

Bite-Sized Info for the Produce Industry

# the **SNACK**

ISSUE 52 SEPT 2020

**BECOMING  
TIMELESS**

# frrieda

From the creators of *AndNowUKnow*



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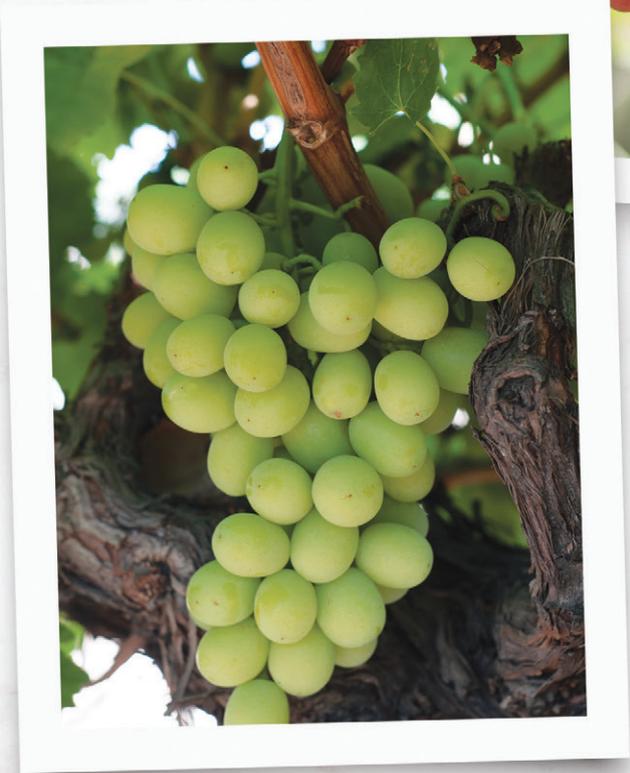
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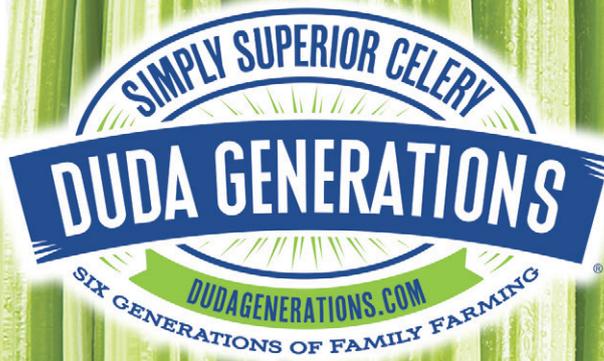


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---

**FRESH**  
*Flavor*  
**YEAR-ROUND**

---

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**I** **HAVE REGRESSED, IT IS OFFICIAL.** I feel like the five-year-old who wanted the red bike—drastically red—with chrome-flecked paint, a glittered-beyond-belief banana seat, streamers spouting out of rubber handlebar covers, and a bell that drives the neighborhood dogs mad. I wanted to rule the streets at sunset—scraped knees, chlorine-drenched hair, and just enough leash to feel tethered but not caged. I wanted to be free.

I want to be free.

Over 30 years later, I can't help but understand the spaces in which we live today in the same way—a very particular way. And while context changes—our rooms become relative, our expectations evolve—we all inherently want the freedom of movement, of choice; we want options, we want opportunities. This holding pattern we find ourselves in has acted as quite a force. Maybe even a reckoning. But, as you all have taught me, the past shows us that the only thing for certain is uncertainties, and we move through them anyway.

So, we come together and plant those seeds of change and opportunity, whose growth and success we may not be able to see for months or years to come.

But, isn't this what our industry does?

A mother or a father steps foot into a field and tests the soil, converts it, nourishes the land, lays the roots not so much for tomorrow, as for the days of their children or their grandchildren—for the legacy of moments long in the future. For the small, barefooted child that cannot even be conceived of yet.

So, we fill these pages with the voices that speak to us, which carry us through the thick of it. Let us help reconcile the distance between us. The courage of building a dream from scratch, of moving from fear and loss to remembrance and legend—these things can heal us.



From G&R Farms and PRO\*ACT to the ineffable loss of Frieda Rapoport Caplan and the rich life that lives on—these stories are not just words on the page: They are the bones that build our bodies.

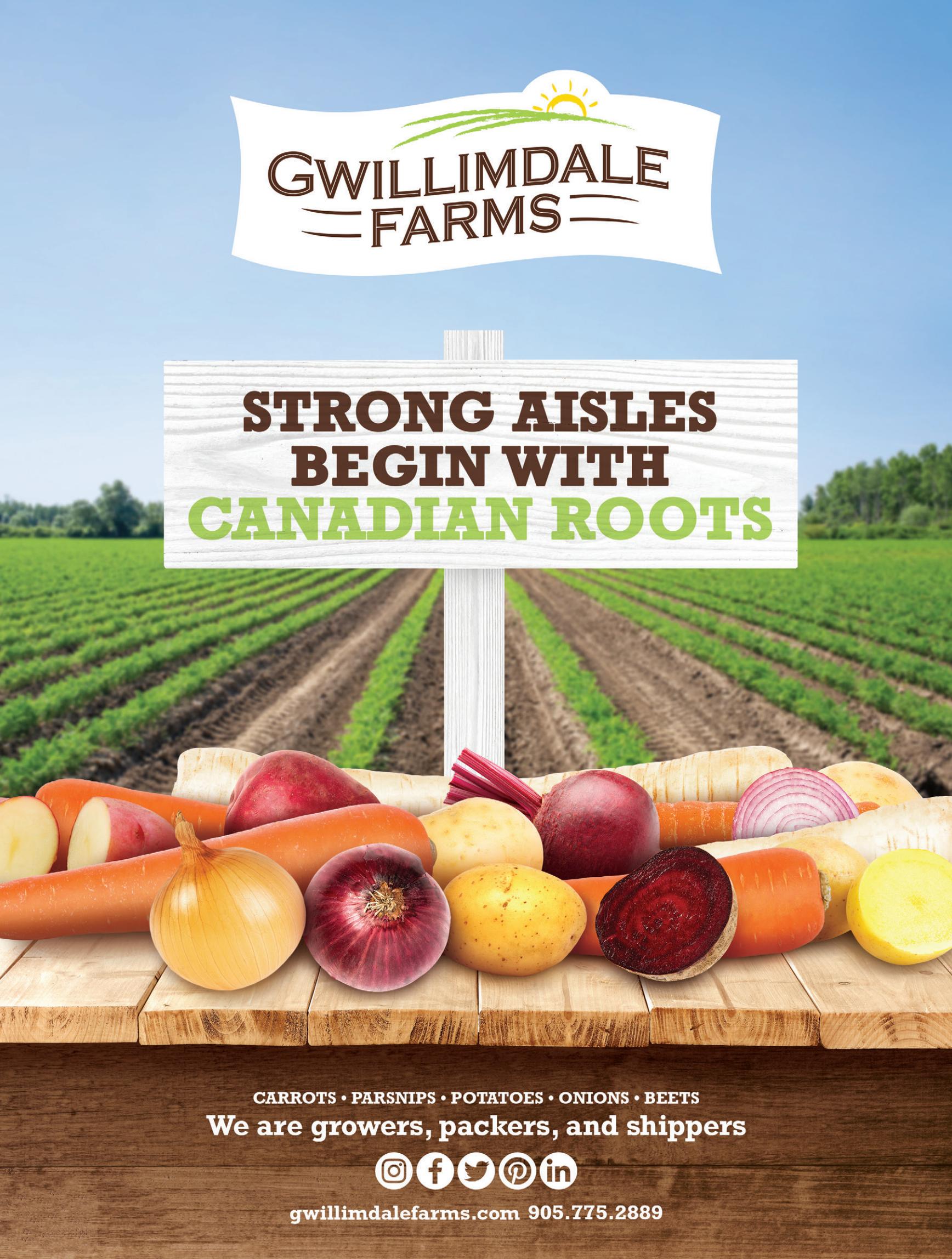
I've had a very intimate relationship with time in 2020. Who knew you could feel seconds in such a way—who knew an inch of space could collapse such distance or create a canyon? We are in tough times, and the embraces and handshakes that used to be second nature now have the ability to cut a chasm in half. In other words, I miss you all. We miss you all—we toss a line out to sea each day not knowing what will come back. And, yes, it is a cliché—but I do believe that we have each other, our red bikes streaming down the road into tomorrow—even if only a vision for now.

And we will find a way to be free together. 🍷

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



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# FEATURES

## FRIEDA RAPOPORT CAPLAN

### BECOMING TIMELESS

To live a life less ordinary is the matter and the material that great legends are made of. In small, large, and transformative ways, Frieda allowed each life she touched to walk the path with her. Now, walk it with us...



### PROGRESSIVE PRODUCE CUTTING TO THE CORE

As this trio prepares to add new stones to the path of a legacy, Scott Leimkuhler, Cory Stahl, and Oscar Guzman discuss the pieces that truly make for a rock-solid operation...



### PRIME TIME INTERNATIONAL FROM DUST TO DIAMONDS

From internal innovations that will forge new frontiers to carving out new portfolio prospects, we learn from Mike Way, Jeff Taylor, and Brian Miller why making dust is the mantra, but maintaining trust is the key...



### PRO\*ACT

PUTTING THE 'PRO' IN PROACTIVE  
Weathering industry challenges is par for the course for this unstoppable industry partner. Chief Operating Officer Brian Kane shares how the company is coming out on top...



### SUNKIST GROWERS WHEREVER YOUR ROOTS MAY GROW

Come along with us as we study the storied roots of industry pathfinder Julie DeWolf. In this exclusive, she unfurls the blueprint of her career as an unstoppable fresh produce marketer who shaped an industry-leading team...



### G&R FARMS

HOW THE DICE MAY FALL  
There are some tall tales that are born in reality, and Walt Dasher and the Dasher legacy are a testament to them. With 75 years of earth on its shoes and experience in its hands, what does the future look like for this Vidalia® onion powerhouse?



### PROPRIETARY VARIETY MANAGEMENT

KISS THE SKY  
An apple of cosmic proportions has upped the produce ante in ways that we could never have imagined. Kathryn Grandy walks us through how this is only the beginning...



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*The Snack*

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United States

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FARMS

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season. always in season. always  
Grown under the California Sun  
quality is always in season



Think fresh, think fig

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**Carrie Briones,**  
Sales and Grower Relations,  
LIV Organic Produce

**W**hen I first heard of Carrie Briones, I had just entered the industry. To me, this world seemed analogous with sensations reminiscent of a summer day: light dappling on greens, the zip of citrus floating on the breeze. But these images came to equal the figure of Carrie as well, for her indomitable industry spirit was conveyed through the warmth of her smile.

It seems fitting that my two-and-a-half year anniversary in fresh would coincide with writing about the maven in charge of LIV Organic Produce's Sales and Grower Relations. Carrie, too, is aware that we each come to fresh in our own ways—whether it's with dirt-under-your-nails experience or through the breeze of chance. Either way, whetting the produce appetite is akin to a flower turning toward the sun: inescapable and beautiful.

Charting her course has helped me realize the potential surging through every produce hopeful, whether we see it there or not. Carrie began her career 18 years ago; at the time, she was only 20 years old. Since then, she has become a formidable player, infusing those radiant images I associate with produce with those similar to connectivity: the handshake to symbolize a deal well struck, a bowed head bent forward in concentration.

But pretty images, as everyone in this industry knows, need to have magnitude and strength behind them to ensure that even the brightest minds have what it takes to conquer this ever-changing produce arena. Sitting down with Carrie, I was able to uncover just what makes her a tour de force, and how she's going to use that power she harnesses to take LIV Organic's operations to the next level.

**Q1 Anne Allen:** Carrie, you've become a well-known name in the produce industry now, but can you trace your produce beginnings for us?

**Carrie Briones:** I started working as a Coordinator at Riverside Arlington Heights Fruit Exchange—a Sunkist-affiliated company—which is where I got my start in citrus. I was doing office work and answering phones. I had no industry experience prior to that, so it opened my eyes to a whole new world I hadn't known existed.



I moved to California's Coachella Valley and took a position as a Sales Coordinator for Coachella Valley Citrus, where I got involved with export sales and documentation. The company was bought by Richard Bagdasarian, Inc., another Sunkist packing house. I coordinated both of their citrus packing houses for orders and began to do sales for their sister company, Pasha Marketing, selling row crops, both organic and conventional, as well as grapes. It was here that I discovered how much I loved the sales side of the industry. I also learned a tremendous amount on the grower-side.

After that, I wanted to branch out and learn some other commodities and expand the growing area for selling.

**Q2 AA:** You've traversed this produce path through the sales and growing sides, all while building a strong career along the way. Which industry members have helped build up your skills?

**CB:** While I was working for Richard Bagdasarian, I gained a lot of experience in both sales and organic commodities. During my time there, I met Franz DeKlotz, as well as Craig Armstrong, both of whom taught me invaluable lessons about the industry.

Franz taught me so much, I don't even know where to start. From diving into growing costs to maximizing sales, Franz was constantly teaching me the lay of the land. And Craig was instrumental in teaching me about harvest and field practices. We actually still work very closely together on certain projects!

“IT MAY BE CRAZY, BUT I LOVE THE FACT THAT THIS PRODUCE WORLD IS ALWAYS CHANGING. I ALSO LOVE WORKING WITH PEOPLE WHO SHARE THE SAME PASSION THAT I DO ABOUT THE PRODUCE WE PROVIDE.”

- **Carrie Briones,**  
Sales and Grower Relations,  
LIV Organic Produce



**Q3 AA:** When you made the leap to LIV Organic Produce, what first drew you to the team?

**CB:** LIV's business model was very exciting to me, given that we work directly with growers to help them plan crops and better maximize returns. This way, we can provide retailers with fruit from high-quality growers, and that's become a huge part of my ethos as a saleswoman. In my position here, I'm responsible for an already hefty citrus program, as well as making sure that all of our family farmers feel supported.

It may be crazy, but I love the fact that this produce world is always changing. I also love working with people who share the same passion that I do about the produce we provide. It is so rewarding to see the process from the dirt to the store and knowing we are providing food for people.

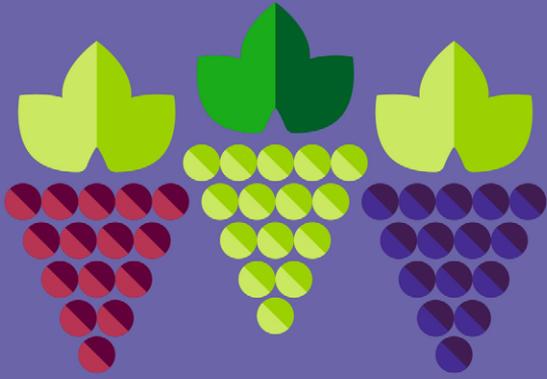
**Q4 AA:** As you've become more acquainted with the operations at LIV, where do you see the future of the company headed?

**CB:** Having our relationships with many families and multi-generational growers, over decades of service, has given us a tremendous start in achieving our goal—to continue to help them establish, maintain, and leverage a stable spot in the supply chain. We are here to be long-term partners, but we also understand we need to show results sooner than later. There's an immediate need for these established family farms to have a presence and some level of security in the changing marketplace.

The LIV organic team and I work with our core group of growers to expand acreage and explore new commodities. What allows us to be so nimble is that LIV Organic is a tight, teamwork-oriented company where our work ethic and our commitment are transparent to our customers. Our values also allow us to be able to provide our growers with fair and sustainable returns on top of providing a premium product to our customers.

“IT IS SO REWARDING TO SEE THE PROCESS FROM THE DIRT TO THE STORE AND KNOWING WE ARE PROVIDING FOOD FOR PEOPLE.”

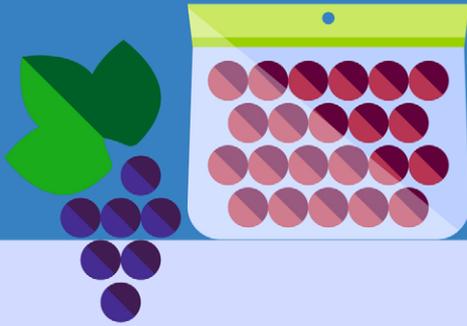
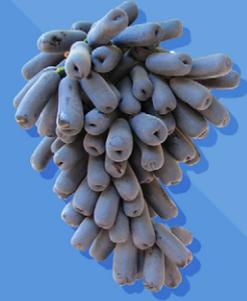
**A**s LIV Organic Produce continues to develop its organic programs and fine-tune its approach to supply-side excellence, I hope that my career in fresh will run the length of Carrie's—so I can watch the continued evolution of this produce star. 



