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ISSUE 53 OCT 2020

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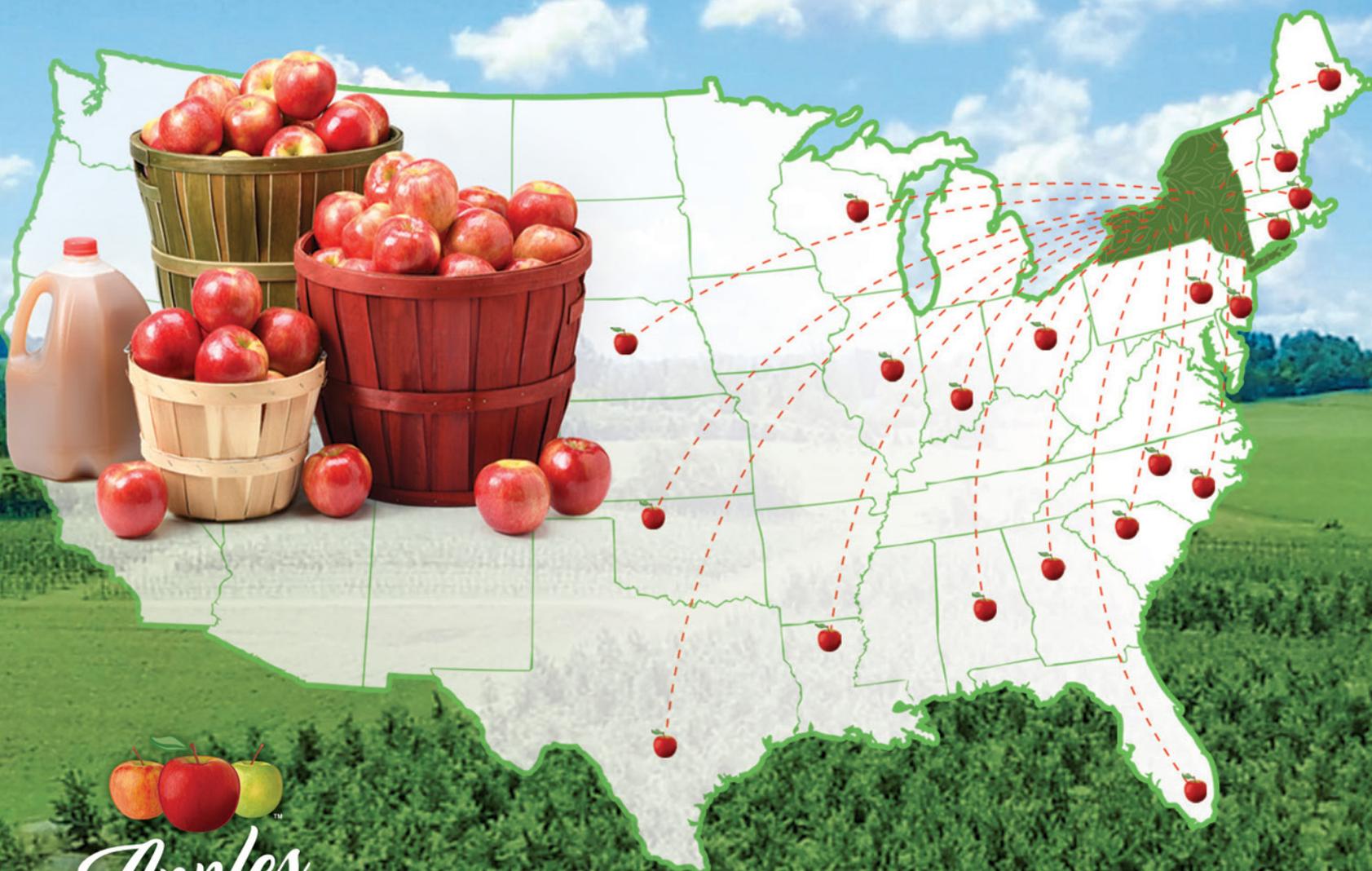


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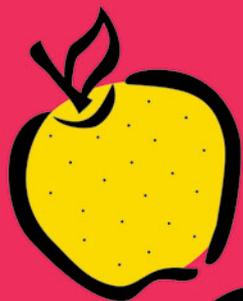


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THIS INTERVAL WE CALL *FALL*—like rounding the bend on an unknown road—traditionally evokes images of change, of circular movements grounded by centripetal force. Autumn is my favorite time of the year. It sounds like harvest, looks like water aflame, smells like overturned earth, and tastes like dew. For me, fall has always marked a loosening of attachments and a deep dream of Persephone returning to the underworld as Demeter lets the world fall under a blanket of snow. Here we enter a plane of myth and Earth, of modernity and a surrender to time passing.

For me, this is the perfect time to take stock of where we are and appreciate the great lengths we have gone to arrive exactly where we are—all through the lens of gratitude.

What I love about this time of year is that my expectations cease to be of any use to me. I am not sure why, but they do. I stop trying to walk upstream, I curl up to hibernate in the middle of the day (don't tell my CEO), and a strong sense of both nostalgia and gratitude take over. Call it the holiday season approaching or the Northern Hemisphere coloring warm.

We have become very accustomed to change this year and, I believe, it is now a part of our DNA—an ability to exist in a constant state of fall. There are wonderful possibilities that come with thinking of our lives, our companies, our industry, as living breathing bodies. As DNA maps with the ability to change, we can understand the impermanence and capacity for evolution. We have strengthened muscles this year, made our agility a priority, grown our periphery to see the bigger picture, and enlivened our five senses to bridge the gap where distance has challenged our ability to connect.

I often think of companies that have this ability to flex their DNA and stretch the potential of how they exist in this industry, this country, the world. Companies like FreshSource, whose Founder, Robert Thompson, sees opportunities where others see closed doors and says yes where others might say no. He does not get lost in the

game of semantics, of labeling his company, but is instead recreating a map of business advancements on his own terms and with a team that aspires to evoke the same vision.

When I look at this issue, at the companies and individuals sharing their stories in these pages, I imagine the bones of a body—the foundational aspect of these unique biological structures we live and thrive in.

As the leaves fall, as our skin sheds, and our bodies transition, we become a new living, breathing animal together. With teams like Frontera, Chelan Fresh, Atlas Produce, and Mucci Farms laying the strong groundwork for our muscle memory to adapt, we may find ourselves flexing in new ways while sidelining the impossibilities we all imagined have been in our way during these recent seasons.

This year has shown us our vulnerabilities, and many of us have had to show our bellies in order to find the soft spots that actually breed transformation, not frailty.

The road ahead is long—and that is actually a gift and not a fear, to me. It might just mean we need to hibernate, if just for the afternoon.

Let's allow this fall to change us, to bring us together in gratitude instead of division and hope instead of doubt.

Let's explore the DNA that we thought was a sign of our limitations, and instead see it as a map toward growth and possibility. Maybe we come out on the other side with a little more heart, a little more insight, and a stronger sense of what comes next for us all.

Cheers, to the path ahead. 🍷



Jordan Okumura

Editor in Chief
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FEATURES



FRESHSOURCE HUMBLE AND HUNGRY

This fresh produce disruptor refuses to be defined by traditional standards in the fruit and veg sector, and we just had to know why. Tapping the intellect and passion of Founder Robert Thompson, we took a journey into the mind behind the vision...



