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ISSUE 100 DEC 2025

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ISSUE

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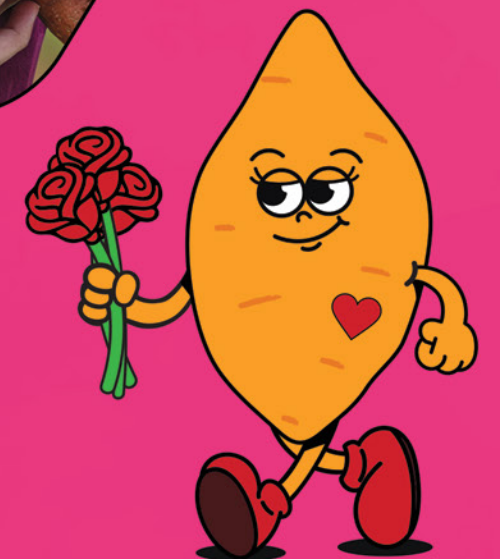

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I'VE STARTED THIS LETTER WHAT FEELS LIKE A HUNDRED TIMES OVER THE PAST TWO WEEKS. Between all the big things that seem to happen in life at once, and the opportunity and gift of writing Angela Hernandez's story on her journey through breast cancer, I've found my personal and professional worlds overlapping more than ever.

My mother is currently battling stage 4 cancer, and it has been one incredible process—both painful and humbling. We found out just days after my first child was born, and since then, our lives have revolved around medical appointments, chemotherapy, immunotherapy, radiation, and palliative care. My family has been the connective tissue of communication between the different medical departments, facilitating her care instead of the other way around. I have found myself as blind as I have been in quite some time, in a time when that level of blindness feels misleading and terrifying instead of cautionary. We all live with some level of uncertainty about when our lives will conclude, but I think there is a deal we make with ourselves that is uniquely private—to keep the thought of our end at bay.

Over the past two and a half years, I've come to rely heavily on her medical team, not just for clinical direction, but also for the emotional support they provide. Trust becomes everything in this space. Moving through a fog of hope and fear that's entirely foreign, my family tries to find the questions we don't yet know how to ask, and search for strategies we never imagined we'd need. What appears to be a clear and straightforward process from the outside is, in reality, anything but.

Trust is built in many different ways. But I've come to understand that it isn't built on promises of safety and success alone—it's built on the resolution of outcomes, on showing up, on advocacy, on our ability to celebrate the wins, and to come together in the losses—no matter how small.

In our industry, trust isn't forged by the wins themselves. It's in the moments when communication breaks down and we choose to work through it together anyway. That's where the real roots take hold—in the quiet, uncomfortable spaces where transparency, vulnerability, and persistence meet. That's where partnerships are born, and where trust grows into something fundamental.

When a retailer requests a grower gamble by planting more in anticipation of next season's demand, that requires trust. When the supply chain breaks down, is delayed, or experiences a natural disaster, the shelves are left empty, but buyers and suppliers get on the phone and come together

anyway. That experience is layered in reliability, both offered and created.

Trusting another person is hard enough—trusting a system can feel nearly impossible. But we go on doing it. We sit across from partners and buyers who tell us to plant more, who remind us that prices will rise and fall, and we continue to believe in the collective good of it all.




Maybe it's not always about fighting. Maybe what we call "fighting" is really learning when to surrender—to timing, to people, to the process. We weigh the lesser evils, we adjust, we try again. Because, as human beings, we hang on every word. We strive to make sense of uncertainty. And in that act—in choosing to trust, again and again—something beautiful quietly happens.

Angela's story reminded me that trust is never simple; it's layered, lived, and often learned the hard way. The way she had faith in her body, her care team, her community, and her own voice through something that could have broken her is a testament to what it means to stay open in the face of fear. So does this industry, in its own way.

Because in farming, in business, in health, and in life, we are constantly asked to trust. To trust what we plant will grow, that the people beside us will hold the line, that our efforts mean something even when the outcome is uncertain.

I realize this editor's letter may seem to be about fear, loss, and hardship—but what I mean for it to be about is trust. About reaching across the table, with everything on the line, and meeting each other halfway.

These days, I cherish every moment—those loved and those not—with my mother. I will come back to these days long after they have passed and wish for every moment. I will want them, again, one more time. If only we could live each day that way.

Maybe we can. 

Jordan Okumura-Wright
Editor in Chief
AndNowUKnow, Deli Market News,
and *The Snack Magazine*

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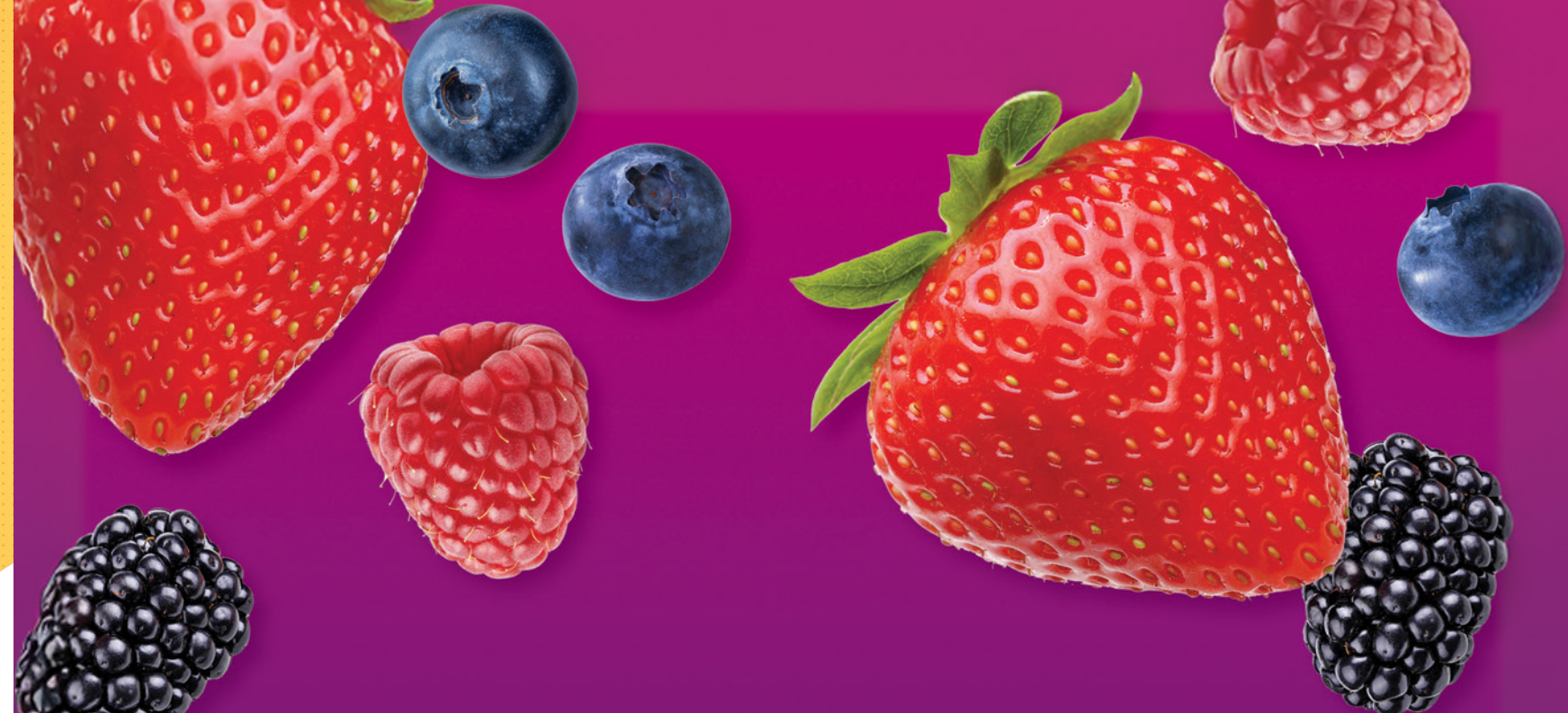
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2005 Capitol Ave.
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A DEPTH OF FLAVOR UNLIKE ANY OTHER.™



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A Legacy Defined

A Q&A with Sara Lozano,
Director of Marketing and Product Development, Sambrailo Packaging

By Chandler James

How can you define a legacy? Is a company's impact measured by its financial success, its ability to grow quickly, or, perhaps, the expanse of its network?

In the case of Sambrailo Packaging, the answer to these questions is more nuanced than it may seem. The company's legacy is defined by its people.

Sambrailo has something that not all companies can boast: employee longevity. As a packaging and solutions provider in the fresh produce space, that is one value proposition worth its weight in gold. With a history spanning 102 years in business, Sambrailo has firmly cemented its place in the fresh supply chain.

That century-long legacy is one that Sambrailo's partners take comfort in. It is a key differentiating factor in a competitive market. To better understand Sambrailo's influence, I turned to a key figure at its center: Sara Lozano, Director of Marketing and Product Development.

Q1



Chandler James: Sara, it is clear that operating on a 102-year legacy provides peace of mind to other industry partners. How does Sambrailo differentiate itself?

Sara Lozano, Director of Marketing and Product Development, Sambrailo Packaging:

Sambrailo takes great pride in the trust we have built through our relationships in the industry. We couldn't do it without the consistency of the people behind our company, many of whom have dedicated a lifelong career to furthering our success. Consistency in service is another key differentiator for Sambrailo. Our partners know what we deliver on, and that extends far beyond just packaging.



Q2

CJ: While it's clear Sambrailo's product quality speaks for itself, what about the people behind these products makes them unique?

SL: Our team is what makes us special; it's what Sambrailo Packaging is truly all about. We have team members with packaging knowledge and innovation that spans over 50 years. Our people, service, and packaging products have evolved with the industry. For a product that has become an industry staple, such as the 1 lb strawberry clamshell and tray, Sambrailo has been a part of it since the very beginning. How we build the tray, nest the clamshells, issue the bundles each day to our customers throughout the season—it's what our customers know and trust about what we do, how we deliver, and how we show up for them.

On the other side, it can be a relationship built on creating something innovative, like our single-use plastic packaging alternative, ReadyCycle®. We design, build, and issue packaging to our customers just like any of our other boxes, trays, and clamshells, but ReadyCycle is setting the customer apart by offering a non-plastic alternative to the market.



Q3

CJ: Over 102 years, produce operators have certainly solidified their trust in Sambrailo. In what ways has the industry come to know Sambrailo as a people-first company?

SL: When you call, show up to pick up packaging, or have a meeting, you see our familiar faces, voices, and receive our high standard of customer service. It's those everyday tasks and transactions that take our entire team's commitment to make it work. This process begins with our production teams assembling trays, nesting clamshells, bundling, and issuing the product to each grower, ranch truck, and customer. It encompasses everything from the sales teams entering forecasts and sales orders, and collaborating with our procurement team, to our vendor relationships, our truck drivers transferring and delivering materials to our multiple warehouse locations, and our forklift drivers unloading and loading customers. Each of these team members and touch points is what makes us so good at what we do.




Q4

CJ: When it comes to those who may not have had the opportunity to partner with Sambrailo yet, what would you say are the most important things for them to know?

SL: We are a fourth-generation, family-owned company that has established a strong presence in the agricultural industry. Our superior service is emphasized by the incredible team members who have exemplified such longevity with our company. It is our people, first and foremost, who make us truly special and allow us to have a lasting impact on fresh produce.

“When you call, show up to pick up packaging, or have a meeting, you see our familiar faces, voices, and receive our high standard of customer service.”

- Sara Lozano, Director of Marketing and Product Development, Sambrailo Packaging

I began this article with some unanswered questions. I was unsure how an industry operator with a history as long as Sambrailo's would define itself within the supply chain. In speaking with Sara, it quickly became clear that there is one aspect of the company's operations that sets Sambrailo apart from the rest: its people. 

WTF

DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

Prime Time Bell Peppers

?



