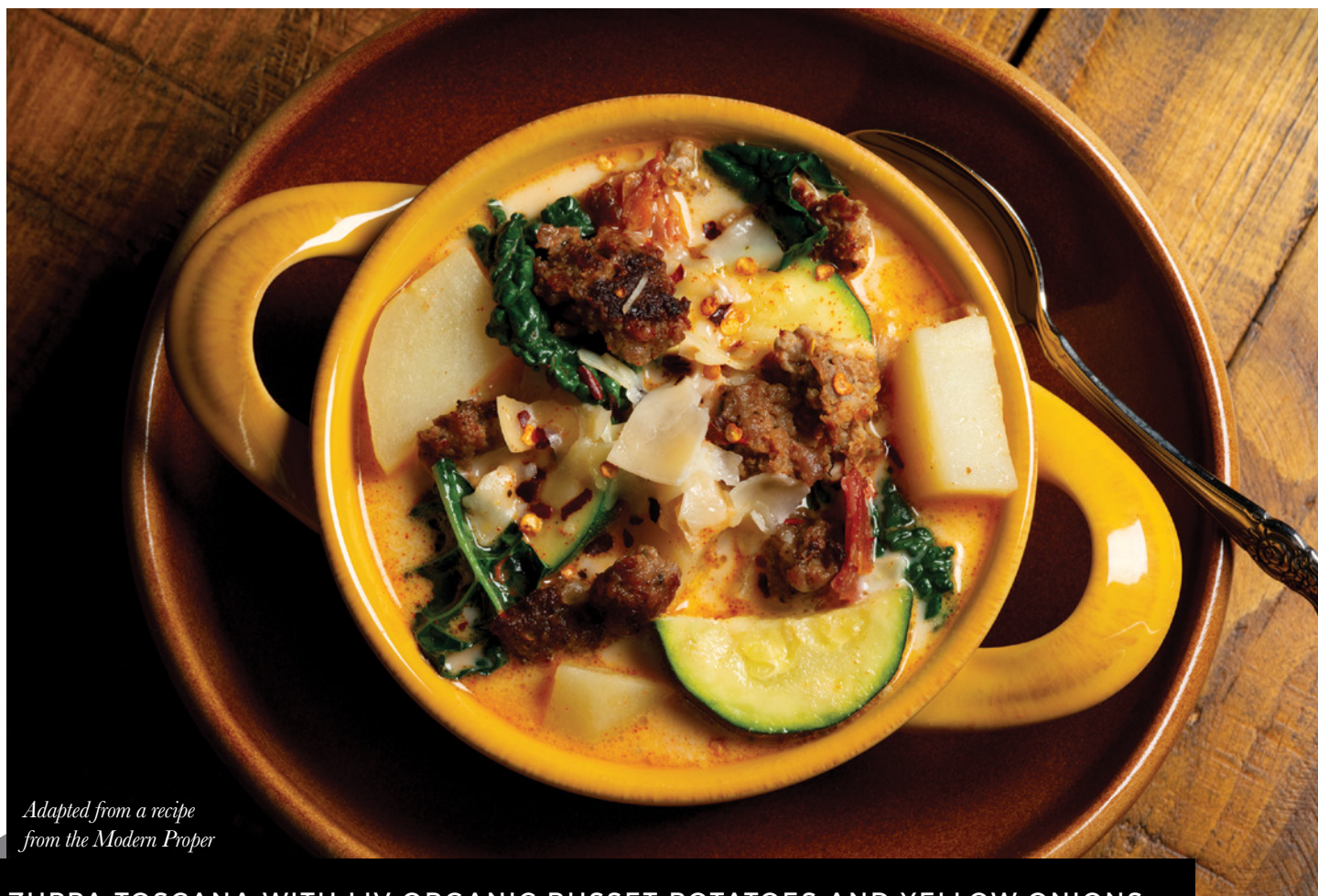


WTF

DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

LIV Organic Yellow Onions
and Russet Potatoes ?



*Adapted from a recipe
from the Modern Proper*

ZUPPA TOSCANA WITH LIV ORGANIC RUSSET POTATOES AND YELLOW ONIONS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium** LIV Organic Yellow Onion, diced
- 2 large** LIV Organic Russet Potatoes, peeled, $\frac{1}{2}$ " sliced then quartered
- 2 medium** zucchini, sliced
- 10 slices** of Prosciutto Italiano
- 2 tbsp** olive oil
- 1 lb** ground Italian sausage, spicy
- 4 cloves** garlic
- 32 oz** chicken stock
- 1 tbsp** chili powder
- 1 cup** heavy cream
- 1 bunch** kale, stems removed, roughly chopped into bite-sized pieces
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup** Parmesan cheese
- 1 tsp** salt, adjust to taste
- $\frac{1}{4}$ tsp** pepper
- 1 tsp** red pepper flakes

Prep Time: 15 min

Cook Time: 40 min

Servings: 6

DIRECTIONS

- 1** Heat a large skillet over medium heat. Cook the Prosciutto until browned, remove from heat. Use a slotted spoon to transfer Prosciutto to a paper towel-lined plate, set aside. Reserve drippings in pan.
- 2** While the Prosciutto is cooking, heat olive oil in a heavy-bottomed soup pot over medium-high heat. Add sausage, crumbling it as it cooks, for about 10 minutes. Drain sausage well and add it to the plate with Prosciutto.
- 3** Return the soup pot to medium heat and add 2 tbsp reserved Prosciutto fat. Add diced LIV Organic Onion to pot and cook until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add a little chicken stock to deglaze the pan if necessary. Add the garlic and cook for another couple minutes.
- 4** Pour in remaining chicken stock. Add in the chili powder, LIV Organic Potatoes, and zucchini. Increase heat and bring to a boil.
- 5** Reduce the heat to medium-low and boil for 5 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender. Add the cooked sausage, $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Prosciutto, heavy cream, kale, and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of the Parmesan cheese. Stir and cook 2–5 minutes until kale is wilted.
- 6** Add the salt and pepper, adjust to taste. Serve in bowls, topped with remaining Prosciutto, remaining Parmesan cheese, and red pepper flakes.

To learn more about LIV Organic, visit www.livorganicproduce.com



"When my wife and I were back East for a visit, one of my relatives said, 'Who the hell put these goddamn labels on the produce?' And I had to say, 'Well, that would be me.'"

-Dick Spezzano, Founder, Spezzano Consulting Service

Living History

By Melissa De Leon Chavez

Many of us would consider ourselves blessed to have a single lifelong love. Dick Spezzano has two: his wife, Carole, and the fresh produce industry.

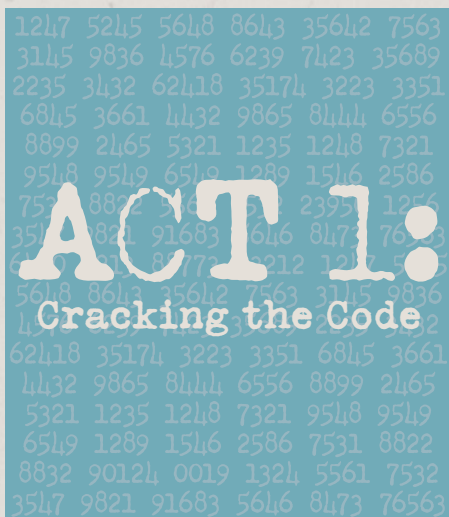
"I have had a passion for this industry ever since I was a kid."

Dick's words boomerang back to me from the summer 2021 revelation that he was stepping away from active produce duty after more than six decades.

In short, Dick's story is more of a saga. One in which he either had a front-row seat to historic business events, or a direct hand in their direction. He has served the supply-side through his consulting business, Spezzano Consulting Service, since 1997. Before that, he spent more than 30 years working in retail, where he started on the ground floor as a part-time Clerk at the Star Market when he was 19.

The only way I can articulate such a journey is to view it in the major acts that were its turning points, ultimately shaping a career that has left deep footsteps for others to tread.

Dick Spezzano with his wife Carole, whom he met at his first produce job at a Boston, Massachusetts, area Star Market in 1961



"When my wife and I were back East for a visit, one of my relatives said, 'Who the hell put these goddamn labels on the produce?' And I had to say, 'Well, that would be me.'" Dick laughs, reflecting on one of the largest moves of his 61-year-long produce career—bringing consistent PLU codes to produce.

What would it be like if we knew in the moment we were living history? That these were the days that would make us, break us, or simply be the moments worth reliving as we get on in years?

"When I pursued consistent coding at the time, I didn't realize how huge it was," Dick points out.

Flipping through the countless meetings and milestones of a lifetime in fresh produce, he settles on the chapter where he and a few other industry stalwarts dug their heels in to carve out true change in our business.

"That was the first step in getting syndicated data for produce and floral. If we had not done that, how would you track produce?" Dick asks.

Bryan Silbermann, former Chief Executive Officer of the Produce Marketing Association

(PMA), was happy to step out of retirement for a moment to look back on the decade-long adventure he and Dick traversed to make history.

"I could write a book about the decade-plus in which Dick and I worked to develop standard codes for produce," he shares, concerned he might not be able to distill his recollections "into nuggets rather than coal."

Believe me, the entire journey was gold.

Serving on PMA's Retail Division Board in 1985, a lengthy discussion took place on the lack of any consistent coding for produce, impacting both bulk and bar-coded produce.

"I got assigned to staff the group and we met in Chicago's O'Hare Airport for the first of what would be regular meetings at this central hub for the next eight years! Dick was the perfect leader for this role. He was determined, energetic, knew produce inside and out, was highly respected, understood the meaning of deadlines and commitments, and wasn't afraid to call out others to hold to their commitments of lists, suggestions, and revisions," Bryan tells me.

He explains how the group met with leaders of the Uniform Code Council (UCC), the predecessor of GS1 US, at

its headquarters in Dayton, Ohio, to make produce's case for standardizing numbers to help the department effectively manage its exploding growth.

"Dick convinced the UCC's Hal Juckett and Tom Wilson that retailers and their suppliers needed this exception to unique coding—which was the hallmark of the UCC coding system then—and we left Dayton with an agreement in principle to move ahead," Bryan recalls. "I left with insight into Dick Spezzano's ability to state a case and argue a point using facts and vision that were unquestionable. It was the first of many such exchanges."

Along the campaign road, retail produce leaders like Chuck Tryon of SuperValu, Harold Alston of Stop and Shop, Kroger's Database Manager Dave Harris, as well as Bob DiPiazza, former Senior Vice President of Perishables at Dominicks, worked with Dick and Bryan on the project.

"We went from state to state to convince each operator to implement the system and what the benefits were, to the point that I had an extensive memo I used for my senior management that went out to retail on how the conversion process was going to go. I even let a competitor take that memo," Dick says of one key moment. "It helped convince him to make the change, and he in turn



Dick Spezzano took part in many key moments while at The Vons Companies, including having shown Prince Charles, future King of England, around a store in the 1980s

convinced his management to do the same.”

What it came down to for Dick was how, eventually, these codes would go right on the produce. Somehow, he understood the doors that could open, even if he couldn’t see where they might lead.

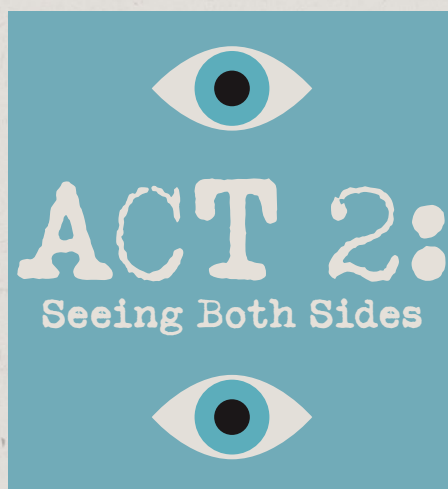
“Now, you’re able to track product by grower, proving what sells better and why some products need a premium,” he reflects.

Shrink measurement, traceability, even a new avenue within the industry were made possible by this initiative.

“If you walk through a modern fruit packing house, for example, and see the computer-controlled, multiple-sizing, air-jet labelers applying PLU stickers—some are now using two-dimensional bar codes too—understand that none of this would have been possible without the pioneering work of Dick Spezzano and a handful of others who realized the system needed to be changed. They developed an alternative, and then led the industry on a decade-long journey to get it done,” Bryan assures me. “In my mind, and with four decades of experience, there has been nothing like it when it comes to consensus building across our industry.”

“...life's not full of guarantees, especially when it comes to fresh produce. You've got to try it. If it works, great. If it doesn't, move on.”

—Dick Spezzano



Karen Caplan, Chief Executive Officer of Frieda’s Branded Produce, was quick to point out how fervently Dick would fight for something he believed in, and how he knew he couldn’t do so alone.

“Dick was always a visionary in our industry and could be quite demanding. He was my first big retail customer when he was Vice President of Produce at Vons. At the time, we were selling him lots of passion fruit, tamarillos, Spaghetti squash, and other specialties, and he came to me asking if we would label the bulk products we were selling to make it easier to get the products rung up properly at the front end,” Karen recalls.

At the time, Frieda’s had already started labeling all those items with the name of the product, something Dick said shows how innovative the specialty company has always been. However, he needed them to take one more step.

“Dick wanted us to add the—then new—PLU number for each product in addition to the name. Well, I kept telling him that we were working on it—which we were, but, admittedly, I had not made it a super high priority. So, one day, Dick calls me and says, ‘I really need you to make this a priority. You have until the

first of the month. After that date, you will not get any orders unless every piece of produce has the PLU number on it!’ As you can imagine, we immediately redesigned every one of our labels, adding the PLU to each one!” Karen shares.

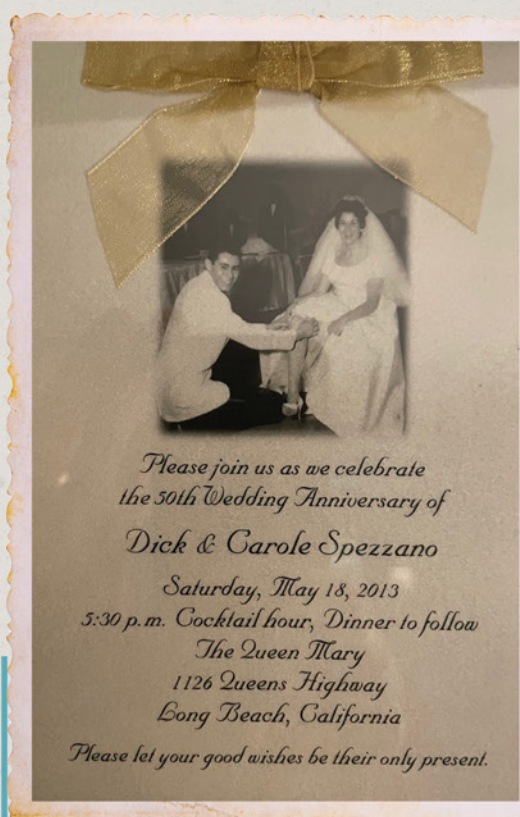
In echoing the exchange, Dick assures me he has always seen Frieda’s as ahead of the curve. In this case, though, Karen gives him the lead, sharing that those PLU labels not only benefited Vons, but all Frieda’s retail customers nationwide.

“Karen is forward-thinking, and she is a very, very good businesswoman. We did a lot with her and her category, and we learned a lot together,” Dick smiles as he recalls the story.

It’s a fond one, and he argues that such moves need to be matched on the retailer’s side to ensure success; something as true today as it was then.

“You have to make sure what you are saying is not unreasonable. If a vendor came to me and said, ‘It’s going to increase my costs,’ I would say, ‘Charge me.’ If we like a product, we’ll pay for it. Oftentimes it would work, sometimes it wouldn’t. One thing about produce, should it fail at retail: Just push it out of the stores, drop your retail below cost, move it through, and you’re done,” Dick says, falling easily into the role he mastered for over 30 years. “The chance for this doesn’t happen often today because retailers want guarantees. But, life’s not full of guarantees, especially when it comes to fresh produce. You’ve got to try it. If it works, great. If it doesn’t, move on.”

The necessity of understanding and willingness to test new products, Dick shares, is what makes for the best produce. Change, he says, needs buyers willing to push boundaries as well as growers.



"We have to have control of the buyer and the seller. Today, the buy-side talks about quality, service, and price, but they've got bottom line hurdles they have to make, otherwise they probably wouldn't have their job. So, the price becomes more and more important," Dick observes.

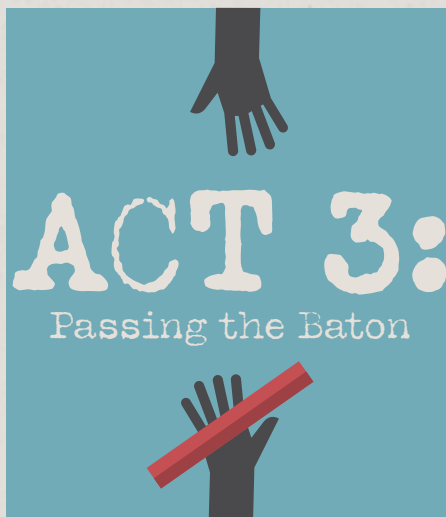
In reflecting on the current state of the industry as he steps further back, Dick's thoughts rest on the magic made when all sides of fresh produce come together, but also his concerns when it does not.

"I think valuing vendor relationships is an easy thing to say, but, if you go to the selling side of it, oftentimes, that's not always the case. There's always that squeeze on the buyer to sell, and now the grower/shipper's cost goes up every day, whether it's imported or domestic," Dick shares, alighting on his unique perspective. "At the same time, growers tell me they'll have different state's officials coming in that tell them what to do; there are so many regulatory boards that they have to appease. So, it makes it harder for the inputs, and cost goes up to get to an FOB. Meanwhile, transportation has gone through the roof."