## Sweet Sapphire<sup>®</sup>

IFG SIX

**Season:** AUG-SEP  
**Color:** Blue-black  
**Size:** Medium-large  
**Shape:** Elongated with dimple  
**Seeds?** No



## Summer Royal

**Season:** MAY-OCT  
**Color:** Black  
**Size:** Medium  
**Shape:** Round to slightly oval  
**Seeds?** No



# CALIFORNIA TABLE GRAPE SNAPSHOT

## Midnight Beauty

SUGRATHIRTEEN

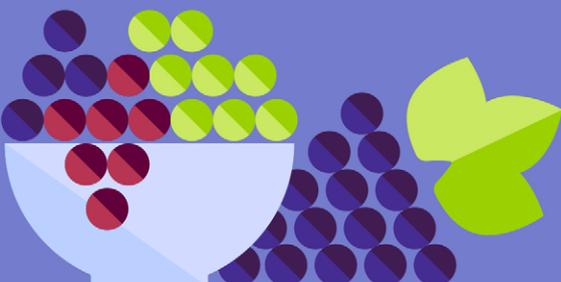
**Season:** JUN-SEP  
**Color:** Blue-black  
**Size:** Large  
**Shape:** Elongated  
**Seeds?** No



Whether it's Dionysus, Cleopatra, or just ourselves staying in on a Friday night, a bowl of brightly colored grapes brings forth images of decadence and a little self-indulgence. Let your consumers spoil themselves with these little clusters of sweet treats as we dive into the secrets of their splendor and how each answers a different need in the produce department...

## Autumn Royal

**Season:** AUG-JAN  
**Color:** Black  
**Size:** Large  
**Shape:** Oval, elongated  
**Seeds?** No



## Arra Mystic Dream<sup>®</sup>

ARRA THIRTYTWO

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





## Scarlotta Seedless<sup>®</sup>

SUGRANINETEEN

**Season:** SEP-JAN

**Color:** Red to dark red

**Size:** Large

**Shape:** Oval, elongated

**Seeds?** No

## Flame Seedless

**Season:** MAY-OCT

**Color:** Red

**Size:** Medium

**Shape:** Round

**Seeds?** No



## Red Globe

**Season:** JUL-JAN

**Color:** Red

**Size:** Very large

**Shape:** Round

**Seeds?** Yes

## Scarlet Royal

**Season:** JUN-JAN

**Color:** Red

**Size:** Large

**Shape:** Oval

**Seeds?** No



## Passion Fire<sup>™</sup>

ARRA TWENTYNINE

**Season:** JUN-AUG

**Color:** Fiery red

**Size:** Large-extra large

**Shape:** Oval

**Seeds?** No

## Sheegene-20

ALLISON<sup>®</sup>, FALL BLISS<sup>™</sup>

**Season:** AUG-JAN

**Color:** Red

**Size:** Large

**Shape:** Oval

**Seeds?** No



## Arra Passion Punch<sup>®</sup>

ARRA TWENTYEIGHT

**Season:** SEP-OCT

**Color:** Pinkish-red

**Size:** Large-extra large

**Shape:** Oval

**Seeds?** No

## Crimson Seedless

**Season:** AUG-JAN

**Color:** Red

**Size:** Medium

**Shape:** Cylindrical

**Seeds?** No



## Holiday<sup>®</sup>

90-3618

**Season:** SEP-DEC

**Color:** Red

**Size:** Very large

**Shape:** Round

**Seeds?** No

## Sweet Celebration<sup>®</sup>

IFG 68-175

**Season:** JUL-DEC

**Color:** Red

**Size:** Large

**Shape:** Oval

**Seeds?** No





## Sweet Scarlet

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

## Jack's Salute®

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



## Sheegene-21™

IVORY®, SUGAR CRUNCH®, AND SUMMER CRUNCH  
**Season:** JUN-NOV  
**Color:** Green  
**Size:** Large  
**Shape:** Round to oval  
**Seeds?** No

## Arra Sugar Drop™

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



## Pristine®

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

## Superior Seedless®

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



\*SOME FRUIT SOLD UNDER LICENSE AS SUPERIOR SEEDLESS



## Sweet Globe

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

## Princess

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



## Autumn King

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

## Sweeties™

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



# CASTLE ROCK *Vineyards*



A RENAISSANCE OF FLAVOR

*castlerockvineyards.com*

# WTF DO I DO WITH 4Earth Farms™ Organic Brussels Sprouts ?

{ what the fork }



## 4EARTH FARMS™ ORGANIC BRUSSELS SPROUTS WITH CARMELIZED BACON AND HONEY

### INGREDIENTS

**16 oz** 4Earth Farms™ Organic Brussels Sprouts, halved  
**¼ cup** brown sugar, firmly packed  
**⅓ tsp** ground cinnamon  
**4 slices** thick-cut bacon, cut in half  
**1 small (½ cup)** onion, chopped  
**4 tsp** fresh garlic, finely chopped  
**⅓ cup** butter  
**⅓ cup** Craisins® (dried cranberries)  
**¼ cup** shaved Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese  
Honey

**Prep Time:** 20 min

**Cook Time:** 40 min

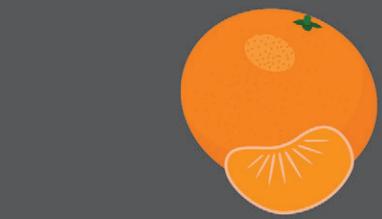
**Servings:** 4

### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Heat oven to 450° F. Prepare cast iron skillet by greasing it with some butter.
- 2 Combine brown sugar and cinnamon in bowl. Coat bacon slices with brown sugar mixture. Place coated bacon in skillet and sprinkle with any remaining mixture. Bake in oven for 5 minutes, turn and bake for another 7–10 minutes, or until caramelized. Remove bacon and cool on plate, cut into pieces.
- 3 Add butter, onions, garlic, and Craisins to bacon grease left in skillet. Sauté 1–2 minutes, until softened. Remove from heat and add organic Brussels sprouts; stir to coat.
- 4 Roast in oven for 10 minutes. Remove from oven, add bacon, and stir. Roast for an additional 10–15 minutes until sprouts begin to turn golden brown.
- 5 Plate, top with Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese, and glaze with honey. Enjoy!



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



# Peel

Your Way Into

# Happiness

Domestic Varieties Shipping Now!



Navel Oranges

Mandarins

Lemons

Grapefruit

# Cutting to the CORE

by Melissa De Leon Chavez

If you are willing to dive deep enough, there is a word for almost any feeling, experience, and emotion. There are even terms to describe a lack of language—*alexithymia* literally means the inability to express your feelings. When it comes to the individuals that call Progressive Produce home, frequent terms like *commitment* and *solid* come to mind. The team's constitution is so deeply layered, it is nearly impossible to speak of one individual without encompassing the whole. As such, I felt I was hopping from stone to stone following the pathway of a company firmer than granite or marble.

"The men and women working in our warehouses around the clock for weeks on end should be extremely proud of what they did to come together and feed a country in need," says Scott Leimkuhler, Senior Vice President of Sales. "They are our Progressive heroes, and they should be yours, too."

We first spoke of the groundwork for this piece before COVID-19 began to reshape us—back when the bonds of Scott's team were challenged by the typical turbulence of providing fresh produce.

Like the industry we serve, though, the narrative evolved as Progressive Produce found itself adjusting to the COVID-19 climate.

"Even though what's currently happening is unprecedented, we cannot steer away from the fact that this brought us closer as a team and challenged us to be better," remarks Oscar Guzman, Director of Marketing and Sales. "We're dealing with an evolved customer in the wake of this chaos that requires the utmost attention to detail and empathy to understand their needs."



**“The men and women working in our warehouses around the clock for weeks on end should be extremely proud of what they did to come together and feed a country in need.”**

**- Scott Leimkuhler, Senior Vice President of Sales, Progressive Produce**



To help me understand as well, Oscar walks me through a day inside Progressive Produce—all movement as things run in constant motion. From the facility in Commerce, California, the sales team calls customers; potatoes and onions are packed in the warehouse; and logistics are coordinated. In La Mirada across town, Progressive’s new 120,000-square-foot cold storage facility bustles with workers packing and shipping high-quality fresh produce.

When lunchtime rolls around, Oscar emphasizes that you will inevitably hear team members chat about friends and family. When the day ends, calls of “Have a good night,” and “Drive safe!” ring out as the second shift rolls in. The only difference from any other day, he points out, is that, amid COVID-19, team members are wearing masks, socially distancing, and sanitizing constantly.

Food safety, packaging, and innovation have never been more critical as they are today. Progressive has always invested in being ahead of the industry’s needs, and this time’s no different as significant details that might have gone unnoted are brought to the surface.

“This pandemic galvanized the next generation of leaders, and Progressive has made sure the right people are in the right seats,” Oscar explains as we dig

into a transition initiated well before the pandemic, but solidified throughout.

If we return to the idea that the people of Progressive are building a pathway that has become the company itself, Scott is the first stone and a foreshadowing of a grander theme.

First starting in 2010 as a Sales Coordinator and growing to become Progressive’s leading sales team member, Scott’s contribution to the path is a legacy. His father, Jim Leimkuhler, is not only the current Chief Executive Officer, but one-third of the ownership that initially saw Progressive’s potential, acquiring the business from Chiquita in 2003.

“I’m excited to see where we can take things. The sky’s the limit because we have the best people in the produce industry working here,” Scott shares of what’s taking shape. “Everyone at Progressive is passionate about produce and taking care of our customers.”

His stone connects invariably to the next of those taking up the torch of Progressive’s future, Cory Stahl, Vice President of Sales for Progressive’s Asparagus+ division.

Cory recalls when Scott first mentioned a hiring opportunity that would be the beginning of a ground-up education in a whole new world. The two met at the University of Southern California and Cory, a year ahead of Scott in school, found himself graduating in 2009—just in time for the Great Recession.



**Cory Stahl,  
Vice President of  
Sales, Asparagus+  
Division, Progressive  
Produce**

“There was something about Progressive and the ownership group of Jim Leimkuhler, Victor Rodarte, and Jack Gyben, that piqued my interest.

That, along with being part of the beginnings of an asparagus program within a great company,” Cory begins. “It also helped to know Scott so well and trust him before getting into a world I knew nothing about.”

Now, among the leadership of the company, the two work together to strengthen the culture and ensure its core business segments continue to find innovative solutions.

“Scott and I know how to cut to the core of an





issue and positively impact the entire company together. It's been great having a longtime friend as your partner and leading the two produce divisions of Progressive into the future," Cory concludes.

And, of course, there's Oscar, who's perhaps an opal or quartz in this strata leading us through the story—he ensures maximum shine for the rock-solid company. In his role as Director of Marketing and Sales, it falls to him to help outsiders, me included, understand the intangible essence that sets Progressive apart from all the rest.

Oscar's path was originally meant to diverge from fresh produce, with plans of being an educator rather than a lifelong industry member. But a fervor we all can relate to left that stone unturned.

"I thought teaching was going to be my future, but ultimately my passion is in produce and marketing. I found a home at Progressive, where I can be part of the industry and continuously challenge my creativity and problem-solving," he shares.

Fresh produce is the ideal environment for a mind that continuously seeks to learn, and Oscar promises Progressive does just that.

"The education I received from produce veterans like Brad Martin, Pat McDowell, Jon Gerondale, Mike Rodriguez, and Jack Gyben has been priceless, and I owe a lot of my success and understanding of this industry to them," Oscar says. "Because of that education, I believe I can be the partner that our team needs in our relentless pursuit of excellence."

With this next generation of management, Progressive is more prepared than ever to continue being its customers' problem solvers and innovators.

Perhaps there is no single word to encompass the unity of Progressive's culture, much like no single stone can construct an entire path on its own. A mix of friendship, family, and purpose, each individual comes together to ensure that the trail taking form is only just beginning to show what it is capable of traversing. 

**"This pandemic galvanized the next generation of leaders, and Progressive has made sure the right people are in the right seats."**

**-Oscar Guzman, Director of Marketing and Sales, Progressive Produce**



# People Forming the Pathway of Progressive Produce



**Howard Nager**  
Vice President of Business  
Development and Marketing

Howard Nager, whose produce career spans 37 years among brands like Fresh Del Monte and Sun Pacific, was drawn to Progressive's strong culture and core values. He shares that, "There is terrific energy and enthusiasm amongst the team, along with a strong commitment to providing the most consistent quality products with superior customer service."



**Dominic DeFranco**  
Vice President of Sales

Dominic DeFranco, who brandishes nearly 30 years in produce with prowess at companies like Fresh Del Monte, is one, Scott says, who has rocked the boat in the best ways possible, commenting, "Dominic is a difference-maker and has hit the ground running to make a positive impact on our business. I'm looking forward to what we can do together for many years to come."



**Veronica Rodarte**  
Chili Commodity Manager

Veronica Rodarte is a third-generation member of the industry, having started as a Dispatcher for Pathfinder Logistics before working her way up. "My dad always said that if you show up ready to work, ready to learn, and ready to make a difference, then your potential here is limitless," she shares, clearly having followed her dad's advice. Veronica's dad, Victor Rodarte, now retired, began as a forklift driver and earned his way up to Senior Vice President of Sales and Part Owner following the path laid by his own mother, who started the family tradition by sorting potatoes on the packing line at the very same company.



**Jesse Montoya**  
Director of Operations

Jesse Montoya also has deep roots at Progressive, recalling, "I still remember my dad picking me up in the Progressive big rig when I was a kid and driving me around the block!" Now all grown up, Jesse has been instrumental in bringing Progressive to the next level. "Being on the front lines during the COVID-19 panic buying period was a whirlwind. But it was comforting that I could reassure my family that everything would be okay," he shares. "I could see firsthand how the supply chain was still flowing and that fresh, healthy produce would continue to make its way to consumers."



**Gael Vazquez**  
Director of Procurement

Gael Vazquez has held several roles within Progressive, including having spearheaded the company's traditional organics division. Looking back, he says, "During my career, I've learned the many different sides of our business, and it's helped tremendously in my growth at Progressive. Working in produce has been a rewarding challenge. It's by far the most difficult challenge I've faced, but well worth it. The way I see it, we help connect people to good healthy food, and that's an idea I can get behind."



# Variety to the Core.

“We place immense value on our relationship with D’Arrigo New York. Not only are they long-time trusted partners and friends, but they consistently deliver on their promise to provide our highest quality apples to retailers and consumers when and where they need them. We look forward to continuing our valued partnership, and what the future has in store for the apple category.”

—*Ellie Tucker, Account Manager*  
*Oneonta Starr Ranch Growers*

**DARRIGO**  
NEW YORK

# A Closer Look at Naturipe Snacks™ Bliss Bento™ Snacking Line

# UP CLOSE

By Lilian Diep

In today's hurried lifestyle, snacks are a blockbuster category. Healthier eating habits continue to grow and capture a larger portion of shopping carts, creating a great way to inject more fresh produce consumption amongst consumers. Top qualities most shoppers look for while perusing options include convenience, taste, and health, all of which Naturipe Farms encapsulates in its latest addition to its Naturipe Snacks™ line—Bliss Bento™.

The appeal lies in the packaging, presenting three sections of irresistible flavors in one handy format.

Each of the four flavors from the new lineup will bring unbelievable attraction to the refrigerated produce aisle, but this writer has her eyes—and stomach—set on Salty Caramelicious™.

Hitting salty and sweet, crunchy and chewy, Naturipe combines irresistible flavors to bring a showstopping combination of healthy indulgence. The grower casts salted caramel granola clusters and salted cashews as strong leads to pair with its fresh blueberries.

Naturipe's new Bliss Bentos also headline captivating flavor combinations such as Chocolate Cheer™, Vanilla Crunch™, and Berry Lemony™ to nourish and energize both consumers and the refrigerated fresh produce aisle.

For today's on-the-go consumer, convenience is a top-billing star to keep in mind. Great for portable snacking, these bentos are ready to eat, full of nutrients, and are a healthy indulgence—an A-list cast to catch the consumer's eye. 



## MENTORS IN THE MAKING

# Morgan Underwood

BY JORDAN OKUMURA

“**M**Y INTRODUCTION TO THIS WORLD WAS DIFFERENT FROM MANY OTHERS as I was drawn to the Allen Lund Company before I was acquainted with the industry.”

This reflection shared by Morgan Underwood is a reversal of many of the stories we hear in this business. Where countless origins reveal family ties that tethered newcomers to fresh produce, or a desire for agriculture propels them into fruits and vegetables, Morgan was drawn to this industry by the allure of the Allen Lund Company (ALC)—what it stood for and the desire to grow alongside some of transportation’s greatest leaders.

“I was working in software sales part-time as I finished college at California State University—Northridge, but was still searching for opportunities. As soon as I visited the corporate office and saw the brokers in action, I was instantly hooked. The fast-paced and exciting environment was what initially drew me in, however, it was the company’s culture that has kept me excited to come to work for the past 12 years. Our company invests in its employees, and customers know they can count on the strong relationships we have built,” Morgan reflected.

Since 2008, Morgan has been on an upward trajectory driven by a deep passion to contribute to the betterment of the company and to his own personal growth. Beginning as a 23-year-old writing up load orders for ALC’s San Francisco Office as a Transportation Broker, before moving to Operations Manager by 2018 and promoted

to Assistant Branch Manager in 2019 by Branch Manager Wendy Adan—Morgan has continued to start each new day with a hunger for knowledge and admirable compassion for each client and team member under ALC’s wide-ranging branches of family and offerings.

Along the way, two very important people made an impact on Morgan’s life as they reached across ALC’s ranks to mentor him in profound and incredible ways. The first of those two mentors is Kenny Lund, Executive Vice President of ALC Logistics, who Morgan actually knew growing up in Pasadena, California.