CHRISTMAS ORNAMENT APPETIZERS

INGREDIENTS

1 Prime Time Red Bell Pepper
1 Prime Time Green Bell Pepper
1 Prime Time Yellow Bell Pepper
28 rice crackers
8 oz whipped cream cheese
4 mini sweet peppers
32 pink peppercorns
3 oz curly parsley leaves
10 chives
4 oz herb/flavored goat cheese

Prep Time: 30 mins

Servings: 6

DIRECTIONS

- To create the stars:* Slice the sides off the colorful bell peppers. Trim the insides so that its a little more flat and even. Use a 1" and 1½" star cookie cutter to cut stars out of the different colors. You will want 9 of each size star, making 18 total. Mix and match the colors how you like.
- Add the whipped cream cheese to a piping bag with a star shaped end. Pipe the whipped cream cheese onto 9 rice crackers in a thin, pretty layer.
- Press a larger star onto the cream cheese. Add a small amount of cream cheese to the center of the big star, and add a smaller star on top. Repeat with all 9 crackers.
- To create the wreaths:* Slice the mini peppers into rings and remove the seeds. Pipe the cream cheese into a thin, pretty layer onto 9 crackers. Place the sliced peppers in the center. Carefully place 2 pink peppercorns at the bottom of each slice, then carefully place 2 small parsley leaves below, using the stems to stick securely into the cheese. Repeat for all 9 crackers. *Tip: Use toothpicks or cocktail pins to place peppercorns and parsley.*
- To create the gifts:* Spoon 1½ teaspoons of goat cheese into a square cookie cutter and evenly fill to the sides and press down to keep the goat cheese together. Gently ease up the cookie cutter, leaving a square, and transfer to a rice cracker. If you don't have a square cookie cutter, use a knife to create the square shape. Continue until you have 10 squares of goat cheese on crackers.
- Use kitchen scissors to cut each chive into 2 pieces the length of the square. Lay one down across the center of the goat cheese square. Cut the other in half and lay perpendicular to make a cross. Carefully, stick a teeny tiny bit of goat cheese to a pink peppercorn. Place the peppercorn in the center of the chive "ribbon." Add 2 tiny parsley leaves on the sides.
- Serve all appetizers together on a tray and enjoy!

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Industry Spotlight SEASON'S GREETINGS!



Emily Zirkle,
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT,
RAINIER FRUIT COMPANY

"While I admit my excitement for cold weather is waning every year, I'm always eager for the spirit of the season with its warm wishes and reflection on another year. I'm incredibly fortunate to spend most of my time with the determined and slightly crazy people in our industry, who dedicate their lives to bringing nutritious food to the world and supporting many thousands of livelihoods along the way.

On behalf of everyone here at Rainier Fruit, thank you to all of our partners for supporting our mission to go the extra mile in quality, service, and treating both people and the land with respect. Happy holidays, and cheers to 2026!"



A Closer Look at Generous Brands Evolution Fresh Organic Soda

By Jordan Okumura-Wright

Expanding the periphery of the produce aisle to encompass more good-for-you, fresh-produce-forward options in the consumer's basket is a call to action that every retailer should be heeding—especially when that move walks hand in hand with companies like Generous Brands.

As the operation climbs over the \$1 billion in retail sales portfolio horizon, retailers are jumping on board this skyrocketing premium refrigerated beverages segment. Generous Brands, which now encompasses four dynamic counterparts—Bolthouse Farms,


Evolution Fresh, Health-Ade, and SAMBAZON—spans the juice, smoothie, kombucha, cold-pressed juice, protein, coffee, and alternative soda categories.

Where this progressive company really grabbed my attention recently was with the Evolution Fresh Real Fruit Soda—a refrigerated organic soda brand relaunching as Evolution Fresh Organic Soda in Spring 2026.

The company is introducing two new fruit-forward flavors, Watermelon Raspberry and Passion Orange Guava, designed to deliver the vibrant, fruit-first taste consumers

love. The sodas are now sweetened with organic monk fruit and agave instead of stevia—a strategic shift reflecting feedback from fans. But honestly, the Pineapple Dragon Fruit flavor is the one I still have my eye out for. Consider my palate teased.

USDA Organic Certified and made with real fruit juice (never from concentrate), 5 g of fiber, and only 7 g of sugar, Evolution Fresh Organic Soda delivers the refreshing, lower-sugar, gut-healthy beverage consumers are craving.

Bottoms up—and health up, too! 



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Generous
BRANDS

UP
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**VALUE
ADDED**
Snack Chat



By **Chandler James**



Consumers are looking for convenient solutions in the kitchen, and fresh produce providers are here to make their lives easier. The value-added set now contains more flavors than ever, with pre-cut and washed fruit and veg featuring spices, sauces, and toppings to elevate the eating experience. Plus, with the health-forward benefits fresh produce provides, these convenient offerings elevate the plate in more ways than one. Hear from the experts who bring these products to market...



Karen White,
Vice President of Marketing,
Bolthouse Fresh Foods™

“Produce continues to evolve as shoppers look for fresh solutions that support healthier lifestyles. From the rise of organic to more fiber-rich and convenient options, value-added offerings make eating well easier by removing barriers and making fresh food more accessible and enjoyable. Pre-cut items like baby carrots are a natural entry point, giving consumers a simple way to incorporate more produce into their day. Building on that,

our kits with seasonings and sauces make meal prep not only faster but also more flavorful and approachable for today’s busy consumers.”

Steve Ware,
Vice President and General Manager,
Value Added Fresh, Naturipe Farms

“At Naturipe Farms, our Ready to Eat line is carefully crafted to showcase our farmers’ fresh fruit paired with innovative snacking solutions. Berries are the top-performing fruit segment, and we’re elevating them even further with delicious snack options that are long-lasting (thanks to our special patented washing process). From fluffy mini pancakes with real maple syrup and blueberries to balanced and wholesome snack packs with cheese, nuts, granola, and fresh fruit, every product is designed to delight consumers while boosting sales for retailers.”



Christina Barnard,
Vice President of Marketing and
Ecommerce, Taylor Farms

“Innovation in the value-added salad category is crucial for meeting changing consumer demands and driving category growth. Shoppers love seasonal flavors and unique varieties. The seasonal Taylor Farms Spiced Apple Chopped Salad Kit is perfect for both fall and the holidays. It celebrates the flavors of the season by combining cabbage, romaine, shredded broccoli, and green onion with crunchy honey-roasted chips, cinnamon-

puffed apples, and smoked Gouda cheese. Similarly, Earthbound Farm Wild Red Arugula brings bold flavor and visual appeal. This striking red-hued leaf adds a peppery kick and vibrant color to salads, flatbreads, and fresh garnishes. Together, these innovations keep our brands fresh, relevant, and well-positioned for continued growth.”



Jeff Hutterer,
Director of Value-Added Sales,
Ocean Mist® Farms

“Our value-added program launched in 2003 with bagged spinach, introduced in response to evolving consumer demand for convenient, nutritious, and delicious meal solutions requiring little-to-no prep. Recognizing that consumer trends drive retail demand, we steadily expanded our offerings over the years. Today, our value-added lineup includes broccoli and cauliflower florets, medleys, slaws, Brussels sprouts, and even

artichokes. Our latest innovation—Roastables Ready-to-Roast kits—is an exciting new line now seven items strong, each with its own unique flavor packet. By complementing our core commodity line, these innovations have broadened our market reach, strengthened retail partnerships, and delivered added convenience to our valued customers.”

Kathleen Triou,
President and Chief Executive Officer,
Fresh Solutions Network

“At Fresh Solutions Network, our value-added Side Delights® offerings—including A Cut Above® fresh-cut potatoes, Steamables® 1.5 lb microwaveable potatoes, and Bakeables® single-serve Russets—are designed to deliver both retailer and consumer advantages. For retailers, these products drive incremental sales, enhance fresh potato assortment while offering exciting options for merchandising and promotion, and capture shoppers seeking convenience and quality. For consumers, they provide fresh, nutritious potatoes in easy-to-prepare formats that fit today’s busy lifestyles. By combining innovation, premium packaging, and consistent supply, we help our retail partners differentiate in the fresh potato category while giving shoppers simple, delicious solutions for every meal.”



▶ MENTORS IN THE MAKING ◀

JAY SHORT

VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES, SUPERFRESH GROWERS®

BY CHANDLER JAMES

Nineteen years ago, Jay Short walked into an interview at Superfresh Growers® that was set up through a local temp agency. At the time, he had no career path in mind, but was simply looking for a job to make ends meet. What he found was an opportunity that would change his life, his family’s life, and become a career he is deeply enthusiastic about.

“I started at the very first rung of the ladder as a Sales Assistant. It was in that role that I began to understand the incredible complexity and dynamism of the produce business,” Jay, now the Vice President of Sales at Superfresh, tells me. “The Kershaw family and the culture they built at this company have a way of rewarding hard work and a willingness to learn, and I am a living testament to



that. As a Sales Assistant, I was given opportunities to manage accounts, became a Sales Manager, and now I serve as the Vice President of Sales.”

As Jay settled into his newly discovered career, he crossed paths with a few key mentors who guided him in reaching his full potential. One such mentor was Tim Lane, who is now retired, but held the role of Sales Manager when Jay started with Superfresh.

“Tim conducted my initial interview, and our paths crossed at a pivotal moment in my life. I quickly learned that we both came from small towns on the west side of Washington State, he from Conway and I from Chimacum. That immediate, shared connection helped build a foundation of trust that would shape my career,” Jay explains. “Tim was a no-nonsense leader who held the team to high standards. He had a strong work ethic that resonated with me. He coached me to make decisions and stick with them. If they were wrong, he

taught me to learn from my mistakes and keep moving forward.”

This simple but powerful philosophy became a cornerstone of Jay’s career, reminding him that progress is more important than perfection and that resilience is key in a fast-paced industry.

Soon after beginning with Superfresh, Jay quickly became acquainted with the company’s Chief Executive Officer, Robert Kershaw.

“My path with Robert crossed almost immediately; he was the Owner of the company and a fixture in the office. He took an interest in me from the beginning, challenging me even when I was brand-new to the team. He recognized some natural talent, but also a lot of self-doubt, and he consistently pushed me to believe in myself,” Jay elaborates. “The most pivotal lesson I learned from Robert was the importance of doing what you say you are going to do. He taught me that your word is your bond in this industry and in life. This was not just a lesson in business; it was a lesson in character.”

From Robert, Jay learned a lesson central to the fresh produce industry:

Integrity is the currency of trust, and consistency and reliability are the keys to building a lasting career and reputation.

As Jay continued to grow with the company, his network expanded far beyond what he may have thought possible. He soon met his next mentor, Rob Conrad, a leader at Kershaw Fruit since 1990.

“Through our interactions, he has consistently demonstrated the power of a positive mindset. Rob is a genuinely optimistic and upbeat person, and that energy is contagious,” Jay reveals. “He helped me understand the challenges of the produce industry from a whole new perspective: the grower’s side. He taught me that while we face daily market pressures and logistical hurdles, it is crucial to maintain a positive outlook and appreciate the challenging work that goes into bringing the crop from the field to the table. Rob’s constant upbeat energy has been a powerful reminder that with the right attitude, we can overcome any obstacle.”

Now, 19 years later, Jay is a key figure to look toward for newly joined industry members. For anyone just getting a start in this industry, his advice is to become

the person who can figure it out. “This business is fast-paced and constantly changing, and you will be handed tasks you have no idea how to complete. There is nothing more valuable than someone who can meet that challenge with resourcefulness and determination,” he concludes. “This means you need to work hard and not be afraid of a challenge. It means being humble enough to ask questions and seek out the wisdom of others, and it means finding a way to get it done. In an industry built on relationships and integrity, being known as someone who is resourceful, dependable, and able to find a solution is the greatest asset you can have.”

In speaking with Jay’s mentors, it is clear to me that he has always possessed these qualities, even as an interviewee first dipping his toes in the produce waters. It is these qualities that will make him an excellent mentor as he traverses the rest of his career path. We are honored to be witnesses to it all. \$

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TIM LANE,
Retired

“I have had the pleasure of knowing Jay for over 20 years. He was the very best of teammates and also a friend. I truly respect and love him. Jay comes from a blue-collar background, working on his family’s dairy farm, and excelled in sports. He has become one of the most respected leaders in the produce industry because he brings the values of hard work, grit, and humility. Jay understands the rhythm of the importance of early mornings, the unpredictable seasons of the produce industry, and the relentless pace it takes to excel and lead a sales team. He leads with empathy for growers, packers, and shippers that make this industry run.

Jay’s background as a high-performing athlete shows up in his drive and discipline. Jay knows how to compete, but more importantly, he knows how to build a winning team. He’s the kind of mentor who sees potential in people and helps them rise. At Superfresh Growers, Jay has helped shape a culture where performance is not just measured in sales but in relationships, reputation, and long-term trust. He is a connector, a coach, and a champion for doing things the right way.”



ROBERT KERSHAW,
Chief Executive Officer,
Superfresh Growers®

“Jay is everything I value in people. He was raised in a modest environment and was one of the first in his family to go to college. When he made his way to the produce industry, he started at the bottom and worked his way up using his intelligence, hard work, and competitive spirit. He continues to develop his skills, and he gets better every day. Jay leads by example, which has also made him a good father and husband. Perhaps a better way to say it is that he is a good human. He is always reading, educating himself, and trying to improve himself.