OCEAN MIST® FARMS HEARTS OF GOLD

Take a closer look at Ocean Mist® Farms' proverbial gold mine as Paul Scheid and Diana McClean detail a world-renowned artichoke breeding program and the dedication it takes to be an industry pioneer...



CHELAN FRESH SEISMIC SNACKING

Julie DeJarnatt brings retail strategies to the pinnacle of success for this Washington apple powerhouse program. With the distinctive Rockit™ flying off the shelves almost as quick as apples can hit them, what is in store for this year's competitive retailers?



FRONTERA IDENTIFYING AN EDGE

Fueled by technology but driven by ag, this rebrand finds a balance between two sides. Amy Gates tells us how a new look cracks open a dynamic all but forgotten...



MUCCI FARMS A BUMBLE BEE'S PERSPECTIVE

As the greenhouse category lights up the fresh produce market with innovation and vision, the trailblazing leaders at this family-owned company are turning ideas into explosive growth...



ATLAS PRODUCE REWRITING HISTORIES

Ancient ways have gripped the world. With a vast array of new additions bringing a modern twist to classics that predate most methodologies, Robert Dobrzanski tells why these underdogs are more likely food gods...



MOM'S ORGANIC MARKET WHAT'S IN A TOMATO?

Evoking simplicity and an uncomplicated approach to produce merchandising, Chris Miller, Produce Director, dials in on why even the bare necessities speak for themselves...

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**WHAT MAKES VASILIU
A WHOLESOME HERO?**

Having tenacity will get you far in this industry, and Vasiliu has plenty of it. From buying his first truck in 2012 to owning 120 today, Vasiliu has learned the ins and outs of running a business and grown his company into a nationally known empire. Vasiliu first got his chance at setting the foundation of his dream in the U.S. through the help of a childhood best friend, Nick Popescu of Hermes NVC. With a firm dedication to paying things forward, he now dedicates his time to improving the livelihood of those in Moldova, his home country, and inspiring others to achieve their dreams.

- 1 WORK ETHIC
- 2 PARTNERSHIP
- 3 ADVICE FOR OTHERS
- 4 PAYING IT FORWARD
- 5 LEAVING A LEGACY



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Vasiliu Tipa

Chief Executive Officer, TVA Logistics

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7	10	Apples



With a goal set in his heart, Vasiliu followed his father's advice and traveled to the U.S. to live a better life. He learned from his parents to work hard and persevere in order to achieve his goals. Vasiliu saw the value of those teachings he grew up with and actively helps his employees achieve their goals too.



"I owe my experience in this country to Nick Popescu, my friend since we were still in Moldova. Nick came here with the dream of building a trucking fleet, and he helped me get to where I am today. Now, I believe in continuing that good faith in my community and my company. By working together, I know we can continue to grow and create something great."



"Be inspired and inspiring. I want to show others it is possible to achieve what you want if you work hard. If they are inspired, then they would want to pay it forward and inspire and help others. I know I am not going to stop here."



After building his transportation empire, Vasiliu looked to giving back to those in Moldova. Vasiliu sponsors employees who want to work hard and live a better life. Once they are here and working for him, he helps his employees through the process of obtaining green cards, housing, and finances. Now, 75 percent of his company is composed of Moldovan-Americans, and his family continues to grow.



Having built his business through the help of a friend, Vasiliu believes it's his duty to help others and to teach them how to do the same. He now strives to leave a legacy of good behind so that he can help others achieve their goals. Through teamwork and reliance, Vasiliu believes TVA Logistics and his expanded family will continue to grow to be the best they can be.

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Humble & Hungry

THE FRESHSOURCE WAY

BY JORDAN OKUMURA

“This vision of ours is in our DNA.”

Robert Thompson reveals this to me, manifesting its multiple possibilities in the same instant as he speaks it into being.

“This vision is created by our origin, our values, and our mission for driving change—all led by a very rare group of individuals and beliefs that defy definition in many ways. Like us,” he says, tracing FreshSource’s sequencing back to a single challenge that he turned into a vision for the future.

We live in interesting times, to say the least, creating an incubator primed for change—for revisiting and deepening our stories, our notions of who we are and what comes next.

“Providing value—this is the proposition to which we hold true. It is also the code we are creating. It is what drives and

motivates us. We are always looking to raise the bar in what we do and never to become complacent,” Robert, Founder of FreshSource, tells me as we look back on the tumultuous but amazing year that has allowed space for the company to find itself even further.

The beauty of Robert’s vision is that, like DNA, it contains instructions that light a torch toward legacy to be passed from generation to generation. As Robert tells me, looking to next month is essential, sure, but looking down the line is the way to turn a vision for change into a movement. Into a complete reimagining and execution of the organism that is the fresh produce industry.

When Robert arrived on the scene in 2001, he noticed that traditional brokers were not providing the services essential for meeting retailers’ needs.

“FreshSource was created out of this necessity. Growers, shippers, and packers needed a sales and merchandising support company that would help execute sales plans at the store level. While other brokers would take meetings, they were not providing the necessary boots-on-the-ground focus required in that last 20 feet, which is critical at the store level where the support is needed most,” Robert reflects.

This was the crossroads for him: Either he kept his head down and pushed in the same direction as everyone else, or he could step off the path and create another.

Robert crafts his words and beliefs with so much intention that he slows time to this moment, allowing the periphery to take on new possibilities and opportunities that many cannot imagine.





ROBERT THOMPSON, FOUNDER, FRESHSOURCE, REMAINS ON THE FRONTLINES OF FRESH AS HE TAKES THE PULSE OF TODAY'S CHANGING MARKET DYNAMICS

His perception is more expansive than most, taking in both the past and future simultaneously while he has his feet firmly planted in the DNA of today.

As drivers of innovation across products, packaging, ingredients, go-to-market ideation, and horizon building, FreshSource remains a crucial resource for principals, retailers, and products—promoting the ability to identify the fast-changing landscape as more than a one-size-fits-all business model. This grounding ideal is the tether from which Robert builds the cellular structure of a company whose DNA is always adapting.

“We get to choose how we do business every day. The depth of relationships from leadership to those on the frontlines interacting with the consumer is the glue that keeps us together in times of market turmoil. These relationships are also the fuel that drive growth forward. We do not function in a closed system—we thrive in situations that keep us nimble and moving,” Robert adds.

This ability of Robert's to hold the attention of the industry is rooted in so much more than just his vision, like where he has come from.

Robert cut his teeth as a Regional Manager for Del Monte Fresh. He then left in 2001 to found FreshSource, starting out with one client, Foxy, in those initial days, and was responsible for sales management and hiring and managing the broker network for Foxy. Robert soon became frustrated with having to continuously hire and replace brokers because of their inability to execute his vision. This frustration and desire for a full-service support company are what prompted Robert to start FreshSource.

It is hard to get Robert to identify these critical moments that challenged his values and motivations because he doesn't see them as such, but as entry

“We do not function in a closed system—we thrive in situations that keep us nimble and moving.”