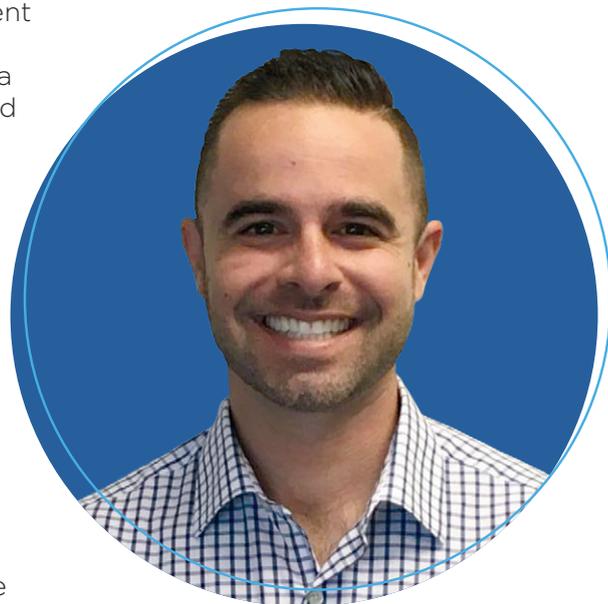
“I got to know Kenny, as well as his father Allen Lund, while I was in high school. I volunteered as a camp counselor at a YMCA camp that Kenny helped run. While my own patience was tried, I admired how Kenny was able to compartmentalize different roles while never seeming overwhelmed. He could be a comedian, disciplinarian, and everything in between,” Morgan shared. “All the while, he was conscious of the tone a particular situation needed. I worked at that YMCA camp every summer through college. After graduating, I was intrigued as to what industry someone as versatile as Kenny was involved in. What he introduced me to was a business that would provide never-ending challenges and constantly needed creative problem-solving. The influence Kenny has had on my life has only grown since I

met him. His love for his family, dedication to his responsibilities, and tireless work ethic are all qualities I strive to emulate.”

When Bob Rose, Vice President of National Accounts for ALC, got a hold of the newcomer, Morgan realized that the hope he had to grow alongside the company could become even more graspable.

Morgan met Bob Rose when he interviewed with the San Francisco office in 2008. He was immediately impressed by Bob’s knowledge of the transportation industry and quickly learned that the location specialized in produce.

“Just as not all trucks are meant to haul produce, not all brokers are meant to work with produce. It takes a certain type of person to want to get involved with a ‘round-the-clock race against time’ industry. I knew within an hour of meeting Bob that I wanted to be one of those people,” Morgan told me. “Throughout the years, I have learned how to have balance in this exciting industry from him. Through his example, Bob has shown me how to be kind to



**Morgan Underwood**

Assistant Branch Manager,  
Allen Lund Company

people while still holding them accountable, how to push people to get the best out of them without being overbearing, and how to be an effective manager by putting people in positions to succeed. I am grateful for the lessons I have learned for the last 12 years and fortunate that he helps continue to support my growth, both professionally and personally.”

I can tell that Morgan takes pride in being part of a supply chain that keeps this country fed. It is

in the way he speaks about the life he leads instead of the “work” he does.

“Regardless of what challenging situations are happening, people need to eat. And building relationships with truckers in order to efficiently get that done is something I am passionate about. Most of the population simply goes to a grocery store and doesn’t think twice about the extraordinary efforts that took place in order to get that product in front of them. Working closely

with truckers, vendors, and customers makes me so grateful for those conveniences I used to take for granted.”

In this “race-against-the-clock” industry, there is much comfort in knowing that individuals like Morgan are on the front lines taking care of all of us. And in turn, I can almost guarantee his mentorship of others will ultimately help to better our fresh produce industry and the hearts and minds of many. 

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## THE MENTORS

Here is what they have to say about Morgan...

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**Kenny Lund**  
Executive Vice President,  
ALC Logistics

“ I have known Morgan and his parents and sisters for more than 25 years. When Morgan was in high school, I invited him to be a volunteer counselor at the summer camp where I was Director. His energy and charisma at camp made him a stand-out favorite with the campers and with his fellow counselors. He is a natural leader and fun to be around. When he graduated from college, we offered him a job at our San Francisco office. Over the past 12 years at the Allen Lund Company, he has excelled and his leadership traits have shown through his work. His was not an easy path at all. He has dealt with some tough situations, but his positive attitude always helped get him back on a successful road. He knows how to embrace the struggle and use those lessons to make him stronger and better. Morgan has earned his leadership position, and he will be a great mentor to others who have struggles of their own. I am tremendously proud of what Morgan has accomplished, and I look forward to seeing what he does next!

”



**Bob Rose**  
Vice President of  
National Accounts,  
Allen Lund Company

“ One of my first days working with Morgan, I had a faux camera on the ceiling. I played a little trick on him with Kenny Lund, who was in the Los Angeles office. For about three minutes, we all had the time of our lives making Morgan do silly things in front of that faux camera. He did jumping jacks and talked into thin air yelling things like ‘Hey, I’m the new guy.’ The hidden smiles and laughter that followed still bring a chuckle to me as I share this. The wonderful thing about the trick was how Morgan was able to have fun with us and be a part of the event afterward. From that time on, I realized that Morgan had what it takes to straddle the world of shippers and trucking companies and deliver in so many ways. Through all the years together, through thick and thin, Morgan has always been a genuine and wonderful human being. Even when things were challenging I always knew Morgan was a special person, a person that was going to help others in this world. Morgan is smart and willing to put in the hard work for his people and all his clients. I’ve been blessed to have Morgan in my life and know he will do great things in the future.

”



▶ MY FAVORITE THINGS ◀

# HEATHER FULLER

Senior Director of Sales, Braga Fresh Family Farms/Josie's Organics

With **Lilian Diep**

Connecting historic sophistication with modern taste, this Senior Director of Sales knows how to keep things fresh and whimsical. Heather Fuller takes you down a winding path of grace, wisdom, and fun. Ready yourself as we dive into her world of favorite things...

**1** I love making and trying champagne-based craft cocktails.

**2** Reading about European monarchies is the best!

**3** Champagne while people-watching at a café is the best way to take in a new city.

**4** Josie's Organics, of course!

**5** Nothing better for your core.

**6** Girl time with my daughters Alexandra and Samantha is the best.

**7** Especially fun to see when you travel.

**8** Football, basketball, golf...my husband Jason and I watch it all!

**9** Looking for shells on the beach with Samantha is our relaxing place.



- 1** Champagne
- 2** Historical Fiction
- 3** Traveling to New Places
- 4** Broccoli
- 5** Pilates
- 6** Cooking and Shopping
- 7** Real Estate and Interior Design
- 8** Watching My Son, Brody, Play Sports
- 9** The Beach

# FROM DUST TO DIAMONDS

BY MELISSA DE LEON CHAVEZ

“**M**ake dust, don’t eat it,” are words that tend to stay with you as a rookie. A headline in one of my first *Snack Magazines*, this was my initial impression of the Prime Time International methodology when I met Managing Members Mike Way and Jeff Taylor in 2015. Five years later, it turns out much has changed on both sides of the conversation, yet the mantra these produce purveyors introduced me to still rings true.



“WE HAVE A HIGH LEVEL OF INTEGRITY IN WORKING WITH CUSTOMERS AND TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE, WHICH ALWAYS RESONATES. WHEN THEY TRUST YOU ENOUGH WITH ONE PRODUCT, THEY’RE WILLING TO GIVE YOU A CHANCE TO TRY SOMETHING ELSE.”

-BRIAN MILLER, DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT,  
PRIME TIME INTERNATIONAL



**MIKE WAY,**  
MANAGING  
MEMBER,  
PRIME TIME  
INTERNATIONAL

“Things have changed since then, no question! And we’ve grown quite a bit,” Mike starts off, telling me that business just keeps getting bigger; primarily in the company’s signature item, peppers, but also in asparagus—a category Prime Time has rapidly navigated. “Brian Miller, our Director of Business Development, has led us into unbelievable growth in asparagus, where we are now year-round as of July 2020, breaking into organic as well.”

Barely circling its third season in the category, this is no small achievement. But, as Brian puts it, the growth was an inevitability if you follow the pattern Prime Time has modeled since its inception.

“It comes back to just doing what you say,” he shares. “That’s the driving force with Prime Time. I think this has always stood out for me and a lot of people who have come to know us. We have a high level of integrity in working with customers and taking care of people, which always resonates. When they trust you enough with one product, they’re willing to give you a chance to try something else.”

It is a simple truth with a diamond-strength core, fueling all the facets of Prime Time’s operations. With the faith its customer base instills, Prime Time is able to explore the unknown and discover what might be buried beneath.



**BRIAN  
MILLER,**  
DIRECTOR  
OF BUSINESS  
DEVELOPMENT,  
PRIME TIME  
INTERNATIONAL

If you are only as good as the tools you work with, your product only as strong as the seeds you plant, Prime Time is sowing itself a successful progeny that ensures its name remains among the top producers in anything it grows.



**JEFF  
TAYLOR,**  
MANAGING  
MEMBER,  
PRIME TIME  
INTERNATIONAL

“Our Somis, California, facility has truly become our gem, in which we have invested a lot of growth over the past few years as demand has grown,” Jeff tells me.

The year I met him and Mike was the same year the team had acquired the facility, which the group says has been modified so much over recent months it is hardly the same building.

“It’s a new infrastructure in packing lines, with a focus on advancing our packing capabilities and the quality of what we produce to further set us apart from our competitors,” Jeff shares, adding that expanded doors

and cooler capacity bolster space where it counts. Consolidated docks ensure maximum volume and a hyper-focus on production from a premium produce location.

This mindset, Mike, Jeff, and Brian tell me, is what brought the company so much success. “A commitment to excellence” may sound cliché, but according to the Prime Time team, it has opened doors to produce expansion, new regions, and new retail departments.

It’s on this tour that the light of the team’s limitless capabilities really shines. One of the most difficult aspects of getting the gold we all seek is not even knowing where to break ground, let alone how to begin digging. Likewise, I would never have thought that the next step to recasting pepper production was quite literally to sit the expert in peppers down with the person that is doing the casting.

Yet, this is exactly what Prime Time has done, forging from the fire a one-of-a-kind edge to its operations.

“This past summer, we introduced a new design that we created ourselves for our packing line,” Mike tells me. “Completely designed and built in California, this was the brainchild of our very forward-thinking harvesting and packing manager, who had an idea and hired an engineer to help him make it happen.”

This unique concept is designed specifically to harness the power of technology for Prime Time’s product. Of course, with such a singular achievement, certain secrets cannot be shared—believe me, I asked.

As any good thrill-seeker knows, though, the twist is often best left to the imagination. And the Prime Time guys seem to be here for the rush.

“It’s exciting, and it’s just one example of how we are investing and ensuring that we are as efficient as possible, mechanizing



Prime Time International’s Somis, California, facility has become a second home as the company continues to expand its operations and increase its efficiency

“THIS PAST SUMMER,  
WE INTRODUCED A  
NEW DESIGN THAT WE  
CREATED OURSELVES  
FOR OUR PACKING  
LINE.”

-MIKE WAY, MANAGING MEMBER,  
PRIME TIME INTERNATIONAL



as best we can as fast as we can,” Mike says, telling me that the improvements the team has made to its facility specifically have made Somis the burgeoning “Mother Ship” of Prime Time’s operations. “In this aspect, Somis has become our new home. In so many ways, that is a great sign of how our operations have grown, yet the changes to labor laws, and now the challenges with COVID-19, have made the upgrades we have been implementing more important than ever.”

With the increasing costs and complexities of the California workforce, automation has presented a strong solution for Prime Time. And of course, more automation and less human hands mean an easier environment to ensure both food and personnel safety in the face of COVID-19.

As if to one-up itself, the advantages of Prime Time’s work extend past the supply chain’s behind-the-scenes to ones retailers can bring directly to the produce department.

“Overall, we are certainly implementing a technology advancement that has given us an advantage, amid COVID-19 but, more importantly, has really ensured the pack quality of our peppers achieve the next level,” Brian explains, adding with a laugh, “and that is saying something! It was already very evident that we pack a superior product. Now, with the popularity of bags increasing due to consumer perception and the improvements we are making to our packs, we are better than ever.”

Whether you’ve been in the industry five years or fifty, it’s likely you’ve noticed the evolution of the pepper category, with each new option seeming to bring in even more consumers than the last. The latest in line are mini peppers.

“I see a lot of potential in the future of mini peppers. Already they’ve experienced incomparable growth year over year, with so much more room to excel,” Jeff shares, explaining that while some retailers are already seeing the power minis reap, others have yet to, leaving room for even more success.

Mike agrees in a way that I can see across a billboard: There are not many vegetables a kid will eat.

“I can’t tell you how much feedback we get on how well received mini peppers are among kids. Sure, they’ll eat fruit, but what about their vegetables? How many kinds of veggies can you put in a kid’s lunchbox and expect them to be eaten? They actually like mini peppers, and retailers can easily see that this is an item to promote. The success in the industry is proving them an item to bet on,” Mike tells me.

Still relatively new in terms of pepper offerings, who better to take betting advice from in the category than the team that has led its charge over the past 30-plus years?

While I’m not sure we are what we eat, I find a company is very comparable to what it might produce. In the case of mini



“I SEE A LOT OF POTENTIAL IN THE FUTURE OF MINI PEPPERS. ALREADY THEY’VE EXPERIENCED INCOMPARABLE GROWTH YEAR OVER YEAR, WITH SO MUCH MORE ROOM TO EXCEL.”

-JEFF TAYLOR,  
MANAGING MEMBER,  
PRIME TIME INTERNATIONAL

peppers, Mike calls them a challenge that requires multiple regional relationships, patience, and skill—like all the peppers that have come before them. Likewise, Prime Time has built its infallible reputation on expansive relationships, patience, and skill that has inspired trust and opened doors to other items in the produce department.

“The pepper business has changed, with some new players in the game while others have come and gone. To be in the pepper business, you have to have a lot of moving parts in place, especially to do so year-round, which in turn has opened us up to more opportunities,” Mike shares.

But opportunities are shaped, not simply handed over, and the team at Prime Time is not one to wait for anyone to come knocking on a door they hold the keys to.

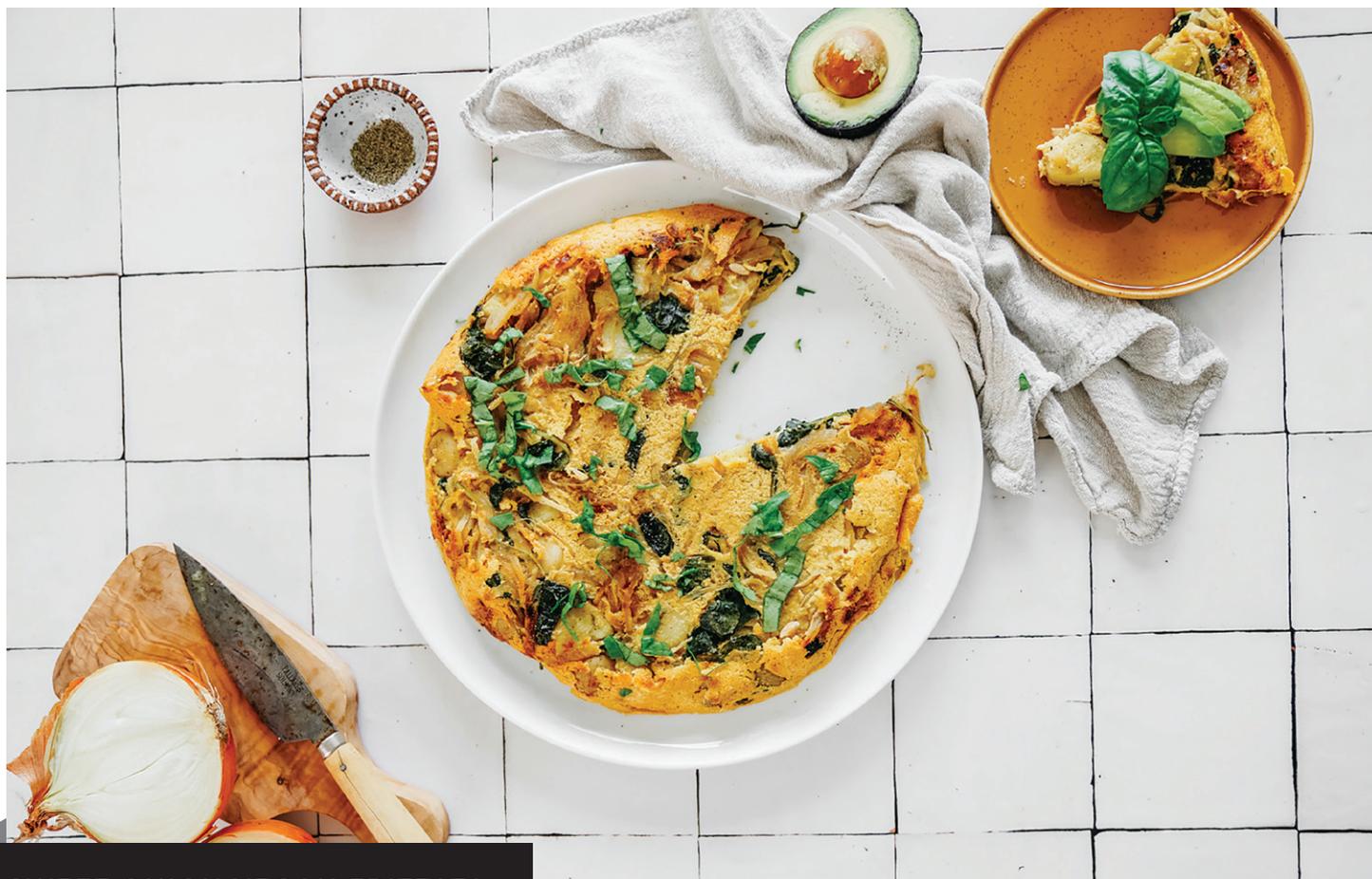
While the words that initially introduced me to Prime Time encompass the daring changes and willingness to get dirty for a chance to strike gold, this brand is anything but dusty. Solid and shining, it is a pioneer among compressing forces, a diamond forged among the dirt. 