Jay is a leader and a mentor to many, impacting others by caring deeply about them. He sets a standard for all in his orbit on how a good human approaches life. Jay lifts others simply with his presence. I am very proud of Jay, the man he has become, and the inspiration and example he sets for so many people. At the end of my career and probably the end of my life, I will look back at many things I am proud of. My most memorable will be all the people I have worked with, and Jay Short will be at the very top of the list. Jay is my hero.”



ROB CONRAD,
Former President,
Kershaw Fruit

“Jay is a true professional. He knows our industry is filled with challenges and opportunities, and he recognizes that he can only control his attitude and work ethic. His positive attitude is contagious, and he leads by example, never expecting his teammates to do something he is not willing to do himself. With Jay’s athletic background, he is extremely competitive in everything he does. He is process-driven in his work ethic. He recognizes the daily fundamentals required to win every single day, always leading from the trenches.

I will retire at the end of this year after completing 36 harvests. I want to retire knowing the company is in a good position going forward—Jay and our other young leaders have given me this comfort. In an industry that is constantly changing, I know with certainty that we will continue to be industry leaders because of teammates like Jay. I will miss Jay’s incredible sense of humor and his positive energy. He may not realize it, but his energy has even lifted me up, just like he does every day with his teammates. He makes everyone around him better.”

“THE KERSHAW FAMILY AND THE CULTURE THEY BUILT AT THIS COMPANY HAVE A WAY OF REWARDING HARD WORK AND A WILLINGNESS TO LEARN, AND I AM A LIVING TESTAMENT TO THAT.”

JAY SHORT,
Vice President of Sales, Superfresh Growers®

?



To learn more about LIV Produce, visit livproduce.com



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Where VISION

Meets IMPACT

Every game-changing strategy is born from a clear vision—a well-designed map of what we hope and expect our industry to look like in the next year, decade, or even century.

With its eyes trained far into the future, California Giant Berry Farms is no stranger to company vision and what it takes to lay a staunch foundation for long-term growth. Its Berries with Purpose™ ideology remains at the center of each decision as the family-owned, purpose-driven provider embarks on its journey to be the most sustainable berry operation in the world. Why?



“We believe that’s the only way to provide healthy, nutritious berries for generations to come,” **Joe Barsi, President,**

explains, answering the question just as it enters my mind. “Berries with Purpose reflects the heart of how we operate. This purpose guides every decision. It’s who we are. It’s how and why we do what we do.”

California Giant Berry Farms’ company-wide sustainability framework is built on

By **Peggy Packer**

a series of goals that guide its day-to-day operations while keeping the grower’s ultimate vision in clear view.

“Sustainability is a fundamental part of our identity,” Joe adds. “We believe a truly resilient and thriving company balances its economic success with a deep commitment to its people and the planet. This is not just a moral obligation but an ongoing strategic imperative ensuring our business remains strong.”

The supplier’s overarching sustainability blueprint consists of intentional actions taken each day to bring the Berries with Purpose system to life. Instead of limiting its efforts to a single, separate program, the company’s eco-friendly initiatives are integrated across California Giant’s operations. While Berries with Purpose remains a driving force, the concept itself is upheld by the company’s core pillars: nourishing its communities, protecting the planet, and delivering exceptional berries.

The berry maven upholds its Nourishing Our Communities pillar through philanthropy and volunteer work. In

2024, California Giant donated a total of \$290,000 to non-profit organizations and introduced a new policy to provide paid volunteer time off for all employees.

“As a family-owned business with over 40 years of experience, we view our employees, growers, customers, and vendors as part of our extended family. We are committed to creating an inclusive, engaging workplace where employees can thrive, and supporting our growers in building sustainable businesses,” Joe explains.



Addressing Protecting our Planet, **Catherine Campbell, Director of Sustainability,** notes, “Our growers are conscientious

stewards of the land, taking care to conserve water and employ pollinator-friendly practices. Together with our growers, we continuously work to improve our environmental stewardship and foster resilient farming communities.”

As part of its packaging efforts, California Giant has tapped the expertise of multiple partners to move

toward a circular system, where all materials are reused, recycled, or repurposed. This includes collaborating with its partners to advance packaging innovation by exploring new designs, decreasing material use, improving recycled content, and reducing plastic. The company is also reducing emissions and improving energy efficiency through solar power, electric vehicles, and cutting-edge facility upgrades.

At the heart of it all, however, is the brand’s penchant for Delivering Exceptional Berries.

“With special attention to four-season harvesting, quality and safety audits, and farm-to-table traceability, we work every day to deliver high-quality berries,” says Catherine. “To advance resilience and sustainability, we work with partners to develop varieties that are drought and pest-resistant but also enhance traits such as flavor, texture, shelf-life, yield, and overall quality.”

Through its focus on sustainability, California Giant has achieved meaningful milestones, driving positive change across its operations and the communities it serves.

“One of our most significant accomplishments is becoming the first large-scale, field-grown strawberry

operation to earn Fair Trade USA certification, reflecting our dedication to responsible business practices,” Catherine tells me. “In addition, we are also proud of our momentum in our grower participation in the Ethical Charter Implementation Program (ECIP), which outlines guiding principles around worker health, safety, and human rights. By embracing ECIP, our growers are demonstrating their commitment to responsible labor practices and helping strengthen accountability across the produce industry. Together, we’re building a supply chain that not only delivers exceptional berries but also upholds the highest values for the people who make it possible.”

2025 brought another exciting milestone for the company, as California Giant Berry Farms further elevated its status by securing B Corp certification in October.

“While Fair Trade and Organic certifications validate how our berries are grown, B Corp certification recognizes how we operate as a company,” Catherine continues. “B Corp certification shows just how much each of us at California Giant is dedicated to creating a better world and raising the standard for our industry, while setting a foundation for ongoing progress.”

While these milestones have already signified great strides in sustainability, California Giant is primed to spark even more growth through its Berries with Purpose blueprint.

“Looking ahead, we are focused on several goals; to ensure we make meaningful progress on our climate-related targets, we have already established baselines for greenhouse gas emissions, energy, and water usage, providing a clear starting point for measuring reductions over time,” Joe explains. “At the same time, our work to expand grower support and deepen community engagement reflects a broader commitment to creating long-term value beyond our operations.”

Ten to 20 years down the line, the California Giant Berry Farms team will look back on current progress as some of the most crucial stepping stones to decades of success in sustainability. For now, each intentional achievement is a confident step into the future.

A direct result of the brand’s clear and committed company vision. 🍓



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FOODS

*Happy
Holidays*



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DRIED FRUIT - CANDY - SNACKS & MORE



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A RAINBOW IN EVERY BITE!

INTRODUCING



gwillimdalefarms.com/rainbow-carrots

A Closer Look at Topline Farms Grab N’ Go Tomato Snack Packs

By Melissa De Leon Chavez

I have seen—and deeply agreed with—the claim that millennial- and-younger generations are currently hooked on charcuterie boards because we were raised on Lunchables, the child-friendly version of the same format.

Now, those of us who once reached excitedly for a pudding cup will be stocking up on Topline Farms’ Grab N’ Go Tomato Snack Packs. It’s the familiar shape that had us sneaking two or three a day, to the dismay of our parents. And as our roles change, so has the snacking game, offering

those reaching hands—grown and growing alike—an option no one has to worry about having too much of.

Available year-round in 100 percent recyclable packaging, the grower assures the colorful collection of either medley or grape tomatoes in each cup offers sweet, crisp, tangy, and savory flavors. Additionally, the product helps time-pressed, health-conscious consumers and their families gain a good source of fiber and antioxidants in a treat good for heart and eye health.

Grab N’ Go grape tomatoes now come in convenient multi-packs: three-pack, four-pack, six-pack, ‘n go! Each size is offered as an option, from convenience to retail and family, ensuring that the fresh product is perfect for quick snacking, stocking up, or sharing.

Top-sealed in bright orange and green, this expanded offering will be hard for consumers to miss as it decorates the produce aisle. 🍅



Topline

UP
CLOSE

Topline

ROMA
• REVOLUTION •

GREENHOUSE
GROWN



EXPERIENCE THE
**BOLD
RICH FLAVOR**
GREENHOUSE GROWN
ROMA TOMATOES!

**FRESH &
FLAVORFUL**
Bold, sweet,
and tangy taste

**SUSTAINABLY
GROWN**
Year-round
quality and supply

**VERSATILE
& MEATY**
Perfect for
sauces, salsas,
and salads

**NUTRIENT-
RICH**
Packed with
antioxidants
and vitamins



Grown sustainably for peak freshness, these firm, meaty tomatoes are perfect for sauces, salsas, salads, and more. With fewer seeds, vibrant color, and superior taste, they bring chef-quality excellence to every dish.



WTF DO I DO WITH Squeezed Juice® Pomegranate Juice ?

{ what the fork }



APPLE CIDER MOCKTAIL

INGREDIENTS

1/3 cup Squeezed Juice® Pomegranate Juice
1/3 cup apple cider
1/3 cup sparkling water
 Ice
 Rosemary sprig

Prep Time: 5 mins
Servings: 1

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Combine Squeezed Juice Pomegranate Juice, apple cider, and sparkling water.
- 2 Pour the liquid mixture over ice and add a sprig of rosemary as garnish.
- 3 Enjoy!

To learn more about Squeezed Juice®, visit squeezedjuice.com



Enticing the consumer is all about appealing to the taste buds. While digital promotions, creative merchandising, and eye-catching packaging are all worthwhile ways to capture a shopper's attention, flavor is the one element guaranteed to keep them coming back for more.

Giorgio Fresh knows this well, which is why the iconic mushroom supplier has

consistently placed flavor and quality at the center of its brand strategies. In fact, the company sees itself as not just a supplier, but a formidable partner in category growth.

From consumer insights to continuous flavor innovation and merchandising support, the brand has set out to make mushrooms a staple in every home, helping its retail partners achieve monumental gains along the way.

As Bryan Shelton, Vice President of Marketing and Sales, puts it, everything Giorgio® does is rooted in a straightforward mission: to make mushrooms easier to enjoy, more frequently and in more ways than ever before.

What better way to achieve this than to captivate consumers with an exquisite lineup of flavor-forward offerings?



Q1

Peggy Packer: From new Savory Sauté Kits to mouthwatering stuffed mushrooms, Giorgio continues to move the needle in category innovation. Can you tell me more about Giorgio's newest portfolio additions? What makes these offerings unique in today's market?

Bryan Shelton, Vice President of Marketing and Sales, Giorgio Fresh: At Giorgio, innovation means finding ways to make mushrooms more exciting and accessible. Our newest lineup includes Savory Sauté Kits, which combine fresh mushrooms with chef-inspired, flavored butter pucks for a quick, delicious side dish that's ready in minutes.

We've also expanded our stuffed mushroom range with bold new items like Jalapeño, Nashville Hot, and Fiery Sriracha, alongside classics such as Spinach-Artichoke and Garlic Parmesan. We've also introduced Mushroom Toppers, which give shoppers easy ways to add flavor to proteins and sides, and our seasonal grill kits make mushrooms a hero on the barbecue. Each of these products is designed to bridge the gap between raw produce and ready-to-use meal solutions.

Beyond mushrooms, we're expanding our fresh portfolio with Vita Sana Sol Limes, which are Persian limes that bring exceptional flavor and color to the produce aisle. Grown on trusted family farms in Colombia, these limes deliver reliable year-round availability and the quality today's shoppers expect. With flexible pack options and a strong value proposition for retailers, Vita Sana Sol helps inspire fresh, flavorful experiences from backyard grilling to craft cocktails and everyday cooking.

Q2

PP: What makes these offerings a must-buy for shoppers? Are there any key consumer trends driving Giorgio's innovation?

BS: Today's shoppers want convenience, bold flavors, and better-for-you options, and our portfolio delivers on all three. The Sauté Kits and stuffed mushrooms cater to the value-added produce trend, offering time savings and consistency. Our Hot N' Spicy SKUs lean into the growing appetite for heat and global inspiration, while mushrooms' natural nutritional benefits tie into the broader demand for healthy, plant-forward foods. These products also create new meal occasions, from game-day snacking to weeknight cooking, helping households enjoy mushrooms more often.

One example of this innovation is our new mushroom Grill Kits, designed to bring bold, chef-inspired flavors to outdoor cooking and casual entertaining. Available in crave-worthy varieties like Steak Seasoning, Brown Sugar Bourbon, and Smokey Honey Habanero, these kits make it easy for consumers to elevate backyard meals or weeknight dinners with minimal prep and maximum flavor. Perfect for younger shoppers and food explorers looking for simple but exciting ways to cook at home, the grill kits showcase mushrooms as a center-of-plate star and a versatile partner for proteins, grains, and plant-forward menus.