 **ROBERT THOMPSON, FOUNDER, FRESHSOURCE** 

points for change instead. Semantics at play, if you will. But, he willingly does it anyway, allowing me to weave the strands of this new organism that Robert imagines. He is one of those elite and passionate people who sees barriers and definitions as hurdles to overcome—but never impossibilities.

“Although we are classified as a broker, FreshSource prefers to be known as a sales and merchandising support company,” Robert says. “We pride ourselves on being an extension of the brands we represent and to always say yes to our retail partners. We are a ‘say yes’ company,” he shares. “Our retail partners continue to need added support at the store level to help with execution, and our brands require our expertise to help guide them. Our merchandising team assists to accomplish numerous tasks in-store, such as resets, new item launches, merchandising placement, and closing voids, to name a small handful of activities.”

Inside this living, breathing program that is constantly in flux, and by design at that, FreshSource also offers a great deal of in-house support, with new item set-up, promotional support, data analysis, and more.

“When I speak of that unique and much-needed diversity of vision, I speak of the DNA of our personal experiences as well. We have strategically hired retailers to assist us in building our retail support model,” Robert tells me.

This strategic vision includes Chad Miller, who brings more than 17 years of retailer experience in roles like Vice President of Produce Procurement for

Sprouts Farmers Markets, and Scot Olson, who taps over 31 years of buy-side grit in leadership positions like Vice President of Produce and Floral at Grocery Outlet. Bringing about the perfection of a full trifecta is Mike Casazza, who has more than 25 years of executive experience in sales and marketing of tropical fruit, commodity vegetables, and all lines of value-added produce through retail, foodservice, club, and wholesale formats throughout North America. To bring together a force of

nature means establishing that norms are meant to be broken and expectations exceeded.

“Just to give you an idea of our genealogy, we have more than 350 collective years of service and knowledge of sales on our team,” Robert says, still very much in awe and humbled by the incredible team that has brought a new direction of support to the industry.

As Scot, President of the newly restructured North/Northwest Division of FreshSource, tells me, this vision of the company is keeping the team ultra-focused on what is important.

“Connecting the principals we represent to our valued retail partners and supporting all activities that help them increase sales and profits is what we strive for. Execution at store level is critical to all parties involved and so that is where we place a great deal of resources in order to achieve success for all. Mr. Robert Thompson leads this company with one basic rule. As



▲ CHAD MILLER BRINGS A WEALTH OF BUY-SIDE KNOWLEDGE TO THE TEAM'S GO-TO-MARKET STRATEGY



ROBERT THOMPSON (LEFT) AND MIKE CASAZZA (RIGHT) STAND READY FOR THE NEXT WAVE OF CHANGE

Robert has shared, *yes* is always the right answer in relation to helping drive our principals' business objectives and in support of our retail partners' needs! This go-to business strategy Robert has as a core operating procedure has removed all hurdles and barriers for us to effectively perform our jobs."

This dynamic mix of retail backgrounds, progressive mindsets, and dedicated leaders is how FreshSource continues to defy expectations simply by pivoting them and adapting to the needs of the market. Looking downfield allows the team to proceed with an open mind where so many others are closed to it.

"Individually our values may seem obvious, but put them together and our team culture is born. The passion to develop relationships and collaborate with our retail partners and principals, who bring endless innovation and opportunity to enhance consumer engagement and experience, is at the foundation of our success at FreshSource," says Chad, Chief Innovation and Strategy Officer.

Plain and simple, FreshSource operates on the premise that to satisfy the needs of its brands and retail partners is to impact change across all standards in fresh produce. The ripple effect cannot

"We pride ourselves on being an extension of the brands we represent and to always say yes to our retail partners. We are a 'say yes' company."

 **ROBERT THOMPSON** 

be understated when leadership like FreshSource is under the lens of every microscope in the proverbial industry town.

"There are many voices that surface when you are trying to evoke change, but our mission remains the same: FreshSource is committed to building client relationships that strengthen retail and consumer confidence. Our goal is to provide sales and merchandising support to deliver value to all we represent," Natalie J. Machado, National Director of Marketing, shares with me. Natalie has her own family legacy in the industry and not one that she takes lightly, having

tread her own path before her roots took to FreshSource's vibrant and rich soil.

Growing up being part of the produce arena, Natalie watched her father, Steve Junqueiro, interact with other retailers, buyers, brokers, farmers, attending Produce Marketing Association's Fresh Summit—a dynamic that was always very exciting for her. With such a driven mindset, Natalie started at the company in 2013 and saw a need to market FreshSource and continue strengthening and building the brand. She became the National Director of Marketing in January 2017 and notes that it continues to remain her ongoing effort to ensure



“There are many voices that surface when you are trying to evoke change, but our mission remains the same: **FreshSource is committed to building client relationships that strengthen retail and consumer confidence.**”

 **NATALIE J. MACHADO, NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, FRESHSOURCE** 

the team elevates and enhances its commitment and passion as a solution-driven sales and merchandising company.

Each storied veteran brings their own unique drive to the team. Those generating success for FreshSource would tell me that their strategies for execution are not rocket science. But, I do believe that the amount of detail and dedication they put into their roles and performance have the mark of science: a critical eye for detail—data-driven or empirical—and concrete testimony and solutions that answer the FreshSource hypothesis time and time again. The vision of a traditional broker will fall by the wayside as the demands of global demographics change.

“We continue to evolve and elevate our services and value proposition. In the

end, an ongoing goal is to add value to a brand in helping them with relationships, expanding shelf space, providing relevant data and guidance, execute at the store level, or assist in any way with their goals and objectives. We are not out to build up a stable of brands without adding value to the brands we represent,” Robert says.

The depth of FreshSource’s team knowledge, combined with its flexibility and nimble nature, gives the company the ability to support short- and long-term projects or goals and apply resources to support requests from those throughout the industry, regardless of the situation.

“It all comes back to that ability to say yes to anything and find a way to be agile in an increasingly competitive climate. Our

goals are to bring the highest level of sales, merchandising, and retail support 24/7. This passion and commitment allows us to continue to grow and be focused on solutions, constantly refining those best practices to bring the very best products to the retailers and, ultimately, the consumer,” Mike, President of the Southwest Division, reflects.

For a team that is committed to continuously investing in its business to grow the brands it represents while simultaneously providing great consumer experiences for retail partners, you wonder how they even have time to take a vision to execution. But, they achieve it despite the restraints of time and space.

“When you see the FreshSource brand, you know our services and values are the same. Our initial goal was not to be a national company. In today’s environment, we are continually being asked by our principals to expand into additional territories. It is exciting to see that the value and support FreshSource provides makes a difference for all involved, and we will keep growing to help our brands,” Robert says.

Humble and hungry are the final words he offers, like a gift on the table, and they speak volumes. Those words might just be the DNA coding that maps out his future from beginning to beginning. Because, for FreshSource, there really is no end. 



◀
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HEARTS *of* GOLD

BY CHANDLER JAMES

Imagine the amount of heart it would take to be a pioneer in the produce industry. An ineffable quality that lives inside someone, bursting with curiosity and imagination. It is a level of determination difficult to put into words, though I will do my best to build this story stone by stone.