The result, Dick shares, prompts industry members to work to be the smartest in the room, able to get costs down, and be elite merchandisers, effectively trying to determine the cosmic question: How do we control the supply chain process in its entirety?

"I consider Dick to be one of the giants of the retail produce world. Dick has always been innovative, progressive, and attuned to changing consumer demand [...] Dick is a visionary, a trusted partner, and a loyal friend."

**- Bruce Taylor,
Chairman and Chief
Executive Officer,
Taylor Farms**



A space in which hope and hard work is sure to show ROI is mentoring. Dick reminds me that throughout the majority of his accomplishments he was working for The Vons Companies, maintaining and exceeding both sales and profit goals. But a leader is only as strong as they help their team to be.

"Over the years, I was blessed with a great team, and we always hit or exceeded our financial targets. Many of my team left Vons after I did in 1997 for other pursuits, and I am so proud of their accomplishments in their various new ventures in the produce business," Dick reflects.

Brimming over with knowledge and passion, few people can foster the motivation to tackle the challenges in the next generation of produce professionals like Dick Spezzano and those he has already taken under his wing.

"Dick has always donated a lot of time and knowledge to the industry, whether it be a PMA function or a local one. He really enjoys coaching future or existing leaders, and has always been accessible and willing to help. Dick is a pillar of the fresh produce industry in the United States. On top of all he has accomplished, he is a lot of fun too," Steve Barnard, Founder and President of Mission Produce, says of the produce veteran.

One thing about our business, Dick and I both agree, is that you either love it or you don't. It's as true for my seven years as it is for his six decades.

"If you hate it, don't waste your time and energy," he says resolutely. "Get out and find where your passion is. If you love this business, then be willing to give back in any form that works for you."

John Corsaro, Chief Executive Officer of Giumarra Companies, shares how Dick's unique perspective brings a learning opportunity like no other.

"Dick was a strong leader in Southern California retail, always pushing for innovation in our industry and sharing his expertise with retailers across the U.S. He has been a mentor to many folks in produce who became leaders themselves, and we are lucky to count him as both an advisor and a friend. We wish him the best in his retirement," John shares.

And in retirement, Dick will be able to continue his favorite part of coaching—catching up.

"To be part of those exciting milestones in a person's life—when they get married, have kids, buy a house—that, to me, is really exciting. It's like having my own kids, without the headaches," Dick laughs.

In addition to mentoring, another way to give back to the industry is participating in associations and committees. It is



these spaces Dick does not see himself vacating, even in retirement.

"I am open to serving on Boards and committees of interest, particularly in fostering the next generation of produce professionals, since I've been working with PMA's Center for Growing Talent for more than 10 years," Dick shares. "I like working to attract young, educated, diverse talent to our business, and I think the Center has been very successful at doing that, too."

This is made even more exciting, the produce vet shares, with the new possibilities to entice those who might otherwise not think of ag as an ideal profession.

"We have a spot for anyone in our industry, and a lot of the university students don't realize all the kinds of jobs we offer. Especially in the last 20 years, we've seen marketing and merchandising take off," Dick advises in seeking to expand and bolster future prospects.

With PMA and United Fresh opening the doors on its newly merged International Fresh Produce Association, he sees this as yet another exciting opportunity on the industry's horizon.

"I am excited for what is to come with someone like Bruce Taylor, Chairman

and Chief Executive Officer of Taylor Farms, leading that executive committee. In my opinion, you could not have found a better person to lead the executive committee of a brand-new association. He's been a champion of the produce industry and the Center for Produce Safety. He's an initial contributor on the capital campaign for The Center for Growing Talent by PMA and encourages his people to be involved. He's all in for the betterment of the company and the industry," Dick recounts.

Reflecting on the incoming Chair's knack for innovation and leadership, Dick says the opportunity to work with Bruce, and others like him, are definite mile-markers of his career.

The impression he has left on each is just as impactful.

"I consider Dick to be one of the giants of the retail produce world. Dick has always been innovative, progressive, and attuned to changing consumer demand. He went 'all in' early on, taking the chance to launch the packaged salad category in Southern California with great success. Dick is a visionary, a trusted partner, and a loyal friend. I wish him and Carole the best!" Bruce comments.

The (Not So) Final ACT

From witnessing defining moments that shifted the trajectory of fresh produce to having a direct hand in the momentum, I can't imagine trying to pick one aspect to summarize such a career.

"I was fortunate to turn the clock back and work with guys like Howard Marguleas, who was the Chief Executive Officer and Principal Owner for Sunworld International, and different men and women, like Bruce and Steve Taylor, Dennis Gertmenian, Tonya Antle, Frieda Caplan, then with her daughters, Karen and Jackie [Caplan Wiggins]," Dick ponders. "That's probably the true highlight of my career. I got to work with some really effective, creative, innovative people."

It is safe to say that, for both Dick and the produce industry, this has been an epic love story that has left us wanting more. Luckily, like many true romances, there is plenty to be found in the changes that love story has left for others to experience.

Thank you, Dick, for your devotion, tenacity, honesty, and, as always, your heart. 🍷



Left: Dick and Carole Spezzano enjoy traveling and new experiences, which they hope to do much more of now that he has retired from active produce duty

Right: The Spezzano family—Carole, Sheryl, Sharon, and Dick



WTF DO I DO WITH Mucci Farms Cherto™ Gourmet Cherry Tomatoes ?

{ what the fork }



ROASTED CHERTO™ AND EGGPLANT HUMMUS

INGREDIENTS

1 (255g/9 oz) clamshell Mucci Farms Cherto™ Gourmet Cherry Tomatoes
2 Mucci Farms Mini Eggplant, diced
3 tbsp olive oil, divided
1 tsp smoked salt or sea salt
1 (540 ml) can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
¼ cup tahini
Juice of 1 large lemon
3 cloves garlic
Za'atar seasoning (optional)
Olive oil, to drizzle

Prep Time: 15 min

Cook Time: 25 min

Servings: 6–8



DIRECTIONS

- 1** Preheat oven to 400° F.
- 2** In a medium bowl, combine diced Mucci Farms Mini Eggplant with 2 tbsp olive oil and salt. Arrange in a single layer on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Roast on bottom rack for 12–15 minutes until soft and tender.
- 3** Halve Mucci Farms Cherto Gourmet Cherry Tomatoes and toss with 1 tbsp olive oil. Arrange in a single layer in a baking dish. Roast on top rack for 10 minutes. Let cool.
- 4** In the bowl of a food processor, add Mucci Farms Mini Eggplant, chickpeas, tahini, lemon juice, and garlic. Process until smooth.
- 5** Spoon hummus into a bowl and top with roasted Mucci Farms Cherto Gourmet Cherry Tomatoes, a liberal drizzle of olive oil, and sprinkling of Za'atar seasoning. Enjoy with pita bread, pita chips, and/or assorted veggies!

To learn more about Mucci Farms, visit www.muccifarms.com

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Marketing YOU: Can a Burrito Help You Get a Job?



By *The Snack* Editorial Contributor Rex Lawrence, Founder and President, Joe Produce SearchSM

I'm sure it happens, but I have never personally seen anyone get a job just because of their resume alone—and without at least one interview.

A resume is a marketing document. Its major job is to get you the interview. It will be reviewed during the interview and throughout the interview process. The further you get into the interview, the more closely your resume may be scrutinized.

So, you want lots and lots of great details there, right? Not exactly. Here's the challenge: In the early stages of your resume, it will be reviewed by Human Resources, recruiters, or the admin person at the front desk among the 50 other various tasks throughout their day. The resume will be scanned in a matter of seconds, not minutes. So, your resume has to speak to them VERY quickly in the first scan, or you're out.

We call it "making the cuts." If you don't make the first cut, you'll never impress on the second one. Too much detail can end your dreams in a snap, but, if they can't scan and find the right info points quickly, you're sunk too!

Remember to not "sell" yourself on the resume. Rather, "market" yourself and pique their curiosity. Provide enough information to entice them to want to speak with you.

Anyone who knows me knows I love Chipotle: Think of the succession of information that may have put a Chipotle burrito in your hand.

1. Blazing down the freeway at 70 mph, I'm focused on the road. What is that billboard? A big silver burrito. "Chipotle...Exit 34 ahead."
2. Exit 34, there is "Chipotle" on the mall sign, and then on the side of the applicable storefront.
3. I walk inside, and everyone says, "Rex!"—Wait a second, that is Norm from *Cheers*. I'm not quite that great of a customer. Seriously though, I get in line and study the menu. I consider my options and how they fit into my day. Hmm...OK, a veggie bowl, small chips, and small guac.
4. It's my turn to order, and they ask me what I'd like. I share my selection and perhaps a question or two...gluten-free tortillas yet?
5. I move through the line, answer and ask more questions, and finally get to pay.

Stay with me, I'm not losing my mind here. Rather, I'm making a point.

You are Chipotle! Your resume (billboard) has to quickly capture the attention of the prospective employer and they need to place you in the “yes” folder (Exit 34).

Your resume needs to display your skills, experience, and WIFM (what’s in it for me) attributes in a way that is easy to read, pleasing to the eye, and supports a decision to move forward (the menu).

Your resume brings them to the point of contacting you and setting up an interview (making it to the counter).

When interviewing, share information and ask great questions. Listen (building your order).

In the latter stages, you’re exchanging information and helping the employer make a decision and pull together an offer (you’re at the register and about to get your food).

Naturally, I’m having fun here writing about two of my favorite subjects: Chipotle and resumes. Albeit fun, let’s not think for a moment that Chipotle has not thought through every single step of getting you from the freeway to the restaurant. Every minute detail is carefully thought out for its strategy. It’s serious business!



Eight Quick Resume Tips:

1. Do not place your street address on your resume. Do you really want someone Zillow your home’s value?
2. Market at the top, i.e. the “billboard” of your resume. If it’s a multi-page resume, the “billboard” should make up about 75 percent of the first page.
3. Speak to your target audience, including company and job type.
4. Keep it to two to three pages max. Remember, you’re marketing here, NOT selling.
5. Use white space. If, for example, you have a 1.5-page resume, read it out. Play with the margins and use white space to make it two pages.
6. Make sure pages two and three both have your name and contact information on them. Also, add page numbers, such as “Page 2 of 3.”
7. Have someone(s) else review your resume and provide feedback. Listen to everything they say. Ask questions, but don’t get defensive.
8. Consider investing in a professional resume—the best investment you will ever make. It will cost you less than you would spend at an NFL game and should last you for years, with only minor updates. The ROI is easy to figure—take your annual income and multiply it times the number of years you expect to be in that job.

Your resume is serious business. Done right, there is a lot of strategy, marketing, psychology, and writing that goes into carefully crafting a great resume. Unfortunately, those great lime-tortilla chips and guac are not options. 🌮



Joe Pro Resumes™ is another service of Joe Produce®. Joe Pro Resumes helps you write and refine your resume to help you find the produce industry position of your dreams. We have written hundreds of resumes for many professionals in the produce business in addition to various related sectors.

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Joe Produce SearchSM (JPS) is the Executive Search division of Joe Produce®. Joe Produce Search is comprised of experienced search consultants and produce professionals. Our 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™



Rex Lawrence
Founder and President
Joe Produce SearchSM



CLOSING ----- THE ----- DISTANCE

By Peggy Packer

The line between trade news writer and consumer becomes incredibly blurred as I stand in my dimly lit kitchen on a Sunday morning, peeling back the vibrant layers of a Mandarin orange. With each methodical movement, I feel myself drifting further from the solitude of my apartment in Sacramento, California, and into the fields of Fowler, California, where Bee Sweet Citrus wields an unabating enthusiasm for growing high-quality citrus varieties.

I've long been one of those people who opted to keep their work and home life separated, at least for the most part. I believe this is a key element when it comes to not getting bogged down by the day-to-day demands of being a full-time writer, cat mom, and just a human being in general.



This idea becomes increasingly abstract as I consider our industry, in which there are testimonies—like those within the cover of this magazine—that find a place in your heart, giving you no choice but to take them home with you.

Such is the story of Bee Sweet Citrus, a company deeply rooted in family values and an admirable commitment to its community.

When the citrus purveyor first opened its doors in 1987, its focus was centered primarily around oranges. But, like many soon-to-be legacies at the stage of inception, Bee Sweet Citrus' involvement in the industry continued to grow, building into a fortified operation that provides a multitude of premium citrus varieties.

In fact, less than a decade after the company was founded, its rapid growth already demanded an expansion, allowing Bee Sweet to open a brand-new facility in 1996 to accommodate its evolving product line.

Fast forward to what is now the end of 2021, and Bee Sweet Citrus is an industry force to be reckoned with and an amplified version of the

operation its founding family, the Marderosians, drew up nearly four decades ago.

"Bee Sweet Citrus is more than just an agribusiness. We're a family-owned and operated company, and we strive to implement strong family values in everything we do," **Monique Bienvenue, Director of Communications**, tells me, and I smile as her passion for the business radiates through the phone. "At our company, that means growing, packing, and shipping citrus year-round; establishing personal connections with our customers; creating a supportive environment for our employees; and implementing eco-friendly practices on the farm and in the packing house."

Bee Sweet is a year-round supplier of oranges, Mandarins, and lemons as a result of its summer import program. During the domestic California citrus season, the supplier's product line also includes Cara Cara Navel oranges, Blood oranges, Valencia oranges, Meyer lemons, grapefruit, Melo Gold

grapefruit, Pummelos, and Minneola Tangelos.

"We're extremely proud of our ability to provide our customers with an assortment of citrus year-round," Monique continues. "Regardless of the season, our retail partners know they can count on our team for Mandarins, lemons, and oranges, as well as specialty citrus varieties during California's domestic season. In addition, all of those varieties can be conveniently picked up at one central location, offering a vital advantage to our partners."

This robust lineup of varieties is a direct result of the company's continued investments in its state-of-the-art facilities and other operational advancements, which were sparked by growing demand and the need to keep up with its ever-expanding portfolio.

Bee Sweet has pursued these expansions as if crossing off the days on a calendar. Each year the company breaks ground on yet



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“
We're a family-owned and operated company, and we strive to implement strong family values in everything we do.
”
— — — — —

Monique Bienvenue,
Director of Communications,
Bee Sweet Citrus



Pictured from left to right: Steven Marderosian, Production Manager; Chelsey Skooglund, Financial Analyst/Accounting; Anders Skooglund, Sales Representative; Olivia Skooglund; Tommy Marderosian, Industrial Technology Manager; and Marcus Marderosian, Sales Representative

another cutting-edge development, such as a new palletization room in 2016, a wash line and pack line in 2017, a new shipping lounge in 2018, an 18-door shipping facility in 2019, and, most recently, new sizers and graders for its Navel line.

“Over the last decade, we have focused on improving our facility to include state-of-the-art technology, as well as improvements to create a stress-free experience for our customers. Many of Bee Sweet’s projects were done with the customer in mind,” Monique reflects. “As our product line and volume grow, so too does the demand for our fruit. While our expanded shipping facility and lounge ease the pickup process for the drivers that visit our facility daily, our new wash and pack lines ensure that our production team is able to wash, grade, and pack any of our varieties in an efficient manner.”

With each of these operational expansions implemented at the grower’s main facility in Fowler, Bee Sweet’s sales team has the ability to provide its customers with real-time updates regarding its fruit. These strategic plays also solidify its presence as a one-stop shop by allowing its partners to pick up several premium citrus varieties at one convenient location.

The supplier’s growth extends beyond the physical improvements made to its facilities, however, as last year, the company also made the decisive move to revamp its brand identity.

“The Bee Sweet Citrus brand encompasses more than just a handful of varieties, and we wanted our label to strategically represent the diversity of our citrus line,” Monique explains to me. “From our Mandarins to our Cara Cara Navel oranges, every single one of our varieties got a face-lift in regard to its packaging.”

The new design was applied to the grower’s bags, header cards, standard cartons, and more, refreshing the Bee Sweet Citrus brand with a visual reflection of its versatile varieties and their characteristics. In addition, this innovative new design also laid the groundwork for the development of new in-store POS materials.



“

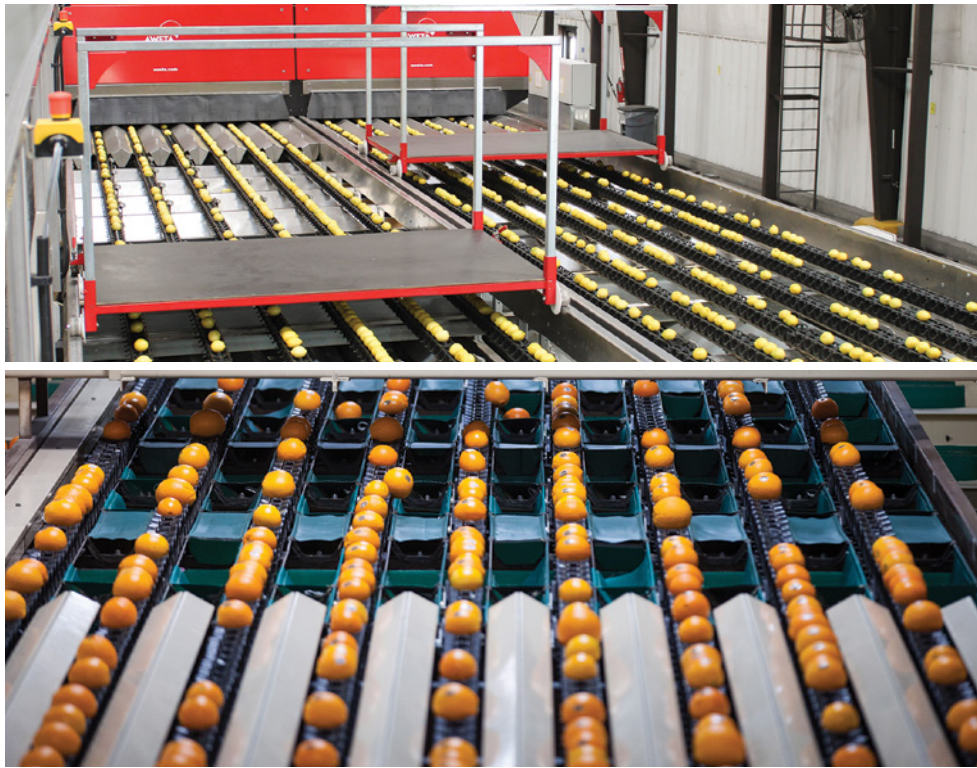
The Bee Sweet Citrus brand encompasses more than just a handful of varieties, and we wanted our label to strategically represent the diversity of our citrus line.