Q3

PP: How does Giorgio Fresh's portfolio help retailers elevate their produce departments and increase household penetration for mushrooms?

BS: Our new offerings give retailers multiple ways to reach beyond the core mushroom shopper. From quick-prep skillet kits to premium stuffed trays, these products make mushrooms approachable for busy households while also elevating the overall perception of the produce department. They also create opportunities for cross-merchandising with proteins, pastas, and seasonal displays, driving larger baskets and repeat purchases. Most importantly, they help households integrate mushrooms into more meals, which is essential for growing penetration and category sales.

Even more, our portfolio unlocks meal solutions across every part of the day, from power-packed breakfast scrambles to crave-worthy lunch salads and hearty, plant-forward dinner entrées. By inspiring shoppers to use mushrooms from morning to night, we help retailers position the category as an everyday essential rather than a specialty item.

Q4

PP: Looking ahead to 2026, what are Giorgio's main focuses for continued growth?

BS: For generations, Giorgio has led the way in category innovation by asking how we can make mushrooms easier to use and more enjoyable to eat. That spirit of innovation is reflected in everything from our microwave-ready trays to our new skillet kits and sauces. Looking ahead, we're focused on three areas: developing occasion-based solutions for everyday meals and entertaining, extending successful flavors across formats, and maintaining operational excellence so every product is consistent, safe, and retail-ready.

We're expanding how we connect with consumers by leveraging influencer partnerships and digital storytelling to show the versatility and craveability of mushrooms in modern meal occasions. These efforts help us reach younger shoppers, food explorers, and those discovering mushrooms in new ways. By pairing innovation in the product lineup with fresh, social-first marketing strategies, we're not only meeting today's core mushroom consumer but also attracting a new generation to the category.



At Giorgio [Fresh], innovation means finding ways to make mushrooms more exciting and accessible.

- Bryan Shelton,
Vice President of Marketing and Sales, Giorgio Fresh



By keeping flavor at the center of each game-changing portfolio development, Giorgio Fresh has lived up to its reputation as more than just a supply-side partner. "Innovator," "trailblazer," and "category powerhouse" are much more fitting names for the company as it continues to push the mushroom sector to new heights, while always letting flavor lead the way.

WTF DO I DO WITH 4Earth Farms™ Organic Green Beans ?

{ what the fork }



BACON-WRAPPED ORGANIC ROASTED GREEN BEANS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb 4Earth Farms™ Organic Green Beans
- 6 slices bacon
- 3 tbsp butter
- 1 tbsp brown sugar
- 2 tsp garlic powder
- Salt and pepper, to taste

Prep Time: 15 mins
Cook Time: 45 mins
Servings: 6

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Pre-heat oven to 400° F. Place a wire rack on large cookie sheet.
- 2 Wash and dry green beans. Snap off the ends. Take 6–8 green beans and lay them on a strip of bacon. Roll the bacon up and around the green bean bundle and place it in the pan, seam side down. Repeat with remaining green beans.
- 3 Melt the butter in a sauce pan on the stove. Add the brown sugar and garlic powder and mix together until well combined. Remove from the heat and brush over the tops of the green bean bundles. Sprinkle with salt and pepper.
- 4 Cover with foil and roast for 35 minutes. Remove foil and roast for another 10–15 minutes or until the bacon gets nice and crisp.

To learn more about 4Earth Farms™, visit www.4earthfarms.com



► MY FAVORITE THINGS ◀

ANNA O'BRIEN
SOCIAL MEDIA AND PR MANAGER,
TRINITY FRUIT COMPANY

With Anne Allen

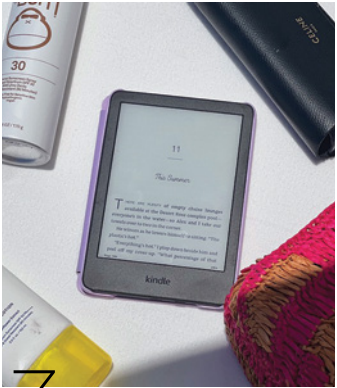
Those of us in the fresh biz understand the importance of that initial connection. Meeting someone new is par for the course in our industry, and seeking out moments of connection is a common thread in every conference, conversation, and text. It's what makes *My Favorite Things* such an exciting feature, especially when connecting with up-and-comers like Trinity Fruit Company's Anna O'Brien. Bringing vivacity and verve to her role, Anna tackles the shifting landscape of social media to grow the company's brand presence, and you bet we couldn't wait to learn about her favorite things...



1 MY HUSBAND
My husband and I tied the knot on September 27, 2025, the most magical day of our lives!



2 MATCHA TEA LATTES
At this point, I consider myself a matcha connoisseur. I can't start my day without my morning matcha latte!



3 A GOOD BOOK
Nothing beats a poolside read! Reading has become one of my favorite ways to unplug after work or unwind on vacation.



4 CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA, CALIFORNIA
My family and I have been visiting Carmel since I was a little girl; it will forever be my happy place.



5 COOKING WITH FRESH, SEASONAL PRODUCE
There's nothing I love more than cooking with ingredients that are in season. Citrus season is my favorite.



6 TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY (TCU) HORNS FROGS
Proud TCU Class of 2022 alum. Go Frogs!



7 BAKING SOURDOUGH BREAD
My latest (and most loved) hobby! There's nothing better than a warm, freshly baked loaf straight from the oven.



8 SQUEEZED JUICE
The Power and Immunity juices from Squeezed are my daily essentials for an energy boost and wellness refresh.

Interpreting the LANDSCAPE

A Q&A with **Michael Cleugh, President, Agrifrost** and **RC Jones, Managing Member, Bobalu**

By Jordan Okumura-Wright

Being in produce means reading the landscape—watching the rhythms of today's consumers to see where their lives are pivoting, what their needs are demanding, and how we can help buy-side partners build lasting loyalty within the consumer basket.

Bobalu (fresh) and Agrifrost (processing) are two companies with its ear to the ground, boots in the field, and now, hands in a new Individual Quick Freezing (IQF) facility in Salinas, California.

Decades of growth and a new generation later, the Agrifrost brand was born. Today, third-generation

family members Bobby and RC Jones run the operation year-round, providing premium strawberries from California and across North America.

With facilities in California's rich Oxnard region and now in Salinas, Agrifrost and Bobalu is bringing more value to its customers—and by extension, to the end consumer. Michael Cleugh, President of Agrifrost LLC, has been instrumental in the strategic planning and ongoing development of the company's IQF program, and offers a window into how this investment is shaping the future of the berry industry along with RC himself.

Q1

Jordan Okumura-Wright: To kick things off, can you walk me through what IQF actually is? How does the Agrifrost IQF investment reflect Bobalu's long-term vision for adding value across your entire berry program?



Michael Cleugh, President, Agrifrost: Individual Quick Freezing, or IQF, is a freezing method widely used across the food industry. It rapidly freezes individual pieces of food—like berries—separately rather than in a solid block.



This approach preserves food quality, texture, and nutritional value far better than traditional freezing methods.

By adding IQF capabilities and another processing plant, we've created additional demand for fruit from our ranches. That means we can achieve full utilization of the fruit grown on our farms, maximizing returns to the ranch. In turn, that strengthens sustainability and supports continued growth for our fresh berry program.

"By adding IQF capabilities and another processing plant, we've created additional demand for fruit from our ranches. That means we can achieve full utilization of the fruit grown on our farms, maximizing returns to the ranch."

—Michael Cleugh, President, Agrifrost

Q3

JOW: What sets the Agrifrost facility apart from other IQF providers when it comes to technology, throughput, or product integrity?

RC Jones, Managing Member, Bobalu:



Agrifrost has invested in the latest IQF technology available, gaining significant advantages

in quality, food safety, and sanitation. Our system features the most advanced cleaning technology on the market, which improves efficiency, reduces energy and material consumption, and maximizes throughput compared to older systems in the marketplace.

We're also seeing incremental gains in food safety as a result of this technology. Feedback from customers has been excellent, and we always invite prospective partners to visit the facility to see the difference for themselves.

Q2

JOW: That's a great foundation. How will this new IQF line enhance product availability and versatility for your retail and foodservice clients?

MC: We're proud to be one of the highest-rated suppliers for several retail customers who value sustainability and consistency. As those customers see our growth on the IQF side, it opens the door to collaboration across both fresh and processed platforms.

This integration ensures a reliable supply and quality for both their fresh and frozen berry programs. It also strengthens the grower-processor-customer relationship—working directly with a vertically integrated company brings trust, transparency, and shared success.

Q4

JOW: Let's talk about the buy side. How are you working with retailers and foodservice operators to integrate IQF offerings into their programs or menu development?

RCJ: On the retail side, there's tremendous interest in our vertically

integrated story. For retailers who manage both domestic fresh and IQF programs, we're collaborating in multiple ways—focusing on sustainability, efficiency, and the "one-stop shop" model.

Because we control our own fields and processing, we can deliver higher-quality products with improved food safety. That transparency builds incremental trust with both customers and consumers.


For foodservice, menu development often pivots between fresh and frozen depending on preparation needs. We're partnering with restaurant groups and their distributors as a single-source supplier for all their berry requirements—fresh or frozen.

We also work on custom-formulated products that support culinary R&D and innovation, helping our partners elevate the dining experience at the restaurant level.

Q5

JOW: What else is new for Bobalu, whether that be on the fresh front or with vision and mission?

RCJ: Why not all three! At Bobalu, we're continuing to evolve with the needs of today's berry consumer by expanding our year-round organic strawberry program to strengthen both supply and consistency. We've aligned with growers across Mexico and California's Oxnard and Santa Maria regions to ensure a steady flow of high-quality berries through five distinct crop cycles. This growth allows us to enhance efficiencies in logistics, consolidation, and shipping, while also supporting our retail and foodservice partners with marketing insights and category management tools. Above all, we remain committed to delivering a better berry experience—every season, every region, every berry basket.

For Bobalu, the journey from field to freezer and beyond is about more than technology—it's about connection. As the company grows, so too does its promise to deliver berries that taste as fresh as the relationships behind them. 

WTF DO I DO WITH Giorgio Mushrooms ?

{ what the fork }



GIORGIO MUSHROOM CROSTINI & GRAZING BOARD

INGREDIENTS

CROSTINI

8 oz Giorgio Mushrooms, diced
1 small baguette, cut into slices
2 tbsp olive oil, plus more for brushing
1 shallot, thinly sliced
1 garlic clove, minced
 Salt and pepper, to taste
6 oz herbed goat cheese, softened

GRAZING BOARD

Giorgio Mushroom Crostini, Marinated Giorgio Mushrooms, Prosciutto, salami, Gruyere cheese, Gouda cheese, almonds, walnuts, hummus, green olives, sliced cucumber, cherry tomatoes, mozzarella pearls, crackers, breadsticks, fresh basil, and rosemary sprigs

Prep Time: 20 mins

Cook Time: 15 mins

Servings: 6-8

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat the oven to 350° F. Arrange baguette slices on a baking sheet, brush lightly with olive oil, and toast for 5 minutes, or until golden. Set aside.
- 2 Heat 2 tablespoons olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add shallot and cook for 2 minutes. Stir in garlic and cook for 30 seconds. Add Giorgio mushrooms and cook 8-10 minutes, stirring occasionally, until tender. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Remove from heat.
- 3 Assemble the crostini by spreading a tablespoon of herbed goat cheese on each toasted baguette slice. Top with a spoonful of Giorgio mushroom mixture.
- 4 Arrange Giorgio Mushroom Crostini on a platter or wooden board. Fill in with your choice of additional items: marinated Giorgio mushrooms, meats, cheeses, nuts, dips, vegetables, and crackers. Garnish with basil and rosemary for a fresh, festive touch. Enjoy!

To learn more about Giorgio Fresh, visit www.giorgiofresh.com

Giorgio

GR Fresh



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BOLTHÖUSE
FRESH FOODS™

Transforming



Tradition

By Jordan Okumura-Wright

If you sense a shift in momentum happening in our industry, that instinct is correct.

Fresh produce is seemingly always at a crossroads. Between market disruptions, technological advancements, and shifting personal preferences, the direction, strategies, and trajectories of today's business models are at a critical juncture. Or, as Timothy Escamilla sees it, an inflection point.



Timothy Escamilla,
Chief Executive Officer,
Bolthouse Fresh Foods™

"This is an exciting time, a moment of pivotal change, one where tradition meets transformation," the Chief Executive Officer of Bolthouse Fresh Foods™ shares with me. "The future of produce is in a position to

honor the field while reimagining how it connects with people's daily lives. As consumer expectations evolve, so must the ways fresh food is presented, packaged, and delivered. This means rethinking formats, embracing digital tools, leaning into convenience, and expanding organics—all while staying rooted in the farming heritage that defines our company."