I found a proverbial gold mine while speaking with the leaders of Ocean Mist® Farms. The act of pioneering a category as unique as artichokes did not include a clear-cut path, but there is at least one crucial quality that comes naturally

to this company: heart. Not only is it what keeps our blood pumping, but having heart is an innate ability to lead with our truest intentions. This is what lies at the very core of Ocean Mist's being—a precious stone that cannot be broken.

"We know what we want in an artichoke," began Paul Scheid, Vice President of Production. "Because it is our flagship commodity, Ocean Mist Farms has the incentive and obligation to invest our time and resources into developing the best artichoke varieties for our customers."

In the early 1920s, nearly one hundred years ago, Ocean Mist Farms entered the ring with distinguished passion and drive. What began as a fierce determination to establish a footing in a new country for the founding families has since evolved into a world-renowned fresh produce operation led by expertise in artichoke variety development.

In the early years, as Paul explained to me, Ocean Mist grew a perennial heirloom artichoke variety that produced a large supply in the spring with little production in the

summer, fall, and winter. By the '80s, the company set out on its pursuit of being a year-round artichoke supplier, developing a new variety that would change the commodity forever.

"We wanted to create an annual variety to supplement the traditional springtime production with a consistent year-round supply of artichokes. Our search for the ideal artichoke included trips to the Mediterranean region, the birthplace of the commodity, and to South America, including Chile, Colombia, and Peru," Paul said. "In 1997, Ocean Mist introduced its new annual variety on a production scale, and our dream of producing year-round artichokes became a reality."

Through bright minds and steady hearts, Ocean Mist Farms' varietal development program truly struck gold. By that same token, the grower introduced its Gold Standard varieties to its crops in Castroville, Coachella, and Oxnard, California, and Mexico.

The Gold Standard is an overarching belief that the company has sustained for years based on its core values of quality, passion, integrity, and success, as Senior Director of Marketing Diana McClean expressed.

"In the last two years, we have named and emphasized the Gold Standard as a brand identifier that infiltrates everything we do from varietal development, plant

"Because it is our flagship commodity, Ocean Mist Farms has the incentive and obligation to invest our time and resources into developing the best artichoke varieties for our customers."

~ Paul Scheid, Vice President of Production, Ocean Mist® Farms



cultivation, harvest practices, cooling, quality assurance, and food safety to our marketing strategies, all the way to the nutritious and delicious eating experience of an Ocean Mist Farms-branded item," she continued. "This Gold Standard is what sets us apart in the produce section of the grocery store, and our retail partners continue to choose us to put their name behind."

Because artichokes are considered a niche crop, few operations compare to the size, complexity, and history of Ocean Mist's program. The grower evaluates over 1,100 individual selections annually, leading to its large collection of artichoke breeding material from around the globe.

That Gold Standard is carried throughout Ocean Mist's

partnerships with some of the world's most prolific breeding intellects, headlined by two essential programs: one which uses traditional plant breeding techniques, and a second which develops varieties using high-tech plant breeding.

The individuals who have grown the industry-leading operation into its current form have planted their being within the heart of each artichoke, leaving a sprinkle of gold dust hidden among every leaf.

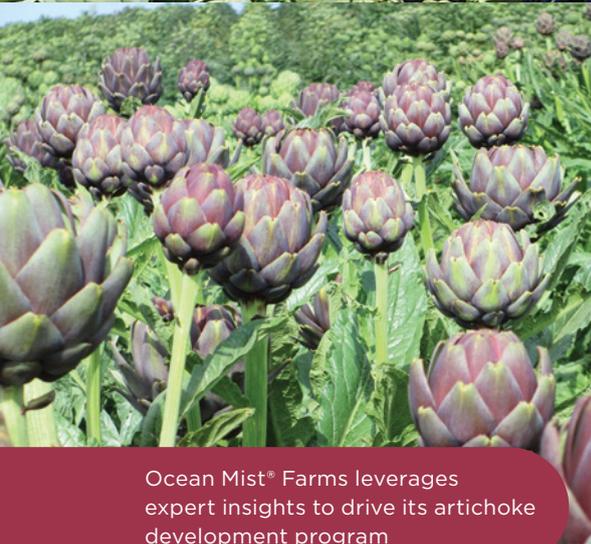
"At Ocean Mist Farms, the team behind our artichoke production is comprised of the experts. We use their insights to drive the development program and determine which artichoke varieties to develop in order to meet our goals," Paul explained. "Originally, our goals for the program were to



Ocean Mist® Farms entered the ring as a champion of the artichoke category in the early 1920s

“This Gold Standard is what sets us apart in the produce section of the grocery store, and our retail partners continue to choose us to put their name behind.”

~Diana McClean,
Senior Director
of Marketing,
Ocean Mist® Farms



Ocean Mist® Farms leverages expert insights to drive its artichoke development program

provide year-round production, high yield, and a superior appearance.”

But like any company, Ocean Mist’s goals have since evolved, honing in on what makes an artichoke a superior eating experience, and boiling it down to flavor and edibility.

“In addition to being a nutritious and unique vegetable, we also want our artichokes to provide exquisite flavor and texture. Our consumers don’t eat artichokes simply because vegetables are healthy, but because they provide an eating experience unlike any other,” Paul told me. “For the future, we are looking within to develop pest and disease resistance—the sustainability aspect of our artichoke production.”

With the proper cultivation, irrigation, and fertilization of its crops, both conventional and organic varieties of Ocean Mist’s Gold Standard artichokes grow into some of the largest, most high-quality varieties on the market. It’s been said that not all that glitters is gold, but in the case of Ocean Mist Farms’ artichokes, this could not be further from the truth.

As Paul mentioned, unearthing a truly fantastic product in terms of the supply chain is only half the battle. Once it had climbed that mountain, Ocean Mist looked back at its history and asked, “How can we make our artichokes even more appealing on the shelf?”

Beyond the impressive size and unrivaled taste of Ocean Mist artichokes, the company set out to create a cult-like eating experience to wow the masses. This summer, the prized Gold Standard artichoke entered its next phase of innovation as the Purple Artichoke came to fruition.

“Our plant breeding team understood that purple is a color many artichoke varieties exhibit,” Paul commented. “The color is naturally occurring and can show up as a subtle basal blush or a general hue over the entire artichoke. Through our breeding programs, we discovered that some artichokes were more purple than others. Those crosses were further refined to produce a consistently purple artichoke variety while



The Gold Standard is an overarching belief that Ocean Mist® Farms has sustained for years based on its core values

maintaining the great flavor and edibility our products are known for.”

Diana meditated on Paul’s thought for a moment before launching into the possibilities that this flowering vegetable possesses.

“Introducing this variety to the market in June of 2020 lined up beautifully with shopper trends and demand for new, fresh vegetables and experimentation in both meal preparation and flavors,” she said. “Because we’ve been around for so long, we are very thoughtful and methodical with new varietal research and development. Identifying the optimum intersection of consumer demand and new item availability is an essential strategy for maximum impact.”

The mineral masterpiece that is Ocean Mist Farms is far from its final form. Gold is one of the few elements that remain pure amidst the forces of nature—a worthy comparison for these artichoke experts. Company stalwarts like Paul and Diana continue to lead with their hearts, ever at the forefront of Ocean Mist’s unstoppable momentum.

So, as we all grow more familiar with the mineral elements at our core, let us remember this: To have your heart set on something of gravity is one of life’s greatest gifts. 