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“When we initially discussed concepts to pursue, we knew we wanted the artwork to accomplish two things. On a large scale, we wanted the new packaging to reflect the diversity of our product line. And, on a smaller scale, we wanted each design to educate shoppers on the variety inside,” Monique notes. “For example, if you look closely at the design for our Cara Cara Navels, you’ll see that the background is pink, similar to that of the variety’s internal color, as well as the citrus slices displayed on the artwork. This same concept was applied to our grapefruit bags, Meyer lemon bags, and so on.”

While strategically reflecting the unique attributes of the fruit inside, the packaging also maintains a cohesive look, creating familiarity for the consumer to drive repeat purchases and increase basket share.

“This cohesive look is a huge benefit for our retail partners. If a shopper is looking for our Mandarins at their local grocery store but then sees a bag of Cara Caras with similar packaging, the shopper will be more inclined to try the Cara Caras—or any variety they may not be as familiar with—because the shopper recognizes and trusts our label,” Monique points out.



Leaning back into my squeaky desk chair, I silently nod on the other end of the phone call, reflecting on the many times I have confidently picked up an unfamiliar product simply because of my faith in the brand reflected on the label.

This sense of trust is an essential element of the Bee Sweet operation, in addition to a heightened focus on social responsibility. Continuing its growth as a family-owned and operated business, the supplier injects even more faith into the brand by treating all those it interacts with like family, including its employees and the communities it serves.

As Monique divulges the details of the company's social responsibility efforts, I sit in a moment of revelation, realizing this is just another example of how the notions of "business" and "personal" tend to merge so often in our industry.

"The Marderosian family is actively involved with the day-to-day operations of all departments. Not only do they understand what's happening on the ground floor, but they've also done a beautiful job of cultivating impactful relationships with employees at all levels," Monique adds.

Knowing all too well that production agriculture can be a hectic line of

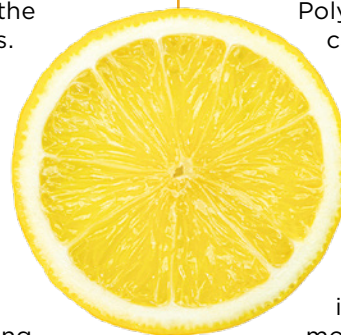
work, the Marderosian family has made social sustainability one of their highest priorities. Over the past few years, the team has developed a strategic partnership with local United Health Center Clinics to allow all its employees and their dependents to have access to basic medical and dental care throughout California's Central Valley. With many of its employees living in the rural areas of the region, this alliance grants them healthcare access without having to make the long drive to larger cities.

Further demonstrating its commitment to the health and safety of those who make the company's legacy possible, Bee Sweet has also hosted numerous on-site health clinics, including becoming one of the first in the industry to provide voluntary mass COVID-19 vaccinations to all of its employees.

"Because Bee Sweet Citrus is a family-owned and operated company, our team recognizes that our employees' health, family, and education are all critically important," Monique says. "We will never stop looking for ways to show our support."

Last year, Bee Sweet amplified its investments in the next generation


of produce aficionados with the launch of its first-ever employee scholarship, which celebrates its employees and their dependents in the pursuit of higher education at trade schools, community colleges, and more. The company also backed the next era of experts with new facilities, establishing a citrus packing line for students at Fresno State University and a new wash line in Nipomo, California, where students from California Polytechnic State University can intern.



Looking back on all that Bee Sweet has accomplished in the past few years of upward trajectory, I suddenly realize why the bright orange fruit in my hand that Sunday morning was an inevitable conduit to the fields where Bee Sweet makes its magic.

With each layer I remove, a small globe is uncovered.

A tiny world with a tremendous impact.

A storied history that leaves me with no choice but to collapse the distance between consumer and trade writer, and put pen to page. 

» The **IF** List «**Angela Hernandez**

Director of Marketing, Trinity Fruit Company

With **Jordan Okumura**

Bringing incredible heart, passion, grace, and edge to the fresh produce industry, Angela Hernandez is one unique human. Call it gusto, call it fervor—there is just something contagious about the Director of Marketing for the Trinity Fruit Company. When I put this *IF List* in front of Angela, I could feel her eyes light up 165 miles away down California's Highway 99 South, and when she sent her responses back, her humor, spark, and spirit immediately closed the distance. But enough of me waxing poetic about this marketing playmaker, see for yourself what our friend, Angela, had to say...

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

Kobe Bryant.

» IF you were stranded on a desert island, what three items would you bring?

Water, a blanket, and a knife.

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

Esther in *A Reluctant Queen*—a rewritten love story about the “Book of Esther” in the *Bible*. Esther’s character is read as a gentle-spirited girl, yet bold in her courageous actions. She ‘moved in silence,’ risking her life to save a nation and win the heart of the king.

» IF you could have been born in another century or decade, which would it be and why?

If I was born in the 1950s, I could have enjoyed the *grooviest* of times in the '60s.

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

My mom’s white rice, lamb chops, and squash.

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

Salma Hayek.

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

The fashion industry—trends change very quickly and I love different styles of fashion. The industry seems just as crazy as the one we work in!

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

A lion. ROAR! Or, in my petite self’s case, MEOW!

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

Perfectly Imperfect.

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

Denim jeans, a denim jacket (always in style), a white tee, and some cute sneakers.

» 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?

Janis Joplin. She’s raspy and I think we could carry that same tune and rock out together!

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

I believe I do have a superpower: PRAYER! I may curse like a sailor at times, but there isn’t any other being I speak to more than the One upstairs. 🙏



The background is a deep red with a subtle, repeating pattern of stylized, overlapping scales or petals. Several red lanterns with gold trim and tassels are hanging from the top. Some are large and prominent, while others are smaller. There are also sprigs of white flowers with yellow centers. A vertical white banner with a gold border is positioned on the left side of the main title.

新年快樂

LUNAR NEW YEAR SNAPSHOT BY PEGGY PACKER

By virtue of the sky, consumers are pulled into the produce department every time Lunar New Year rolls around. Whether it be fan-favorites like ginger, cabbage, or Buddha's Hand, shoppers are sure to be reaching for something fresh to ring in the Year of the Tiger. As the first new moon of the lunar calendar nears, harness the luck of these famed varieties to capture good fortune, in shopper dollars and beyond...



LONG BEANS

Also known as Yardlong beans, these are firmer and longer than regular green beans and hold up well in the high heat used for stir-frying. Despite their name, long beans are actually more closely related to black-eyed peas and provide a great source of fiber, vitamin A, and vitamin C. This versatile vegetable can be used in multiple preparation methods, from stir-frying, steaming, and boiling to a snack or salad ingredient.

CHINESE EGGPLANT

Tender, versatile, and widely used across multiple cuisines, Chinese eggplant is unlike many varieties. The vegetable offers a tender skin that does not have to be peeled, which preserves the texture, taste, and shape of the eggplant. The item has several different preparation methods to fit your fancy—from baking or broiling to stir-frying or deep frying.



BUDDHA'S HAND

Though it looks to be more of a Halloween-suited fruit, Buddha's Hand is used as an offering in temples during the lunar holiday and is one of the oldest citrus fruits on record. Coveted for its sweet, floral fragrance and mild zest with little-to-no flesh or juice, Buddha's Hand is all rind and pith. Think of it more as a presentation piece; although the rind can be candied or used in baking and other recipes. Like cocktails? This is a great ingredient for infusing into spirits.

NAPA CABBAGE

A staple ingredient in many Asian dishes, this cabbage has a sweet, mild flavor that can be used in soups, as filling in egg rolls, and eaten raw in salads. The crunchy, unique texture of its leaves continues to make this cabbage one of the most sought-after ingredients in Asian cuisine.





OPO SQUASH

This Asian squash, also known as a Bottle Gourd, is native to the cuisines of China and Southeast Asia and is similar to a zucchini with a very mild flavor. Prepare it as you would zucchini or other soft-shelled squash and add this delicious source of vitamin C to soups or stir-frys. As a symbol of good health, longevity, and good fortune in Chinese tradition, this item brings both flavor and differentiation to produce departments as we move into the New Year.



GAI LAN CHINESE BROCCOLI

Gai Lan's distinct, sharp flavor and long, leafy characteristics set this produce item apart from more common varieties. Steamed, boiled, or stir-fried, this vegetable is a great addition to any dish.



WATER CHESTNUT

This holiday favorite is usually found in marshes, and its crunchy texture is associated with a mildly sweet flavor. Try boiling or steaming this veg to use in soups, salads, and stews; peel before you use it in a stir-fry.



SHANGHAI BOK CHOY

Shanghai Bok Choy is commonly found in mainstream markets. With light green stems, spoon-shaped leaves, and a milder flavor, Shanghai Bok Choy is popularly used in restaurants and home cooking. Alternatively, not pictured is the Baby Bok Choy variety, which is more commonly found specifically in Asian supermarkets and preferred by Asian consumers due to its smaller size. It has crunchier stems and dark, spinach-like leaves.





SNOW PEAS

Most often either sautéed or stir-fried, snow peas are one of the easiest vegetables to prepare and have a sweet, crisp flavor. Their versatility and plentiful health benefits make snow peas a great addition to a healthy diet. They can even be eaten raw as a delicious snack.

DAIKON RADISH

Looking for good fortune? This vegetable may be beneficial to have around. A fundamental part of Asian cuisine, this veggie has a mild flavor, crispy texture, and a powerful, earthy aroma. The flavor tends to vary throughout the vegetable as the bottom is usually the most pungent and the top is the sweetest.



GINGER

Valued for its spicy flavor and medicinal benefits, ginger can be sliced or grated to add zest to Asian dishes. Try combining ginger with soy sauce, olive oil, and garlic to make a flavorful salad dressing.

KUMQUATS

Literally translated to “golden orange” in Chinese, this tiny specialty citrus item has sweet, edible skin and a tart inner-flesh. Kumquats also provide an excellent source of vitamin C and fiber as well as calcium and iron. Like Navel oranges and Mandarins, this citrus item is said to bring luck, wealth, and prosperity.





TABLE GRAPES

Associated with wealth and abundance, table grapes are another produce favorite that bring good luck and prosperity. While grapes are great gift options amongst close friends and family members, they are often served as holy offerings in Buddhist temples and family shrines. Plus, grapes are a great snacking fruit and are easy to handle and serve amidst a jam-packed day of preparation and greetings—a bonus for consumers that have a busy schedule throughout the holiday.

PEACHES

Peaches represent longevity and immortality. The fuzzy stonefruit appears in several myths and legends and is viewed as a lucky item to eat during the New Year celebration. Great grilled, baked, or on its own, one thing is for sure: you can't go wrong with a basketful of peaches.



ORANGES

This category star is very popular during this festive celebration because it looks like the sun, often signified as an auspicious symbol of abundance, wealth, good fortune, and happiness. Perfect as a snack or incorporated in a variety of dishes, oranges bring great flavor and health benefits—and good luck!

MORE AUSPICIOUS OFFERINGS...

Produce items such as apples, pomegranates, Mandarins, lotus root, and Spring onions are easy to display, both in produce aisles and in households. There are a lot of common fruits and vegetables that have several crossover meanings and symbolisms, many revolving around luck, wealth, and happiness. Help shoppers welcome 2022 with a little bit of fresh produce luck, and we as an industry will be prosperous together.



WTF DO I DO WITH Sunkist® Blood Oranges ?

{ what the fork }



BLOOD ORANGE BREAKFAST LOAF

By Dzung Lewis, @honeysuckle

INGREDIENTS

1½ cups Sunkist® Blood Orange juice
(about **2** Blood oranges)
½ cup butter, room temperature
1 cup granulated sugar
2 large eggs
1½ cups all-purpose flour
2 tsp baking powder
½ tsp salt
Thinly sliced Blood orange, for garnish

BLOOD ORANGE GLAZE

2 tbsp Sunkist Blood Orange juice
1 tsp Sunkist Blood Orange zest
1½ cup powdered sugar
1 tsp melted butter
Pinch of salt

Prep Time: 30 min

Cook Time: 45 min

Servings: 4

DIRECTIONS

- 1** In a bowl, combine all-purpose flour, baking powder, and salt. Mix well and set aside.
- 2** In another bowl, add the butter and sugar and mix until fluffy. Add one egg at a time and mix until combined. Scrape down the bowl. Add orange juice and dry mix.
- 3** In small increments, add the dry ingredients while gently mixing with a spatula.
- 4** In a 9"x5" loaf pan, line with parchment paper and pour in the batter.
- 5** Smooth it out and bake at 350° F for 40–45 minutes or until golden brown and toothpick comes out clean.
- 6** While loaf is cooking, make the glaze by combining powdered sugar, Blood orange juice and zest, melted butter, and pinch of salt in a bowl. Mix until smooth.
- 7** After the cake is completely cooled, place the cake on an icing rack over a baking sheet and pour the glaze over the cake.
- 8** Decorate with thin Sunkist Blood Orange slices and let the glaze harden for about 10 minutes. Slice and enjoy!

Sunkist®

To learn more about Sunkist Growers, visit sunkist.com/recipes

THE GREATEST YIELD

*A Q&A With Brianna Shales,
Marketing Director, Stemilt*

By Chandler James

It takes a village to raise something out of nothing.

We are journeying forever toward life's greatest yield; with each sister, colleague, or local grocery bagger we form a connection to—no matter how brief—our team of everyday warriors grows larger, and that greatness we seek comes closer.

Stemilt is building one such village with Equitable Food Initiative (EFI).

EFI was welcomed into the fold of this people-forward operation in recent years, and is now a full-fledged member of the family. As of August 2021, Stemilt announced that all of its owned farm and warehouse operations have become fully EFI Certified. The achievement not only expands the supplier's ever-growing village, as Marketing Director Brianna Shales tells me, but it signifies an integral investment in the community Stemilt has cultivated since being founded: its team members.





Chandler James:

Many congratulations on this exciting achievement, Brianna. I'm so excited to hear more about Stemilt's collaboration with EFI.

Brianna Shales, Marketing Director, Stemilt:

Thank you, we're excited too! It's a highly collaborative process, and EFI has been a joy to work with. We began partnering together in 2019 when we launched our first pilot program. After the successful trial, we sought and earned EFI Certification in September 2020 at our Quincy, Washington, orchard, where we grow apples and cherries. Our momentum with this program continued, and we soon decided to make a goal to become fully certified at all company orchards and warehouse/packing operations in 2021.

The Leadership Team formation and training started occurring, audits happened in the spring and summer, and we received full certification in August 2021, becoming the first apple, pear, and cherry company to do so!

CJ: It sounds like the process moved quite swiftly! I assume this is partly because many of EFI's implementations align with Stemilt's values as a people-first organization. What was the primary aspect of the program that supported this ideal?

BS: As part of the certification, EFI provides training to a group of our



employees from one work area. The group is called a 'Leadership Team' and represents all cross-sections of that certification focus, composed of people with multiple work functions, different genders and ethnicities, and a wide window of capabilities. This composition helps ensure the group can collectively represent our broader team and help put continuous improvement projects into action. Following training, that Leadership Team works on solving a problem in the operations they oversee. They conduct research, plan, discuss, and present the solution before implementation and evaluation.

CJ: From that operational standpoint, Stemilt's employees have a direct hand in the long-term growth of the company. As they work toward the goal of continuous improvement that you speak of, what are some of the primary areas of focus for the Leadership Teams?

BS: The core areas of EFI's more than 300 certification standards relate to pest management, food safety, and social responsibility. Developing a Leadership Team for each certified area has helped Stemilt formulate the process around continuous improvement. Moving forward, these teams will meet regularly to fortify the training and structure EFI helped us build.

We are excited to have these teams actively working on problem solving in a collaborative and proactive way.

CJ: It truly takes a Stemilt-sized village to bring your fruit to market. In a previous conversation, you said the EFI Certification "has nothing to do with fruit, yet everything to do with fruit, because it is providing training on soft skills throughout our operations," and I



am curious to learn how the Responsibly Grown, Farmworker Assured label will translate to sales.

BS: Shoppers continue to vote with their dollars, and this label communicates both the quality of our fruits and that they were grown in a responsible way. It's important for buyers and consumers to know our fruits are produced safely and with great care from hard-working teams. With this label, EFI provides us with the foundation to help live out Stemilt's purpose: to cultivate people and delight consumers through excellence.

Our team members are truly what make our products "World Famous Fruits." As they gain a greater understanding of the role they play, our culture becomes stronger and we are able to collaborate more in order to continually improve. Using the EFI framework, we are able to train and support our members, increase teamwork and collaboration, and even identify future leaders of our organization. It's all about building our culture and working together for that greater purpose.

CJ: So, essentially, the relationship between your people and the people you serve is a feedback loop: what they put in will come back to them, and vice versa. This reminds me of another continuous exchange in the produce industry: the one between us and Earth. In what ways has the recent EFI Certification supported Stemilt's sustainability framework?

BS: Our sustainability and social responsibility program, called Responsible Choice®, was developed way back in 1989 as a way to farm responsibly. That is just another reason

— “ —

**This certification
is helping both
our own future
and the future of
agricultural work
as a whole.**

— ” —

Brianna Shales,
Marketing Director, Stemilt

why EFI's label fits so well with our company and culture. We know that being World Famous is a journey, not a destination where we will ever truly arrive. Having a culture of continuous improvement fits well with the long-time pillars of Responsible Choice. It looks at ways to improve our people, planet, and profits in order to make our business sustainable for generations to come.