When challenged with the new landscape of today, Bolthouse Fresh Foods made a clear choice: transformation over irrelevance. As the architect of Bolthouse Fresh Foods, Timothy is shaping a new era defined by innovation, accessibility, and bold vision.

As one of North America's largest carrot producers and distributors—offering whole, baby, and rainbow organic carrots—the company has found its path to steady growth alongside innovations that make fresh eating simpler and more engaging. Beyond retail, Bolthouse Fresh Foods partners with foodservice operators and global manufacturers, supplying natural ingredients for beverages and prepared foods.

"For us, success means defining the future of produce," Timothy explains. "Whether it's helping retailers grow the category or giving consumers fresh, simple options, we're focused on creating the trends that will shape how people eat."

While rooted in tradition since its founding in 1915, the company recognizes the strength in holding firm to its values while charting a course of innovation that acknowledges a changing consumer.

"Consumers today are busier than ever, juggling work, family, and fast-paced lives. Fresh produce is already recognized as nutritious, but the challenge is helping it fit seamlessly into modern routines. That's shaping how the category evolves—and how companies like Bolthouse Fresh Foods are pushing it forward," Timothy explains. "Shoppers want more ways to experience produce, along with simple ideas for how to use it. It's about making fresh food fit into today's lifestyle."

Through this lens, everything Bolthouse Fresh Foods does within its go-to-market strategy becomes a product of focused

vision. This includes launching items like Soup N' Stewin' carrots, which simplify meal prep, or Carrot Fries, a disruptive format that reimagines what a fry can be.

"We perfected carrots, and now we're upgrading fries," Timothy says. "These innovations highlight the category's direction: products that are practical, craveable, and bridge the gap between nutrition and enjoyment."

This forward-looking approach is gaining recognition not only within our industry but beyond it. *Fast Company* named Bolthouse Fresh Foods to its 2025 list of The Most Innovative Companies in North America.

"This honor underscores a broader shift in our industry: Produce is no longer content to be a quiet category; it's stepping up as a source of excitement, disruption, and growth for retailers and consumers alike," Timothy suggests.

That same momentum extends to seasonal items like Reindeer Snack carrots, designed with kids in mind. Festive packaging makes vegetables more engaging while creating new holiday traditions.

"When produce shows up in fun, simple, and engaging ways, it changes the way people think about vegetables—and more importantly, how they buy and enjoy them," Timothy details.

"The future of produce is in a position to honor the field while reimagining how it connects with people's daily lives. As consumer expectations evolve, so must the ways fresh food is presented, packaged, and delivered."

Timothy Escamilla,
Chief Executive Officer, Bolthouse Fresh Foods™



And this philosophy isn't confined to the physical shelf—it extends into the digital space as well. Online grocery shopping has moved from occasional to everyday, and for produce—long considered a category where shoppers wanted to see and feel before buying—this shift demands fresh thinking.

“E-commerce will continue to grow,” Timothy says. “As lives get busier, online shopping isn't just convenient—it's becoming a default. And we have to think differently about how produce shows up in a digital basket versus a physical aisle.”

Working closely with retailers, Bolthouse Fresh Foods enhances the online produce experience with clear communication, pristine photography, and accurate product descriptions. These tools not only build consumer confidence but also help partners differentiate their offerings and grow the category.

“Digital isn't just about e-commerce—Bolthouse Fresh Foods is also reimagining how consumers connect with produce every day. QR codes on packaging link shoppers to recipes, tips, and interactive content, showing how carrots move from basket to table in engaging ways,” Timothy reveals.

As Timothy paints the picture of an evolving consumer, I see what he sees: a shopper who wants more than just a carrot on their plate—they want an experience, a story, a value proposition for their busy, bustling lives. Or, at the very least, they want to buy from a company that sees them. And seeing them means showing up—at the grocery store, the corner market, even at the quick stop on the way to soccer practice.

“Convenience stores used to be about soda and chips. Now they're becoming fresh food stops,” he says, acknowledging the expansion of produce beyond the

grocery aisle. “By meeting consumers where they are—whether at gas stations, airports, or campuses—produce can expand its role in daily life without forcing people to choose between health and convenience.”

Bolthouse Fresh Foods is leaning into this opportunity with innovations like Carrot Shakers™—snackable carrots with bold seasonings that make produce as fun and portable as chips.

“Snacking is one of the most important growth drivers for fresh produce,” Timothy says. “When people want something quick, they're open to healthy options—but we need to make them craveable and designed for quick consumption.”

Alongside convenience, Timothy points to organics as another major focus.



“Organics are no longer a niche—across generations, people want food that aligns with their values,” he notes. “To meet this demand, Bolthouse Fresh Foods continues to expand its organic offerings, ensuring consumers have accessible options that reflect their priorities. From organic baby carrots to premium foodservice selections, organics remain a critical part of the future of fresh produce.”

I admire the ingenuity and follow-through of Timothy and his team. They are shaping a more well-rounded, experiential consumer into their strategies—and it is paying dividends in both sales and loyalty.

It's at this point in our conversation that Timothy shifts from product innovation to technological innovation. For Bolthouse Fresh Foods, it's a natural next step. AI is top of mind for everyone, and as Timothy notes, it could provide a pivotal moment for fresh produce.

“AI is transforming fresh produce—unlocking new ways to farm and operate,” Timothy says. He sees this moment as both urgent and exciting:

“By meeting consumers where they are—whether at gas stations, airports, or campuses—produce can expand its role in daily life without forcing people to choose between health and convenience.”

“It is the truest product,” he expresses. “It's growing, it's evolving, and it will always matter in people's lives.”

the chance to combine over a century of farming knowledge with cutting-edge technology. “We have always been rooted in farming traditions, and we have always embraced innovation. Today, AI brings data-driven precision to practices once guided by instinct. One example is laser weeding, which uses cameras and AI to distinguish weeds from crops and eliminate them with precision, reshaping productivity in the field. But the significance goes far beyond Bolthouse Fresh Foods. For the produce industry, AI is opening doors to faster insights, more resilient supply chains, and new skill sets. AI won't just change how we grow—it will change how we lead.”

At Bolthouse Fresh Foods, this means combining innovation with a commitment to people, ensuring both employees and partners are equipped to thrive in this new era.

Looking further ahead, Timothy is certain of one thing: Fresh produce will always be relevant.

At the heart of it all is a mission to ensure fresh, nutritious food supports people in their daily lives and elevates the role of produce in modern eating. That mission guides Bolthouse Fresh Foods today, will remain vital tomorrow, and will continue to inspire the industry for generations to come.

With more than three decades in the produce industry, Timothy brings expertise spanning agricultural operations, product innovation, supply chain, and strategic leadership. His career, shaped at companies like Dole, Tanimura & Antle, and Ready Pac Foods, reflects a consistent focus on growth through innovation and on making fresh food more accessible.

And so, the inflection point that always seemed just on the horizon has arrived. For Bolthouse Fresh Foods, it is not just a turning point but a launchpad—where tradition meets transformation, and where the future of fresh produce is being written today. 🥕



“As lives get busier, online shopping isn't just convenient—it's becoming a default. And we have to think differently about how produce shows up in a digital basket versus a physical aisle.”



HOLIDAYS

— SnackChat —

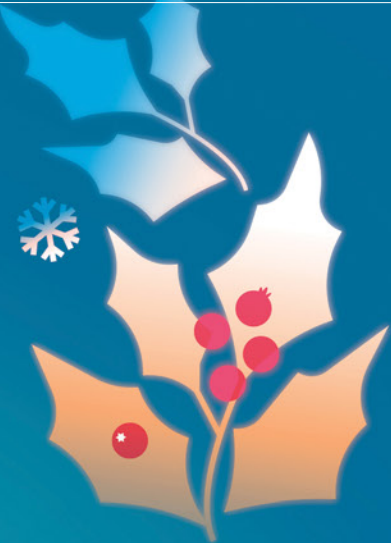
BY ANNE ALLEN

Every holiday season differs in this industry. With every passing year, different challenges and successes come to the forefront, and with them, the chance to reflect on the year behind us and the one to come. Given the nature of those of us in fresh produce, there is no shortage of care and gratitude for the ones who've made these successes possible. And it wouldn't be *The Snack* if we weren't sharing some tips and tricks on how to get through this time of year, too. So, read on for inspiration and a whole lot of love...



Rannel Santiago,
Director of Produce, Sysco

"The holiday season is a time to celebrate abundance, and produce plays a starring role in that story. From vibrant citrus to festive greens, merchandising should evoke warmth, tradition, and freshness. It's also a moment to reflect on the incredible teams that make it all happen—from field to shelf. Gratitude goes a long way, especially during the busiest time of year. Clear communication, early planning, and a little creativity can turn holiday chaos into opportunity. At the end of the day, it's about bringing joy to the table—and produce does that beautifully."



Kyla Oberman,
Director of Marketing, California Giant Berry Farms

"The holidays are a time to pause and appreciate the people behind every clamshell of berries—from our staff, growers, and harvest crews to our trade partners and customers. At California Giant Berry Farms, we're proud to offer Berries with Purpose™ —grown with care and delivered with the mission to nourish our communities. During the holiday season, we are reminded that what we do goes beyond the produce aisle; it's about bringing people together, celebrating the dedication of our team, and adding a touch of health and sweetness to celebrations everywhere with fresh berries."



Dan Canales,
Senior Vice President of Sales, Marketing, and Processing, Ippolito International

"During the holidays, it's a 'tale of two cities.' There's work-holiday Dan, and there's family-holiday Dan. From a work perspective, it's all about planning promotions with customers and maintaining an all-hands-on-deck focus on communication and providing the products they need during this important time of year. With Brussels sprouts being our major product line, this season bodes well for us—whether it's bulk, value-added products like our Queen Victoria Brussels Bites® Kits, or simply Brussels stalks. Providing choices gives our customers options to meet their specific merchandising needs."

Family Dan is a completely different story. Our 'kids' are now grown, and with four grandkids, it's all about getting together as much as possible. We've been so fortunate that everyone genuinely enjoys being together. We love playing board games when we're together, and needless to say, the competitive spirit is alive and well in our family! When it comes to meals, we tend to stick with the traditional Thanksgiving spread—complete with a nice side of Brussels sprouts, of course. When Christmas and New Year's come around, we usually go for more of a smorgasbord to suit everyone's tastes. It's the time of year our whole family looks forward to. Wishing the best of holidays to everyone and their families as we reflect on the important things in life."



Lauren Anderes,
Senior Sourcing Manager, Walmart

“As Senior Sourcing Manager for Citrus and Pomegranates, the holiday season is especially meaningful. It marks the transition back to California-grown fruit and showcases a vibrant array of fresh produce in stores. Walking through the department this time of year is a reminder of the countless individuals who work together to deliver high-quality items on time. Their efforts help make it possible for families to enjoy fresh ingredients in home-cooked meals shared with loved ones throughout the season.”



Joseph Bunting,
Produce Business Director, United Supermarkets

“The holidays are always a fun but challenging time for retailers. Making sure you have just the right amount of fresh product is challenging. Many months of planning and preparing for the holidays finally come to fruition, and it is your time to shine. Offering expanded and creative fresh displays are eye-catching and help set the tone for the holidays. Large displays of sweet potatoes and marshmallows are perfect for the holidays. Cranberries and celery will be in high demand for that perfect family recipe your guests have been waiting to make. As we head into the holidays, just remember how blessed you are and how blessed we are to be in such a great industry who can serve our guests and make their holidays the best one yet.”



► MY FAVORITE THINGS ◀
CHRISTINE ETCHEVERRY
DOMESTIC ACCOUNT MANAGER,
SUNVIEW MARKETING INTERNATIONAL

With Jordan Okumura-Wright

Behind Christine Etcheverry’s kind smile and contagious laugh lies the curious mind of a true crime sleuth who lives by the Cowboy Code. These fun facts—and many more—reflect a passion and dedication that define her work as Domestic Account Manager at Sunview Marketing International. Whether she’s in a vineyard, on a sales call, or indulging her love of travel, Christine is the kind of person who always leaves your cup full. Discover what makes her one of our favorites...



1 **FARMER'S MARKETS**
A place that brings my lifelong love for agriculture to life—where hard work meets fresh, beautiful bounty.



2 **OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY**
Forever loyal and true to my alma mater—OSU taught me to ride for the brand and never lose sight of my roots.



3 **CRIME JUNKIE PODCAST**
From my daily commute to cross-country flights, true crime keeps me hooked—a little mystery to balance all the grape talk.