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CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

BY MELISSA DE LEON CHAVEZ



Paul Catania Jr. (left) and Matt Catania (right) mark two of the three generations of Catania Worldwide, each opening new gateways for the company



G

ateways conjure a vast array of meanings—representing both a figurative and literal progression that promises something

new on the horizon. Evolution by chance or design is on the way, and this story has no shortage of such multifaceted meanings. But we did begin this journey with an actual gate—one in which Paul Catania Jr. was captured stepping through as he led us down the strategic past of Toronto, Ontario-based Catania Worldwide.

Now, two years after *The Snack* dove into finding out why this company is *Purposefully Incomplete*, another threshold is crossed 1,900 miles away by the next generation of the organization's namesake.

Matt Catania is stepping through an entirely different gate both metaphorically, as he leads the way in cracking open a southern corridor, and literally. Matt is carving out his own chapter in Catania Worldwide's legacy, and he is doing so from the Lone Star State—a surprise to everyone, including him.

"This has become so much more than we planned, and on a faster trajectory than I think any of us could have anticipated," Matt says as we discuss the region that he made his new home only a year ago. "This new facility has become a gateway to growth potential for our company to expand into new categories and distribution channels."

The convenience and confidence of end-to-end custody of its product inspired the company to set up McAllen-based Catania Texas in 2019. Having complete control is advantageous for obvious reasons, but what no one anticipated was what Matt would do once he got settled.

"After the first couple of months, I decided to start developing my own customer base and working with people throughout the United States," Matt reflects. His dad, Paul, shakes his head—whether in awe or exasperation is hard to say, until he smiles.

"While there were a number of objectives when we opened our facility in McAllen, the main one was to facilitate our fruit

"THIS NEW FACILITY HAS BECOME A GATEWAY TO GROWTH POTENTIAL FOR OUR COMPANY TO EXPAND INTO NEW CATEGORIES AND DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS."

**MATT CATANIA, SALES MANAGER,
CATANIA WORLDWIDE**



Catania Texas marks the beginning of a new chapter for the world-reaching company as it looks to further expand its network and its physical presence

coming out of Mexico—streamlining our logistic operations as we transported our fruit to the U.S. and into Toronto, Canada. But, when Matt arrived, he looked around and realized he could establish a deeper sales network," Paul says. "Long before this transition, he had spent eight months in Mexico, specifically focusing on limes. He knew the product and the people, making him perfectly suited to be there in Texas when we opened. I couldn't have found anyone better."

A father's intuition proved true. Fast-forward to the second half of 2020, and Matt says that those new customers have helped increase Catania's lime business by about 50 percent over the past year.

Mario Masellis, Director of Sales, shares that the overnight success of the

Texas division is a result of all the best variables coming together. Matt is one of them.

"Matt has added a layer of confidence in both quality control and supply by being our eyes and ears at the border. This growth has opened up avenues that were not accessible from our other locations," Mario observes. "He has taken control of the steering wheel and is now driving us to places that we have never been."

If you know Matt, you know he is not one for the spotlight (sitting with him to compose an article of his achievements was its own adventure). From his perspective, the events that have made Texas a booming facility for Catania's portfolio were a natural progression. Though, sitting back to experience it through his eyes, I get the feeling his

excitement and sense of the potential the area offered certainly held some sway.

“I came to Texas with the primary focus of connecting all the dots from our limes to our figs, with plans to expand further in those categories. But, items like cactus, prickly pears, dragon fruit, and chayote are all great products coming out of Mexico. Now that we’ve established a new customer base and have a physical presence here, these are areas that, with an organization like ours, we can really start expanding on,” Matt says.

And there are a few specialty items that have made their way to becoming the fruit of this burgeoning leader’s eye, and the excitement of his vision is contagious.

“All these items—prickly pears, dragon fruit, Mexican lemons, and mangos—help retailers expand their customer base and bottom line in the same way our current items do, by focusing on quality and accuracy. As a whole, our organization caters to foodservice, retail, and all kinds of buyers,” Matt shares.

But, though he definitely has a lot of energy about the product itself, it is not the key to supply success in his eyes.

“While the offerings help, having quality and service you can depend on is the backbone to any business relationship and potential for expansion. I believe it is not only the items we are expanding to include that can help our customer base, but also our physical growth as

a company in different locations. The more we expand across Canada, the U.S., and Mexico, the easier it becomes to service our customers and assure accuracy and quality,” Matt points out.

Luckily for the three-generation-strong company, these are qualities it holds in spades.

“Our group already does such a great job on the items we work with, but I believe more offices, more potential, and covering more ground across North America can bring new items into the fold that we hadn’t thought to pursue before. That’s one thing that I’m really excited about—the prickly pears and the dragon fruit, especially,” Matt says, smiling at his own full circle. He highlights not just rising demand, but what Catania in particular provides. “Our fruit coming out of Mexico offers the proper grower certifications, paperwork, and requirements for the food safety aspect of our operations, which is a rarity with these items and allows a lot of doors to open for us across the United States and Canada. Specifically, we’re seeing demand and interest in prickly pears spike, and that’s why it’s been so fun!”

That fun is a feeling that can be chased all the way to the register, Matt adds as we talk about how these expansion opportunities extend from Catania’s newfound border presence to its retail customers. He points out that there is a lot of room for that growth, surprising

me with the news that the facility the company has utilized so strongly is a rented one.

“It has been a great large space, as we were just dipping our toe in the water, not knowing how far and how fast our presence here would grow. Now, we are getting to the point of that next step, with room to think about where we go from here,” Matt shares.

With everything achieved over the past year—both planned and unplanned—there is so much excitement as Matt and I look at the vast possibilities the next 12 months could bring.

“Over the next year, with four existing offices between Canada, the U.S., and Mexico, there is a lot to expect from us as we continue what we’ve started worldwide,” he says. “As great of a job as we are already doing, we could only have expected to achieve so much without actually having the people here at the border. Now, with pieces in place, we can deliver on the potential we knew we had.”

Whether a means to what is next, access to even more for this dynastic brand, or an actual archway, there is no question a gateway has been built in this new region for Catania Worldwide. And it has no fear of crossing whatever threshold might lay before it as the team continues to bridge countries across North America and beyond. 🍷

“OVER THE NEXT YEAR, WITH FOUR EXISTING OFFICES BETWEEN CANADA, THE U.S., AND MEXICO, THERE IS A LOT TO EXPECT FROM US AS WE CONTINUE WHAT WE’VE STARTED WORLDWIDE.”

MATT CATANIA

Prickly pears are among the categories Catania Worldwide is eyeing as the next intriguing produce item for retailers to provide curious consumers





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What is your favorite fall activity?

- A. Reminiscing about summer.
- B. Seeking out every pumpkin spice flavored product imaginable.
- C. Watching football and eating guacamole, obviously.
- D. Trying out new seasonal recipes and sharing them with my online followers.

Which holiday is your favorite?

- A. **Fourth of July** – Barbecue, fireworks, and outdoor fun!
- B. **Thanksgiving** – Sharing memories with loved ones around a bountiful fall table can't be beat.
- C. **"Big Game" Sunday** – It may not be an official holiday, but I live for the culmination of football season.
- D. **Halloween** – I'm a big fan of the color orange and surprising everyone with my unique costume ideas.