CJ: That is such a lovely way of describing your company's journey—an evolution that is unending and, therefore, forever growing stronger. At this very moment in Stemilt's journey, how has the EFI Certification served the company, and how will it continue to?

BS: This certification is helping both our own future and the future of agricultural work as a whole. We are investing in our culture and our team members so that we can continue to see our purpose through and keep delivering World Famous Fruits to delight people around the world.

Now, it's about continuing the progress with our Leadership Teams throughout each certified area. It's also going to be about sharing ideas and best practices with EFI and learning from others that have aligned with the organization. EFI is incredibly supportive and continues to work with its grower/supplier partners to



ensure that all of our successes with the program are shared.

CJ: And with that, Stemilt's village grows even stronger. On a final note, Brianna, can you tell us what's next?

BS: With the broad certification, we hope to start utilizing the EFI Responsibly Grown, Farmworker Assured label on our consumer packaging. We've already started doing this on some packs and hope to expand it in the future to our entire portfolio. We will also keep sharing the improvement work our EFI Leadership Teams implement in the coming months.



As I began penning this piece, the idea of cultivating people is what struck me; growing our team members inherently runs parallel to the journey of bringing fresh produce to the plate.

The ultimate goal of our industry may be to drive fresh fruit and vegetable consumption in kitchens across the world, but the unique, diverse, and whole humans we cultivate are the greatest yield. **S**



WTF DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

Prime Time
Asparagus

?



PRIME TIME ASPARAGUS AND RED PEPPER MEDLEY

Recipe and photo by closetcooking.com

INGREDIENTS

1½ lbs Prime Time Asparagus, trimmed
1 tbsp oil
1 cup roasted Prime Time Red Peppers, diced
Salt and pepper to taste
¼ cup feta, crumbled
¼ cup Kalamata olives, finely chopped
2 tbsp red onion, finely chopped

BALSAMIC MARINADE
2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
2 tbsp balsamic vinegar
1 clove garlic, grated
1 tsp Dijon mustard
1 tsp honey
1 tsp oregano
Salt and pepper, to taste

Prep Time: 10 min
Marinade Time: 20 min
Cook Time: 10 min
Servings: 4

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Mix all ingredients for the balsamic marinade well.
- 2 Mix marinade into the Prime Time Roasted Red Peppers, feta, Kalamata olives, and red onions. Optionally marinate for 20 minutes to overnight, or even longer.
- 3 Toss the Prime Time Asparagus in the oil, salt, and pepper and grill over medium-high heat until tender and slightly charred.
- 4 Serve topped with the marinated roasted Prime Time Red Pepper, feta, and Kalamata olives, and enjoy!

To learn more about Prime Time Produce, visit www.primetimeproduce.com





Ringing in the New Year
with the BERRY best
brand for all of your
customers' needs.



An Organic Metamorphosis

By Peggy Packer

Many do not have the privilege of realizing when they are knocking on the doors of evolution. Just as a caterpillar tactically and methodically crafts its cocoon based on only an intrinsic impulse, uncertain of the vibrant wings that will soon break through it, companies everywhere have unknowingly sparked their own transformations and were left to ponder the catalyst to their success.

Watching your own metamorphosis in real-time is a gift—one that D'Arrigo New York is gracefully unwrapping as it lays the groundwork for an invigorated organic program.

With this in mind, I can clearly envision Gabriela D'Arrigo, Vice President of Marketing and Communications, on the other end of the phone as we kick off an exploration of the wholesaler's newfound blueprint for growth.



Gabriela D'Arrigo,
Vice President of
Marketing and
Communications,
D'Arrigo New York

"The pandemic has obviously changed the way a lot of people look at their food," Gabriela notes, and the conversation shifts to one of the budding reasons we cannot discuss this face to face. But, the unforeseen event ended up opening a new channel of

demand for the company. "Health has been a very popular focus over the last five to seven years, but the pandemic really kicked it into overdrive. People are now looking at everything they're putting in their bodies because they want to build up their immune system and maintain good health practices. In many shoppers' minds, organic equals healthy, so a lot of our independent retailers said, 'This is something we need to have.' That was really the catalyst for us to step up and actually start a legitimate organic program."

D'Arrigo New York has taken several key steps to build out its organic division and meet this steadily rising demand, including the development of cutting-edge facilities to back its impending growth.

"We have an external facility across the street from the main Hunts

Point Produce Market in The Bronx, New York, and it was formerly John Georgallas Banana Distributors. We took that business over in 2016 and totally revamped the facility. Our Food Safety Director, Bobby Stead, was absolutely instrumental in getting it food safety- and organic-ready. Everything in it is basically brand new, so Bobby looked at that and said, 'This is the facility we're going to certify because everything's going to be state-of-the-art,'" Gabriela adds.

In addition to a facility primed for organic expansion, the wholesaler is pulling out even more stops to establish itself as a leader in the sector, tapping into the expertise of organic savant Eric Mitchnick, the company's newly appointed Director of Organics.

"D'Arrigo New York is well-versed in finding organic customers and knowing who needs a product and where we can place it, so we had a little bit of a foundation already built. It was the very bare bones of the skeletal structure, if you will, and we were incredibly confident that Eric would be able to fill that in," Gabriela says.

The new Director brings a wealth of experience to D'Arrigo New York's organic operation, wielding an impressive history in produce spanning over two decades. Diving into his career at a natural food store in Long Island, New York, the fresh maven found a deep passion for organic produce and its correlation to the well-being of the environment and farmworkers.

"When organic wasn't really a thing, Eric was one of those people who said, 'No, we need to do organic.' He's been around a very long time, and he is well-established in the organic world," Gabriela says. "He's a wealth of information in that

segment. It was the perfect storm. Eric had taken a brief break from work during the pandemic to spend time with his family and then got the itch to be in produce again. Right when we said we were looking to expand our organic program, those conversations started, and voilà, he joined us. It was only his second week with us, and he was already at the Organic Produce Summit working the show floor like he was an old pro."

If the cocoon is the high-tech facility in which D'Arrigo New York will work to expand its organic program, Eric embodies the actions of a caterpillar, carefully placing each building block to establish a formidable operation and create new opportunities for the wholesaler.

As Director of the Organic Division, Eric's focus will be on purchasing organic items, as well as maintaining the vital relationships that back D'Arrigo New York's success. His extensive knowledge of the industry and long-term relationships with many of its leaders make him the ideal force to aid in the company's transformation, developing new partnerships and finding other resources to supply organic produce to its customers.

"D'Arrigo has a tremendous amount of relationships already," Eric explains to me, "and over the last 15 to 20 years, many conventional growers have gotten into organics in



Eric Mitchnick,
Director of Organics,
D'Arrigo New York

“ ”
We're going to look at
what our customers need and help
them build their programs as we grow our
business—a mutually

Beneficial partnership
with both new customers and the ones we've
had for many years.

Eric Mitchnick, Director of
Organics, D'Arrigo New York



a big way because they realize it's not just a fad. It's here to stay. As the category keeps growing, I think it's a great time for us to get involved. We're going to look at what our customers need and help them build their programs as we grow our business—a mutually beneficial partnership with both new customers and the ones we've had for many years.”

These efforts to brand itself as a prime contender in the organic industry only emphasize the wholesaler's admirable dedication to its retail and foodservice partners. Harnessing a century-long reputation in fresh produce, the company is continuing its transformation into a well-rounded, one-stop shop armed and ready to meet the needs of those it aligns with, whether those needs fall under conventional or organic.

“We're a great ally to have because we've been around for 100 years. We're experts in growing; we're

a family of farmers,” Gabriela points out, giving me a closer look at the lineage behind the D'Arrigo name. “We come from the supply-side, and we understand the labor that goes into it. We've also been on the wholesale and distribution side for a very long time, so we have a lot of experience in different segments of the industry. And, because we've been around for so long, we've established strong relationships with other experts in these fields.”

Only adding to D'Arrigo New York's strength as an operation is the diverse expertise of each of the members who comprise this successful business. As Gabriela

“ ”
I know everyone says
it's not good to have too
many hands in the fire, but in this
situation, it absolutely is. Each of us
can handle our own different

flame.

Gabriela D'Arrigo,
Vice President of Marketing and
Communications, D'Arrigo New York

talks, I see the incredible family of farmers standing before me, some of which probably had only an inkling of an idea of what would happen once the company took flight.

Tapping organic savant Eric Mitchnick to head up its organic program, D'Arrigo New York is priming itself to supply both new and long-standing customers with more high-quality, organic produce





D'Arrigo New York has taken several steps to build out its organic division and meet steadily rising demand in the sector, including the development of cutting-edge facilities to back its impending growth

"We're the fourth generation to come into the company, at least on the New York side," Gabriela points out. "Because we have that youth and that energy, if you will, in addition to a connection to new forms of technology, we look at things from a different perspective. And because there are so many of us, each of us can tackle one area and make it our own, which makes our ability to adapt to change easier than it is for a lot of other companies. I know everyone says it's not good to have too many hands in the fire, but in this situation, it absolutely is. Each of us can handle our own different flame."

Gabriela pauses for a moment, as if realizing the magnitude of this dynamic team herself, before she continues laying out a list of its infinite strengths.

"We all have different backgrounds. Some came from finance, logistics, or the growing side, and others came right out of school with a fresh pair of eyes, so we cover a lot of different bases," Gabriela


says. "Even if none of us have an idea, the ability to sit down and brainstorm, utilizing the generation above us and their experience with the industry, has been very transformative."

The next point Gabriela makes strikes me. In a day and age where many feel compelled to build a brave facade for the sake of those around them, I find the sentiment both valiant and exemplary, as the company forges a rare level of trust and vulnerability—one I am convinced can only be found within an industry as raw and rich as fresh produce.

"We don't ever pretend to know something we don't," Gabriela explains, pausing to let me digest the statement. "If we don't know what we're talking about, we're not going to fake it as if we do. We really lean on the relationships that stem over 40, 50, some 60 years with other companies. We lean on each other and say, 'Okay, what are you doing? How can I help and be a peer?' or 'I don't

know about this, tell me about this. How can I make it better?' We utilize those different relationships we've fostered, grown, and tended to for the last century."

Suddenly, I have a deeper understanding of the magic that takes place at D'Arrigo New York, and I am swiftly reminded that this is not the company's first metamorphosis.

For over 70 years, this unique division has transformed and transformed again, each time emerging from the cocoon with wings stronger than the last. 





STUFFED SWEET ONION WITH LOADED MASHED POTATOES

INGREDIENTS

8 med-large Mayan Sweets® Onions
1 lb Pacific Gold® Russet Potatoes
1/3 cup sour cream
1/4 tsp garlic powder
1/4 tsp ground black pepper
1/3 cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
6-8 slices cooked bacon, crumbled
1 tsp fresh parsley, chopped
1 lb Progressive Farms Asparagus,
 optional

Prep Time: 35 min

Cook Time: 2 1/2 hours

Servings: 8



DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 450° F.
- 2 To prepare the sweet onions, cut off the bottom root, leaving enough so the onion stays together. Then, cut off the top quarter from each sweet onion. Peel and discard the outer skin. Wrap the sweet onions in aluminum foil and place in the oven, cooking until soft, about 1 1/2 hours.
- 3 When done, remove the sweet onions from the oven, unwrap, and let cool for 15 minutes. Working from the center of each onion, pull out all but two or three outer layers, leaving a shell. Place shells in a small baking dish sprayed with cooking spray to avoid sticking. Chop the remaining onion that you removed and set aside, about 1/4 cup.
- 4 Meanwhile, bring a large saucepan of water to a boil. Peel potatoes and cut into 2" cubes. Cook potatoes until fork-tender, about 20 minutes, then drain in a colander.
- 5 Place cooked potatoes in a large bowl and mash using a potato masher. Add sour cream, garlic powder, and black pepper to potatoes; stir until well-combined. Add in chopped onions, parsley, cheese, and bacon; stir until well-combined.
- 6 Lower oven to 400° F. Stuff the sweet onion shells with the loaded mashed potato mixture. Lightly spray tops with cooking spray. Bake stuffed onions until they are soft and golden, approximately 30 minutes. Let the onions cool slightly and serve warm. Enjoy!

Note: To serve with fresh Progressive Farms Roasted Asparagus, place the cleaned and trimmed asparagus in a Ziploc® plastic bag. Combine with enough olive oil to coat. Add salt, pepper, and any seasoning of your choice to taste. Seal the plastic bag and shake to mix. Pour the mixture onto a large, lined baking sheet and roast at 425° F for 20 minutes.

To learn more about Progressive Produce, visit www.progressiveproduce.com

A Closer Look at Naturipe Snacks™ Berry Parfaits

By Jenna Plasterer

Choices. Both a major source of freedom and the root of uncertainty for many consumers as they hit the grocery aisles.


When it comes to consumer packaged goods, shoppers often find themselves choosing between flavor and nutritional benefits as they search for the perfect option. But, Naturipe Snacks™ is stepping up to the plate, joining forces with Chobani to roll out its new Berry Parfaits, which give snackers the best of both worlds.

Right off the bat, the elegant, innovative packaging will have

shoppers intrigued. Naturipe designed the parfaits with all ingredients separated in a container where they can later be mixed, ensuring crunchy granola, fresh-tasting berries, and amazing convenience for consumers on-the-go. The result keeps any of the well-curated aspects of the product from losing their luster.

Further crystallizing shoppers' decisions, the containers are made using less plastic, advancing the berry maven's sustainability mission and further enticing consumers to favor this value-added offering over others in the case.

The 6 oz Berry Parfaits will be available in Doubleberry Crunch—featuring delicious, fresh Naturipe blueberries paired with Chobani's nonfat strawberry Greek yogurt and granola—and Vanilla Crunch, containing Naturipe blueberries alongside Chobani nonfat vanilla Greek yogurt with a sweet crunch of granola.

Whether displayed in the yogurt case or front-and-center in the produce aisle, the only choice your shoppers will have to make when it comes to Naturipe Snacks' Berry Parfaits is how many they think they can fit in their fridge. 





An Innovative Spell

A Q&A With **Julia Shreve**,
Director, Marketing, Brand and Innovation,
Mastronardi Produce®

By **Anne Allen**

If you've seen the reflection of a tree branch hanging low across the water, then you can imagine my pen hovering over this page. As a writer, I strive to graft meaning onto the everyday. Within December's chill is a bountiful space for such contemplation, as both myself and the industry look back at another year of challenges met and successes struck.

Perhaps none understand the importance of this meaning-making as well as Mastronardi Produce®. Like me, the team that brings the SUNSET® brand to life is seeking out the impossible and turning it into reality. As someone who plucks words from the sky to convey her own understanding of the universe, what Mastronardi does is akin to magic.

Weaving this spell with me is Julia Shreve, Director, Marketing, Brand and Innovation, who tells a story of just how far innovation can take a company—and what the fruit of those endeavors spells for its future.



Q1 Anne Allen: Julia, we've reached the end of another monumental year for the industry as a whole, but especially for you and the company. Can you speak to how Mastronardi Produce continues to balance meeting market trends with delivering on flavor and quality?



Julia Shreve, Director, Marketing, Brand and Innovation, Mastronardi Produce:

Innovation is a big focus area for us, and so is finding the best in quality and flavor. That's why we invest significantly in research and development and work with the best experts in the world to have access to exclusive varieties and world-leading expertise in sustainable greenhouse growing. From there, we trial new varieties for three to four years in our greenhouses before we determine if they're good enough to be commercialized under our brand.

Bottom line, we are able to provide quality and flavor because we grow everything in state-of-the-art greenhouses that allow for more control and extra care.

"...we trial new varieties for three to four years in our greenhouses before we determine if they're good enough to be commercialized under our brand."

- Julia Shreve,
Director, Marketing,
Brand and Innovation,
Mastronardi Produce®

Q2 AA: I think part of the magic behind Mastronardi Produce is its ability to bring those flavors to life visually. With this in mind, what drove the decision behind rebranding the Wild Wonders® line?

JS: It really begins with our story of traveling the globe to find the best flavors available. For the last 70 years, it has been the Mastronardi family's goal to bring unforgettable flavor to everyone. Discover The World's Flavors™ isn't just something we say. We literally search the world to find the unique flavors that go into every variety, and then bring those varieties back to our greenhouses to grow and, eventually, share with everyone.

Our team has worked hard at bringing this story to life through creative imagery, and we couldn't be happier with how the Wild Wonders branding turned out. We're proud to reveal this new look, as it truly encompasses family history and passion for good flavor.



“Our philosophy is simple: We never settle for anything but the best—and we don’t stop until we get there!”

Q3 AA: This line speaks to that passion, as well as the passion of someone discovering adventures in food. How do you see both your products and your company emboldening the consumer to seek out joy in the world of produce?

JS: Our vision is focused on delivering the entire package: fun branding and a story of how we seek incredible flavor for everyone. Our mission of inspiring healthy living through WOW flavor experiences and striving to make healthy eating fun serves our consumers well. It’s the driving force behind why we’re always innovating and coming up with new ways to bring the best flavor and marketing to them.

We believe everyone should have access to quality produce that not only tastes good, but also provides a lasting memory. That’s why we’ve created fun, whimsical imagery for our Wild Wonders offerings—they aren’t just delicious to taste; they are also providing excitement on the shelves, one package at a time.

Q4 AA: When crafting lines like Wild Wonders, what is top of mind for the team?

JS: Quality and flavor come first, always. And while flavor is what will keep consumers coming back for more, it’s the overall aesthetic that attracts them to pick up our product off the shelf in the first place. That’s why the entire process—from the growing and harvesting of the crop to the marketing, packaging, and shipping—is so important to get right. Our philosophy is simple: We never settle for anything but the best—and we don’t stop until we get there!

Several proprietary game-changing varieties, including the Wild Wonders lineup, are a result of the incredible time and dedication we’ve put into finding and growing the best-tasting fruits and vegetables on the planet.