4 **BRUCE AND MEL**
My parents’ yellow Labs—the family’s official welcoming committee and favorite children; snack-obsessed, attention-hungry, and impossible not to love.



5 **FAMILY**
The youngest of six and aunt to seven—grounded by the unwavering love of my parents, the ones who built the foundation we all stand on.



6 **TRAVELING**
Each trip—from trade shows to retailer visits—reminds me that agriculture doesn’t just grow crops; it cultivates connections and shared purpose.



7 **SUNDAY FUNDAY**
Where “just one episode” turns into three, something’s baking in the oven, and the couch becomes home base.



8 **GRAPES (AND THE PRODUCE WORLD)**
The heart of what I do—rooted in California soil, driven by passion and legacy, and shared with pride in every box grown, harvested, and shipped.

A Closer Look at Pure Flavor® Rebrand

By Melissa De Leon Chavez

Amid a sea of green in the fresh aisle, color breaks are often sought to draw the eye. Reds, yellows, and purples play well to offer some contrast, but one pack I don't often see is white.

Until now.

When I first saw the Pure Flavor® reveal of its entirely new brand approach, I remember thinking how the bright white booth and clean-line style stood out amid a bustling Global Produce & Floral Show floor—not unlike a maximized fresh produce and floral department.

Surrounded by over a thousand other companies, the grower's strategy is one that was easy to spot initially, then left me with much to take in from the messages being conveyed. Safe to say, it stuck with me.

Sometimes differentiation means distillation—in this case, a simplified message delivered through the greenhouse grower's refreshed packaging identity. No flash, just fresh produce.

It is a seemingly quiet move that speaks volumes about the brand's

confidence in its product, and the look will easily complement several in-store approaches while offering a ziggung approach to packaged veggies and fruits. In fact, the company itself pointed out how its holistic refresh resonates with consumers and retailers alike.

Pure Flavor's entirely new brand approach proved to me that, sometimes, standing out isn't about how much you can add onto your pack—it's about the confidence of clarity, kept simple. 🍅



UP
CLOSE



Learn More



As the spotlight fades and the applause settles, what remains is the quiet hum of momentum—proof that inspiration doesn't end with the award. It is, in many ways, just the beginning.

Fresh produce carries a passion and a willingness unlike any industry I have known before. Ours is an ecosystem built layer upon layer by a call to action far bigger than ourselves to feed the world. This inspiration begins anew in every story told, every brand built, and every hand that continues to lift this industry higher. Because, truth be told, recognition is more than a moment. It's a mirror. A reflection of how far we've come as an industry and how deeply rooted our determination is to place our beautiful, healthy fruits and vegetables in front of the consumer.

The Besties Awards mark a milestone in that ongoing journey.

For this moment, though, we can pause and acknowledge one another for every inch we move closer to innovation in both thought and product. There is real progress to be found in that recognition: the collective gain that comes when we celebrate one another—competitors, neighbors, and partners alike. Together, we contribute to the growth of what was once a peripheral department, now a key driver of revenue and relevance across buying operations.

It's easy to forget, on some days, that the farmer, the grower, the packer, and the shipper are not required to open up shop, though they are compelled to, driven by a shared sense of vision and intention. When a package, a purpose, a design, or a cause reaches beyond the register and into the community, fresh produce becomes something more. It becomes nourishment for both the body and the soul—a reminder that

doing good and doing good business can, and should, coexist.

Chosen by a committee of leaders who understand the nuances and challenges of today's market, this year's Besties honorees embody what happens when passion meets purpose. Each award reflects not just excellence, but intention—the result of countless decisions, risks, and moments of creativity that move our industry forward. Their recognition is a testament to the collective drive that unites us all and to the shared belief that progress, at its best, is grown together.

A heartfelt thank you to our committee members for your time, your wisdom, and your support this year.

From soil to shelf, these awards—these stories made manifest—remind us that innovation thrives when it's rooted in passion. 🍅

Our 2025 Advisory Committee



Carrie Mack,
Senior Sourcing
Manager, Walmart



Lauren Anderes,
Senior Sourcing
Manager, Walmart



Ryan Sanchez,
Produce Sales Manager,
Albertsons and Vons



David Dudley,
Senior Category Manager,
Sprouts Farmers Market



Chris Keetch,
Director of Produce and
Floral, The GIANT Company



Robby Cruz,
Vice President of Produce,
Target



Joseph Bunting,
Produce Business Director,
United Supermarkets



Chris Miller,
Produce Director, MOM's
Organic Market



Chad Miller,
Chief Innovation Officer,
FreshSource

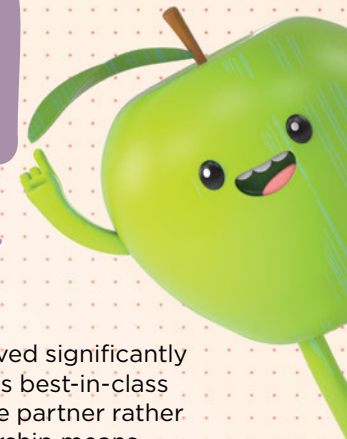


Patrick Mills,
Western U.S. and Canada,
Idaho Potato Commission



Julie Krivanek,
Founder, Krivanek
Consulting

If you could leave suppliers and vendors with one message about what it takes to truly stand out and move the needle in today's market, what would it be?



"Don't just sell us fruit—sell us the future. Bring ideas, not excuses. The suppliers who move the needle are the ones who innovate with purpose, anticipate what's next, and make our shared shopper the hero of every decision."

Carrie Mack,
Senior Sourcing Manager, Walmart



"What it takes to truly stand out and move the needle in today's market can be summed up in one truth—one belief rooted in both upbringing and experience: farmers feed the world. Whether you're a consumer, a retailer, a leader, or a parent, this business thrives on keeping the supply chain—from farm to fridge—intact, 24/7, 365 days a year. Challenges will come, but any obstacle can be overcome when that symbiotic relationship remains strong."

Chris Keetch,
Director of Produce and Floral, The
GIANT Company



"The partners that set themselves apart from the pack are those who value transparency, communication, and shared goals. It's impactful to feel as though the transaction is not a sale on its own, but a path to a mutually beneficial relationship."

Chris Miller,
Produce Director, MOM's Organic Market



"In today's market, standing out isn't about a single innovation or strategy—it's about the culture that drives every action. At FreshSource, our success comes from a team whose passion, experience, and collaborative spirit transform partnerships into growth. When retailers, suppliers, and vendors share that same commitment—to relationships, executional excellence, and creating meaningful consumer engagement—they don't just move product; they move the needle."

Chad Miller,
Chief Innovation Officer, FreshSource



"Among all the wonderful design and marketing elements is the ability to stand out in a crowd with the deep value and uniqueness of their product or service. Value is something that can't be faked—it is the catalyst that makes others in the marketplace seek them out."

Julie Krivanek,
Founder, Krivanek Consulting

"Retailer-supplier relationships have evolved significantly over the past decade. What stands out as best-in-class today is a supplier who seeks to be a true partner rather than simply transactional. To me, partnership means engaging in forward-looking conversations—discussing what our business will look like five years from now and how we can achieve our category goals together."

Lauren Anderes,
Senior Sourcing Manager, Walmart



"Being upfront and honest about everything is how a vendor/supplier can stand out for me. Whether it's cost, availability, quality, or timing, just be upfront about what's happening, and the earlier the better. When it comes to price, give me the best cost available without sacrificing quality, rather than going back and forth for a week. It will save a lot of frustration for both of us. Working together on a common goal of selling more produce and making a little money is a recipe for success for all."

Ryan Sanchez,
Produce Sales Manager, Albertsons
and Vons



"Success in produce today takes more than great products: It's about collaboration, agility, and a shared commitment to growth. Vendors who listen, adapt quickly, and bring creative solutions to challenges help elevate the entire industry. The real differentiator is partnership: working side by side to deliver freshness, consistency, and innovation every single day."

Robby Cruz,
Vice President of Produce, Target



"As a retailer for 38 years and now on the other side of the desk I feel very strongly about a few key points on supplier/vendor and retailer business relationships. In today's world, the supply chain has to be very customer service oriented and totally transparent when it can; pushing for 100 percent transparency. Nothing feels better than having a supplier/vendor you deal with that you can trust and know exactly what costs are involved from beginning to end. All parties need to be profitable. If there is a transparent agreement, everybody gets equal profitability. Add in good customer service, and it's a win!"

Patrick Mills,
Western U.S. and Canada, Idaho
Potato Commission

Our 2025
Besties Awards
Winners

RETAILER OF THE YEAR



Chris Keetch
The GIANT Company

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT



Dan Canales
Ippolito International

BEST EMAIL AD CAMPAIGNS



Bee Sweet Citrus

BEST EDUCATIONAL VIDEOS



Monterey Mushrooms

SNACK STORYTELLER



Catherine Gipe-Stewart
Superfresh Growers®

BEST MARKETER TO
WORK WITH



Teri Gibson
Peri & Sons Farms®

BEST ALTERNATIVE
MARKETING CAMPAIGN



Fowler Packing Company



Our 2025
Besties Awards
Winners

BEST WEBSITE



Zespri

BEST SNACK AD



Mucci Farms

BEST SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNING



Trinity Fruit Company

BEST SOCIAL MEDIA
CULINARY ARTISTRY



Duda Farm Fresh Foods

BEST REBRAND



Highline Mushrooms

BEST PHILANTHROPIC INITIATIVES



Lipman Family Farms

BEST MERCHANDISING CONCEPTS



CMI Orchards



Harvesting Balance: Rethinking Time Off in the Produce Industry

By Editorial Contributor Julie Marcik, President and Managing Director, Joe Produce SearchSM



In an industry that never sleeps, rethinking rest could be the key to attracting and retaining the next generation of leaders.

The relentless reality of feeding the country means long hours and consistent demand. Our work is essential, and the pace rarely slows. But as we look to cultivate the next generation of talent, we must recognize that their expectations are different. For them, work-life balance isn't a perk—it's a prerequisite.

Considering the significant financial impact of employee turnover and disengagement, a thoughtful time-off policy is clearly an investment, not an expense. The holiday season provides a perfect opportunity for leaders to demonstrate both their commitment to business needs and respect for employee well-being.



1. Start With Data, Not Tradition

Our industry doesn't stop in December, but that doesn't mean we can't plan smarter. A data-driven approach ensures operations continue without overburdening teams.

- **Analyze Demand Patterns:** Look beyond the Thanksgiving rush. Is there a dip in institutional orders the week before Christmas? An uptick in citrus demand after New Year's? Identify the true peaks and lulls
- **Spot Coverage Flexibility:** Some roles, like shipping and receiving, may need to stay fully staffed. Others, like sales or administrative support, might be able to run on a lighter schedule
- **Anticipate Buyer Cycles:** Know how your customers' demand fluctuates. If your retail partners finalize orders a week out, you can plan staffing accordingly

2. Build Trust With Fair and Transparent Policies

The next generation of workers values transparency above almost everything else. Ambiguity breeds resentment.

- **Announce Deadlines Early:** Give employees ample time to plan by setting clear dates for time-off requests
- **Use a Fair System:** Whether it's based on

rotation, a lottery, or seniority, make the system clear and stick to it. This prevents feelings of favoritism

- **Define "Blackout Periods":** If the week leading up to Christmas is all-hands-on-deck, define it clearly and explain the business reasons why

3. Guarantee Coverage Without Guaranteeing Burnout

Critical work can't pause, but we can staff for it without exhausting our most vital people.

- **Cross-Train for Flexibility:** Ensure multiple team members can handle critical tasks, from inspecting a late-arriving shipment to managing a key account's last-minute request
- **Use On-Call Rotations:** Instead of full staffing, use a light on-call rotation for essential roles, allowing people to be home but available if needed
- **Empower Teams to Coordinate:** Let departments manage their own coverage schedules. This builds collaboration, ownership, and flexibility

When leaders demonstrate balance, they create a culture where the next generation sees a long-term future, not just a short-term job.



4. Get Creative with the Gift of Time

Appealing to new generations means thinking beyond traditional vacation days. While a company-wide shutdown might be unrealistic, the key is to demonstrate generosity where you can. Even small, symbolic gestures of flexibility can have an outsized impact on morale and loyalty.

- **Strategic Closures:** Consider a company-wide closure during a predictable slow period, like the week between Christmas and New Year's
- **Early Dismissals:** Shutting down a few hours early on Christmas Eve or Fridays in December is a high-impact, low-cost morale booster
- **A "Holiday Hours" Bank:** Offer a set number of paid hours that employees can use at their discretion throughout November and December
- **Rotation Rewards:** For those who work on a major holiday, offer them a "floating" holiday or an extra PTO day to be used in the slower months of January or February

5. Lead by Example

Grit and hard work are hallmarks of the produce industry, but leaders must also model sustainability. Your actions set the true company culture.