What has been your stress-relieving hobby during quarantine?

- A. My sweet tooth got the best of me and I've been baking a lot.
- B. Sewing face masks for family and friends.
- C. I bought an indoor cycling bike to boost my heart health.
- D. I joined a virtual wine-tasting club to expand my palate and meet new friends.

What is your favorite Tom Hanks movie?

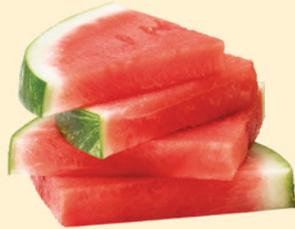
- A. **"Cast Away"** – It takes place on a deserted island and I have a feeling some refreshing fruit would have come in handy.
- B. **"Toy Story"** – Woody is the embodiment of a best friend: reliable and always lending a helping hand.
- C. **"Forrest Gump"** – A man with a unique perspective on life manages to go everywhere and do everything.
- D. **"Splash"** – It put Tom Hanks on the map as a future star. Plus, there was an exotic mermaid.

If you were a social media app, which one would you be?

- A. **Instagram** – I was made to share colorful food and vacation photos.
- B. **LinkedIn** – The line between work and fun is definitely blurred for me.
- C. **Facebook** – Who can argue with 2.7 billion active monthly users? I'm everywhere.
- D. **TikTok** – I'm kind of zany and some folks aren't too familiar with me.

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The Power of Letting Go

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

I jokingly referred to my next installment as *The Power of Letting Go*, in my last *Snack* story. Since then, a lot has happened with the world, country, my hometown of Salinas, my business, my clients, my friends and family, and more. Needless to say, 2020 continues to be the “crazy year” that none of us ever expected or wanted—and we still have the election!

Exhale!

Here at Joe Produce, we have been speaking with people who have been through some tough times. Some are business owners, and others are (now) job seekers. I’m thankful that we are here to help in whatever way possible. I will admit the toughest part of my job is not having a job available at the time when someone really needs one.

What I’ve observed over the past few months is something that I’ve known, and many of us have

at least read about—“stuff” happens. When it’s out of our control, there is no use worrying about it and/or dwelling on it. Easier said than done, I know, especially for some of us. What we do have control over is ourselves, our perspectives, our reactions, and our actions. Again, a lot easier to say than to swallow to varying degrees and in varying circumstances.

I’ve seen some of the toughest professionals devastated by losing their jobs, and then there are others going through the same thing with surprising resilience. Neither reaction is wrong. We all have our own journeys, with unique bumps and bruises along the way. I’ve had my share over the past 34 years, in the produce business and in life, and there is no doubt that these experiences have made me more empathetic to others’ plights.

So where can we learn lessons along the way that will prepare us for the tougher periods? Over the past two-plus decades or so, I have been playing



tennis. Most of those years were spent hitting thousands, or perhaps millions, of balls; working on all the mechanics of the game, like my forehand, backhand, serve, return, footwork, reaction time, etc. There is so much to know, develop, and hone. Much like a career.

For the past eight years, I started spending more time working on the mental aspects of tennis and the ability to compete. At the same time, I returned to backpacking and learned some lessons there, too. Beyond my work ethic and willingness to suffer, I've learned some great fundamentals that are applicable to life and our careers. For the purposes of this story, we'll focus on a select few:

1 Live in the moment: I just watched the documentary *The Last Dance* about Michael Jordan's playing with the Chicago Bulls. My greatest takeaway from that docuseries was a comment made about Michael Jordan by his best friend George Koehler: "Yeah, he's a great shooter, jumper, and defender, but what makes Michael special is that he's always present." *Always be present...in sports, life, and work. We can do that!*

- 2 Short-term memory loss:** A quote that still resonates with me and that we can all learn from involves the Williams sisters. In Brad Gilbert's *Winning Ugly*, he writes, "Serena Williams (and Venus, too) have serious short-term memory loss. By that I mean when things go bad in a point, game, set, or match, they have this ability to mentally wipe the slate clean—to forget about it immediately and not get ruined."
- 3 Change a losing strategy:** If you have a winning strategy, then keep it. If you have a losing strategy, then change it. I refer to this often when speaking with a job seeker who is losing hope. They're sticking with their same old approach and/or resume, and they're not having success—change may be needed here!
- 4 Don't add weight to your journey:** Metaphorically, you may not be able to afford a titanium set of utensils, but surely you don't want to add sand, pebbles, rocks, or even boulders to your backpack. Life's journey is tough enough sometimes, especially the uphills. Keep your pack light!
- 5 Enjoy the journey:** Our perspective is our choice. Some people choose to look at the journey as drudgery, lugging that "backpack" up and down the mountains. Others of us enjoy the scenery, the struggles, the sore muscles, and we know that, in the end, we'll look back at the journey with great memories and stories. We're stronger both physically and mentally because of the mountains we climbed and the struggles along the way.

Nelson Mandela said that resentment—in our case, carrying these "rocks"—is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies. Let them go! Your trek will improve, and the other parties will continue on their own paths. Drop those rocks. Let it go. Live in the moment. If your strategy is not working, then change it.