Q5 AA: It’s obvious to me that we can always expect great things from Mastronardi Produce. I know I’m being greedy, but is there anything you can tease regarding plans for 2022?

JS: Lettuce is a big priority for us in 2022. You can expect to see more greenhouse-grown lettuce from us in the new year. We are also continuing to invest in the latest and most advanced knowledge—and that includes continuing to find new ways to become a more sustainable, more innovative provider of quality, flavorful food. We’re always looking for new ways to be sustainable while making our produce—and how it tastes—that much better!

Mirroring a beginning is one of my favorite ways to draw the year to a close. Just as Mastronardi Produce will be reflecting on weaving dreams into tangible flavors, I will be sitting here, pen in hand, waiting to write them down. 



WTF DO I DO WITH Buddy's Blood Oranges ?

{ what the fork }



FRESH BLOOD ORANGE SORBET

Recipe by Vicki DeFrancesco

INGREDIENTS

2 cups Buddy's Blood Orange juice,
freshly squeezed (approximately
8–10 blood oranges)
Zest of 2 Buddy's Blood Oranges
1 cup granulated sugar
1 tbsp lemon juice
3 tbsp Cointreau (can substitute water)

Prep Time: 15 min

Cook Time: 5–10 min

Chill Time: 2 hrs

Servings: 12 (½ cup servings)

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Combine Blood orange juice and sugar in a small saucepan, warming over medium heat. Stir until sugar has just been dissolved. Do not boil.
- 2 Remove from heat and add lemon juice, orange zest, and Cointreau.
- 3 Chill mixture two hours or until cold. Pour into an ice cream maker and process according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- 4 Store sorbet in an airtight container in the freezer for 2 hours to harden. Serve and enjoy!



To learn more about Trinity Fruit Company, visit www.trinityfruit.com



A FRUIT FOR *All Seasons*



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SUPER BOWL



Nothing screams “Super Bowl” as much as a table laden with game-time dishes. Finger food is always a go-to option during the sports-heavy weekend, but what if your shoppers are aiming to freshen things up this year? Look no further than these masterful merchants. They’ve got their playbooks open and calls ready for you to take to the field and have a smashing sales season...



Jan Delyser,

**Vice President of Marketing,
California Avocado Commission**



"Some consumers shop before the Big Game, others on game day. Merchandising avocados that are fully ripe along with some that will be ripe in a few days helps to maximize the huge potential for avocado sales. A recent California Avocado Commission study among avocado shoppers in California found that 40 percent preferred to purchase avocados that are perfectly ripe or ripe and a little soft, and 55 percent preferred to select avocados that are ripe but still firm or not yet ripe to very firm. A few prefer a variety of ripeness levels. Calling out ripeness on display can help with shopper expectations and satisfaction."



Gary Clevenger,

**Managing Member,
Freska Produce International**

"For me, this Super Bowl will revolve around food, friends, and family. A tradition for quite a few years now is to have friends over for the game. I bring out the smoker, and we slow cook something. Every year, we try to out-make the food from previous years. The new year brings a great time to transition the produce aisle, and new offerings of mangos and avocados help consumers with their resolutions of eating clean foods. Including these items in my Super Bowl dishes is a must because they complement any dish. Mangos and guacamole are great ideas in layer dips, or consider mixing mangos with habanero for an incredible salsa dip. The ideas are endless."



Heidi Wieber,

**Brand Manager,
Litehouse**

"The Big Game is the occasion, but the snacks are what gets people talking—and we believe the best snacks are the ones that dip! This year, our *Will It Dip?* campaign will help fans get Game Day ready through videos, recipes, dip tips and tricks, and one of our star players: the Dip Master. Wings, chips, veggies, pretzels, pickles... whether traditional or a little adventurous, we want to encourage new dip combos and provide dip and snacking inspiration for game day parties. Litehouse makes it easy to be the Dip Master at your Game Day party!"



Pablo Rivero,

Vice President of Marketing North America, Mann Packing Co.

"Retailers can best prepare for 'the big weekend' by focusing on the two M's: marketing and merchandising. Mann Packing Co. knows the impact social media marketing can have. When retailers partner with a major vegetable supplier like Mann Packing Co., there is the opportunity to share content across channels. Cross-merchandising is also extremely important when it comes to major sporting events. We've seen that promoting party trays with an array of veggies is an easy way to appease different appetites. Pairing classic veggies with signature game-day dips will intrigue any party planner."

Nichole Towell,

Senior Director of Marketing and Packaging Procurement, Duda Farm Fresh Foods

"Aside from the holidays, the Big Game is THE day for snacking and eating finger foods while watching your team play. Shoppers will be looking for items that do not require a ton of prep so they can enjoy the game along with their watch party guests. Whether you're including veggies with your dip spread or pairing them with a big plate of buffalo wings, Dandy® has you covered with sweeter, crispier, and less stringy celery than others on the grocery store shelves. Even better, they are fresh-cut and pre-washed for consumers' convenience, so be sure to 'stalk' up soon!"



Valorie Sill,

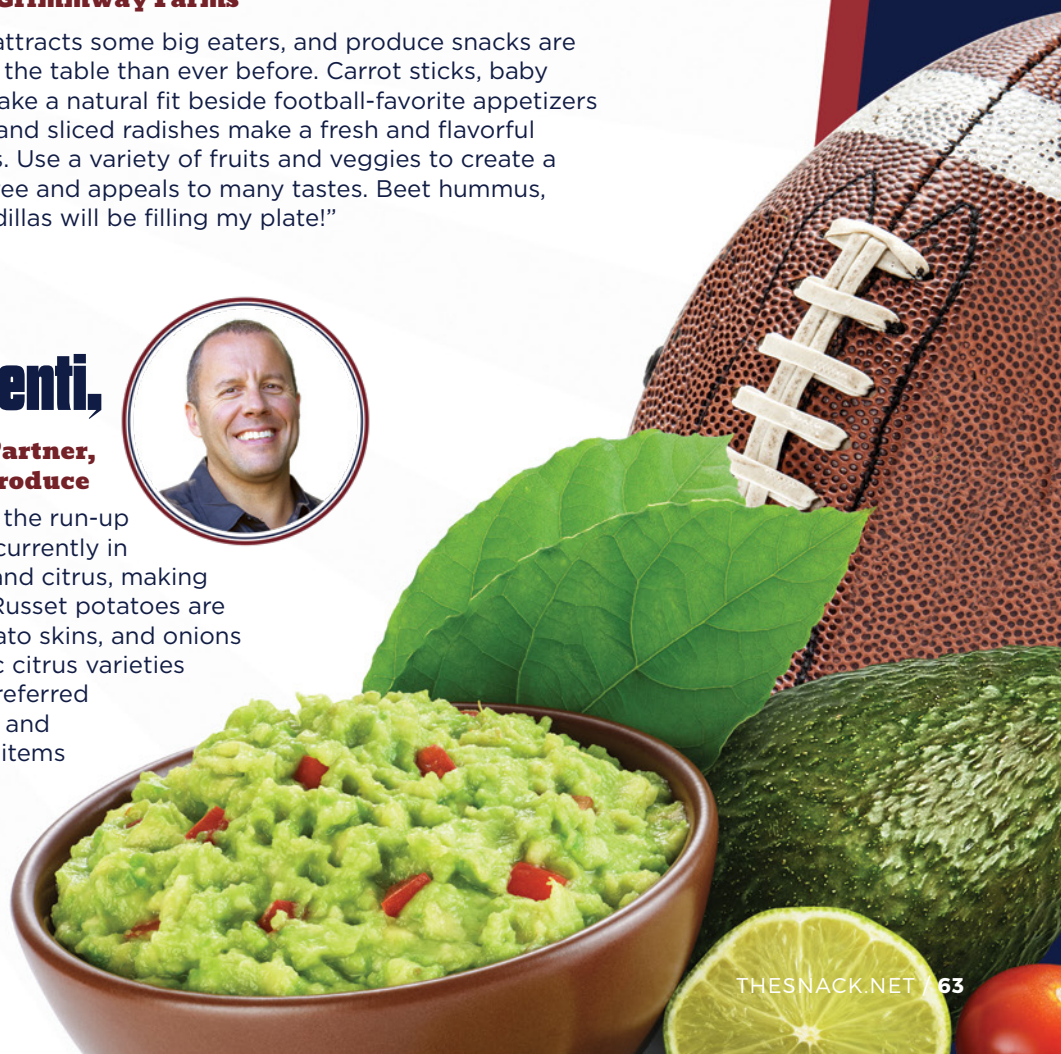
Senior Manager, Communications and Engagement, Grimmway Farms

"The Big Game always attracts some big eaters, and produce snacks are receiving more space at the table than ever before. Carrot sticks, baby carrots, and carrot chips make a natural fit beside football-favorite appetizers like buffalo wings and onion dip, and sliced radishes make a fresh and flavorful alternative to high-sodium snacks. Use a variety of fruits and veggies to create a colorful spread that's nearly fat-free and appeals to many tastes. Beet hummus, cauliflower pizza, and kale quesadillas will be filling my plate!"

Anthony Innocenti,

Co-Founder and Managing Partner, LIV Organic Produce

"Our core items are always major hits during the run-up to Super Bowl as well as game day. We are currently in full swing on our organic potatoes, onions, and citrus, making them the MVPs of the game day weekend. Russet potatoes are a perfect choice for classics like stuffed potato skins, and onions are amazing in seven-layer dips. Our organic citrus varieties also make great ingredients for shoppers' preferred beverages or a great addition to any snacks and dishes. Be sure to display these fan-favorite items front and center for a great sales period."



WTF DO I DO WITH DelFrescoPure® Beefsteak Tomatoes ?

{ what the fork }



STUFFED BEEFSTEAK TOMATOES

INGREDIENTS

4 DelFrescoPure® Beefsteak Tomatoes, cored

Tip: scoop seeds out with a melon baller

1½ tbsp olive oil

1 cup grain or grain/legume combination

1 cup lightly wilted kale, spinach, or bok choy

½ cup shredded aged Cheddar cheese

Salt and pepper to taste

Prep Time: 10 min

Cook Time: 15 min

Servings: 4

DIRECTIONS

- 1** Preheat oven to 400° F or, if grilling, set barbecue to medium-high.
- 2** Once tomatoes are prepared as directed in ingredient list, rub inside and out with olive oil, then season well with salt and pepper on the inside.
- 3** Combine grain of choice with greens and half the cheese, about ¼ cup.
- 4** Stuff ½ cup of the mixture into the hollow of each tomato.
- 5** Place 1 tbsp of remaining ¼ cup of cheese on top of each tomato, pressing down to make sure it is inside the hollow.
- 6** Bake or barbecue for 15 minutes until the tomato is blistered slightly, the filling is hot, and the cheese has melted. Serve immediately.

Tip: The filling mixture is to your preference. This is a great way to use leftover grains such as cooked quinoa, rice, bulgur, etc. The more seasoning in the grain the better the finished dish will be.

DelFresco
Pure®

To learn more about DelFrescoPure®, visit www.delfrescopure.com



A Wellspring — In-Hand

BY MELISSA DE LEON CHAVEZ



So much is held in a handshake. My grandfather preached how the weight and honor of someone's word may be found in their grip—a belief system I think hums within the current of our industry to this day.

The clasping of hands is an agreement. You are aligned, combining each other's strengths to tighten your hold on some aspect of a volatile world.

"There are factors and market forces out of our control in the short term, but there are many that are very much in our control as we take this next step," **JOHAN LINDEN, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER** of



the newly named Dole plc, says as he reflects on a monumental handshake earlier this year.

Few symbols strike a deal as done like a handshake. And, while we settled into 2021 for what would be another year of change and challenges, Dole

Food Company entered such a deal by merging with longtime partner Total Produce, expanding the reach of both brands and deepening an already-bubbling wellspring of industry wisdom.

It's no secret that Dole had a sizable presence in the market as it was. Each company has individually served fruits and vegetables to the world for more than a century and a half under their respective brands and markets. Now, as Dole plc, Johan says the company will undertake an even greater global position by unifying under the iconic DOLE® brand and serving it to more communities, increasing its reach to an additional tens of millions of people daily.

"As we move forward, thanks to our enormous asset base—from farms and ships to distribution centers—Dole plc will be a truly integrated business bringing the production ever closer to our consumers. Our fresh produce knowledge from farm to fork will enable us to constantly improve our sustainability practices across our entire global supply chain, while the universally recognized DOLE brand will provide a focal point for consumer trust, innovation, and new product development," he promises.

Even with such increased power added to the Dole and Total Produce handshake, Johan is confident that what has succeeded for each, respectively, will remain, if not strengthen.

"The past 18 months have been a paradigm shift across all businesses, including our own produce industry. For Dole, the completion of combining with Total Produce to form Dole plc has been a transformative event in both companies' long histories. Yet, externally for customers and consumers of both organizations, the mission, brand strategy, and core values remain unchanged for Dole plc. We will continue our pursuit of feeding the world with the highest quality nutritious foods and produce grown in the most sustainable way possible," he assures me.

With two great, culturally aligned organizations forming a strong foundation, Johan points out how a premier global fresh produce leader has been forged.

Customers can't help but benefit as the team grabs access to further ongoing investments; delivery of a broad, highly diversified portfolio; a strengthened balance sheet; and complementary

"The past 18 months have been a paradigm shift across all businesses, including our own produce industry. For Dole, the completion of combining with Total Produce to form Dole plc has been a transformative event in both companies' long histories."

Johan Linden.

Chief Operating Officer, Dole plc

capabilities in the future growth and development of Dole plc.

“A core competency of Dole plc lies in our capacity to differentiate the fresh offerings our customers can present to consumers. By virtue of our on-the-ground operations and local experts across the world, we are attuned to the needs of local marketplaces, tailoring solutions and delivering a tangible competitive advantage to our customer base. We know one size does not fit all, so we distinguish ourselves through our global presence, our capacity to source high-quality crops, and our ability to customize our offerings to local needs,” Johan says of the core pieces of the organization.

After all, those local experts are what has guided the company through key challenges—not just throughout the past couple of years’ unprecedented global state, but decades of defining moments.

“Dole is fueled by an amazing team of people. Being tagged an essential business during COVID-19; executing a successful business merger and restructure; launching an IPO; reestablishing hurricane-decimated banana plantations; expanding

capacity; taking high growth categories like organics, avocados, and berries to the next level; and debuting new groundbreaking products—our achievements are a testament to the commitment and effort of our teammates at all levels of the organization,” Johan reflects. “Both Dole and Total Produce have been around for a long time, in part because of a willingness to adapt in the face of industry disruption, and because of the incredible people who power it—teams of individuals with a passion for growing, distributing, and providing the best produce.”

It is this very formula, after all, that helps this powerful pairing maintain a dependable tempo of new releases. From research and development into the pipeline of new products to introducing technology and advancements that drive value in business operations, Johan shares how innovation has long been at the core of both businesses, making them two halves of a whole.

“This continues to be at the heart of Dole plc,” Johan adds. “In unifying, we will realize enhanced and expanded category management expertise and innovation capabilities. The combination enables full operational

“By virtue of our on-the-ground operations and local experts across the world, we are attuned to the needs of local marketplaces, tailoring solutions and delivering a tangible competitive advantage to our customer base. We know one size does not fit all..”

integration, allows meaningful value creation from increased collaboration, and unlocks potential across the value chain. Together, we are utilizing Dole’s vertically integrated business model and asset base with Total Produce’s flexible and agile structure.”

In fact, this combined market and industry insight is on track to drive



“The combination enables full operational integration, allows meaningful value creation from increased collaboration, and unlocks potential across the value chain.”

the focus and speed of new product innovations and developments, delivering even better service to both customers and consumers.

“The two markets—North America and Europe—have a total combined size of about 335 billion dollars for fruits and vegetables and are expected to grow at an annualized rate of 2.7 percent from 2020 to 2025. Dole plc will be well-positioned operationally to capitalize on this growth,” Johan says strongly. “I think of our commitment to innovate our product offerings and insistence on consistently challenging what’s working today in favor of exploring what’s needed for tomorrow. We will utilize our increased size and network to drive market penetration and cross-sell our extensive and increasingly diversified product portfolio across our now more balanced geographic presence. We owe it to ourselves and to the customers we serve to continue leading in this way.”

To be in the fresh produce industry is to take on a dynamic world. Control and predictability are rare to have in hand, requiring balance in both the familiar and the unknown. With the right pieces in place, however, Johan has convinced me that this is a balancing act Dole plc is ready to perform.

But, don’t simply take me at my word—let’s shake on it. 🍷



From farms and ships to distribution centers, the newly merged Dole plc is now a truly integrated business with an enormous asset base for even better reach and service



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*Wishing you and your family
a safe and healthy holiday season!*



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An Experience Worth Savoring

By Jenna Plasterer

I was seven years old when I tasted my first real cherry. Not one of the bright red, extra sweet maraschino cherries you get in a Shirley Temple or on top of your ice cream sundae—an actual cherry.

I still remember it fondly to this day. It was life-altering.

From the first bite—a flavor explosion of juice—there was a perfect combination of sweet and tart that rocked my young tastebuds. From then on, I've been hooked, eagerly awaiting the moment each summer when I would walk into the produce department of my local grocery store, greeted by seas of crimson and garnet.

Although I border on poetic when discussing my beloved cherries, I think many other consumers feel the same way. In my mind, one of the truly special things about the bite-

sized fruit is its ability to conjure up memories and nostalgia. Eating them is an experience, not just a moment in time.

You can't just bite into a cherry, chew it, swallow, and be done. Nay, nay! It requires skill. One must use finesse to carefully maneuver around the pit, getting every tasty morsel of flesh without swallowing the hard shell. Then, there are the juices that stain your mouth and fingers—a must-have summer accessory—allowing you to stick your tongue out at friends and family so they can see the seasonal badge of honor you've earned by eating these delicious treats.