- **Take Your Own Time Off:** When leaders visibly unplug, it gives their teams permission to do the same
- **Respect Boundaries:** Avoid sending non-urgent emails or texts to people who are on vacation
- **Celebrate Inclusively:** Host gatherings that emphasize community and appreciation rather than obligation

The Bottom Line

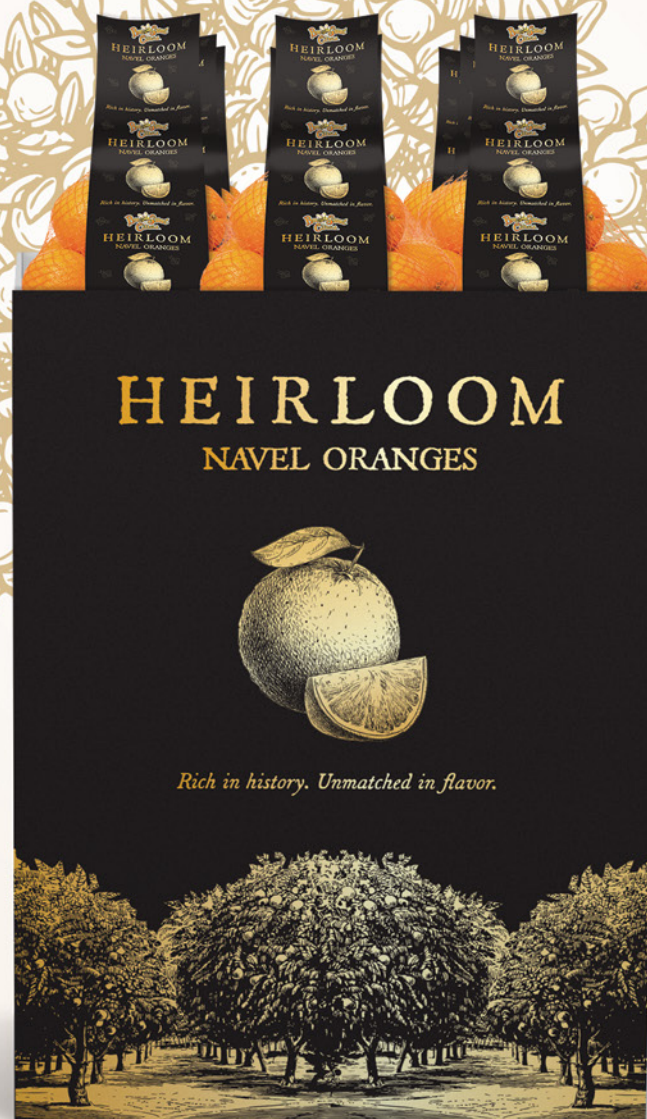
The produce industry will always demand hard work—that won't change. But to attract and keep the talent we need for the future, we must prove that a fulfilling career and a balanced life are possible here. This doesn't require a complete operational overhaul; it begins with thoughtful planning and consistent, meaningful gestures that show you value your people as much as your product. 🍎

Julie Marcik leads the JOE Produce SearchSM team, leveraging more than 20 years of experience in executive search. Produce is not a job, it's a lifestyle. Once you "check the boxes" on skills and experience, the real job becomes matching the people with the culture of the business and leadership. This takes time, expertise, and a robust process Julie and the JOE Produce SearchSM team know well. JOE Produce SearchSM is composed of experienced search consultants and produce professionals. Placements range from middle management to C-level positions throughout North America, covering a wide range of produce and produce-related businesses.



Julie Marcik,
President and Managing Director
JOE Produce Search

A PREMIUM Promise



A Q&A With Monique Mueller,
Director of Communications, Bee Sweet Citrus

By Anne Allen



There's something immensely satisfying about indulging in citrus. The first rush of juice flowing over the tongue, followed by that sharp zip of acidity and sweetness, is an eating experience humans have been chasing after for millennia.

Modernity has worn away the old-world indulgence of consuming citrus with year-round supply, but the act of putting that first slice in your mouth is arguably still as deluxe. Especially if you have suppliers like Bee Sweet Citrus providing the product.

The company's latest move to rebrand its Heirloom Navels is an homage to the uniqueness and diversity of its lineup. Under the Premium Citrus line, the new Heirloom Navels design will now reflect its sophistication in both taste and look.



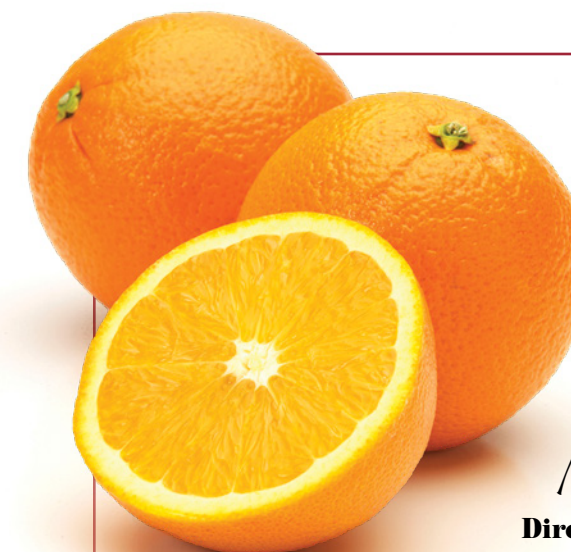
Anne Allen: Before we dive into the rebrand, could you provide a brief history of Bee Sweet Citrus' Premium Citrus line?

Monique Mueller, Director of Communications, Bee Sweet Citrus:

The line first made its debut during the 2024-25 citrus season. At the time of its inception, it included Royal Red oranges, Pummelos, and Golden Gem grapefruit—all varieties that are incredibly unique in both flavor and appearance, but are only available to consumers for a limited period.



With a citrus line as diverse as ours, we wanted to ensure that those varieties had everything in place to maximize visibility in the eyes of our customers. So, before the 2024-25 season launched, our team made a strategic decision to rebrand those varieties to ensure they would stand out against other varieties in the produce aisle for seasons to come.



“With a citrus line as diverse as ours, we wanted to ensure that those varieties had everything in place to maximize visibility in the eyes of our customers.”

Monique Mueller,
Director of Communications, Bee Sweet Citrus



“Heirloom Navels are truly special because they’re the direct result of decades’ worth of hard work.”



AA: How did the rebrand for Heirloom Navels come into being, and what prompted the change?

MM: Heirloom Navels are truly special because they’re the direct result of decades’ worth of hard work. For years, Bee Sweet Citrus growers have been nurturing the health of our citrus trees, enabling them to mature and produce fruit that is worthy of our loyal customers.

Unlike regular Navel oranges, Heirloom Navels are harvested on specific blocks of well-aged trees and have higher Brix (sugar) than standard Navel varieties. Numerous steps need to be taken before our team can pack fruit under our Heirloom brand, which is what inspired our team to redesign its packaging and give it a new look that represents its quality and exclusivity.


AA: Packaging is a crucial part of the puzzle, as it helps convey quality to consumers. What else contributed to the redesign of the packaging?

MM: In a fast-paced world, it is crucial to make a strong first impression. While some shoppers have time to peruse the grocery aisle, many consumers are often grocery shopping while running errands or on their way home from work or school. Regardless of their schedules, we want to ensure that everyone not only notices our Heirloom Navels in the grocery store, but is also inspired to try them. Their distinctive appearance and quality will achieve just that.



AA: In addition to Heirloom Navels, how does Bee Sweet Citrus’ premium citrus line continue to drive quality for Golden Gem grapefruit, Pummelos, and Royal Reds?

MM: The Bee Sweet Citrus team takes the term “premium” very seriously. When we market our varieties under an exclusive brand of fruit, we are committed to growing, packing, and shipping products that truly embody that standard.

A good first impression is everything, which is why the strength of a company’s branding should never be underestimated. Delivering on premium flavor for decades now, Bee Sweet Citrus is only further ramping up its promise to deliver delicious and, yes, *premium*, fruit to market with this rebrand. 

WTF DO I DO WITH Red Sun Farms™ English Cucumbers ?

{ what the fork }



CRISPY RICE AIR FRYER SALAD

INGREDIENTS

SALAD

- 1** Red Sun Farms™ English cucumber, thinly sliced using a mandoline or a sharp chef’s knife
- 2 cups** leftover rice
- 1 tbsp** red curry paste
- 1** shallot, minced
- 1 bunch** cilantro, chopped roughly

- ½ cup** mint, chopped roughly
- ½ cup** crushed salted peanuts, for garnish

DRESSING

- 1 tbsp** ginger, freshly minced
- 1 tbsp** garlic, minced
- ¼ cup** fish sauce

- ¼ cup** olive oil
- Juice of **1** lime
- 2 tbsp** brown sugar
- ½ tsp** chili flakes

Prep Time: 15 mins
Cook Time: 20 mins
Servings: 2

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Blitz all the dressing ingredients in a food processor and set aside.
- 2 Toss the leftover rice with the olive oil and curry paste. Mix very well.
- 3 Set the air fryer to 400° F for 7–9 minutes and place the rice in clumps into the air fryer (not too clumpy).
- 4 Place the salad ingredients into a bowl and toss with the dressing.
- 5 Remove the rice from the air fryer and crumble on top of the salad, and garnish with crushed peanuts. Enjoy!



To learn more about Red Sun Farms™, visit www.redsunfarms.com

Libations

For All Occasions

CRANBERRY-INFUSED VODKA



By Anne Allen

Photography by Reid Monsma


We can all picture the insanity that is a holiday kitchen. Children running in and out, perhaps even a dog or cat underfoot, and relatives popping in and out to either pilfer snacks or lend a hand. It's a place where chaos reigns, and during the hectic hustle and bustle that is synonymous with the holidays, the last thing you want to add to the list is another thing to stress you out. Especially when it comes to the menu.

Hence, my gift to you: Cranberry-Infused Vodka!

With minimal effort and maximum pay-off, this vodka is a boon to

home chefs looking for an easy way to dazzle relatives throughout December. The recipe is fool-proof. All you need to do is add all of the ingredients to a jar and wait.

Combining fresh, chopped cranberries and vodka leaves behind a tart, cherry-red liquor. Don't be tempted to mix sugar into the mixture; there's plenty of time to infuse sweetness into your cocktails when you're preparing them.

Retailers could easily entice shoppers to try this recipe by displaying the two ingredients together, as well as highlighting limes and Navel oranges to extend the cocktail possibilities. 



Here's how to make it... **Prep Time:** 5 mins **Infusion Time:** 7 days **Servings:** 7

INGREDIENTS

3 cups fresh cranberries
3 cups vodka



DIRECTIONS

1. Pour 2 cups of cranberries into the food processor and roughly pulse them.
2. Put the 2 cups of chopped cranberries and 1 cup whole cranberries into a large mason jar and pour vodka over.
3. Cap the jar and shake it vigorously. Store in your pantry and shake once a day for 7 days.
4. Line a sieve with a cheesecloth and place over a large bowl. Pour the contents of the jar over the sieve. Discard the cranberries once done.
5. To store, pour into a large bottle with a lid or several smaller bottles with lids. Serve and enjoy!





BY ANNE ALLEN

Every building needs a sturdy foundation to support it. When you're building a house, grading the land and pouring the foundation begins before the rough framing even starts. If you're going to succeed, you need your most supportive structure to be in tip-top shape.

After discussing past and present investments in its workforce with Peri & Sons Farms®, I can see how this rule applies to the produce industry as much as it does to carpentry.

"Healthier employees are more engaged, satisfied, and loyal, which increases retention and recruitment efforts and creates

a more positive work environment," Teri Gibson, Director of Marketing and Customer Relations, tells me. "Ultimately, these programs are a strategic investment that can lead to a significant return for an organization."

As Teri notes, most large produce operations offer medical insurance. But it's the unique programs within the company itself that are delivering wide-ranging benefits.

To begin, we need to step back to 2013, when David and Pamela Peri, the Owners and Operators of Peri & Sons Farms, noticed a lack of available or affordable childcare in their local community.



"PERI & SONS FARMS UNDERSTANDS THAT ITS COMMITMENT TO EMPLOYEE WELLNESS MAKES THE COMPANY MORE ATTRACTIVE TO NEW TALENT AND FOSTERS LOYALTY, REDUCING COSTLY TURNOVER."