Enjoy the journey, my friends! 🍎

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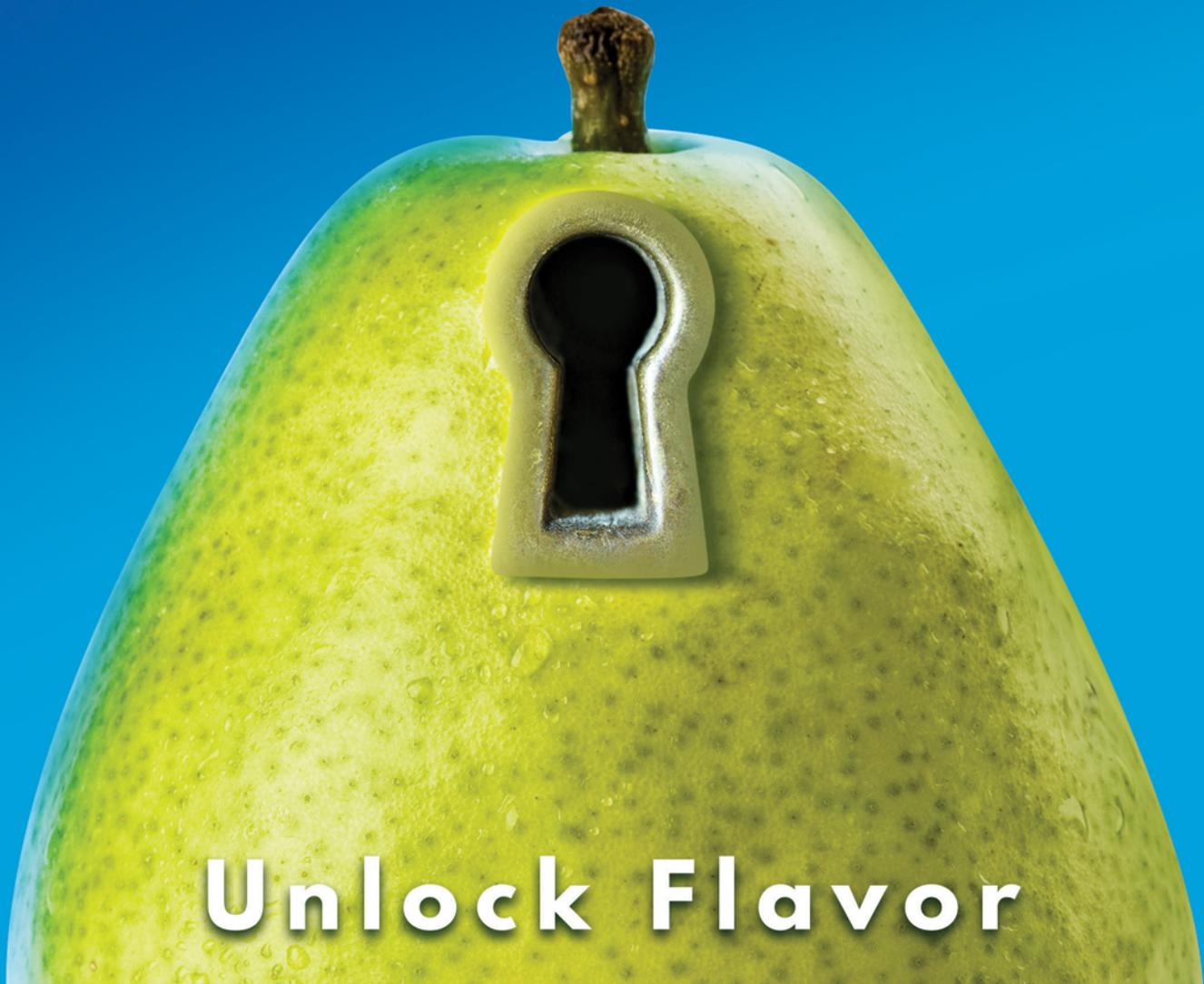
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Rex Lawrence
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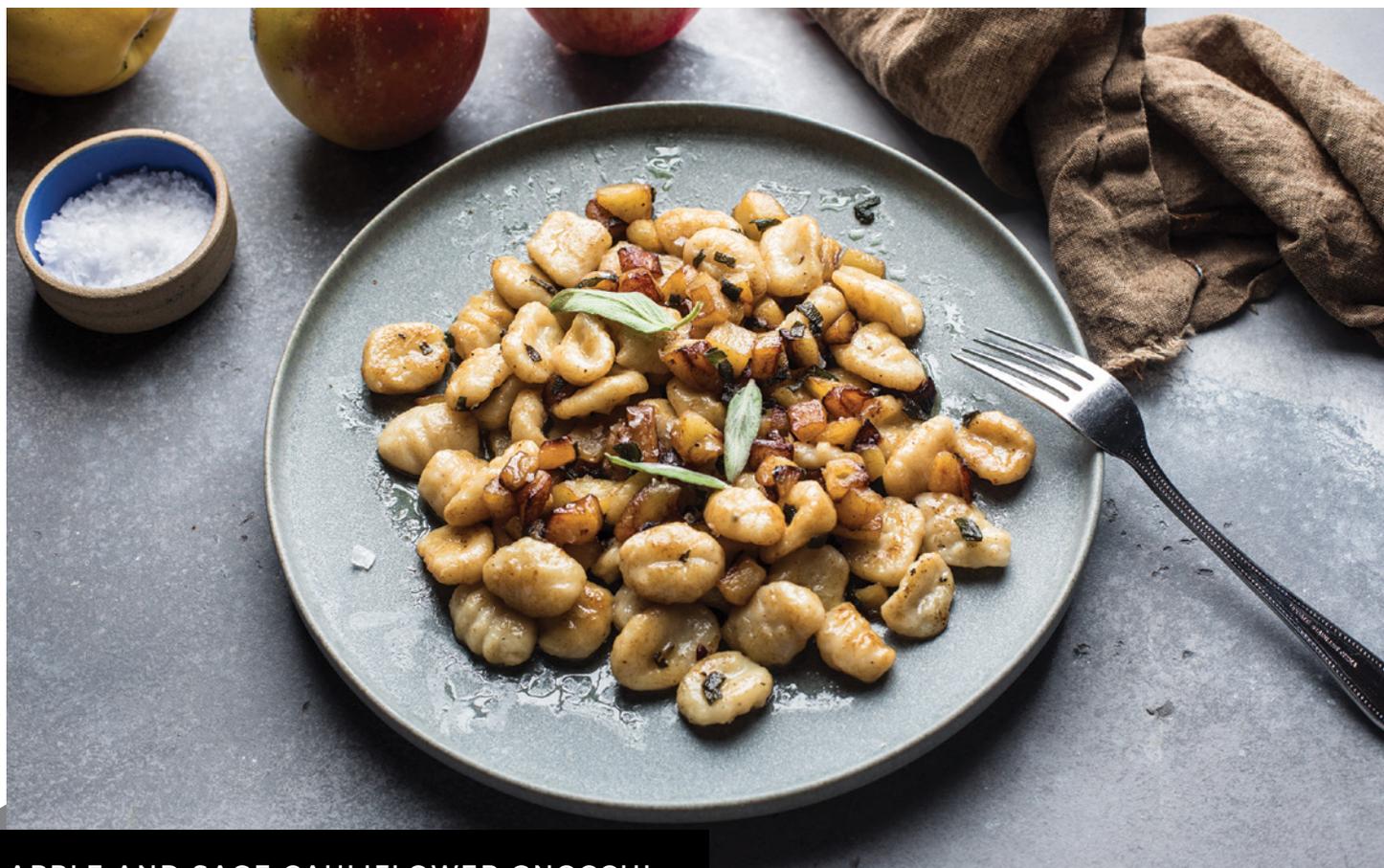


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{ what the fork }

Stemilt
Piñata® Apples ?



APPLE AND SAGE CAULIFLOWER GNOCCHI

INGREDIENTS

2 Stemilt Piñata® apples, peeled and chopped
5 cups chopped cauliflower (roughly 1 head)
1 tsp of salt
½ tsp pepper
1 tbsp olive oil
1¾ cup all-purpose flour
8 tbsp (½ cup) butter
2–3 tbsp fresh sage leaves, chopped
½ cup Parmesan cheese, grated
Salt and pepper, to taste

Prep Time: 60 min

Cook Time: 15 min

Servings: 4

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Steam cauliflower soft, roughly 5 minutes. Remove cauliflower from the steamer basket and let cool. Place cauliflower into a tea towel or cheesecloth and squeeze out any additional water.
- 2 Place cauliflower into a food processor and pulse until finely ground. Add 1 tsp of salt, ½ tsp of pepper, 1 tbsp of olive oil, and 1¾ cups of all-purpose flour, and pulse until the mixture comes together into a ball. Place the dough onto a well-floured surface.
- 3 Knead the dough for roughly 3 minutes. Add additional flour if the dough becomes too sticky. Shape the kneaded dough into a ball and set it to the side.
- 4 Meanwhile, bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.
- 5 Using a pastry cutter or a knife, divide the dough into 4 pieces. Take one piece of dough and roll into a long rope approximately 1" thick. Using a knife, cut the dough into ½–1" pieces, depending on how thick you want your gnocchi. To shape the gnocchi, roll it into tiny balls and push the back of a fork against it to get the signature gnocchi indents.
- 6 Place the gnocchi onto a baking sheet covered with a towel until you are ready to cook. Continue rolling and cutting the other three pieces of dough into gnocchi shapes. Cover with a towel.
- 7 In a large frying pan, add the butter and heat on medium until it starts to brown. Add chopped apples and sauté until tender.
- 8 Add the gnocchi to the boiling salted water and cook for 3 minutes until the gnocchi floats to the surface. Add the cooked gnocchi to the apples and butter along with the chopped sage. Fry for a few minutes until the gnocchi has slightly browned.
- 9 Season with salt, pepper, and Parmesan cheese. Serve warm!