# WTF DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

Mayan Sweets®  
Sweet Onions

?



## SWEET ONION VEGAN FRITTATA

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 large** Mayan Sweets® Onion, sliced
- 1 tbsp** olive oil
- 3 cloves** of garlic, finely chopped
- 2 cups** The Original Baby potatoes, halved, boiled
- 1 tsp** smoked paprika
- 1 tsp** cumin
- ¼ tsp** red pepper flakes
- 1 tsp** sea salt
- ½ tsp** black pepper
- 2 cups** fresh baby kale or spinach
- 1½ cups** chickpea + fava bean flour
- 1½ cups** water
- 1 tsp** garlic powder
- 2 tbsp** nutritional yeast
- ½–1 tsp** black salt

**Prep Time:** 20 min

**Cook Time:** 45 min

**Servings:** 6



### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Lightly grease a large 9" cast-iron skillet with butter and set aside. Preheat oven to 350° F.
- 2 Heat a skillet over medium heat for 30 seconds before adding olive oil.
- 3 Add in sweet onions and sauté for 10 minutes on low-medium heat until translucent and fragrant. Make sure to stir often to avoid burning.
- 4 Add garlic to the pan and stir until well combined. Cook for around 2 minutes.
- 5 Add baby potatoes, paprika, cumin, red pepper flakes, sea salt, and pepper. Continue cooking for another minute.
- 6 Add the spinach or kale and cook until completely wilted and no moisture is left in the pan.
- 7 Remove from heat, evenly transfer to the greased cast-iron skillet and flatten the surface slightly with a spoon or fork. Set aside.
- 8 In a large mixing bowl, whisk the flour, water, garlic powder, nutritional yeast, and black salt until well combined. Once well combined, transfer mixture to the prepared cast iron skillet and gently pour over the sweet onion/baby potato mixture.
- 9 Cook for 30 minutes in the preheated oven.
- 10 Enjoy with fresh herbs like Olé Pacífica® Basil, some hot sauce, and sliced avocado.

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*Wholesome Heroes*

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



**WHAT MAKES KENTON A WHOLESOME HERO?**

Kenton may have happened into fresh produce by chance, but in life, there's no such thing as a coincidence. As an integral part of the sustainability movement, Kenton has made it his mission to increase transparency in the supply chain, improve the lives of farmworkers, and help whole farming operations raise the bar. Worthy of the title *Wholesome Hero*, his commitment to help bridge farmers to sustainability and social responsibility is an inspiration.

- 1 SUSTAINABILITY AND ROI
- 2 WORKING WITH A PASSION
- 3 ENHANCING FARMS
- 4 AN EMERGENCY PLAN
- 5 THE FUTURE OF AG



RAINIER® FRUIT CELEBRATES WHOLESOME HEROES

# Kenton Harmer

*Managing Director, Equitable Food Initiative*

**YEARS AT  
EQUITABLE FOOD INITIATIVE:**  
7

**YEARS IN  
THE AG INDUSTRY:**  
12

**FAVORITE  
PRODUCE ITEM:**  
*A mélange of fruit  
for a daily smoothie*



“What is different about our approach at Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) is that it’s not about making an investment that may or may not pay off later by attracting consumers. Each part of the supply chain must invest in collaborative systems, but they are met with a meaningful return.”



“I saw that EFI was developing methods for solving complex problems by bringing everyone to the table and making sure that the values were being returned to stakeholder groups. The EFI model allowed me to explore my passion—engaging with the industry in difficult topics like forced labor, food safety, and high turnover environmental impact—to fundamentally change the way the industry did business.”



Kenton’s favorite thing about working with EFI is hearing about how the model is working for the companies that have earned the certification. Teams that EFI trained and put in place are often credited with solving problems that management teams have struggled with. EFI is providing a new channel for learning.



With COVID-19 still prevalent, the learnings and teachings EFI has imparted on certified organizations has never been more important. As farming operations had to look at workplaces and processes, EFI Leadership Teams took the lead in designing and implementing the necessary steps to reduce risk and keep operations running to continue to bring fruits and vegetables to market.



“I think this is a really amazing time to enter agriculture. There is a renewed energy as operations are passed to the next generation. This will bring a lot of smart and passionate people into the industry, bring new thinking, and help us figure out the problems that have been vexing us for decades. I think for reasons of both scarcity and abundance, I really see a different attitude in the industry around innovation.”



Ready  
*for another*  
Great Season

*Isabel Aguayo*

Crew Supervisor, 12 years

**Rainier**  
FRUIT

---

Apples, Pears, Cherries, and Blueberries

PRO\*ACT





# PUTTING THE 'PRO' IN PROACTIVE

BY ANNE ALLEN

**T**he beginning of 2020 gleamed bright with promise. I can especially remember the fervent hope for the new decade; a hope that steadily became fraught as the months flew by. In a scant few weeks, our industry came face-to-face with one of the most difficult challenges it has yet to tackle, and the call to batten down the hatches made some of us nervous.

At the crossroads between crisis and challenge is determination, and determination's name is Brian Kane.

PRO\*ACT's Chief Operating Officer, who has been with the company for 12 years now, knows that battening down the hatches is essentially second nature to this 30-year-old Salinas, California-based produce company. Founded by six independent fresh produce

distribution companies, PRO\*ACT has been on a trajectory to diversify its services, processes, and products. Ultimately, though, it's been chasing after the diversification of its business while also adapting to the necessary shift needed to absorb COVID-19's impact; one that has not deterred the company—or Brian—at all.

"Our teams are built to quickly problem-solve, adjust, and pivot to changing landscapes," Brian begins, both of us viewing the other through the lens of a computer camera. It's a stark contrast to how we might normally interview, but still, I can see the bright morning on Brian's end, and he can see the glow of light on mine. "It happens dozens of times a year because this business has a harsh mistress in Mother Nature—but obviously, we had seen nothing on the scale



of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the weeks leading up to the state-wide, shelter-in-place orders being handed down, we were reviewing business continuity plans, issuing safe handling advisories, and working with our supply chain on contingencies. This time has been extremely challenging for everyone in foodservice, but it has given us an opportunity to find ways to bring value to customers, suppliers, and distributors.”

Value was found quickly, as PRO\*ACT launched its *produceboxdirect.com* campaign a mere four days after the nationwide shutdown went into effect. The company had even been enterprising at the beginning of the year, implementing in-depth training and a goal to improve its consultative approach to business for every team member. As each customer, supplier, and distributor has been affected in different ways, this training was an unknown boon of support, for it prepared PRO\*ACT to respond accordingly to differing challenges. It also began selling thousands of boxes of repacked produce directly to consumers in 26 states, eventually partnering with multiple customers to offer boxes in their units, providing a social-distancing compliant space for communities to pick up fresh produce.

“We worked with distributors to shift volume to retail and established LTL and cross-deck consolidations to keep fresh produce moving across North America at drastically different volumes,” Brian remarks. “Working with key partners, we established ProducePartners.org with our supplier and distributor community.

This helped bring 35,000 produce boxes through the Feeding Our Frontlines program to healthcare workers and economically disadvantaged families affected by the pandemic. Our sales team worked with customers to quickly establish new business priorities to keep their doors open, and then assisted in establishing protocols as they have emerged on the other side. We assisted our distributors in putting together bids for the USDA Farmers to Families program, securing over 120 million dollars in contracts. To be frank, there are times I have just been in awe with the tirelessness our team has brought to keep systems moving in the face of obstacles we have never seen before.”

Brian is no stranger to our industry, so his awe is easily justified. His journey in fresh, as it does for so many, stems from humble origins. He began working in foodservice as a line cook to help pay for college, after which he moved into a culinary operation and then, ultimately, purchasing.

“Prior to joining PRO\*ACT, I was the Senior Director of Purchasing with Rare Hospitality, where I was responsible for category management, commodity purchasing, and the management of broadline and produce distribution,” he explains. “We utilized PRO\*ACT as our key produce supplier, and this is when I first started to note the team’s emphasis on flexibility and customer controls, which fit my company and personal ethos well. I remember visiting PRO\*ACT headquarters as a customer, and seeing the way the team had the utmost respect for the



**“PRO\*ACT HAS DEVELOPED A CERTAIN LEVEL OF AGILITY IN OUR BUSINESS MODEL TO NOT JUST SURVIVE DURING PERIODS OF INCREASED PRESSURE—BUT TO THRIVE.”**

- Brian Kane, Chief Operating Officer, PRO\*ACT

supplier community, expected excellence from its distributors, and gave me the needed transparency on our spending down to the penny at the unit level.”

Intrigued by the chance to operate at the center of the supply chain, Brian made the jump and has never looked back.

“It’s been a great ride,” he says, before pausing for a moment to reflect. “There’s something really special about having great relationships with suppliers, customers, and distributors—and providing solutions to make everyone’s business run better through efficient services.”

The produce industry seems uniquely built to attract this type of business mindset—and scare off its fair-weather counterpart.

“PRO\*ACT has developed a certain level of agility in our business model to not just survive during periods of increased pressure—but to thrive. Much of this is due to the strong partnerships that we have formed across the supply chain, and the flexibility we have built by having not only a coast-to-coast reach, but a local touch to our services,” Brian expresses. “This allows us to quickly pivot in many marketplaces to meet the moment that we are in, which has been a part of our DNA from the beginning.”

Naturally, a company rooted in the Salinas Valley has produce sown into its figurative skin. As it has grown to encompass a team that is nearly 100-strong, its consolidated procurement is provided to over 400 suppliers, alongside marketing, food

safety, and sales services to 90 distribution companies across the United States and Canada.

Throughout our video call, during which my black cat, Loki, is inserting himself into the dialogue through pointed nips at my feet, Brian and I have each expressed a tangible love for the industry in which we both operate. Perhaps it’s the sunny day affecting our moods, or maybe we see the forest for the trees—as so many produce partners do.

“The term ‘partners’ can be often overused as a fundamental business term to express two entities that are working together. But in produce, it’s different—and we’ve been grateful to see how deep these partnerships are despite the seemingly insurmountable obstacles,” Brian reflects. “As we look to the future, PRO\*ACT is continuing to listen to the needs of our customers, and adjust and shift to fit those needs as business slowly comes back online. In a time of unprecedented change, we’ve been working harder than ever to show up and create stability for our supply chain in the way that they most need.”

So, am I yet again faced with a crossroads, one that pits me against 2020 and my hope for a successful year? After sharing my screen with Brian, I’ve gained perspective that opportunities are found even in the most uncertain of times, and that sometimes all you need to refocus your mindset is hopping on the computer with a friend.

Perhaps my hope for 2020 was not unfounded after all. 



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# A Closer Look at Windset Farms® Crescendo® Sweet Pointed Peppers

# UP CLOSE

By Chandler James

I admit it—I have a sweet tooth. I'm not talking about getting a hankering for candy every once in a while. From fresh peppers to ice cream, my sweet tooth is yearning 24/7, and many of my fellow fanatics will tell you that this is a fine line to walk when it comes to health.

Fortunately, I work in an industry that affords me plenty of foods that are sweet and healthy. This summer, sugar lovers like myself had yet another fresh produce offering to curb their candy cravings: Windset Farms® Crescendo® Sweet Pointed Peppers!

The eye-catching and recyclable packaging is enhanced by the effortless beauty of these pointed peppers, now featured in red, orange, and chocolate varieties. While their deep, fiery colors might make them look dangerously hot, these peppers are some of the sweetest that Windset grows.

Just like the grower's other products, these Crescendo Sweet Pointed Peppers are sustainably grown in greenhouses. Available year-round, they are packed with vitamins and offer a crunchy and delicious eating experience entirely their own.

Not only do these peppers pop in the produce aisle, but consumers will love how they add a colorful flair to any dish. Salads, stir-fries, and kebabs are just a few of the fun ways to use Windset's Crescendo peppers, so there is plenty of opportunity to inspire shoppers to get creative at retail! 



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

{ what the fork }



## ORGANIC JAPANESE SWEET POTATO BOWL

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 Bako Sweet® Organic Japanese Sweet Potato Steam Bag
- 2 chicken apple sausages, sliced
- 3 **tbsp** olive oil
- 1 yellow bell pepper, sliced
- 1 **bunch** broccolini, sliced thin
- 1 Persian cucumber, sliced
- 4 **handfuls** of spring mix salad greens
- 1 avocado, sliced
- ¼ **cup** green onions, chopped
- Red chili flakes, to taste
- Garlic salt, to taste

**Prep Time:** 10 min

**Cook Time:** 15 min

**Servings:** 1 bowl

### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Steam sweet potatoes according to instructions on the bag.
- 2 Heat oil on medium in a skillet and add sliced chicken sausage and broccolini. Cook for 10 minutes, flipping every couple minutes.
- 3 Use spring mix as a base for the bowl and add chicken sausage, broccolini, steamed sweet potatoes, cucumbers, bell pepper, avocado, and green onions.
- 4 Drizzle olive oil, top with red chili flakes and garlic salt to taste, and serve.

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





## » The IF List «

# Jan DeLyser

VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING, CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION

With **Jordan Okumura**

**T**o know Jan DeLyser is to have a crucial in-road to the mind of a marketing genius. The industry's twists and turns pave a difficult road to navigate for many of us, but it's a challenge we accept with heart. Finding a guiding light, a voice of strength, and one of knowledge are key to both personal and professional success, and Jan is one such gatekeeper that we can never get enough of. With all the seriousness and gravity we bring to the work, one needs a little levity and playfulness, as Jan would tell us. And that she has. These tidbits from Jan bring the gift of laughter and are a wonderful example of how her attitude and candor make her an advocate for all...

» **IF you could have one fruit or vegetable item as your produce mascot, what would it be and why?**

It would be what it actually is: a California Hass Avocado...zenfully delicious and so versatile.

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

Claire in the *Outlander* series—a time traveler, married to Jamie Fraser.

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

Filet mignon and lobster with a salad featuring California produce (avocados, of course), roasted veggies, and a savory tart made from California avocados.

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

Laura Linney for a younger me and Glenn Close today.

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

I'd be in the entertainment business as a comedy writer.

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

*Listen and Learn: The Art of Getting Along.*

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

A California avocado flag t-shirt, jeans or yoga pants, and some undergarments.

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

*The Big Chill.*

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

A BLAT sandwich: bacon, lettuce, avocado, and tomato on whole-wheat bread with mayo.

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

Logical—mathematical intelligence to quantify things, make hypotheses, and prove them. Mathematics has never been a strong suit of mine.

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

George Harrison and the ukulele. I loved The Beatles and still do to this day. I played the baritone ukulele when I was younger.

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

I would create the vaccine to end the COVID-19 pandemic worldwide. 🍌



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Sunkist Growers

WHEREVER YOUR

# Roots

MAY GROW

*By Chandler James*



60





roduce is the kind of career that takes you totally by surprise.”

This is a phrase I’ve heard many versions of since coming into the fresh produce fold. A unified sense of teamwork, pride, and belonging, as Julie DeWolf put it, are just a few of the qualities that enchant fresh produce pathfinders like herself. I, too, can attest to this feeling of togetherness, which has enveloped us all. But, once I crossed paths with the storied roots of this organically grown industry luminary, the simple yet resounding message took on an entirely new meaning.

“The family and camaraderie I’ve found in fresh produce are unlike any other industry,” Julie told me as we sat down to unearth the history of her career. “We are a small, close-knit group of people, many of whom have generations of experience, with the same objective: We are not just feeding the world, we are making the world a better place with our nutritious fruit. We grow the healthiest products on Earth, and there is a huge sense of pride in that for me.”

Though the tree that is Julie is still firmly rooted in Southern California, Sunkist’s Director of Marketing Operations has traversed a complex path that carried her far beyond the soil from which she first sprouted. Like water is to a plant, education nurtured endurance in Julie, beginning at the

# “WE ARE NOT JUST FEEDING THE WORLD; WE ARE MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE WITH OUR NUTRITIOUS FRUIT.”