TERI GIBSON,
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND CUSTOMER RELATIONS,
PERI & SONS FARMS®

"They took a pioneering step by opening the first 'Little Bulbs' daycare center. It's been a win all around," Teri emphasizes. "Employees no longer experience career setbacks or the reduction in family income that can happen when parents are forced to choose between their job and caring for their children. The farm benefits from employee retention and dedication."

Since its inception, the program has become so successful that Peri & Sons Farms now has three "Little Bulbs" daycare centers set up.

Yet even as the company expanded its support for families, the world beyond the farm still tests individual, family, and company strength in unforeseen ways. No matter how strong the foundation may be, external forces can exert pressure. No company is immune to time, supply chain challenges, or even life-altering events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many of us recall those days, which were fraught with anxiety and uncertainty. However, many produce companies did not succumb to the pressure; instead, they reacted to the challenges presented by the pandemic with ingenuity and great compassion.

David and Pamela Peri knew it was up to them to lead their employees back to a healthy mindset.

"The Peri family was greatly concerned for their community in Yerington, Nevada," Teri notes. "They observed that, for employees and their families, the impact of the pandemic extended beyond the physical body; it had an impact on their mental and emotional well-being too."

To combat the negative effects, David and Pamela took the step of hiring a licensed professional with a master's degree in mental and behavioral health counseling and a doctoral degree in counseling psychology to provide counseling services to employees.

"The doctor has had an immeasurable impact," Teri says. "They're still working with the company and the community to this day. Employees and their immediate family members can participate in this confidential counseling program at no cost."

Immeasurable is an apt word. It's challenging to determine the exact impact of investing in employee wellness, but the depth of change in employees who feel valued and seen can be profound.

More recently, the farm began offering the services of a professional registered dietitian (RD) at a very low cost to its workforce.

"Having easy online access to a food and nutrition expert who can provide personalized nutritional assessments, develop customized meal plans, and inform on healthy eating habits to prevent and treat medical conditions is so helpful," Teri adds.

The produce industry is amazing in growing healthy food for the planet, but we could be missing an opportunity to influence families who are closer to home than we realize. Healthy employees who are knowledgeable and passionate about the food they grow invest their time back into the operation with renewed vigor.

"Peri & Sons Farms understands that its commitment to employee wellness makes the company more attractive to new talent and fosters loyalty, reducing costly turnover. A focus on employee well-being builds trust, strengthens company culture, and demonstrates that the farm truly values its people," Teri concludes.

As the possibilities for promoting wellness expand with each passing year, Peri & Sons Farms has taken a committed and personalized approach to its employees' health, one that will continue to support the foundation of this family farm for years to come. 🍅

WTF DO I DO WITH Del Fresco Pure® Sweet Rainbow Peppers ?

{ what the fork }



MUHUMMARA DIP

INGREDIENTS

2 Del Fresco Pure® Red Sweet Rainbow Peppers
 4 **tbsp** extra-virgin olive oil, divided
 ¼ **lb** shelled toasted walnuts
 1 garlic clove, roughly chopped
 2½ **tbsp** tomato paste
 ¼ **cup** bread crumbs
 2 **tbsp** pomegranate molasses
 ½ **tsp** sugar
 1 **tsp** sumac
 ½ **tsp** salt
 ½ **tsp** cayenne pepper

Prep Time: 10 mins
Cook Time: 30 mins
Servings: 4–6



DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat the oven to 425° F.
- 2 Brush the bell peppers with olive oil and place in a lightly oiled oven-safe pan. Roast for 30 minutes and flip a few times.
- 3 Remove from the oven and place the peppers in a bowl. Cover with plastic wrap for a few minutes. After they have cooled and are easy to handle, peel the skin of the peppers.
- 4 In a food processor, combine the roasted red pepper strips with 3 **tbsp** extra-virgin olive oil, garlic, walnuts, tomato paste, bread crumbs, pomegranate molasses, sumac, salt, and cayenne. Blend into a smooth paste.
- 5 When ready to serve, top the dip with a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil and garnish with a little more walnuts and fresh parsley, if you like. Serve with pita bread or pita chips. Enjoy!

To learn more about Del Fresco Pure®, visit delfrescopure.com

WTF DO I DO WITH Murasaki Sweet Potatoes ?

{ what the fork }



MURASAKI SWEET POTATOES

INGREDIENTS

4 – 6 Murasaki Sweet Potatoes

Prep Time: 5–10 mins
Cook Time: 35–40 mins
Servings: 4–6

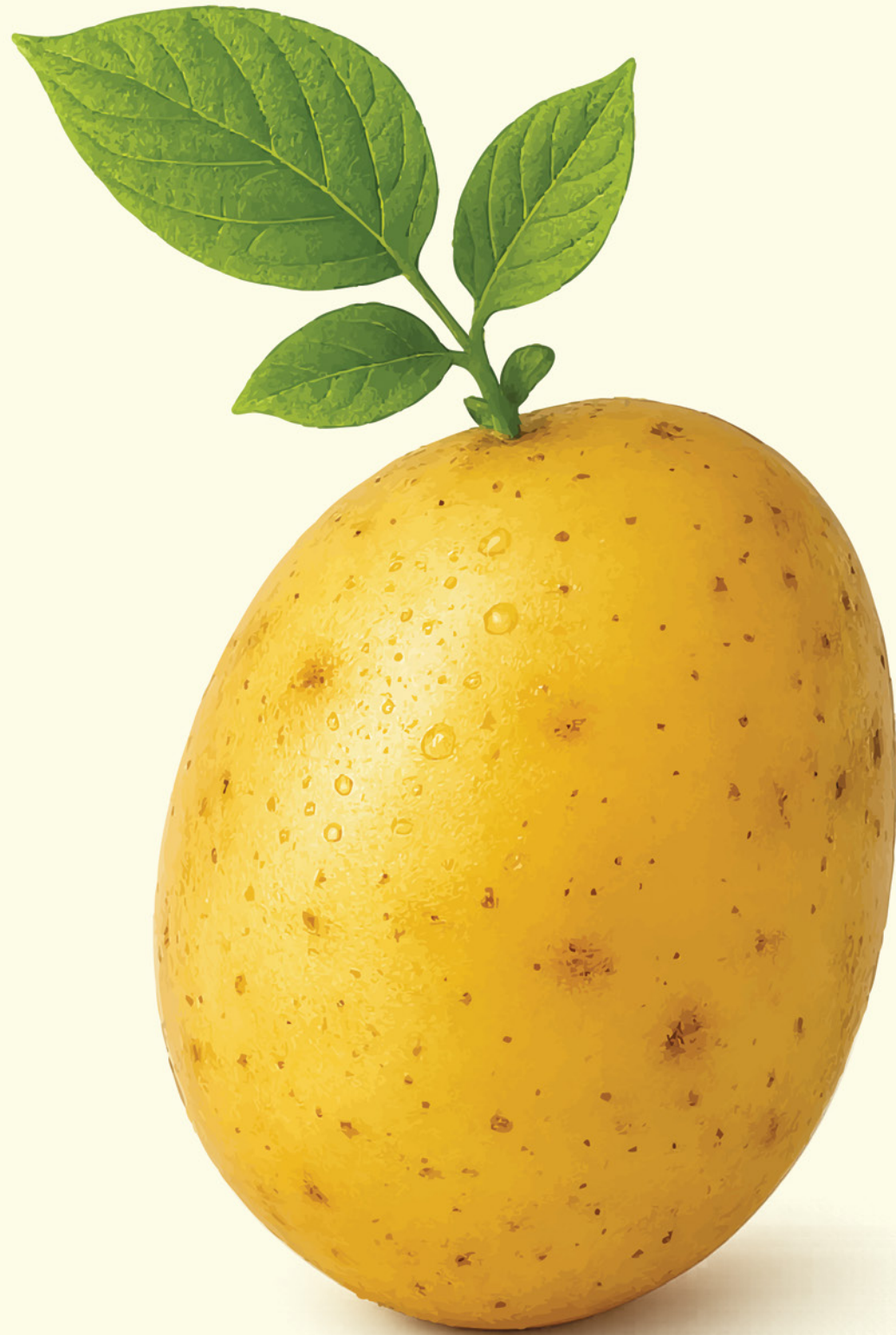


To learn more about Murasaki Sweet Potatoes, visit www.progressiveproduce.com

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat convection oven to 375°F.
- 2 Wash your Murasaki sweet potatoes.
- 3 Poke 3–4 holes in each sweet potato with a knife, fork, or potato poker. This allows the steam to vent so your sweet potato will not explode while cooking.
- 4 Place sweet potatoes directly on the oven racks. Depending on the size of your Murasaki, bake for 35–40 minutes. They are done when they pass the squish test. Wearing oven safe gloves, gently squeeze each sweet potato. If it is squishy and soft, then it is done.
- 5 Remove from oven and allow your baked sweet potato to cool slightly.
- 6 Enjoy by cutting the Murasaki open and fluffing the inside with a fork or simply taking a bite out of the sweet potato and eating them whole, skin and all.

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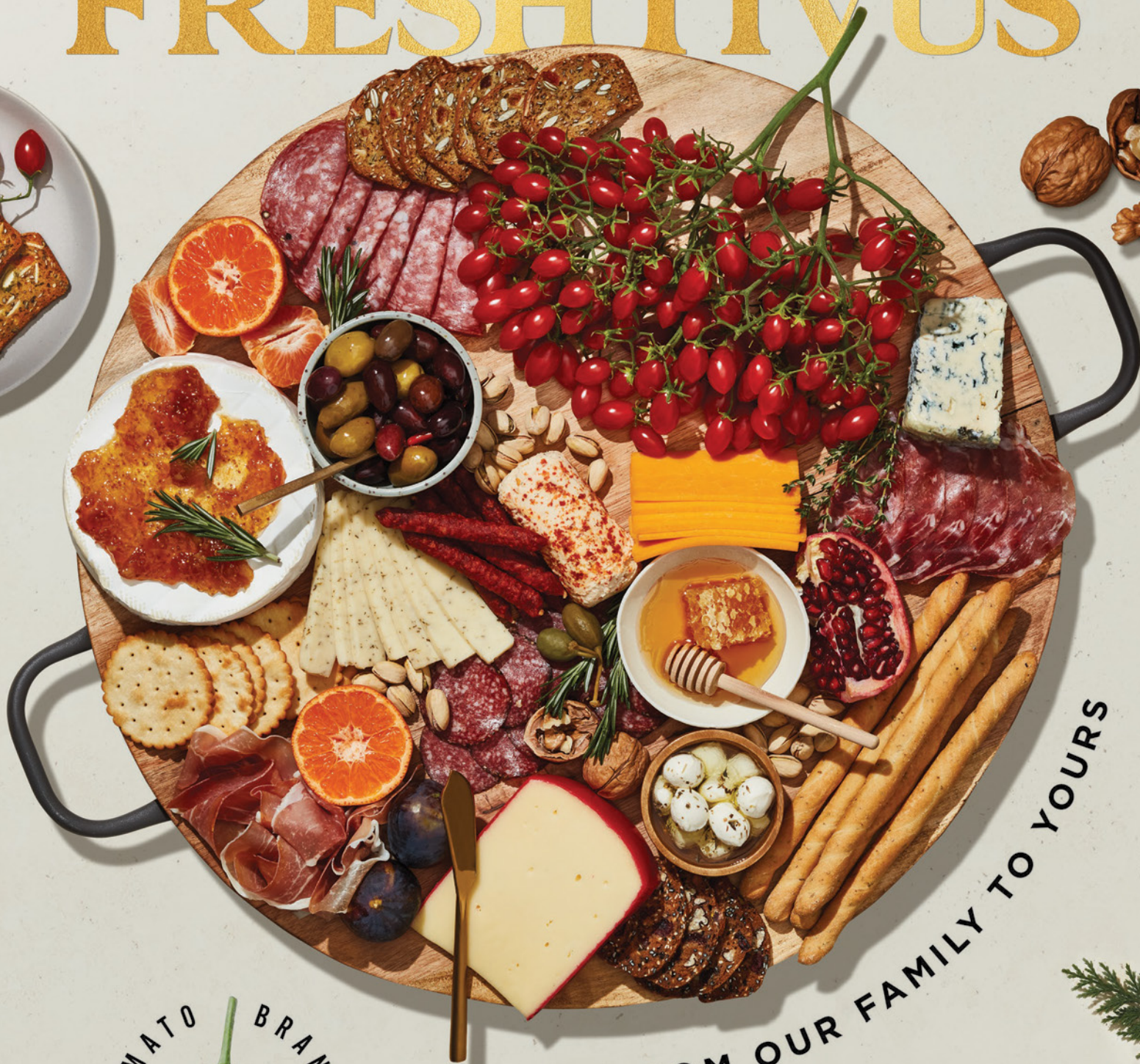
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