It's all of these things, on top of the knockout flavors, that keep shoppers counting down the days until cherry season. Likewise, it is consumer anticipation that inspires companies like Pacific Trellis Fruit and its brand Dulcinea Farms® to keep evolving their programs, offering the chance to enjoy cherries year-round.

"Five years ago, Pacific Trellis wasn't in the cherry business," **Dan Carapella Jr., Senior Sales Executive and Cherry Category Manager**, starts off by telling me. "Now, we are the third-largest combined cherry importer, with strong grower and retailer partners standing alongside us."



Currently, Pacific Trellis imports its cherries from Argentina and Chile from November to March. This gives shoppers the opportunity to take what was once just a summertime experience into the fall and winter seasons, while retailers gain another tool to add to their holiday merchandising arsenal. The unmistakable flavors and scents of cherries create optimal opportunities for cross-promotions in the produce aisles as consumers search for delicious ways to add flair to their celebratory meals. I mean, who can resist a warm cherry pie or a rich cherry glaze on a decadent holiday ham?

However, the grower isn't just revealing new opportunities for itself and its retail partners, it will also be sharing in the success with its Dulcinea Farms brand.

With that being said, January 2022 will be the first time Dulcinea-branded cherries will be offered to buyers.

Packed in standard 11 lb cartons and 1 lb clamshells, as well as 2 lb clamshells that will be offered for specialized programs, the inaugural season will include Bing, Lapins, Kordia, Regina, and Sweetheart varieties. Retailers will be able to display these gems on their shelves, capturing the attention not only of cherry lovers across the board, but fans of the popular Dulcinea brand. In combining the cherished category with a well-loved name, it seems to be a recipe for a surefire win.

"Dulcinea is a household name widely recognized for its quality fruit and commitment to freshness," Dan says, passionately explaining why this new venture is sure to be a hit. "When consumers see that name, they know they can trust our cherries to be flavorful."

But the brand attached to these cherries isn't the only special thing about them. Like Pacific Trellis' lineup, Dulcinea will also be importing the fruit from regions in Chile and Argentina, providing an increased window of opportunity to rack up category sales.

"The most unique aspect of our Dulcinea cherry program is our partnership with Extraberries, based out of Argentina," continues Dan. "Joining forces has allowed us to offer multiple varieties in our first year, extend the cherry season into March, and have import operations on both coasts."

On top of this pivotal partnership, Dulcinea is introducing vital measures to guarantee that retailers, and therefore shoppers, are able to get their hands on these cherries to stay in line with the pace of demand. With the persistence of shipping and transportation issues across the industry, only magnified by the import process, the company is taking the bull by the horns, revealing a new strategy to overcome these hurdles.

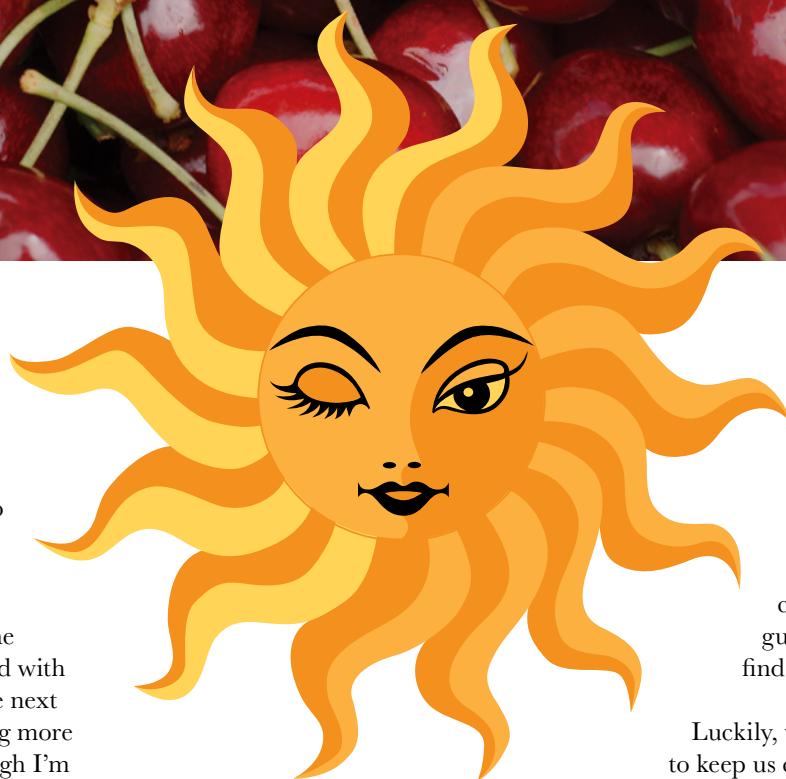
"Inbound logistics challenges remain one of the largest issues for fresh produce buyers and suppliers," Dan prefaces. "To combat this, we are planning to kick off our Packed in the USA program. Through the program, Pacific Trellis



“Five years ago, Pacific Trellis wasn’t in the cherry business. Now, we are the third-largest combined cherry importer, with strong grower and retailer partners standing alongside us.”

Dan Carapella Jr.,

Senior Sales Executive and Cherry
Category Manager, Pacific Trellis Fruit



will be able to grade and package cherries in the U.S., thereby reducing the time it takes to get to produce departments and into consumers’ carts.”

While this is just the start of Dulcinea’s cherry program, the brand is already looking ahead with Pacific Trellis, plotting out the next moves in their mission to bring more cherries to the masses. Although I’m not privy to the exact details, the brand will be growing.

“Cherries are one of the few truly seasonal items in the produce section. Every year, we see an increase in category demand, and we don’t expect that to slow down anytime soon. For Pacific Trellis, the Dulcinea cherries category will be a continued area of high focus as we move into the future,” Dan tips me off.


For now, Pacific Trellis is happy to report that high-quality cherries will be produced this year, and with them come new chances for growth.

“This season, we are anticipating a healthy crop and normal growing conditions,” Dan explains. “In addition, we are expecting the Chilean crop to grow almost 15 percent, creating new opportunities for expansion and for

consumers to enjoy our high-quality lineup.”

What will that mean for cherry lovers like me and so many others impatiently anticipating any and all category developments? I guess we will have to wait to find out.

Luckily, we have Dulcinea’s cherries to keep us company through the winter months, melding the essence of joy from recently passed hot summer months with the happiness that comes from the warmth of family and friends during the Northern Hemisphere’s chilly holiday season.

So, just try and resist that warm cherry pie. Or, rather, give in. Its buttery sweet scent is whispering to me from the kitchen—and when cherries call, I come running, ready to make more mouthwatering memories. 

RISKING to RISE

A Q&A WITH KATHLEEN TRIOU,
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
FRESH SOLUTIONS NETWORK

By LILIAN DIEP

Innovation is a word we love to use in our industry to discuss what's new and what we can expect. By definition, to innovate is to make changes in something established, to introduce new methods, ideas, or products we haven't seen before. I would add that it is the ability to look into the future and figure out how to keep an image or brand fresh.

For many companies out there, innovation is already a part of their strategy, a necessary risk to grow.

For others, it is a business better left to the nimble and agile. I believe that risk is inherent to innovation and only the risk-takers will rise. But, what is it about innovation that keeps us constantly chasing after it? Why are we, as an industry, concerned with what comes next or what changes will be coming down the pipeline?

Because consumers demand it.

Consumers are always looking for the next big thing to try, a dish to satisfy their wanderlust, a flavor yet to be explored, a product to be discovered. And companies like

Fresh Solutions Network (FSN) with its brand of fresh potatoes, Side Delights®, are on the frontlines, delivering time and time again the convenience, taste, and value shoppers will invest in. For FSN, innovation is as inherent to the Network as growing potatoes.

The potato may have humble origins, but the potential this produce powerhouse delivers is not one to underestimate—especially with President and Chief Executive Officer Kathleen Triou at the helm. Innovation is to be expected at FSN, alongside its other pillars of strength, and I couldn't wait to dive into this network of growers and suppliers 13-years-young to discover the inner machinations behind the staple category.



LILIAN DIEP: Kathleen, we saw a major pivot in our industry during the pandemic as consumers shifted from dining out to eating in. Now more than ever, shoppers are on the lookout for easy and healthy ways to get dinner on the table, and Fresh Solutions Network

is consistently endeavoring to meet demands from both retailers and shoppers. How does the network maintain its presence in the market?

KATHLEEN TRIOU, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, FRESH SOLUTIONS NETWORK:

In our Network, we always strive for excellence in three areas we consider critically important to our buyers: customer service, product quality, and innovation.



Customer service is a major pillar of our network because we all know business is better when you like who you are working with.

At FSN, we combine that sentiment with our full grower coverage and dedicated sales support to deliver the best product available 52 weeks a year. We are also attuned to major events year-round so we can provide in-store merchandising support that picks up around the holidays and key sporting events to drive interest and relevance for shoppers every season.

Product quality is another area we focus on. Beyond our adherence to product specs and our established goals to be available all year—part of our recipe for success within the Fresh Solutions Network—our crop growing, harvesting, storage, and transportation approach is rooted in many, many generations of farmer wisdom.

Fresh Solutions Network combines sustainable farming practices—and a little luck—with that wisdom to grow our gorgeous, nutritious potatoes that can satisfy even the pickiest of shoppers.

Lastly, we value innovation. Our focus on making potatoes convenient and interesting for consumers has made us an industry leader in value-added, convenient products. From our six-SKU Side Delights Steamables™ line to Bakeables®, Roastables®, and Flavorables®, we aim to help consumers include potatoes in their dinner options more frequently.

LD: It sounds like those areas are a major driving force for FSN and Side Delights. I know customer service is a central part of any industry, so following through with quality and ingenuity keeps the relationship strong with buyers and customers. With that in mind, how has FSN continued to stay competitive? What strategies did the Network implement in recent years, and throughout the pandemic, to continue meeting these demands?

KT: Most importantly, we take care of our current customers first. We develop and grow our relationship with our customers over time, and that's including the highs and lows. So, when an unforeseen situation comes up, be it a pandemic or significant weather event that impacts the crop or shipping, we have contingency plans in place to execute for our customers.

Building on our customer-first tenet to enhance our value proposition, our network design is strategic as well: the best farmers in the best growing areas situated in different regions of the country. This distribution of growing and shipping centers, combined with the strength of the network partnerships, is how we stay competitive during both the good and challenging times. Additionally, our *Grown Where It Matters* promotion is spot on and addresses today's shoppers' desires and demands.

Our program offers retailers digital and in-store communications to educate shoppers about the growing regions of Side Delights offerings, allowing them to learn and share the passion our farmers have for growing high-quality products.

"IN OUR NETWORK, WE ALWAYS STRIVE FOR EXCELLENCE IN THREE AREAS WE CONSIDER CRITICALLY IMPORTANT TO OUR BUYERS: CUSTOMER SERVICE, PRODUCT QUALITY, AND INNOVATION."

Kathleen Triou,

**President and Chief Executive Officer,
Fresh Solutions Network**



"MOST IMPORTANTLY, WE TAKE CARE OF OUR CURRENT CUSTOMERS FIRST. WE DEVELOP AND GROW OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH OUR CUSTOMERS OVER TIME, AND THAT'S INCLUDING THE HIGHS AND LOWS."



LD: With a customer-first mindset, I see how that would translate to going above and beyond what is expected of you, both as growers and as innovators. As we look toward the new year, what are some goals or ambitions FSN will strive to meet in 2022?

KT: We have many! On the farming side, we're continuing to test new varieties in various soil types all across the country to find the next best potato type for each of our farms. We're also continuing to invest in artificial intelligence and robotics to enhance our ability to deliver the best potatoes to our customers on schedule and at a competitive price.


Another ambition we have is meeting—nay, exceeding—our environmental standards. As generational farmers, sustainability is very important to us, and we are actively working on launching a new sustainable product package in the future. We've seen various packaging versions released this year. While the packaging is definitely headed in the right direction, we are taking a bit more time in research and development to ensure that the right materials, form factor, and marketing strategies are utilized to ensure retail success.

LD: Sounds like an exciting year ahead! With 2021 winding down, I know the Network has some projects in the works to make 2022 a successful year. What can we expect Fresh Solutions Network and Side Delights to innovate next?

KT: At this time, we are currently working on some amazing concepts that we are excited to show to our customers. While I can't divulge the details yet, I can assure you it will combine our core values: customer service, product quality, and, above all else, innovation. We consistently bring convenient and exciting products to the market, so we cannot wait to showcase our hard work and bring it to fruition.

Having entered the conversation with a plethora of questions, I leave with just as much excitement and intrigue at what's to come. Once again, our industry has delighted both the consumer and trade writer in me, providing encouragement to keep an eye—and a mind—open to the innovations left to explore.

This past year, we bore witness to how our industry could pivot to meet unprecedented challenges, and the new year is just waiting to witness all that we can bring to the table.

With 2023 as the next finish line, will you be chasing innovation and change alongside me? 



SNACK CHAT

BY
LILIAN
DIEP

The allure of the value-added sector never fails to deliver—and for good reason. With the jam-packed schedule the average consumer runs through on any given day, having easy, convenient options to whip together and enjoy has become an essential part of the retail shelf. Not to mention nutrition; consumers are more mindful of what is being put into the product just as much as the taste. So, what's a buyer to do? We tapped some fresh-fueled suppliers to get their opinions on how to best maximize the lucrative sector...



ALEXANDRA RAE MOLUMBY, Marketing Manager, Bako Sweet®

“Like many, I was headed to a holiday party and didn’t have time to make a fancy recipe. I bought a microwavable fresh produce steam bag, dressed it up with olive oil, and no one knew the difference. I even got compliments! Sweet potatoes are in high demand during this time of year, and organic value-added products continue to be a fan favorite. To meet that demand, we have three new organic sweet potato steam bags that are triple-washed and ready to enjoy. By offering value-added organic sweet potatoes, shoppers can count on our Bako Sweet® steam bags for a large meal or microwaved as a single sweet for a quick snack.”



MARK MUNGER, Vice President of Marketing and Strategy, 4Earth Farms™

“Every year, the holidays are a busy time for everyone trying to juggle work and family obligations. Value-added produce solutions offer the convenience that makes meal preparation easier and more manageable for time-starved families. 4Earth’s washed-and-ready-to-prepare line of trimmed Brussels sprouts, trimmed green beans, and sugar snap peas are a perfect fit for flavorful holiday menus. And, just in time for the holidays, we are excited to be introducing our newest value-added items—12 oz broccoli and cauliflower florets and 16 oz cauliflower rice. Our 4Earth value-added line is a convenient way to wrap up 2021!”



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

“Every retailer has a different strategy in how they want to merchandise product. Giorgio Fresh believes that understanding each customer’s unique strategy is key, so we offer customizable merchandising to fit every plan. Space allocation is extremely important in the mushroom category. It can be a great opportunity to do some simple testing with expanded sets to see and compare results. If there are too many value-added SKUs and not enough room, sales will be challenged. SKUs and space are intricately linked, so sales to space ratios need to be part of the planning. We believe that a complete category review makes good strategic sense to determine the effectiveness of layout and merchandising.”





KATHLEEN TRIOU,

President and Chief Executive Officer,
Fresh Solutions Network

"The holiday season and value-added potatoes go together like hot cocoa and marshmallows: each is amazing on their own, but even better when enjoyed together. The holidays, while festive and fun, are a lot of work! It only makes sense to reach for value-added potatoes to get the job done. The fresh potato brand of Side Delights® delivers the convenience and taste consumers are looking for across our Steamables™, Bakeables®, and Flavorables® lines. Potatoes complement nearly all world cuisines and have a heart-warming flavor all of their own. We know that potatoes are consumers' #1 favorite vegetable and side dish, so why mess around with anything else when you know you and your family will love them. Happy Holidays!"



BIL GOLDFIELD,

Director of Corporate Communications,
Dole plc

"While the pandemic-era surge in fresh fruit and vegetable sales and consumption has mostly returned to pre-COVID levels, there are signs that the emphasis on cooking at home will continue, making Dole's Chopped! salad kits and Fresh Takes™ ready-to-eat salads bowls more popular than ever. Savvy retailers can capitalize on this customer motivation through fully stocked displays, in-store messaging, and support programs that showcase value-added produce as healthy, quick, and a foundation for kitchen experimentation. It's important to show shoppers that value-added products allow them to combine their need for convenience with their desire to create something new, even at the simplest level."



NELIA ALAMO,

Vice President of Communications,
Calavo Growers/Renaissance Food Group

"Shoppers continue to focus on fresh, healthy options, but at the same time seek convenience and a variety of flavorful choices. Value-added produce can mean the convenience of Calavo's grab-and-go bags of fresh avocados, or shelf-ready options such as our ready-to-eat guacamoles, salsa, and dips. As meal preparation at home also continues, consumers are still looking for help with meal ideas, which is where our Renaissance Food Group's Chef Essentials and Veggie Starters lines of prepped and ready-to-use produce items can offer time savings and healthy inspiration for home culinary creations."



WTF DO I DO WITH DOLE® Strawberries ?