*-Julie DeWolf,*

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING OPERATIONS, SUNKIST GROWERS

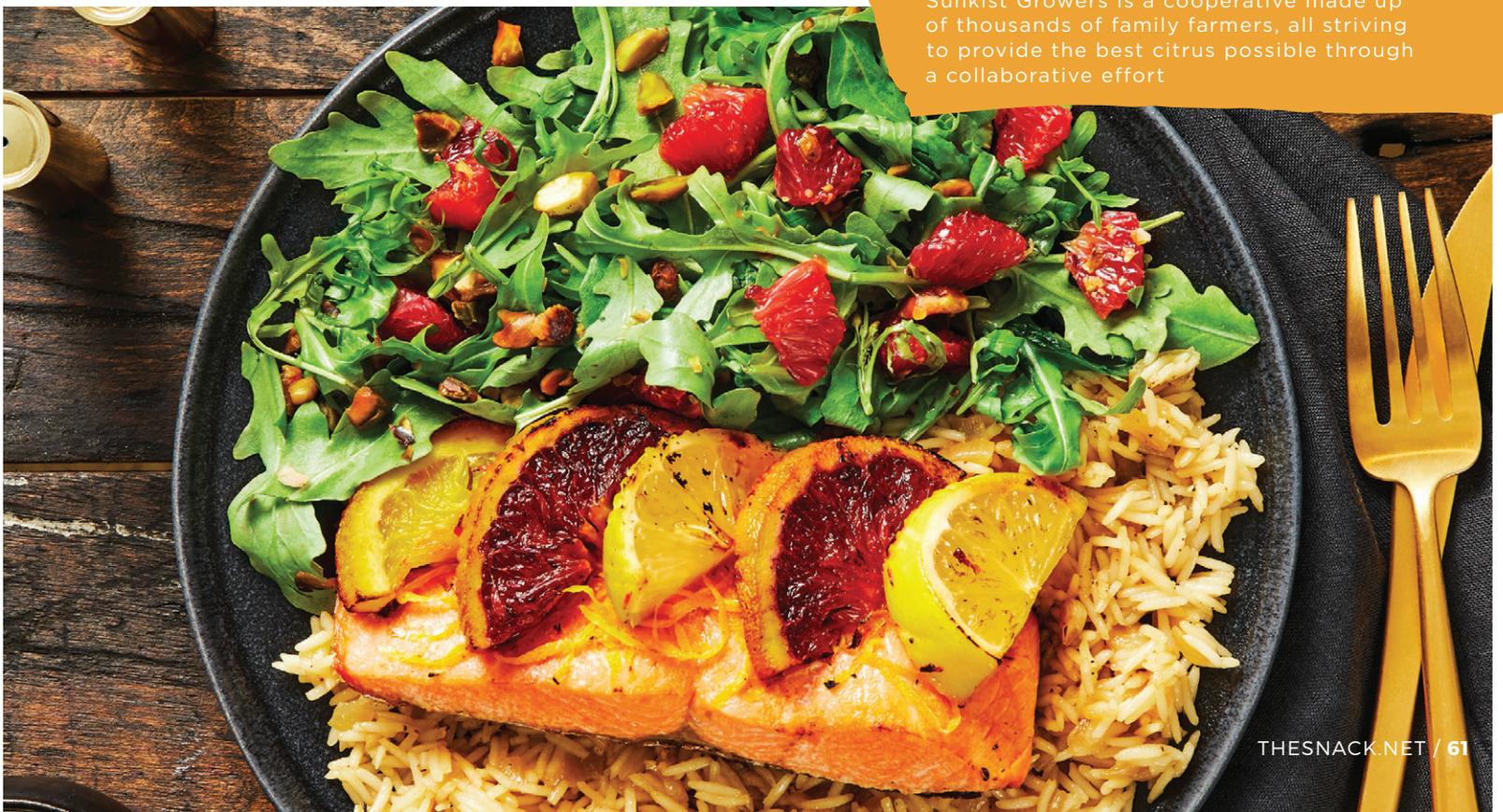
University of California—Santa Barbara, and extending to the University of California—Los Angeles. Newly certified and armed with expertise in Public Accounting, she then returned to where her wealth of passion was first planted.

“I’m a native Southern Californian, born in Redondo Beach and raised in Rancho Palos Verdes. I currently live in Redondo Beach, so I haven’t traveled far from my roots!” Julie explained. “During my nine

years as a Certified Public Accountant (CPA), I was introduced to several different industries—healthcare, gaming, higher education, and nonprofits. After three and a half years, I moved on to a finance role at Twentieth Century Fox. There, I was responsible for the financials of our pay television division and accounts like HBO and Showtime.”

The food industry, however, had bigger plans for Julie. She took on the role

Sunkist Growers is a cooperative made up of thousands of family farmers, all striving to provide the best citrus possible through a collaborative effort





Aside from her work at Sunkist Growers, Julie DeWolf finds time to revel in the joy of her family and hobbies



of Financial Analyst in the beverage division at Nestlé, infusing brands like Coffee-mate®, Nesquik®, Juicy Juice, and Carnation® with her tour-de-force energy. Julie was then in full bloom as unmatched ambition and resiliency formed new branches to the colorful canopy of her ever-growing tree.

“During my time at Nestlé, I met someone who worked in what we called category sales development at the time, which would later morph into what we know as shopper marketing today. She had an entry-level position available, and I knew I didn’t want to be a number cruncher my whole career, so I took the leap of faith,” Julie told me. “That was 20 years ago now, so I’d say the risk paid off!”

Anyone who knows Julie has learned that magic happens when she mans the helm of an ambitious marketing strategy. Her pivotal move to the sector brought numerous new opportunities, including a more-than-two-year-long position building account-specific marketing plans for national accounts like Spiderman and X-Men with the video game company Activision.

“I learned a lot about financial statements and budgets as an accountant, which has proven extremely useful in my career as a marketer. Once I switched over to a marketing role at Nestlé, I worked with our teams and customers on a regular basis, creating programs that incorporated both in-store and consumer marketing elements,” said Julie. “That set the stage for my job at Activision, where I had autonomy for the first time as a manager who could build account-specific plans to drive revenue.”

As her story built, I heard the devotion in Julie’s voice as clear as day. Her cup runneth over with life lessons, instilling in her the determination it takes to succeed in our industry. None of the paths Julie traveled have been taken without purpose, as with each step she took, her resolve continued to grow.

“Managing a marketing campaign was the most fun I ever had in my career, and I knew that was what I wanted to do for as long as possible,” she continued. “There is a lot of excitement in knowing you can directly impact sales even when you’re not a traditional salesperson. I got a lot of joy out of seeing the programs come

to life and helping both our company and the retailer achieve revenue goals. I also learned about several marketing vehicles that transcended industries, and that knowledge traveled with me to the produce industry.”

A new branch emerged in the shape of fresh produce when Julie joined the team at Sunkist Growers, and she never looked back. Finally, Julie’s foliage was complete.

’Twas a very conventional path into produce, as Julie affectionately joked.

While many of the extensions of this proverbial tree are intertwined with Julie’s professional life, joy is not solely sprung from the seeds of a successful career. It also comes from our families, our friends, and all of the unique hobbies that make us who we are.

Julie is no exception. Though this headstrong working woman has roots spread in many soils, she still finds time to revel in the joy that is her life outside of work, which includes her two teenage sons with well-rounded lives of their own, as well as a penchant for killer workouts.

# “MANAGING A MARKETING CAMPAIGN WAS THE MOST FUN I EVER HAD IN MY CAREER, AND I KNEW THAT WAS WHAT I WANTED TO DO FOR AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.”

“One of my biggest passions is watching my boys play soccer on their high school and club teams. The best thing, as their mother, is watching them embrace teamwork on the field because they rarely embrace it at home!” Julie teased. “Other than that, I love the beach, cooking and baking, and exercise—I’m fairly addicted to kickboxing and have recently become a fledgling cyclist.”

When Julie isn’t cheering her sons on from the sidelines or breaking a sweat of her own, family is still on her mind. For at Sunkist Growers, family is embedded into the very bedrock of its success.

With thousands of family farmers who support the cooperative, Sunkist’s values are practically parallel to those of Julie. Collaboration is always top of mind and, lucky for the company, it has just the woman who can connect the dots between the farm and the fridge.

“Working here is the best of both worlds. While Sunkist is a reasonably large brand, it was built on generations of family values and experience. Working every day in an environment where people are hard-working, honest, and concerned for the health and well-being of the human race aligns perfectly with who I am,” Julie remarked.

If we could map the root systems of both Sunkist and Julie, I imagine that we would find similar patterns—an emphasis on family is just one of their

commonalities. Passing industry expertise from generation to generation, Sunkist has paired commitment with a love of nutritious fruit to bring a world-renowned brand to market. With Julie actively seeking out new ways to promote Sunkist citrus, these two are on a fast track for even further growth.

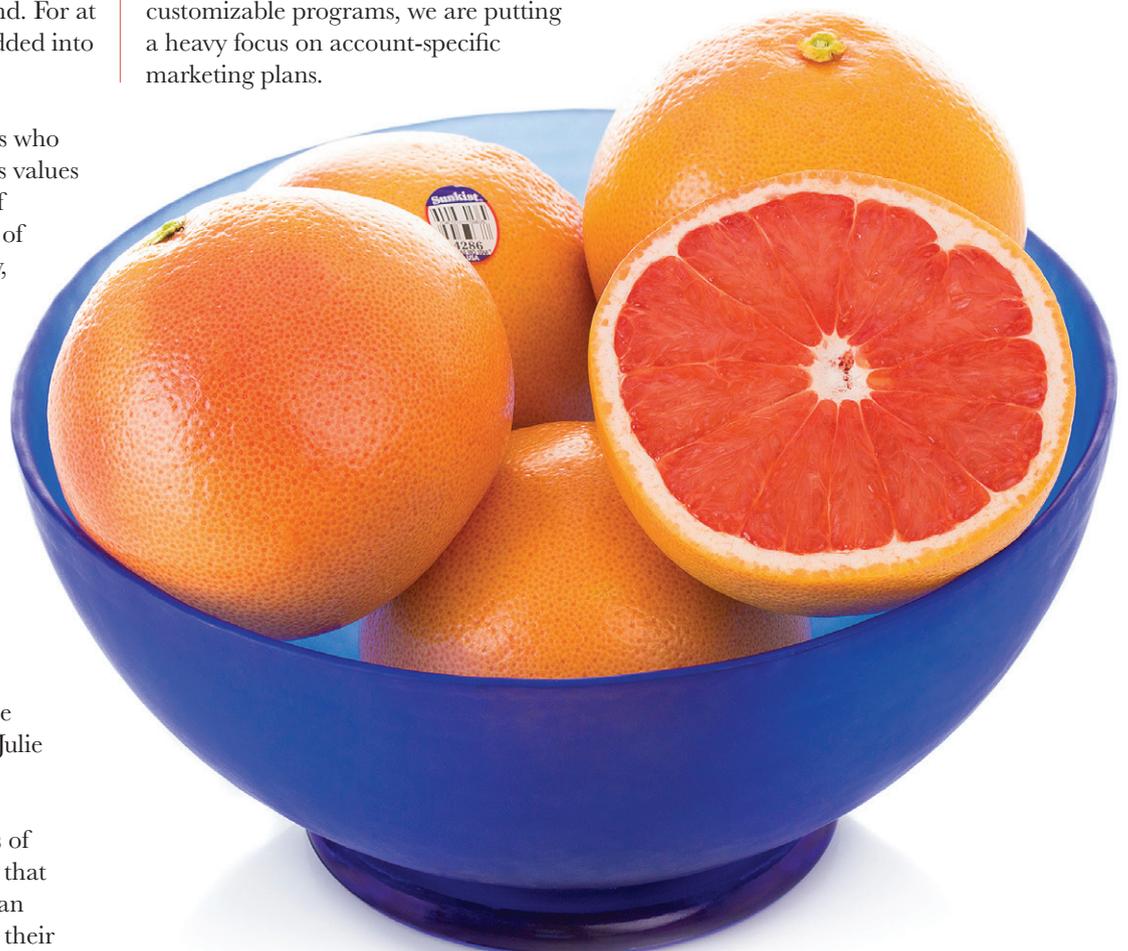
“While we already have very strong relationships with our buying community, I see us growing even more in that area in the coming years. Since we offer customizable programs, we are putting a heavy focus on account-specific marketing plans.

Along with that intention comes the discovery of valuable, cost-effective, technologically advanced marketing programs that drive purchase and convert shoppers into Sunkist citrus fans,” Julie divulged.

When Julie arrived at her position as Director of Marketing Operations at Sunkist, it was less of a meeting than a return. Her roots had grounded her in a place where individuals of Julie’s caliber thrive. And in that space, she found the infinite family that is fresh produce.

“Everyone has their own story. Some aren’t as clear-cut as others, but they inform every step toward the future,” Julie reflected. “Although I didn’t initially know what kind of career I wanted to pursue, I let my passions and intuition guide me to where I am today. There were challenges, of course, but they created the story that is uniquely mine.”

Perhaps that is the best way to look at the tree of Julie. With roots widespread and boundless determination waiting in the wings, Julie DeWolf’s fresh produce path is a story that was simply waiting to be written. 



# WTF DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

Mucci Farms Zukies  
Mini Zucchini ?



## LEMON AND HERB GRILLED MINI ZUCCHINIS

### INGREDIENTS

**6 whole** Mucci Farms Zukies mini zucchinis  
**1 clove** garlic, finely chopped  
**1 small** lemon, juiced (zest reserved)  
**1 tsp** Dijon mustard  
**1 tsp** fresh thyme, finely chopped  
**1 tsp** parsley, finely chopped  
**½ tsp** salt  
**½ tsp** freshly ground pepper  
**½ cup** extra virgin olive oil  
Additional olive oil, for grilling  
Pinch of dried red chili flakes (optional)

**Prep Time:** 5 min

**Cook Time:** 20 min

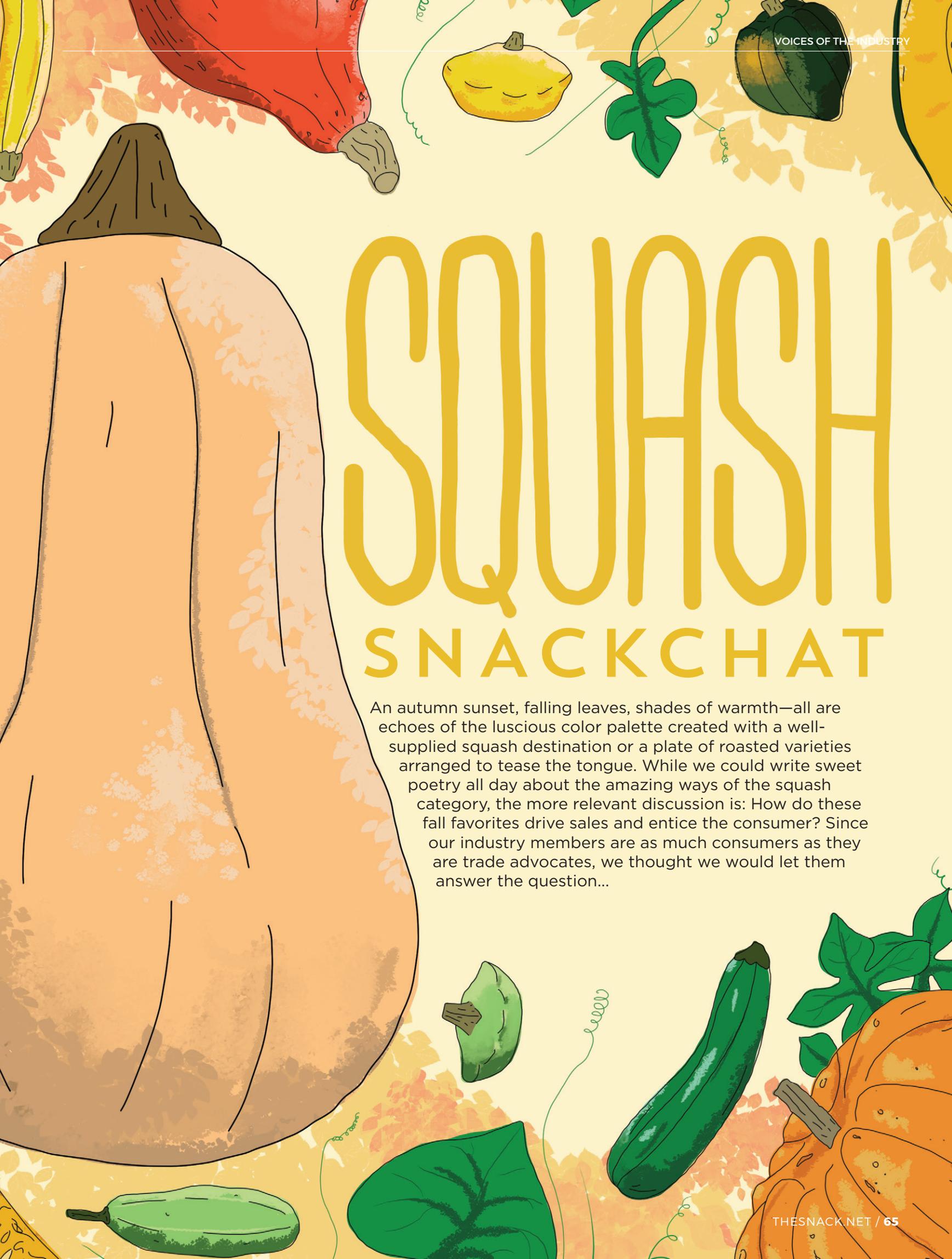
**Servings:** 4–6

### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Slice zucchini ¼" thick, lengthwise. Lightly brush each side of the zucchini with oil to prevent sticking to grill.
- 2 Mix all remaining ingredients together and set aside.
- 3 Preheat BBQ to 350° F (or grill pan on medium high heat). Line up slices directly on grill or pan. Grill 2–3 minutes per side or until grill marks are visible.
- 4 Place grilled zucchini slices on a platter and while hot, drizzle with lemon and herb dressing and serve. Sprinkle with chili flakes to taste, if desired.

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





# SQUASH SNACKCHAT

An autumn sunset, falling leaves, shades of warmth—all are echoes of the luscious color palette created with a well-supplied squash destination or a plate of roasted varieties arranged to tease the tongue. While we could write sweet poetry all day about the amazing ways of the squash category, the more relevant discussion is: How do these fall favorites drive sales and entice the consumer? Since our industry members are as much consumers as they are trade advocates, we thought we would let them answer the question...



## MATT MANDEL

Vice President of Finance and Legal, SunFed

“While some might think of winter squash as a purely cold-weather play, squash is a year-round powerhouse in the produce aisle. Whether you’re noodling, stuffing, sautéing, or chipping, there is a squash type for every palate. Not only does my son love the *Ratatouille* movie, but it is a great way to serve squash in a traditional, mouth-watering presentation that is sure to please even the most discerning of connoisseurs.”



## ALAN VOLL

Sales, Fresh Farms

“In this issue, we truly want to pay tribute to the retail sector, which has taken an already ‘hot’ commodity and catapulted it to new levels with creative marketing at the store level. In a world of value-added foods, the retailers have allowed the consumer to grab and run with these delicious squashes in the form of unique packaging that includes peeled, cubed, and spiraled that are ready to steam, sauté, or mash. At Fresh Farms, we offer a line of seven different squashes from Butternut, Spaghetti, Acorn, and Kabocha to soft squashes that include Italian zucchini, Yellow straight neck, and Grey squash. What incredible options for your next meal! With so many incredible recipes available, you can’t go wrong. The fall here in the Northern Hemisphere is a great promotable period as the days are shorter, the nights are cooler, and it’s time to fire up those ovens with all these wonderful squash varieties. Enjoy!”



## MICHELE YOUNGQUIST

President, Bay Baby Produce

“As our team creates and promotes recipes for our key items—pumpkins and organic winter squash—we are thinking of four major buzzwords: gluten-free, plant-based, paleo, and vegan. For a recent sampling event, our team created the perfect Butternut Chips. It was, as we like to say of our pumpkin and organic winter squash recipes, **SHOCKINGLY DELICIOUS**. Customers are our best critics. As each person sampled our Butternut Chips, they were amazed at how great they tasted and how much better it tasted than traditional store-bought chips! So healthy, so delicious, and so much more! Our Butternut Chip recipe isn’t just for fall or winter squash promotion—it’s the type of recipe to be used every day. It’s simple and easy to make with just a few ingredients, and it can be used as a healthy snack or a healthier chip alternative to satisfy chip cravings. It’s a healthy, paleo, gluten-free, plant-based, and vegan alternative, and it’s shockingly delicious.”

## RICHARD COWDEN

Sales and Business Development, Baloian Farms

"We are very proud and excited to grow and distribute Italian squash and Yellow squash on a year-round basis. The squash category is such an amazing commodity with versatile applications in retail, foodservice, and processing. At home, sautéed with a drizzle of olive oil, some Parmesan cheese, and some herbs...mmm good! They are also a healthy snack to munch on, and their vibrant colors will jump out to your house guests when served on a platter with cauliflower, broccoli, mini peppers, and carrots. And noodling is a fun way to dress up zucchini for your Italian dishes paired with your favorite marinara sauces. There are so many other great cooking options for consumers and chefs, so squash will continue to be a category driver and is a great compliment to our exciting lineup of high-quality year-round vegetables at Baloian Farms!"



## EMILY MURRACAS

Director of Marketing, Mucci Farms

"I absolutely love squash! Specific to Mucci Farms, I love our new Zukies Mini Zucchini, which I think is the best of the best in the squash family! Zukies are great to eat raw, but since grilled veggies are my favorite, our mini zucchinis are a great topper to my list. They are denser than traditional varieties and really hold their texture when they come off the grill, so it makes for a very flavorful experience. I highly recommend them!"



## BEN JOHNSON

President, Bridges Produce

"The versatility of winter and summer squash really lend themselves to being the focus of the meal and the center of the plate. Recent surveys show that people under 40 years of age are eating 52 percent more fresh produce compared with the same demographic 10 years ago. Whether it be for reasons associated with health, the environment, animal welfare, budgetary constraints, or all of the above, vegetables are increasingly becoming the main dish rather than just being a side. Whether squash is used in soups or stews, grilled or roasted, curries or dips, or added to salads or casseroles, it is a flavorful and healthy staple of the modern diet."





# Impressions by Design

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

**D**o we even remember what to talk about at an industry networking event, such as a mixer during a convention? Think back to 2019 and earlier, before virtual became an industry descriptor.

Sarcasm aside, I miss them! But they'll be back.

Those conversations are typically a combination of personal interests and business—a careful balance between your professional and your casual persona. If you're like me, my subject matter with a group of my tennis buddies is different from my business conversations.

Much the same way, your content and representation on Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat are different from what you share on your LinkedIn profile and/or postings.

However, during these times, a lot of conversations are taking place on the Web. Now more than ever, our social media presence has risen to be a critical factor while conducting business, and it's more important to consider when developing and upholding an image.

When considering your "digital footprint," it bears being reminded: "Once you place something on the internet, it is there forever." Employers, recruiters, and prospective employers find information about you while performing their due diligence, or, in some cases, when they're just being curious.

Of course, there are always exceptions. You know them, those people who are always 100 percent professional, in control, perfectly manicured, and never in a photo wearing flip flops. Read next month's story, *The Power of Letting Go!*, to learn how to loosen the reins on your social media presence—just kidding! Though, I do wonder if those people secretly cut loose sometimes.

As for LinkedIn, think of the platform, and your strategy, as an important industry mixer. With the rise in virtual trade shows and an emphasis on social distancing, online interaction is here to stay. That being said, you may seek to err on the side of caution and conservatism in order to maintain your professional image. LinkedIn provides us the opportunity to show our business side and a bit of one's personality, too. It is not, however, a digital resume, and it is not going to sell you to an employer or a customer. And it is not Facebook or another "social" site. It is a self-introduction. If you're looking for a job, a great LinkedIn profile provides enough information to be found and then compels the reader to want to learn more.

LinkedIn has a plethora of resources and how-to's\* to best optimize its platform, including how to market your profile. You can find some great tips on LinkedIn and on other sites. Here are some tips that I think will help you maximize your digital presence...

**1. Choose the right assets**

“A picture is worth a thousand words,” as they say, especially when your profile picture is the first thing people see when they open up your LinkedIn page. So, no fun Facebook photos or selfies here! Make sure the picture is recent and looks like you, your face takes up a majority of the frame, wear what you would normally wear to work, and smile! Remember to also customize your background photo. As it is the second visual element at the top of your profile page, be smart here! Steer away from political, religious, controversial, or offensive images that could possibly turn people away.

**2. Get creative with your headline and summary**

Take liberty with your headline and summary and convey to visitors who you really are. Use the headline field to go more in-depth about your role, why you do what you do, or what inspires you to work in this industry. Then, dive into the summary! Take this opportunity to step carefully into the personal introduction zone and share something about yourself. This is your most personal piece of content marketing—and it’s worth the effort.

**3. List your relevant skills**

Having a handy list of relevant skills is one of the quickest and most effective ways to market yourself on LinkedIn. It helps flush out and support your headline and summary and provides a platform for others to endorse you. Listing your skills will also boost your marketability and visibility in search results.

**4. Exchange endorsements**

Endorsements support skills and credibility, both for you and for your network. Identify connections or colleagues that you genuinely feel deserve an endorsement from you on particular skills, and that will often lead to them returning the favor.

**5. Build business relationships**

Be sure to make full use of the business-media feed by sharing articles and other brand content. It helps add an extra dimension to your own profile, and spotlighting your business to others is an added bonus.



LinkedIn is not meant to sell you, but it can market you and your personal brand. No matter what your position and/or desired end result, developing and nurturing your personal brand is important.

Need professional help with your LinkedIn profile? JoeProResumes.com can craft a new LinkedIn profile for you.

I'd like to connect with you on LinkedIn. Here is my profile address:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/rexlawrence1/>

My email address: Rex@JoeProduce.com

We all need to be conscious of the image we make on others and how we want to be perceived. Impressions are made whether by design or by happenstance. We suggest by design! 



Joe Produce Search (JPS) is the Executive Search division of Joe Produce®. Joe Produce Search is comprised of experienced search consultants and produce professionals. Our placements range from middle management to C-level positions, throughout North America, covering a wide range of produce and produce-related businesses.



**Rex Lawrence**  
 Founder and President  
 Joe Produce Search<sup>SM</sup>



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



\*Source: <https://business.linkedin.com/en-uk/marketing-solutions/blog/posts/content-marketing/2017/17-steps-to-a-better-LinkedIn-profile-in-2017>

# How *the* Dice May Fall

By Jordan Okumura



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The produce business can turn on a dime at any given moment. Once a single step is planted firmly, ankle-deep in the earth and the seeds have been set to sow—the die is cast. The abrupt nature, swift change, and volatile activity can suddenly turn a well-laid plan in your favor or kick success way down the line—no matter how good your hand is.

“I’ve learned never to assume anything or take things for granted. This is an absolute must, in my opinion, in order to survive the long run,” Walt Dasher shares with me. And while he is far from a gambling man in a traditional sense, betting is at the very heart of what he does.

Call it what you want—agricultural agility, tenacity, backbone...whatever you choose to equate with the richness of the Dasher dynasty, the deeply laid foundation of a 75 year-legacy has more than endured. As today’s Vice President and Chief Financial Officer for G&R Farms, Walt has been a part of this gamble ever since he could walk.

“Since I was old enough to tag along behind my dad as a kid, I knew this is what I wanted to do when I grew up,” Walt says. “I think this was partly because it’s all I have ever known, but also because even back then I had a vision in mind of what I wanted to achieve with our family business.”

Imagine the waist-high Walt sifting through the dirt in his youth, reading the cards on the table, his ambition already like a divining rod measuring the arable land. It almost sounds like a tall tale. But, as he leads us down the path of his storied beginnings, you can’t help but feel drawn in as he renders his tale and speaks of the Founder and his namesake.

“Back in 1945, Walter L. Dasher, my grandfather, had a vision when he first began growing the sweet onions now known as Vidalia®. My grandfather was the heart of the company. Although he started growing Vidalias in 1945, it wasn’t until the mid-1960s when Walter achieved a status as one of six original

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..... Walt Dasher,  
Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, G&R Farms

growers contracted by Piggly Wiggly Southern to provide Vidalia sweet onions for the grocery chain’s regional stores. And this is what led to the explosive growth of the variety and the success of our family farm,” Walt notes with admiration.

The gravity of Grandpa Walter’s vision brought more family into the fold as his sons Gerald and Robert joined the farming business, learning the ropes and helping to successfully grow the specialty onions. After Walter’s passing in 1971, Gerald and Robert renamed the operation to G&R Farms, building on Walter’s passion and continuing to sell and promote Vidalia sweet onions.

“The family knew that the quality and unique attributes of the Vidalia onion could not be ignored, and so we promoted and advocated for the category as the team took G&R Farms from regional to national retail chains,” Walt expresses, adding that the Dasher family is often credited as instrumental in helping make Vidalia sweet onions a sought-after food item. The crop was consistently infused with the sustenance of the Dashers’ passion, and a family farming operation began to turn into a legacy.

When Gerald passed away in 2003, Robert ran G&R Farms with Gerald’s wife Pam, along with Walt—their son, and Robert’s own sons, Heath and Blake—fortifying the family fold.

“As I look back over the years, watching the transition from one generation to the next is very rewarding, and seeing the new minds and ideas coming into the business is a true blessing,” Walt reflects.

2009 took the G&R Farms team to the next level, hurdling a huge milestone

when the family started its Peruvian sweet onion program in order to provide retailers with a year-round supply beyond the Vidalia season. Walt shares that he will never forget that first year when the company produced only 45,000 onions. Just 10 years later, in 2019, G&R Farms grew the program to exceed 44 million pounds.

With very strict quality control standards integrated into the company’s blueprint since the beginning, incorporating them into the G&R Farms Peruvian program was only a natural progression. The success of the launch resulted in high-demand and the consistent, premium quality that G&R Farms’ retail partners have come to expect.

Three-quarters of a century after planting those first few acres, the company is continuing to evolve, and not just in the dreamscape of Walt’s vision of the future. G&R Farms is executing a company-wide rebrand to align its core values with an aesthetic enterprise to carry the family’s ingenuity from the seed to the produce department and onto the table.

Motivated by the desire to represent what the company is today, Walt and G&R Farms sought to completely redesign its logo. This fresh design better reflects not only G&R Farms’ current values, Walt adds, but the family’s long-term vision of producing the most consistent, sustainable, and sweet-tasting products on the market.

“The new brand is part of a larger initiative to become more marketing-focused by engaging consumers. The image will appeal to all age groups but especially millennials, the largest generation since the Baby Boomers. This will include a new website and, starting



in 2021, we'll be offering year-round marketing programs geared toward engaging shoppers both in-store and online while helping our retail partners to maximize their sweet onion sales," Walt tells me.

The rollout of G&R Farms' year-round marketing campaigns will take industry partners through both the Vidalia and Peruvian sweet onion seasons. Additionally, this will include expanding G&R Farms Growing America's Farmers program, as well as introducing new seasonal promotions.

"I really enjoy building long-term relationships with our customers. I love knowing we have been able to help customers develop and increase their sweet onion sales from a small program to a major contributor in the onion category, as well as the produce department overall," Walt shares.

With divining rod in hand, Walt has mapped his way with grace, bringing others along the way and taking the small company from earth to sky. As the exclusive sweet onion brand for Delta Air Lines, you can see how Walt does his tall tale justice. The partnership with Delta has helped to expand the G&R Farms brand recognition worldwide.

"It has always been very rewarding for me to watch our crop grow from seed to shelf; knowing we can control every aspect of the process always makes me smile," he says.

And you know that this is the stuff Walt's dreams are made of.

"I'm proud of the new direction our company is moving in and this includes staff additions like our research and development (R&D) Manager, Cliff Riner, who helps us to perfect the quality of our sweet onions through seed trials that improve flavor and soil analysis while reducing pesticides and fertilizers."

To layer even more value and passion into the company alongside R&D, G&R Farms has taken strides to achieve new sustainability goals and to obtain Rainforest Alliance Certification because protecting the environment while ensuring the health and well-being of farmworkers is very important to the Dasher family and the company it leads. The team is also in the process of obtaining Fair Trade Certification across its program.

All of these new elements, intentions, and ambitions are at the core of G&R Farms' ability to endure, innovate, and change—ideals the Dasher family knows are required in order to honor both the legacy that has been laid and the one that is yet to come.

"I think the produce business, or any business, really, is all about honesty—



doing the right thing and building relationships," Walt expresses, taking a beat to cast a look back at what 75 years in the industry looks like for the family-run company. "I am a firm believer that if someone doesn't have the right mindset in this or any business, it will never work in the end. I have learned that listening versus talking has really helped me provide better service and gain new customers, which is a huge asset. I am also never afraid to ask questions or admit when I am wrong or don't understand something. I continue to learn something new every day and pray that I always will."

When the die is cast, at the end of the day, all we have are the values we stand by, the friends we have held close, and the trust we have sown.

With all of his cards on the table and the stakes high, you can't help but revel in that boldness that radiates from Walt Dasher.

That lore that took root where he sat as a child, divining above the Earth. **S**



From left to right: Walt Dasher, Blake Dasher, and Steven Shuman



*Grower.  
Packer.  
Shipper.*

*Ready for Autumn.*



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**ERP**

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Business  
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**WMS**

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Management  
Systems

**FIS**

Famous  
Integration  
Services



## PERFECTING THE QUALITY OF SWEET ONIONS FOR 75 YEARS



**Our humble roots began in 1945** with a small farm in Southeast Georgia. Back then our Founder, Walter L. Dasher, played a pivotal role in the growth and development of Vidalia® onions.

Since then, we've evolved across four generations, expanding to more than 5,000 acres that encompass several crops. But our legacy has as always been to perfect the quality and flavor of our sweet onions, available year round.

We're also proud of our sustainability efforts with our Rainforest Alliance Certification. This enables us to improve the livelihood of our farmworkers while protecting the land for the next 75 years.



**For more information, visit us at [Facebook.com/GandRFarms](https://www.facebook.com/GandRFarms).**



# MUSHROOM

## Snapshot

**T**he mushroom. Versatile, flavorful, and plentiful, this produce hotshot comes in many sizes, shapes, and flavors to give retailers, chefs, and foodservice operators a wide range of dishes just waiting to be made. Mushrooms pack a punch in any dish, whether used as a complement or as the star. What puts the fun in each fungus? We only have so *mush* room dedicated to this world of wonder, but tip your cap back as we unlock the secrets to this culinary gem...