{ what the fork }



DOLE'S FRUITY CHRISTMAS TREE WITH CRANBERRY-GINGER DIP

INGREDIENTS

36 DOLE® Strawberries, hulled
1 lb DOLE Green Grapes
½ DOLE Pineapple, peeled, pitted, and cut into **1"** pieces, plus additional **½"** cross section
1 ripe DOLE Banana, peeled and mashed
⅓ cup gluten-free dark chocolate chips
2 tsp coconut oil, melted
¼ cup desiccated or macaroon coconut
¼ cup white chocolate chips
1 container (5.3 oz) vanilla almond milk or yogurt alternative
¼ cup less sugar dried cranberries, finely chopped
¼ tsp grated fresh ginger

ADDITIONAL

1 (11 x 4") Styrofoam™ cone
1 (4") wooden skewer
120 toothpicks, plus additional for serving

Prep Time: 1 hr
Cook Time: 2–3 min
Servings: 12

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Line a rimmed baking pan with parchment paper. Place grapes, pineapple pieces, and strawberries in single layer on prepared pan. Heat dark chocolate chips in a small microwave-safe bowl in microwave oven on high for 1 minute 20 seconds, or until melted, stirring every 20 seconds. Stir in oil. Drizzle fruit with chocolate mixture; sprinkle with coconut and refrigerate 20 minutes or until chocolate is hardened.
- 2 To make the Cranberry-Ginger Dip, heat white chocolate chips in a medium microwave-safe bowl in microwave oven on high for 1 minute 20 seconds, or until melted, stirring every 20 seconds. Whisk in yogurt, banana, cranberries, and ginger.
- 3 Wrap cone in aluminum foil. Using a 3" star-shaped cookie cutter, cut a star from pineapple cross section; thread star onto skewer. Insert toothpicks into cone to create "Christmas tree branches." Then, carefully thread grapes, strawberries, and pineapple pieces onto toothpick "branches." Insert pineapple star onto top of "tree."
- 4 Enjoy with Cranberry-Ginger Dip and additional toothpicks for a fun holiday treat!

To learn more about DOLE, visit www.dole.com



THE EYE OF THE STORM

By Chandler James



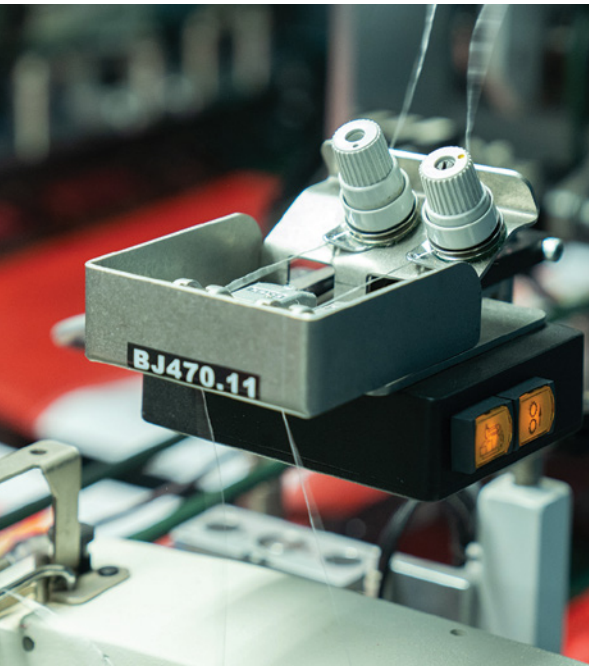
KEITH FOX,
President, Fox Packaging

It is calm at the center of a hurricane. Swirling, dark clouds engulf the never-ending sky around us, but still, in this place, our world remains intact.

I have not survived through such an event—not literally, anyway. But I know for many, the reality of COVID-19 was a natural disaster all its own.

And in the eye of the storm was Fox Packaging and Fox Solutions.

“Our vision is maintained,” says Keith Fox, President of Fox Packaging, when I ask how the pandemic changed Fox’s long-term plans. “COVID-19 brought



about some new terminology, but ultimately—pre-COVID and post-COVID—we work to earn the partnership of fresh produce growers, packers, and shippers through innovative designs, consistent quality, and excellent service. We aim to be the premier packaging partner for the fresh produce industry.”

Keith sees the absolute surprise on my face and continues.

“COVID-19 showed us what we could do when it comes to producing for our customers—24 hours a day, seven days a week. It wasn’t perfect, but we learned about coming together,” he elaborates. “Our employees shone through and exemplified a dedication that demonstrated the culture we’ve been able to build throughout our years in business. People are at the center of our company; our success as packaging leaders is in our ability to enable our employees to overcome challenges.”

While a people-centric proposition is often characteristic of our industry, I quickly realize that Fox Packaging truly has a vision all its own. In March 2020, the provider’s teams took a collective deep breath, and rather than scramble to the source of the problem, they decided to divide and conquer.

“Instead of dedicating our workforce to the immediate need of running product, we designated teams whose separate focuses are on developing how Fox Packaging and Fox Solutions will be positioned in the coming years,” Keith tells me. “Although the ‘all-hands-on-deck’ approach

was a viable option, now having made it past the first few waves of unprecedented demand for flexible packaging, we are pleased with how we allocated our response teams.”

The world may seem unchanged when there are clear skies above you, but Fox and its teams looked straight into the storm and witnessed the holistic changes taking place in the packaging sector. Executive Vice President of Fox Packaging, Craig Fox, relays that the company saw the forest for the trees, taking these historic market shifts and turning them

into secret weapons.



CRAIG FOX,

Executive
Vice President,
Fox Packaging

“Prices were increased across many facets of our supply chain, film was not readily available, and, all the while, orders were being

stacked and demand was increasing phenomenally. Despite this, sustainability did not take a back seat, as our team prioritized research of material types and design optimization. By using this data and reinforcing our supplier relationships, we improved the efficiency of our product line,” Craig divulges, noting how this growth has paved the way for new fresh produce implementations as well. “Flexible packaging applications continue to expand to new product lines and types; the stand-up pouch bag is a staple that has now

“...ultimately—pre-COVID and post-COVID—we work to earn the partnership of fresh produce growers, packers, and shippers through innovative designs, consistent quality, and excellent service.”

- Keith Fox, President, Fox Packaging

transitioned to e-commerce as it is a convenient design for store presentation and shipping and reduces product touchpoints. As automation technology advances, packaging will continue to be a design of preference for both buyers and consumers.”

While accelerated demand is certainly central to the conversation, packaging as a whole has been given a new lease on life.

“The way people are talking about packaging has changed tremendously; there is now an attention to detail that was not there prior,” he says. “Questions are being asked that would not have been in the conversation years ago, and Fox Packaging is excited for this. These conversations give opportunities to fortify our position in the circular economy as converters, and we can educate our customers in a way that sets us apart competitively.”

Fox isn’t just sitting around waiting for those questions to be asked. In fact, Victoria Lopez, Marketing for Fox Packaging, is posing several of them herself. And trust me, there are plenty more that did not fit in these pages.

“When you transition from one packaging application to another, it is important to make comparisons to the end performance. Did you reduce the overall use of plastic in size and weight? Is it recyclable? Were fewer resources used during manufacturing? Quantify your data and share it with your audience, because, in terms of sustainability, each difference contributes to overall change and influences your brand’s reputation for being transparent in your decision-making. This is an honest way to build consumer loyalty to your brand,” Victoria explains.



VICTORIA LOPEZ,
Marketing,
Fox Packaging

Keith jumps back in, telling me how the review of designs and materials has continued to stay at the forefront of Fox’s packaging conversations. I have long been

aware of the company’s commitment to sustainability, but my interview with these packaging thought leaders reinforced that knowledge.

“We have been proactive in communicating the importance of reviewing your packaging program to ensure the key features are addressed in an environmentally mindful way. Our sister company, Fox Solutions, has been working alongside us in review of our Stand-Up Pouch Program as we continue to develop designs that stand out on the shelf and can be seamlessly packed with pouch bagging automation,” Keith tells me. “Part of our culture is nurturing respectful and professional relationships. We understand our customers’ needs; in turn, our customers can reach out to us with packaging concept ideas and our team will realistically approach them. This type of collaboration is key when selecting a packaging partner.”

A refreshing passion for the produce industry is also at the forefront of Fox’s business. The provider is not simply bringing packaging to market, but it is introducing innovations

in partnership with its fruit and vegetable customers. Aaron Fox, Executive Vice President of Fox Packaging and President of Fox Solutions, explains this to me in detail.

“Being part of the fresh produce sector is integral to our lives; we look at the industry in a very considerate way. It’s an accomplishment for our employees to see the finished bag packed and sitting on the store shelf. There is a huge sense of pride there, and that is reflected in the work we do every day,” Aaron says. “We are a packaging partner who will offer honest feedback and will recommend solutions suitable for your product and operations. There are new conversations happening in our industry, and we want our team to be the partner you go to



AARON FOX,
Executive Vice
President,
Fox Packaging, and
President,
Fox Solutions





“...sustainability did not take a back seat, as our team prioritized research of material types and design optimization.”

- Craig Fox, Executive Vice President, Fox Packaging

when you need straightforward information, even on challenging subjects.”

Craig echoes these sentiments.

“Fox Packaging’s innovative culture can be attributed to our many years of service to the fresh produce industry. To be a continued resource to retailers, we have joined our customers in understanding various pain points such as sustainable design, messaging, distribution, and automation solutions. We have worked diligently to adapt our products to offer greater value-added options to be a direct packaging solution and partner,” he tells me. “Whether you are introducing a new pouch program or rebranding your product, there is always a way to capitalize on your packaging program that contributes to the story your brand wants to tell.”

This “brand story” takes me back to a topic that has come up several times in our discussion: design. With branding serving such a pivotal role in the success of today’s companies, the design aspect of Fox’s packaging innovations is not to be overlooked.

“The design allows brands to highlight their story through colors, messaging, and by communicating how they align with the consumer’s lifestyle,” Aaron points out. “Not only is communication through high graphics an enormous benefit,

the sustainability features of a Fox Stand-Up Combo bag structure offer reduced carbon emission in transport due to the lightweight nature of the bag. As members of the Sustainable Packaging Coalition, our Polyethylene pouch bag can feature the Store Drop-Off iconography, communicating its recyclability in participating store programs. We are sourcing our materials responsibly and qualifying them according to strict specifications. Ultimately, this contributes to a greater sustainable impact as the intent is to contribute to a circular economy with materials that add value to end markets.”

Marketing-free education, as Victoria calls it, is at the heart of Fox’s packaging designs.

“This idea is so important because, many times, the desired solution actually has a worse carbon footprint, environmental ramifications, or infrastructure shortcomings. Ideally, we should be designing, producing, and promoting based on scientific reality, not simply based on public perception and demand,” she asserts. “It’s crucial to work together to help consumers dispose of waste and recyclable materials successfully. It’s not necessary that plastic should be villainized. It serves us in so many different and convenient ways.”

Aside from the product itself, Fox offers automated solutions

to support its partners from the packhouse to the store shelf. The company’s automated packaging equipment offers a competitive edge with the ability to control production output, reduce overall waste, and accommodate various packaging formats without significant tooling, as Aaron explains.

“For over 50 years, we have walked through our doors with the intention of improving packaging standards, being a better packaging solution, and a more valuable advocate for the supply chain. The benefits our products provide have been amazing to watch unfold—not just in the lives of our customers and retailers, but in the homes of those from our communities,” Aaron summarizes.

That is a fresh produce vision if I’ve ever heard of one.

While our story may have begun with a focus on COVID-19, that is certainly no longer where we find ourselves as we reach the end of this page.

Storms will come and go, only that is certain. A life without them is not.

Strategically positioned in the eye of the hurricane, the Fox Packaging and Fox Solutions teams are not simply basking in the sun, but guiding their partners toward clearer skies. ☀



MIXED BERRY COBBLER CUPS

INGREDIENTS

- 5 cups** North Bay Produce Berries (rinsed and patted dry)
- 1 cup** sugar (divided in half)
- 2 tsp** lemon juice
- 1 tsp** vanilla extract
- 1 cup** flour
- ½ cup** yellow cornmeal
- 2 tsp** baking powder
- 1 tsp** salt
- 1 cup** half-and-half or coconut milk (from a can, stirred)
- 6 tbsp** melted butter
- 8** ramekin bowls

Prep Time: 20 min

Cook Time: 40–60 min

Servings: 8 ramekins

DIRECTIONS

- 1** Preheat oven to 350° F. Place 8 oven-proof ramekins on a rimmed baking sheet and apply nonstick cooking spray.
- 2** Place berries in a large bowl and pour lemon juice and ½ cup of the sugar over the top. Toss until coated. Divide evenly into ramekins.
- 3** In a medium-sized bowl, mix remaining sugar, flour, cornmeal, baking powder, and salt. Whisk to combine. Pour in half and half (or coconut milk if using), vanilla, and melted butter. Whisk until smooth.
- 4** Spoon batter evenly over fruit in ramekins.
- 5** Bake cobbler cups for 40–45 minutes, or until edges are bubbling and tops are golden. Cool 10 minutes before serving. Enjoy with ice cream if desired!



To learn more about North Bay Produce, visit www.northbayproduce.com



INNOVATIVE INROADS

By Anne Allen

A lone figure cuts
across the field...

Steve Gill founded Gill's Onions with his brother, David, in 1983, under three guiding principles: innovation, conservation, and sustainability

If we zoom our mental camera, our eyes will adjust to see Steve Gill, the man who stands tall at the epicenter of Gill's Onions. If we pull back the camera, we'll soar over the onion grower's operations, which covers miles of California's growing regions.

It's difficult, but not impossible, to come back down to Earth and see the scope of Steve's vision for both his operation and the land itself.

But, I'm getting ahead of myself.

Let's rewind the clock, shall we? Take a breath and settle into the founding of Gill's Onions. Steve and David

Gill, both farming brothers, both determined to bring high-quality and sustainably-grown onions to market, opened the operation in 1983.

Alongside supply-side expertise, three core values guided the brothers' goals: innovation, conservation, and sustainability.

It is the last value that I pause on as Steve, President and Owner; myself; and Megan Jacobsen, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, dial into the layers of this principle.

"Sustainability and regenerative ag have been a staple of Gill's ever since our founding," Steve tells me, already off and running as the conversation begins to unfold. "We worked for a long time to achieve zero waste at our facility. Soil health is our main focus now for regenerative ag, because we want to cut down on the commercial fertilizers which were being used extensively since World War II. Now, we've got to go back and fix the soil to help get healthier crops. That's what we're doing with our onion program and some of our vegetable operations. We're just gradually incorporating more soil health routines because we learned how to use these products."

Utilizing drip irrigation, soil health, and a fertility program, Gill's has cut down on nitrogen fertilizers by up to 50 percent. As we talk more, I realize the scope of this achievement.

The development of a program that reduces nitrogen and still produces a product known for its quality is nothing short of amazing.

"We have healthier plants which have less disease, less pests, and we get higher quality onions to allow us to have the 18-day shelf-life compared to our competition," Steve notes. "Megan can speak to this better than me, but an attribute of our program is that our customers don't have to worry about quality."

Amen, echoes Megan, as we all share a laugh—low levels of complaints is always a plus when it comes to the high-volume world of national distribution to foodservice operators.

"You know, I met Steve through our passion for soil health," Megan interjects, expounding upon why she wanted to focus on sustainability for this piece.



Gill's Onions is a leader in regenerative ag, bringing time-honored tradition to new ways of thinking

"Sustainability and regenerative ag have been a staple of Gill's ever since our founding."

Steve Gill,
President and Owner,
Gill's Onions



“That’s really what brought me to Gill’s, because sustainability is at the core of our company.”

Our conversation steers toward a key aspect of Gill’s sustainability program: its anaerobic digester, which was brought on site in 2018.

“We used to haul hundreds and thousands of pounds a week to the field, and what we do now is shred all the product waste, extract the juice from it—which reduces our solid waste by 75 percent—and take that juice and put it into the anaerobic digester. That way we can create methane gas, which is then put into microturbines to generate electricity,” Steve explains.

In that process of converting the waste to gas, the company sequesters over 30,000 tons of CO₂ per year.

“Rather than the waste decomposing on its own in a field and releasing carbon and methane gas, we capture it all for energy,” Steve relates. “There are no emissions and the engines in the microturbines are extremely clean.”

Expected to be finalized at the end of 2021, the microturbines are but one of many examples of how committed the Gill’s operation is to sustainability.

I circle back and ask about the remaining 25 percent of solid waste, which Steve assures me is taken care of. That is processed into cattle feed for dairies in Bakersfield, California, bringing the company’s total waste conversion to 99.3 percent.

“Steve realized in the early 2000s that he had a waste problem,” Megan continues. “And with Steve being the visionary that he is, he saw a waste problem and found a solution when no one thought a solution existed.”

From the field to the processing facility, even to the truckloads leaving that facility, Steve is asking one vital question: How can Gill’s Onions be part of a sustainable solution?

“My first week on the job, our Head of Sustainability, Laura Hamman, told me, ‘If we’re ever 100-percent zero waste, then we’re missing the point,’”

“...we differentiate ourselves from other onion suppliers because we’re so unique in what we do with our waste and how we handle it.”

Steve Gill



From the field to the processing facility, Gill's Onions is always asking how it can be a part of a sustainable solution

Megan exclaims. "Because the point of sustainability is that you're always looking for new avenues and inroads to find new sustainable solutions."

Steve points out that the attitude surrounding sustainability lends itself to Gill's customers, as well.

"Customers want to have a story to tell about us, you know? The more unique we are, the better it is for them. And we differentiate ourselves from other onion suppliers because we're so unique in what we do with our waste and how we handle it," Steve says, pride making his words glow. "There are all kinds of business models, and I think I like mine the best."

I can't help but smile as he says this; it reminds me so much of my dad and his

approach to business. If my father can do it himself, he'll find a way to do just that.

"I didn't want to be put in the position where I had to depend on another company to deal with our waste. Part of my business model is to take care of everything and not be dependent on anybody to help us," Steve emphasizes.


It goes without saying that Steve is a salt-of-the-earth farmer, a man who implements the saying "actions speak louder than words" into everything he does.

"Oh, yeah," he agrees, as I put this statement out in front of him. "I've put my money where my mouth is."

As a vertically integrated operation, Gill's grows onions to get to the end

consumer. Both Megan and Steve highlight the importance of this, as there's a vested interest on their behalf to bring the best quality possible to market.

"Our onions are non-GMO. That's a big deal," Steve says, taking us down another lane of regenerative ag benefits. "With the reduction of pesticides and fungicides, we feel that our fertility program is on par with organic, although it's not certified as organic. That's the part of regenerative ag that I live by: finding the best way to grow crops and produce healthy, clean food."