## WHITE/WHITE BUTTON

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

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

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

## BABY BELLA/CRIMINI

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

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

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



## PORTABELLA/PORTABELLO

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

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

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

## SHIITAKE

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

**FLAVOR** Rich and woody when cooked, they add a meaty flavor and texture to stir-frys and pastas

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



## KING OYSTER

- APPEARANCE** Thick, white flesh that is firm-textured and meaty, with a blunt cap
- FLAVOR** Very savory, with a chewy texture
- USES** Best sliced and sautéed



## LION'S MANE

- APPEARANCE** Large, white, shaggy mushrooms that resemble a lion's mane as they grow; also called hedgehog, bear's head, old man's beard, bearded tooth, sheep's tooth, and pom pom mushrooms
- FLAVOR** Hearty, slightly sweet, with a meaty texture
- USES** Can be enjoyed raw, cooked, dried, or steeped as a tea



## BEECH

- APPEARANCE** Petite in size, with either all-white or light brown caps
- FLAVOR** Mild, sweet, and nutty, with a crunchy texture
- USES** Best enjoyed cooked, either whole or sliced; add to stir-fry dishes, soups, stews, or sauces



## OYSTER

- APPEARANCE** Can be gray, pale yellow, or even blue, with a velvety texture
- FLAVOR** A very delicate flavor
- USES** Sauté with butter and onions to bring out their flavor





Frieda receiving one of the first shipments of Kiwifruit from New Zealand at LAX



# BECOMING TIMELESS

REMEMBERING INDUSTRY LEGEND FRIEDA RAPOPORT CAPLAN

By Jordan Okumura

STORIES MAKE US  
IMMORTAL.

If we learn nothing else from the artists who have mentored us and the people who have shared their life lessons across the industry—it is that.

1960 Brown  
Mushrooms

1962 Alfalfa Sprouts

1962 Blood Oranges

1962 Cherimoyas

1962 Guavas

1962 Kiwifruit

1962 Passion Fruit

1962 Pearl Onions

1962 Red Seedless  
Watermelon

1962 Shallots

1963 Black Radish

1964 Kumquats

1964 Belgian Endive

1964 Macadamia Nut

1965 Sunchokes®

1966 Elephant Garlic

1966 Feijoas

1966 Tamarillos

1967 Hot House  
Cucumbers

1968 Chayote Squash

1969 Honeycomb

1970 Pre-soaked  
Blackeyed Peas

1970 Cherry Rhubarb

1970 Crab Apples

1971 Asian Pears

1971 Champagne  
Grapes

Frieda taping one of her *Green Grocer* segments for ABC-TV on the L.A. Wholesale Produce Market in 1974



For Frieda Rapoport Caplan, this story is her echo—a tribute and a thank you. The stuff of immortality. While, for us, it is our blue intonation, it is also our strength and our promise to carry her life on in our hearts—our purple song of hope for you, Frieda.

To say that Frieda was a force of nature for many, a voice in rough waters for some, and a friend to all would only begin to do her justice. Perhaps we start with the page and let the words lead into the heart of the matter—the gift that was Frieda. As a raconteur, maven, mother, friend, daughter, sister, and leader, Frieda added a new shade to the color palette of our lives.

“My mom was so very humble,” Karen Caplan begins, settling into a long pause. “She really didn’t realize what a force she was in our industry. My mom was not afraid to speak her mind or offer her opinion, even if it wasn’t exactly what she was asked. I now call it ‘Tell people what they need to hear, not what they want to hear,’ and, inspired by her, I have found myself doing just that. And, like her, I don’t always realize that I am being bold. I feel as if I am just being honest. When I talk to customers or growers who knew her in the beginning of her career, that’s what they comment on most—that she was direct, bold, and ‘one tough broad.’”

As Karen, now President and Chief Executive Officer of Frieda’s Specialty Produce, the company her mother built, shares this with me, a bright smile spreads across her face. She casts a line back into her memory and you can see her mother in her eyes and her smile.

“Mom led an amazing life of more than 96 years, and she has inspired both women and men to be the best version of themselves,” Karen reflects. “She was built with so much love.”

The subtext that surfaces throughout these lives touched by Frieda is that she had the kind of soul that saw obstacles as opportunities and became not just a woman for women, but an advocate for all. If she were here, she might even turn this sentence on its head, taking that positivity and optimism and smoothing over the obstacle-claiming edges of my phrasing. Because, in reality, she could not see an obstacle at all.

And this boldness and love Karen speaks to are inseparable from her unique life perspective, and were contagious for so many who looked to Frieda as a foothold and a voice in the industry. Her brave and vivacious personality quickly gave others a license to be the same—unapologetically themselves.

“MY MOM WAS SO VERY HUMBLE. SHE REALLY DIDN'T REALIZE WHAT A FORCE SHE WAS IN OUR INDUSTRY. MY MOM WAS NOT AFRAID TO SPEAK HER MIND OR OFFER HER OPINION, EVEN IF IT WASN'T EXACTLY WHAT SHE WAS ASKED.”

— KAREN CAPLAN, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, FRIEDA'S SPECIALTY PRODUCE

“My mom was one of the most vibrant and positive people I have ever known. We frequently joked that if someone spit in her face, she would ask if it was raining. She rarely spoke ill about anyone. She always saw and expected the best in everyone. She was self-effacing,” Jackie Caplan Wiggins shares. “But, the one thing that created a lasting impression on me was the fact she never formed an opinion about a person before meeting them, regardless of what others said. She reserved judgment based on the interaction she had with that person.”

Like others who looked to Frieda for guidance and inspiration, Jackie gravitated toward her mother's authenticity and passion with admiration, both as a daughter and in her role as Vice President and Chief Operating Officer.

A rare breed of human, Frieda is almost spoken of like a mythical figure. But, to those who loved

and knew her, she was a living legend and an icon. Her humanity, sincerity, and kindness were only complemented by her drive, ambition, and charisma. Such a person traverses generations and speaks the language of so many in our industry, from the hearts and minds of the old-timers to those of the next generation that will inevitably shape the path we pave ahead.

“Frieda's belief in me and my abilities has truly changed how I move through the world, personally and professionally. When others talk about that one person or mentor that made them believe in themselves, I never had that experience until I realized that's what my grandma's belief in me had been all along—especially over the last two years of her life,” Alex Berkley says. As the Director of Sales for Frieda's Specialty Produce, she speaks intimately of her deep gratitude for her grandmother, for the career she led, and for the life she taught Alex to lead. “She believed in my



Frieda's husband, Alfred Caplan (second from left), and Frieda celebrating with work friends in the early 1950s

- 1971 Quince
- 1971 Sapotes
- 1972 Jicama
- 1972 Tofu
- 1973 Bean Sprouts
- 1974 Seckel Pears
- 1975 Spaghetti Squash
- 1976 Crystalized Ginger
- 1976 Lima Beans
- 1976 Oyster Plant (Salsify)
- 1977 Kimchi
- 1977 Dried Mushrooms
- 1977 Indian Red Peaches
- 1977 Shiitake Mushrooms
- 1977 Water Chestnuts
- 1978 Garbanzo Beans
- 1978 Oyster Mushrooms
- 1978 Red Bananas
- 1979 Sugar Snap Peas
- 1980 Babaco
- 1980 Fiddlehead Ferns
- 1980 Maui Onions
- 1980 Wheatgrass
- 1981 Cactus Pads



judgment of character, decision-making skills, and balance of risk and reward. When I start to lose faith in myself or my imposter syndrome creeps up, I ask myself, ‘What would Grandma tell me I should do?’ and I remember how she made me feel in those moments of doubt.”

With each word the family shares, the near impossibility of encapsulating Frieda’s life on the page feels like an endeavor to combine the mythical and the real—a worthy challenge. While I ventured to call her a legend, she was much more widely known as a queen—a Kiwi Queen.

Wearing the crown of both kiwifruit and mushrooms proudly, Frieda’s start came before she became industry royalty, beginning her career in produce by working for the Giumarra Brothers Company on the 7th Street Wholesale Produce Market in Los Angeles, California.

In a move so distinct of a living legend, on April 2, 1962, the specialty produce maven opened Produce Specialties, Inc. on the Los Angeles Wholesale Produce Market when being a woman in leadership at all, let alone owning a business, was a rare event. And so her kingdom took root. The burgeoning operation’s light lavender signs drew attention and later became the company’s signature color.

Frieda’s greatest joy was that she got to work side by side with her daughters every day. In 1977, Karen joined Frieda in what was becoming a family operation, with Jackie coming on board in 1983. Most recently, her eldest grandchild, Alex, joined the now third-generation family-owned business in 2011.

With her family entering the royal fold, Frieda was able to step into a host of different challenges and arenas as she continued to impact how not only women were valued in business, but people across rich and diverse backgrounds. She advocated for our industry, of course, but also for the communities in which she lived and thrived. Frieda’s deep compassion led her passionately into politics in an array of ways and actions during her life—giving her platforms a voice—and the visionary’s presence became even more courageous and profound as her life went on.

Looking back at that road of political growth and advocacy, Frieda ran student body campaigns



◀ **Top:** Karen, Frieda, and Jackie featured in a VONS Pavilions ad in the 1980s

**Bottom:** Frieda, as featured in *Working Woman Magazine* and also in *Produce Business Magazine* in the 1980s

while she was a student at UCLA and was even named “Miss UCLA,” in 1945 for being the best-known person on campus—another crown that spoke to her ability to connect with people and passions. On top of those accomplishments, Frieda was active in many local organizations over the years, all of which provided support to people regardless of age, gender, race, color, sexual orientation, or financial status.

“If my mom could speak to building her legacy now, she would say, ‘get involved politically,’ whether it is through a trade association or by registering and voting in local elections. My mom was a political activist to her core,” Karen shares. “That’s one of the main reasons that my sister Jackie and I funded and established the Frieda Rapoport Caplan Family Business Scholarship through the United Fresh Produce Association in

2001, to give an employee of a family business a sponsorship opportunity to attend the Washington Conference in September of each year. We knew that by introducing two to four newer members of our industry to lobbying on Capitol Hill and seeing for themselves the impact one person’s voice could make, that we could affect political change.”

Jackie echoes this strong sentiment of Frieda’s political prowess, passion, and advocacy.

“She would want us to remain politically active. Whether it is attending United’s Washington Conference, writing or calling our congressional and local representatives, or supporting important causes financially, we have the obligation to speak up. Don’t be bystanders. Participate,” Jackie expresses.

- 1981 Carob Pods
- 1981 Delicata Squash
- 1981 Kabocha Squash
- 1982 Lady Apples
- 1982 Chanterelle Mushrooms
- 1982 Dried New Mexico Chiles
- 1982 Hami Melons
- 1982 Wild Rice
- 1983 Starfruit
- 1983 Enoki Mushrooms
- 1983 Lemongrass
- 1984 Kiwano®
- 1984 Limequats
- 1984 Loquats
- 1984 Oroblancos
- 1984 Sea Beans
- 1985 Lychee
- 1985 Baby Corn
- 1985 French Style Crêpes
- 1985 Radicchio
- 1985 Sweet Limes
- 1985 Vanilla Beans
- 1986 Donut® Peaches
- 1986 Baby Seedless Watermelon
- 1986 Green Cauliflower



Karen, Frieda, and Jackie in the company’s first test kitchen, in the early 1980s

“MY MOM WAS ONE OF THE MOST VIBRANT AND POSITIVE PEOPLE I HAVE EVER KNOWN. WE FREQUENTLY JOKED THAT IF SOMEONE SPIT IN HER FACE, SHE WOULD ASK IF IT WAS RAINING. SHE RARELY SPOKE ILL ABOUT ANYONE. SHE ALWAYS SAW AND EXPECTED THE BEST IN EVERYONE.”

– JACKIE CAPLAN WIGGINS, VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER,  
FRIEDA’S SPECIALTY PRODUCE

“THE BIGGEST HURDLE SPECIALTY ITEMS HAVE TO SURMOUNT IS NOT THE CONSUMER, BUT THE BUYER.”

– MARVIN CROSS, VICE PRESIDENT OF PRODUCE, NATIONAL TEA CO.,  
*whose guiding vision Frieda valued*



As an industry, we can carry on her legacy by lifting up others around us, Alex adds.

“Inside and outside of our own companies, inspiring and encouraging young people to join and thrive in our industry and to advocate politically on what we know is right can keep that passionate fire burning that Frieda started so long ago,” she says. “She gave so deeply to us so we could see how to give to others.”

As was that strong nature to give and discover, Frieda decided to enroll and be a part of a longitudinal study conducted at the University of California—Irvine (UCI) Mind Institute in Irvine, California, to help find the cause and cure for Alzheimer’s. After her passing, her brain was donated to UCI Mind to be studied to help find a cure and treatment for the disease.

Throughout her life, Frieda created moments like these that would not only live on beyond and after her, but that would impact all those lives she touched for the remainder of theirs.

“I can’t say that there is one moment that encompasses her for me, but rather a compilation of similar moments. It was how she made people feel. Whether it was a client, a friend, or someone she just met, she had the ability to make them feel like they were the most important person in the room. After she passed away, I read over 1,500 emails from people expressing their condolences. Almost every one of the emails mentioned how special she always made them feel. She had that gift,” Jackie says, taking a moment to gather her thoughts. “She truly was an extraordinary human being. I can honestly say that there will never be another person in the world like her. Fortunately, because of her impact, the Queen of Kiwi will live on in all of us forever.”

Those moments, for both her family and friends, were many and wide-ranging, spanning decades, demographics, and generations. As Karen thinks back on one of her most memorable moments, she smiles and takes me on a journey to 40 years ago.

“In 1979, during the Produce Marketing Association Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, I sat next to Mom at a luncheon during which *The Packer Man of the Year* Award was announced. As they were reading the ‘anonymous’ hints of who the winner was, she finally realized it was her,

◀ **Left:** Jackie, Frieda, and Karen, posing for a photo for a magazine article

and she said under her breath, ‘I’ll be damned.’ When she got up to accept the award, she thanked Produce Managers and open-minded Produce Directors as the key to ‘her’ success—always thanking others. Mind you, she also handed it back since she was not a man...and subsequently, *The Packer* renamed it the Marketer of the Year award,” Karen says and then laughs. “That was Mom.”

Alex loves that story as well, and can’t help but wonder how many people have individual memories just like that one.

“Seeing almost 1,000 people come to my grandma’s memorial was all-encompassing of who she was. Everyone in that room truly felt close to her, yet everyone’s experience was different and meaningful,” Alex tells me. “To see people from all over the world, of all different ages and backgrounds having been touched so strongly by one woman, still has me speechless. I think this truly encompasses Frieda’s spirit and the impact she left on the world.”

And her words ring so very true, as our friends share their memories and their tributes to Frieda with us...



**Roger Harkrider, Vice President of Produce/Floral, Brookshire Grocery Company**

“Frieda Caplan was truly one-of-a-kind. Her vigor, energy, and the constant pursuit of knowledge and improvement were second to none. What I

appreciated most was that she only saw opportunities, never obstacles. When I called Frieda on her birthday last year, she was kind and appreciative. It should have come as no surprise when, after a few minutes of conversation, she was in full-on ‘Frieda mode,’ seizing the opportunity to tell me we should be doing more business with her and why. Afterward, I couldn’t help but laugh at the thought, knowing I should expect nothing less from her. That was Frieda. Should any of us be blessed with such a long life, we should strive to emulate Frieda’s drive and focus to inspire others to be active, positive, and affect change in such an elegant fashion. While we miss her, Frieda will live on in so many of us.”



**Dick Spezzano, Founder, Spezzano Consulting Service, Inc.**

“Around 1975, while working for the VONS Companies in the Southern California market, I was promoted to a Produce Buyer from the position of a Field Merchandiser for Produce and Floral, with

the responsibility of 22 stores. The responsibilities and skill sets for those two positions differ from those in the field, but all manage work for the company and have its best interest at heart. As a buyer at that time, you worked with many vendors: L.A. Terminal Market operators, brokers, distributors, as well as working directly with growers and shippers. Each had to make a profit for their company and not all were experts in the commodities that I was responsible for. In the handoff from the buyer I was replacing, he told me who he thought were the best of the vendors of each of my commodities, and who he considered being the experts. When it came to the specialties category, he identified Frieda Caplan as the very best. Her produce stall was on the L.A. Terminal Market next to Giumarra’s. This turned out to be fruitful for me as I often finished my daily buying at about 4:00 a.m. at Giumarra and then would go upstairs to Frieda’s office.

She was certainly the expert in the specialties category, but so much more. She helped me create my vendor partners as she would steer me in the right direction, and on occasion would say, ‘Only buy from them at arm’s length, as they will find a way to take advantage of you.’ She taught me to be a fair buyer who treated my vendors as partners. She would say, ‘Your vendor partners would have to earn their way on your vendor list and could only fail their way off that list.’ She also gave me great advice on how to advance my career, how to have a great home life, and how to be a loving parent. I always said I had a special relationship with Frieda, and I found out later in my career that many successful people said the same thing about her. What a great life she had and what a great legacy she leaves behind.”



**Tonya Antle, Co-Founder, Executive Vice President, Organic Produce Network**

“Frieda was my first produce boss, mentor, second mom, and a true force of nature. Her energy was unstoppable and infectious. I had the rare gift of

sitting between Frieda and Karen during my early days on the sales desk as she helped me create my own personal style of selling. I took all of her valuable lessons on how to sell specialty produce and incorporated those techniques into my early days of selling organics. What I loved most was how she treated everyone with the same level of respect and her never-ending willingness to share and teach. Frieda was the perfect combination of a kind, beautiful woman and a powerhouse businessperson. I miss her constant emails that shared her passion for a cause, or a celebratory note to cheer me on for something that I had accomplished. Frieda was a true leader, innovator, and inspiration for the entire produce industry. She can now fly free. Rest in peace, dear Frieda.”

- 1986 Mini Pumpkins
- 1986 Pepino Melons
- 1986 Purple Potatoes
- 1986 Yellow Watermelon
- 1987 Cape Gooseberries
- 1988 Kiwi Berries
- 1988 Coquito Nuts
- 1988 Purple Asparagus
- 1989 Green Cactus
- 1989 Pears
- 1989 Galia Melons
- 1990 Cucuzza Squash
- 1990 Sugar Cane Swizzle Sticks
- 1991 Pine Nuts
- 1992 Fingerling Potatoes
- 1992 White Asparagus
- 1993 Camouflage Melons
- 1994 Dragon Fruit
- 1994 Oca
- 1995 Cherry Peppers
- 1997 Uzbek Melons
- 2000 Buddha’s Hand
- 2001 Zululand Queen Baby Pineapples
- 2002 Peppadew Peppers



**Bruce Peterson, *Founder, Peterson Insights***

“When I think of Frieda Caplan, the word that would describe her influence on me would be conviction. It might be hard to imagine today, but in the early days of Walmart’s entry into food, there were many in the trade press and in the financial community that were critical about what we were doing. When I came to Walmart, there were six supercenters and plenty of skepticism as to whether Walmart, a general merchandise retailer, could have any meaningful influence in the food industry. And it was Karen Caplan who I first interacted with. I met Karen at trade shows and conferences, and we had occasion to talk about our respective careers and how we interacted with the ‘traditional’ produce industry. I was struck by Karen’s, and later her sister Jackie’s, absolute conviction with regards to their business. And when Karen introduced me to Frieda, I knew right away where they got it from! She was fearless. It was a great lesson in leadership—in trusting your convictions in the face of skepticism.”



**Hugh Topper, *Retired Group Vice President, H-E-B***

“When anyone thinks of Frieda, they automatically think of her innovation, business acumen, and entrepreneurial spirit—all of which are highly accurate and true. Along with these, there are two things that, personally, I will always remember about her and, hopefully, I learned from her. Both entailed her ability to connect with people:

First, was her way to make everyone feel important. It didn’t matter if you were the President of a company, a Produce Buyer, or a Produce Clerk in a store. When you were with Frieda, she valued and hung onto every word you had to say. You always walked away thinking, ‘Wow, she really listened and appreciated everything I said. And, more importantly, she valued me as a person.’

◀ **From top to bottom:** Frieda in the company’s Rappy’s Café for a photo featured in California State University—Long Beach’s *The Beach Magazine* circa 2018; Jackie, Frieda, Karen, and Alex; Frieda and Jackie hugging at a company all-employee meeting

Second, Frieda never forgot anyone. She could meet a person once, then walk up to them a year later and call them by name. She would even recall and talk about their last meeting. Not sure how she did this, but she was amazing.”



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

“Frieda Caplan’s insatiable thirst for knowledge was an inspiration to everyone who knew her and is one of the things I loved most about her. It

really didn’t matter who you were or what you did, she had an innate ability to make you feel important and valued. She had a clarity of purpose and remained true to her core values. Frieda truly was one of those once-in-a-lifetime people and there is no doubt the world is a better place because of her.

She was always the first person you would hear from via e-mail or voicemail, sometimes very early in the morning, to offer either congratulations or condolences as warranted. I saved more than a few of her e-mails and refer to them on occasion to keep me on the straight and narrow. I try to reach out to family, friends, and people in the industry to acknowledge their accomplishments. I am no Frieda Caplan, but I know how much hearing from her meant to me over the years. I have thought of Frieda frequently since her passing and have tried to navigate the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic as she would have, by staying informed and on course.”



**Cathy Burns, Chief Executive Officer, Produce Marketing Association**

“Frieda is revered for her insatiable curiosity and unlocking the market on new produce items, but I wholeheartedly believe she

took equal, if not greater, delight in unlocking the potential in people. In doing so, she didn’t make me feel like the most important person in the room—she always made me feel like the only person in the room.

While accepting the Center for Growing Talent Women’s Catalyst Award in October 2019, at the age of 96, just a few months before her passing, Frieda expressed a desire for her legacy to be a catalyst for young people to understand the impact their voice has on their futures. You could have heard a pin drop as she affirmed, ‘Silence is NOT an option.’ I can say with complete confidence that her fearlessness has inspired me, as well as my own daughters, to lean in strong for what we believe in.

Her curiosity unlocked the world for Frieda. Her kindness unlocked the potential in each of us.”



**Tom Stenzel, President and Chief Executive Officer, United Fresh Produce Association**

“One thing you probably all know is that Frieda was good at giving advice. I always looked forward to seeing Frieda at Fresh Produce and

Floral Council luncheons and other industry events. She greeted me with a big hug, followed soon with a suggestion about something United needed to be doing better. Your true friends are the ones who tell you the truth, not just what you want to hear. I’ll always treasure the advice that Frieda gave me over the years.

But there’s one bit of advice that Frieda never verbalized to me, yet is probably the most important thing she shared: Be passionate about your work. Love your family. Make as many friends as you can. Live life to the fullest. And make a difference.

When Kathy and I had our daughter, Rachel, 17 years ago, we got to know a different Frieda—Grandma Frieda. This loving grandmother to a child she never met was warm, supportive, and caring. Frieda remembered her special days sometimes better than I did. Our Rachel grew up knowing that her dad worked for some wonderful people. Frieda, you truly made a difference in my life and so many others.”

And so, Frieda, we set these words adrift for your heart, so that your stories will live on in your family and friends with the same light you shared and shone on us all. We will always hold a purple flame to your life, your gift, and your memory. 



**AUGUST 10, 1923 – JANUARY 18, 2020**

2003 Toma Peppers

2004 Hot House Heirloom Tomatoes

2005 King Midas Plums

2005 Cocktail Grapefruit

2006 Fresh Pre-Peeled Coconut

2006 Echalion (Banana Shallot)

2007 Angelcots®

2008 Fresh Mangosteen from Thailand

2009 Black Garlic

2011 Fresh Ghost Chiles

2012 California-Grown Stokes Purple® Sweet Potatoes

2012 Sangria Artichokes

2012 Fiore Viola Artichokes

2012 California-Grown Organic Finger Limes

2014 Butter Babies™ Potatoes

2015 Lychee from South Africa



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# A Closer Look at Homegrown Organic Farms® Organic Chilean Blueberries

# UP CLOSE

By Lilian Diep

The organics category has exploded with a multitude of varieties to create a colorful array in produce aisles, so why not bring in some sweet blueberries this fall with a little help from a Chilean blueberry program?

Homegrown Organic Farms® is bridging the supply gap with its newest import program to offer a more robust, year-round, organic blueberry season for its retail partners.

Available in 6 and 18 oz as well as pint and 2-lb clamshells, the berries will be sporting the company's revamped packaging. Shades of blue across a cream background draw consumers in. Meanwhile, the clean label featuring Homegrown's new logo and stamps indicating that the products are USDA Organic and Fair Trade Certified, immediately letting consumers know the product should go straight into their baskets.

In collaboration with Chilean grower Valles del Sur, Homegrown is extending its organic blueberry program from October to March with berries that are 100 percent Fair Trade USA Certified—a boon for conscientious consumers looking to satisfy their sweet cravings while supporting socially responsible movements.

Expand your produce section with Homegrown Organic Farms, and watch as eager shoppers file in for the juicy sweetness. With a more focused look on both eco- and worker-friendly products, consumers will make a beeline straight to the berry aisle this season. 




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# A Closer Look at Fresh Energy™ Organic Date Line

# UP CLOSE

By Melissa De Leon Chavez

Symmetry is something we all seek, finding beauty in mirror images and balance. Already colorful, distinctive, and attention-grabbing, Atlas Produce's Fresh Energy™ line now checks all the boxes of what pleases the eye by complementing its conventional date line with an organic counterpart.

The company has rolled out organic Date Rolls, Chopped Dates, and Deglets, doubling the reach of a brand that already seeks to hook adventurous consumers looking to satisfy their sweet tooth with a not-so-guilty pleasure.

Like their conventional siblings, each organic product has a distinct color palette that consumers can recognize and grab again when they come back for more. And, as someone who is already hooked on the Coconut Rolls—organic and conventional—I can personally guarantee they will.

Fresh Energy's brand, both digitally and physically, feels less like a traditional produce motif and more like a Nike or Adidas campaign, making dates exciting and attractive.

While this approach keys into those specifically looking for a fresh, healthy alternative to bolster an active lifestyle—much of the images tied to the brand are of running, climbing, and other sport moments—it also touches on an indulgent nerve. Rolled in almonds or coconuts, many of the rolls, in particular, look like they should be gifted with roses.

I'll say it—they're sexy, rocking the date world with an appeal usually held by items dipped in chocolate. And now, with an organic option for each choice, literally any shopper can be persuaded to fall. **S**





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## Proprietary Variety Management



By Anne Allen



One of Proprietary Variety Management's goals is bringing new fruits to the market so consumers will continue to be delighted by fresh options

**F**rom a young age, I was taught to reach for the stars. Ever since, the cosmos has been a fitting ruler with which to assess my life. Lofty goals, then, do not scare me, nor do industry innovators that upset the balance of produce synergy. Why, Pythagoras himself looked at the star-riddled blanket above us and saw order, nobility, wonder.

Millennia later, the swirling gases and the organized brilliance of chaos would distill a new apple that some have fittingly called out of this world. Cosmic Crisp®, a result of 20 years of scientific pursuit and industry ingenuity, has taken hold of consumer consciousness in unforeseen ways. Kathryn Grandy, Director of Marketing for Proprietary Variety Management (PVM) and Manager of the cultivar's consumer launch, shared the story with me one afternoon, dotting each revelation with comet-jets of light.

"Cosmic Crisp is a dream apple created from the collective and inspired thinking of many people," she began, sparks of starlight already apparent in her voice. "Bruce

Barritt, Horticulturist and Developer of the Cosmic Crisp, set out on a mission to fill a produce void for a firm, crisp, and juicy apple. After decades of cross-pollinating, tasting, and testing, along with research and development at Washington State University's (WSU) world-class treefruit breeding program, the Cosmic Crisp apple was discovered. WSU researchers, including pome fruit breeder Kate Evans, developed a new cultivar that would change the face of the industry and win enthusiasm among consumers with a combination of taste, texture, and usability."

At its core, PVM is all about bringing new fruits into the market so that consumers will continue to be delighted by fresh options. It's easy to think of each new discovery as a planetary revelation or spotting a new comet: the space between each sighting makes it all the more precious.

As you might have guessed, dynamism and genius are required in this type of work, especially when tackling a mammoth investment like Cosmic Crisp.

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B

“COSMIC CRISP IS  
A DREAM APPLE  
CREATED FROM THE  
COLLECTIVE AND  
INSPIRED THINKING  
OF MANY PEOPLE.”

— Kathryn Grandy,  
Director of Marketing,  
Proprietary Variety  
Management

“This apple demonstrates how the science of breeding and the art of imagination can work together to create an utterly new and delightful apple,” Kathryn noted.

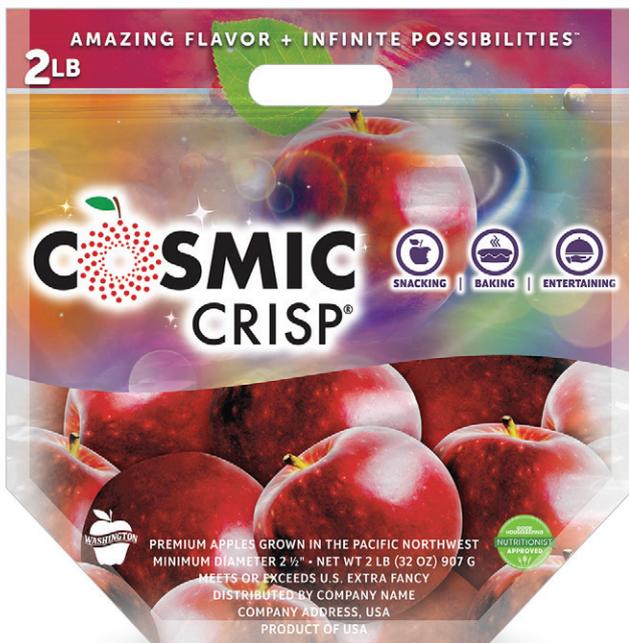
Creating something imbued with stardust is no simple feat. In 1997, Bruce began efforts which later became WA 38, or Cosmic Crisp. After WSU selected this apple to commercialize, PVM was awarded the commercialization contract in 2013. Since then, the development of the WA 38 has been carefully studied and researched. Over 20 years

of the best-growing, harvesting, and storage practices have been packed into one apple! This assures Washington State growers the ability to understand the cultivar and deliver the best fruit possible.

When it came time for Cosmic Crisp’s launch into consumer consciousness, both PVM and Washington State understood the importance of creating awareness around the brand and bringing it to life for retailers and consumers alike. Backed by a \$10 million-plus marketing budget over a five-year time frame, the theme for the launch—*Imagine the Possibilities™*—awoke a sense of wonder, that reach-for-the-stars mentality that infuses our lives with purpose and meaning.

The first of these partners came in the form of Missoula Children’s Theatre and uniphi’s Space Agency.

“Our goal has always been to inspire and educate people of all ages by using Cosmic Crisp as a perfect example of big dreams becoming a reality,” Kathryn expressed, and I’m once again stunned by her dedication to what this apple represents. “For example, by sponsoring the Missoula Children’s Theatre, we connect with thousands of families across the country in schools and online. Our partnership with uniphi’s Space Agency



Cosmic Crisp® apples are the result of the perfect mixture of art and science to create, as Kathryn Grandy expressed, one of the world’s finest apples

has brought us into the space exploration community. We've yet to meet an astronaut who doesn't love apples!"

This, I think, is one reason why I love this world of fresh produce. It invites what we might consider unlikely partners into the fold, bridging the gaps between celestial exploration and boots-on-the-ground connection.

"From a brand standpoint, it's always been important to directly support science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) organizations that empower people to achieve their dreams. We've developed partnerships with a select and diverse set of ambassadors that bring unique perspectives to give us new ways to engage consumers. Major media partnerships have helped us literally get into the hands of millions," Kathryn shared.

Its Brand Ambassadors, all of whom generated mass excitement around the brand, embody the core pillars of Cosmic Crisp itself: EAT, encompassing the taste, texture, and other key attributes; PLAY, encouraging the exploration of food; COOK, using recipes, baking, or coming up with unique applications; and INSPIRE, supporting STEM, dreams, and aspirations.

Each element within Cosmic Crisp's launch has skyrocketed it to success. Even the very appearance of the apple is speckled with brilliance; the starburst-like lenticels create an illusory experience of the cosmos itself.

Naturally, an apple of such innate distinction has piqued the interest of buyers the world over—and for good reason.



Proprietary Variety Management hopes to empower people to achieve their dreams, especially through partnerships with STEM organizations

## “OUR GOAL HAS ALWAYS BEEN TO **INSPIRE AND EDUCATE** PEOPLE OF ALL AGES BY USING COSMIC CRISP® AS A PERFECT EXAMPLE OF **BIG DREAMS BECOMING A REALITY.**”

“We highly value our growers and retailers as partners in the effort to build the Cosmic Crisp brand. Working together to use campaign elements in a brand-focused way helped make the in-store execution of our first season a success,” Kathryn noted before dialing into another partnership that enhances the brand's standing with the buy-side: receiving the *Good Housekeeping* Nutritionist Approved Emblem.

“Retailers and consumers alike recognize and trust the *Good Housekeeping* Emblems. These emblems were established over 100 years ago and have continued through generations of consumers to maintain one of the most recognized and trusted positions in America,” she explained. “*Good Housekeeping* maintains rigorous

standards for product testing to assure consumers of product quality.”

As the flow of our conversation wanes toward the future, Kathryn remarked on constant momentum—and what this means for both suppliers and retailers in the years to come.

“The 2020 to 2021 season of the Cosmic Crisp is going to be another exciting year! We are building on many of the partnerships we have in place and creating new ones. The holiday season is the perfect time to highlight such a versatile and beautiful apple, and we have a focused effort to bring inspiration to consumers. 2021 is a big year for space exploration, and the Cosmic Crisp will be helping to celebrate,” she concluded.

On a clear night, I hope that you will wander and look up at the unknown, at the possible, at the astonishing beauty of the universe, and think to yourself: What more can I do?

Until then, we will count on Cosmic Crisp to do it for us. 🍏



Proprietary Variety Management's Cosmic Crisp® has skyrocketed to success and values its many growers' and partners' efforts to build the brand



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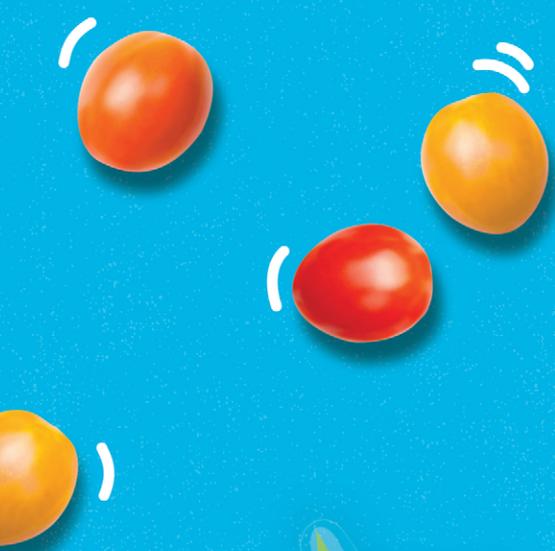
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