Where we get our produce matters. As we confront environmental issues and supply chain challenges, the industry needs a man in its corner to fight the good fight. Luckily, as the camera focuses again, we have Steve Gill. 



A Closer Look at Mann Packing Co. Nourish Bowls®

By Jordan Okumura

If you had told me 10 years ago that I'd be cooking my veggies in the microwave and liking them, I would have told you I was not a fan of frozen dinners or frozen vegetables and reminded you of what industry I worked in. But, the beauty of being a leading product visionary in our industry is that those old mindsets appear as rules meant to be broken and tools designed to be reimaged.


Enter Mann Packing Co. and the launch of its new Nourish Bowls® Sauté Style Veggie Meals in Southwest Chipotle, Creamy Roasted Garlic & Kale, and Sesame Sriracha. Flavor-forward, on-the-

go consumers can tap gourmet ease with these all-in-one dishes prepared in the microwave in just three minutes. This is not your grandmother's frozen dinner, but the crossroads of fresh and convenient.

With cooler temps guiding shoppers toward warmer food options, these comforting blends of fresh vegetables, hearty grains, and plant-based proteins are spicing up consumers' grocery lists and imaginations. Add in a color palette of eye-energizing and distinct labels, and retailers have a memory maker and a sales driver waiting to be tapped.

UP CLOSE

When the Nourish Bowls® Creamy Roasted Garlic & Kale recipe first crossed my desk, the enticing combination of butternut squash, kale, kohlrabi, and brown rice tossed in a warm, creamy, roasted garlic sauce made all my experiential senses perk. In my world, mindful meals that deliver on vision and flavor are not as common as they might seem and are a welcome gift from those passionate companies helping to lead the flavor edge like Mann's.

So, will I be putting my veggies in the microwave anytime soon? You can bet your bottom (or top) dollar I will. 



WTF DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

Yes! Apples
KORU® Apples ?



APPLE AND SAGE POTATO PANCAKES

Recipe by Marley Goldin for Yes! Apples

INGREDIENTS

- 3 KORU® Apples, peeled (save the skins to make apple scrap cider vinegar)
- 2 russet potatoes, peeled
- 1 large egg
- 1½ **tbsp** all-purpose flour
- 1 **tbsp** chopped fresh sage (or substitute 1 **tsp** dried sage)
- ½ **tsp** ground cinnamon
- Sea salt to taste
- Olive oil for frying
- Optional: warm honey and whipped mascarpone cheese for topping

Prep Time: 10 min

Cook Time: 15 min

Servings: 6–8 pancakes

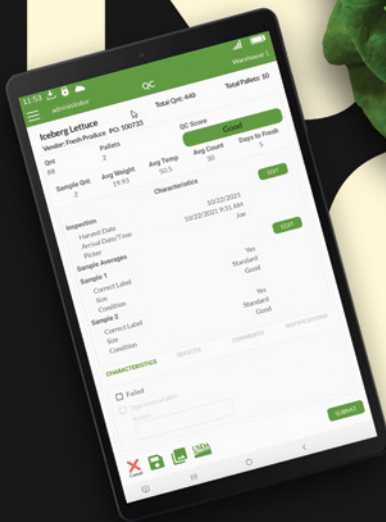
DIRECTIONS

- 1 Grate apples and potatoes using the large side of a box grater.
- 2 Use a cheesecloth (or layered paper towels) to squeeze out excess liquid from apples and potatoes. When most of the liquid is removed, transfer apples and potatoes to a large mixing bowl.
- 3 Add egg, flour, sage, and cinnamon. Combine with clean hands.
- 4 In a large frying pan or cast iron skillet, warm about 2 **tbsp** olive oil over medium heat for about 5 minutes. The oil is hot when a tiny bit of mixture bubbles immediately.
- 5 Use your hands to form a patty from the apple and potato mixture. Try to divide the mixture into 6–8 even-sized patties.
- 6 Fry pancakes in a single layer until golden-brown on the first side, about 5 minutes. Flip over and cook for an additional 5 minutes.
- 7 Transfer potato pancakes onto a paper towel to absorb excess oil. Salt to taste while still hot.
- 8 Repeat steps 6 and 7, adding oil as needed.
- 9 Top with warm honey and mascarpone cheese, or serve as is!

Yes! Apples®

To learn more about Yes! Apples, visit yesapples.com

Tactical TECH NOLOGY



By Anne Allen

With the right minds at the table, technological efficiency will never plateau.

If there's anything I've run across in my time clocked in the produce industry, it's that technological advancements are par for the course—and progressive companies steering those advancements are never satisfied with one innovation.

They're always hungry for more.

For Famous Software, the solutions provider has been keeping its finger on the industry pulse since 1975. Whenever a call rings out for help, Famous is there to answer it.

"Right now, it's labor," begins Heather Hammack, President, emphasizing that the dwindling workforce is something everyone is dealing with. "It's a huge challenge, and one of our underlying objectives as a technology company is to help people gain efficiency, right?"

Introducing the new theme of its Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) package, Famous is highlighting this desire to see efficiency across all aspects of the business. For customers, they'll be faced with a new ERP home screen with support resources, which allows for the Famous team to continually communicate additional ways they can use the software productively. The screen space has also been maximized and enhanced with a more contemporary look and feel to optimize the user experience.



“We invest millions of dollars in technology on behalf of our customer base. With all that we do and deliver, I think they really see the return on that investment.”

Heather Hammack,
President, Famous Software

“It’s a system they use every day, so we want them to easily access helpful information,” Heather notes. “We invest millions of dollars in technology on behalf of our customer base. With all that we do and deliver, I think they really see the return on that investment.”

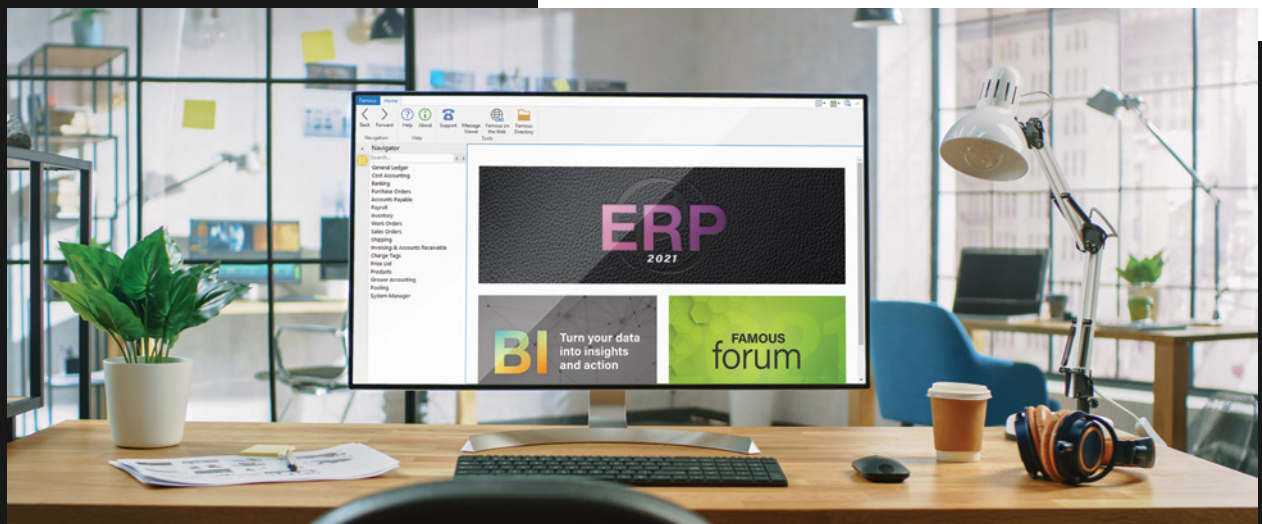
On top of the new theme, Famous regularly updates its ERP two times a year and its other product lines every quarter. In those releases, it includes new screens for salespeople to help them access data quicker, such as sales order lists, through dates, and drill-downs.

Updates also reached across FIS, which includes the elimination of data entry and updating through electronic trading; Business Intelligence (BI), which allows users to make real-time decisions by visualizing data through interactive, fully customizable dashboards and reports; and Warehouse Management System (WMS), the last of which Heather and I take a pause on.

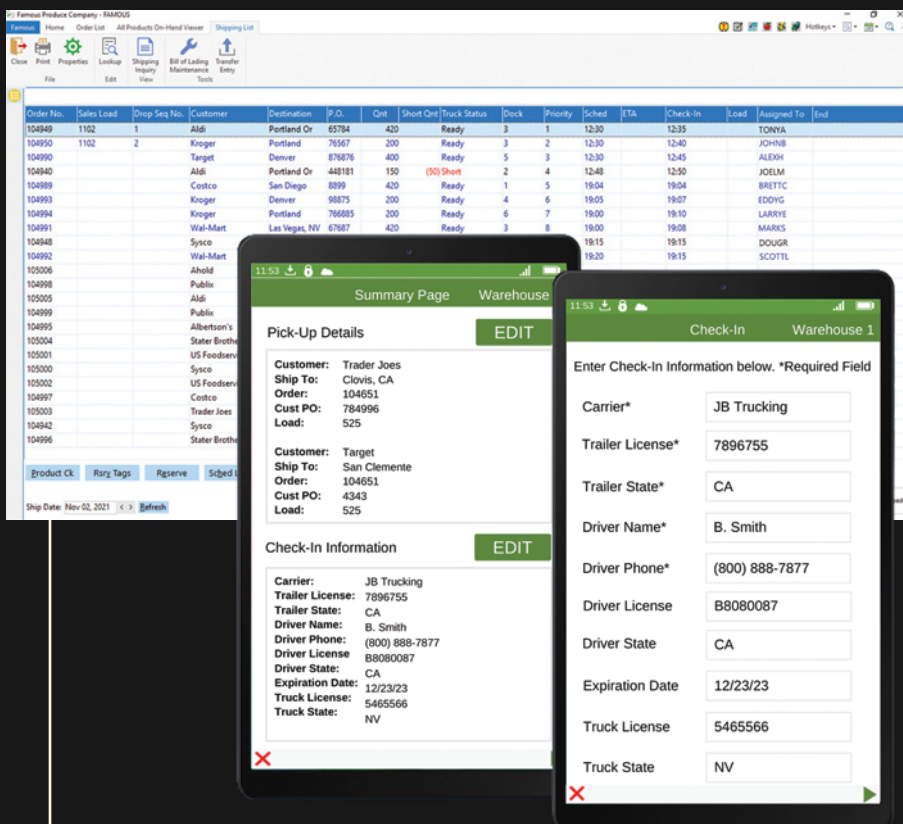
“One of the really cool things we’re building into WMS right now is assigning forklift drivers on what we call ‘the shipping list.’ We sign in loaders from this list so forklift drivers don’t have to come into the office at all. Trucks check-in through a kiosk to eliminate contact, and all real-time data on shipping dock activity relates how effective the warehouse and employees have been on picking and loading product for the day,” Heather relates. “It keeps the labor very directed. There’s no hunting for product slowing down loads.”

Another time-saving efficiency with WMS is the addition of a truck check-in app, which allows the truck driver to check-in for their order or group of orders. Instead of Famous’ customers having to worry about checking in the truck, it’s the truck driver who does it. Utilizing WMS also allows for easier repacking, as the issuing of input tags saves time and money.

“The complex needs of our customers have always driven our solutions,” Heather asserts. “We’re satisfying customer needs with customer service, because if a shipment gets delayed, that directly impacts the customer and the supply chain.”



Famous Software helps customers see efficiency across all aspects of their business, especially with the launch of its new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) package theme



Ultimately, we will continue to build on this platform to help companies make decisions about getting the right product on the right truck and going to the right customer.

Innovative solutions are always close at hand as Famous Software works diligently to bring effective strategies to the produce industry

Famous' continued investment in technology means new applications like the truck check-in hit the market just in time to service clients' needs. One such app is the Quality Control (QC) app, designed to be completely integrated with Famous ERP, meaning people don't need to run multiple systems.

"Every picture and data point shows up in Famous. All the inspection plans are created in Famous," Heather emphasizes. "Ultimately, we will continue to build on this platform to help companies make decisions about getting the right product on the right truck and going to the right customer."

As the ongoing effects of COVID-19 continue to ripple out, Famous Software has seen several of its products in high demand, including the Famous Integrated Services mentioned earlier.

"Instead of a customer keying in a sales order for Walmart, Walmart sends it over electronically, and they import it into our system. They don't have to key things in, which is huge given that it can take valuable minutes to key in a sales order. That might not immediately seem significant, but when you multiply that by a hundred orders a day, it becomes someone's full-time job. And we eliminate the need for that," Heather explains.

The near-constant innovation at Famous Software means Heather and her team are building an architecture that can withstand the challenges our industry faces.

"ERP is the foundation for everything, right?" Heather says. "I'm in so deep with these platforms that sometimes it's hard to float up to the 50,000-foot-level, but what we're hearing from our customers is that we're able to build what they need. As you know, answering the different demands of the produce industry isn't easy, but that's what makes it exciting."

Improving and enhancing on behalf of the customer is only part of the Famous Software puzzle. Heather's ready enthusiasm to get into the weeds of technological efficiency is what drives the company forward.

"I know it sounds cliché," Heather says with a bit of a knowing smile, "but we make innovations to help our customers grow. We get to help them build their businesses and construct them to run as efficiently as possible, and that's incredibly exciting to me."

Making technology work for the modern world—and a modern business—is a feat in and of itself. Technology and modernity often propel each other forward in such a way that our natural association between the two is taken for granted. New tech that moves the industry forward is like the building blocks of the supply chain; if we are unable to stack them seamlessly, the entire concept falls.

Luckily, we have Famous Software to keep us standing tall. 



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

SNACKCHAT

By: JENNA PLASTERER

Come, *Snack* readers, gather 'round and listen as these industry luminaries spin you a holiday tale about the wonderful power of fruits and veggies. As shoppers storm the shelves, searching for enchanted offerings to add extra magic to their celebrations this season, the mystical insights and contagious passion of these produce savants will keep registers lighting up like New Year's fireworks...



Name: **CHRIS MILLER**
 Title: PRODUCE DIRECTOR, MEAT AND SEAFOOD COORDINATOR
 Company: MOM'S ORGANIC MARKET

"December is such a great time of year for organic citrus varieties and quality. After the chaos of November and the Thanksgiving season, it is nice to keep it simple and share some awesome fruit with family and friends. If they bring the wine, I will bring the best-eating citrus around—fair trade-off, right? On the dinner table, I love playing with all the different winter squash varieties available. I've come to realize that the more difficult a variety of squash is to process, the greater the reward is when it comes to taste. Or, maybe that is just me justifying the effort."

Name: **STEVE CHURCH**
 Title: CHAIRMAN
 Company: CHURCH BROTHERS FARMS

"I was asked what my favorite holiday produce item is and, although we grow Iceberg and Romaine lettuce, ironically, these aren't my holiday go-tos. During the season, it is a family tradition for me to make a Granny Smith apple pie using my mother, Jean Church's, recipe. It is by far my favorite dessert, especially paired with vanilla ice cream. The secret to this recipe is to add apple cider vinegar to the crust and to mix lots of butter into the apples, sugar, nutmeg, and cinnamon. My sister, Anne Bramers, and I have apple pie baking contests, battling head-to-head using the recipe—she's beaten me two out of three times; I think it's because she adds in more sugar! To make it even more special, in memory of my mother, we add the letters 'JC' to the top of each pie. Hail to the apple growers!"



Name: **PAUL KNEELAND**
 Title: VICE PRESIDENT OF FRESH OPERATIONS
 Company: GELSON'S MARKETS



"Root vegetables are at the core of making a good holiday season GREAT! Think of all the possibilities that can fill consumers' plates. Roasted root veggies are comfort food for those who love fresh produce. That aroma, that flavor! You just have to love dinner time when your appetite is awakened by their sweet smell of goodness. Roasting mixed vegetables is also a personal favorite of mine—carrots, potatoes, onions, sweet potatoes, rutabaga, and more. Combine those with a little olive oil, salt, and pepper, and it's the perfect complement to holiday meals and a great way to start the New Year. Think beet salad, carrot sticks, and, of course, roasted root vegetables!"

Name: LUKE FOUNTAIN

Title: SALES

Company: ATLAS PRODUCE

"My favorite produce item to have during the holidays would definitely be the Medjool date. They are packed with nutrients and are perfect during the holiday season because of their versatility. Medjools can be eaten as a snack, added to recipes, or served as an hors-d'oeuvre. Basically, they are a one-stop shop! I love to eat them on the go when I'm running around doing those crucial holiday errands, or I'll stuff them with goat cheese to add to my family's smörgåsbord we put out as we count down the seconds to the New Year."



Name: MICHELLE DELEISSEGUES

Title: DIRECTOR OF MARKETING

Company: GEM-PACK BERRIES

"Fresh berries are a foolproof go-to during the holidays. Enticing to the eye and palate, they add extra festiveness to every celebration. Blackberries are my favorite for mixing sweet and savory, and they're easy to drop into winter salads or on top of cornbread and focaccia before baking. When you don't have time to bake, chocolate-dipped or cream-filled strawberries are a sure-fire celebratory hit. For that New Year's toast, I always have lots of fresh blackberries and raspberries on hand to drop into a favorite sparkling beverage. Cheers!"



Name: JOB VILLANUEVA

Title: ORGANIC SALES MANAGER

Company: GIUMARRA NOGALES

"Winter squash varieties are as delicious as they are versatile. Squash is a great side dish for parties and potlucks, or as a main course or soup for a healthy, yet filling, weeknight dinner. We will have consistent supplies of our organic, Fair Trade Certified™ Butternut and Spaghetti squash throughout the winter holiday season. It's the perfect timeframe for retailers to promote Fair Trade—especially as consumers are celebrating the spirit of giving—as each sale of Fair Trade Certified produce gives back to farm workers in Mexico."



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