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OUTSIDE — THE — LINES

A Q&A WITH NICHOLE TOWELL, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND PACKAGING PROCUREMENT, DUDA FARM FRESH FOODS

BY JORDAN OKUMURA

We do not use a word like “limitless” lightly in the fresh produce industry. This is due largely, in my opinion, to the inherent restraints, restrictions, and challenges that everyone from growers, packers, and shippers face, all the way to the dominating demands of the produce department. But, when it comes to companies like Duda Farm Fresh Foods, which constantly draw outside the lines in terms of innovation, I can only think of limitless possibilities for this research and development (R&D) powerhouse player. That boundless language just feels like home.

And home is where both the heart (pun intended) and soul of the company are, embedded in a progressive desire to generate more value in the fresh produce space. The company’s breeding program, located in Salinas, California, allows the family of growers to develop trendsetting new celery varieties with unique attributes and benefits,

specifically focused on flavor and the overall quality of the diners’ eating experience. Paired with the desire to make chefs’ and retailers’ buy-side programs a hit on the plate or in the produce department, Team Duda Farm Fresh Foods is kicking limitless into high gear.

Proprietary varieties and an unrivaled breeding program not only help the company align with its vision of bringing the best quality and flavor to consumers, but they also stand as a testament to the Duda family’s dedication to excellence and the promise of a long fresh produce legacy.

While I imagine the harvest transport rolling into the operation, fast-moving water jet lines slicing and dicing celery to order, and the whirl of innovation at hand, Nichole Towell, Senior Director of Marketing and Packaging Procurement, rises above the sound of ingenuity to talk with me about the groundbreaking program and celery’s status as a fresh produce power player.

Q1

JORDAN OKUMURA: As a category leader in celery R&D, growing, and marketing, Duda Farm Fresh Foods has cultivated varieties that redefine celery excellence. What are some of these key attributes that both consumers and retailers crave and desire?



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



Innovation is as integral to our identity as our family farming foundation. With our team of scientists and lab personnel, we carefully analyze the components that make up celery flavor to ensure our proprietary varieties taste sweeter than any other commercially available seed varieties. With our state-of-the-art flavor and nutrition laboratory—set up with an analytical “tongue” and “nose”—we have made significant investments to better understand and work with nature to perfect growing the sweetest, crispiest varieties available. That means we’re continually studying and testing our product to ensure our customers have access to the highest-quality and best-tasting celery in the market.

Q2

JO: With all those moving parts and promises to your customers, I understand why your partners hold Duda Farm Fresh Foods to such a high standard. How have these tried and true attributes made celery a more versatile veg at retail and on the plate?

NT: We work with Mother Nature and a team of scientists to reduce the bitter flavor compounds in Dandy® Celery to ensure it’s the superior, sweeter, and better-tasting celery, especially when being enjoyed fresh on its own. We’ve seen the snacking category grow and understand the importance of convenience items. Celery snack packs as a whole have seen a 50 percent-plus average weekly dollar increase since March of 2020 compared to the same time period of 2019—even during the pandemic. Through our marketing efforts, we’ve been able to extend the season with celery outside of Christmas, Thanksgiving, and the Super Bowl into snacking year-round.



“WITH FAMILY FARMING ROOTS THAT GO BACK NEARLY A CENTURY, AND A TEAM OF CELERY BREEDERS WITH A COMBINED 180-PLUS YEARS OF EXPERIENCE, IT IS NOT HARD TO SEE WHY THE DANDY BRAND WAS NICKNAMED THE ‘CELERY KING.’”



NICHOLE TOWELL,

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

Q3

JO: One exciting use for celery in recent years has been its essential presence in the juicing craze, and it seems to be finding its niche in other activities and opportunities as well. How is Duda Farm Fresh Foods tapping the rising popularity of the celery movement?

NT: Since the juicing trend took off early in 2019, the demand for celery skyrocketed and we are partnering for its use across menus, libations, and more. When the celery juicing trend gained momentum, we created a celery juicing page on our website to help guide beginners and inspire juicing veterans with recipes, nutritional information, and fun resources to boot.

We recently wrapped our first ever *Dog Days of Summer* promotion that highlighted the use of celery in dog treats as well as summer recipes for consumers, so it has moved way beyond just juicing. We’re working on finalizing details around our fall promotion that will encourage consumers to enjoy fresh celery snacks during outdoor activities.

Q4

JO: With retail and menu planning for fall and winter holidays already upon us—Canadian Thanksgiving and U.S. Thanksgiving, for example—what advice and best practices does Duda have for the buy-side, whether it be merchandising, packaging, or uses on the plate?

NT: We utilize a 360-degree marketing strategy that aims to reach consumers through multiple outlets and channels. By providing information online and in stores at the retail level, we’re able to inspire consumers to make further purchases. For example, we share a number of recipes and celery uses on our social media and with consumer email marketing. In the store, we encourage cross-promotion of products as well as on-pack details to make the buying decision even easier.

Q5

JO: What are some of the driving statistics and support offerings for Duda’s celery program, and how do you see them playing out this holiday season?

NT: With family-farming roots that go back nearly a century, and a team of celery breeders with a combined 180-plus years of experience, it is not hard to see why the Dandy brand was nicknamed the “Celery King.”

We grow both organic and conventional celery in Arizona, California, Florida, and Michigan, with 152 proprietary celery varieties in all. Add in the 37 patented and protected celery varieties, and we have a war chest preparing us for every circumstance, need or desire, and expected or unexpected element in the category.

As we look through the fall and into winter, we’re working on our annual fall promotion that will focus on encouraging consumers to get outside and be active in the fresh air while enjoying healthy and delicious snacks with Dandy Celery.

One of my favorite stats to share is that 33 percent of America’s celery can be traced back to Duda Family Farms, and that is a number I can get behind every day. Can’t you?

Why, yes, I do believe I can. It becomes that much more evident that the doors crack open in the presence of a company like Duda Farm Fresh Foods way more than they close. With boundless and untold paths ahead to choose from, I think the industry is more than willing to let Duda Farm Fresh Foods lead by example into a truly limitless future. 



A Closer Look at ECOS[®] Organic Fruit + Veggie Wash

UP
CLOSE

By Lilian Diep

Using plants to clean plants—our industry is truly fascinating, and I believe I am not the only one to think so. By bringing its revolutionary Organic Fruit + Veggie Wash to market, ECOS[®] is expanding the realm of healthy eating.

With the spread of COVID-19 still prevalent and generating a new norm around fresh produce handling, ECOS is helping to wash consumers' worries away. The plant-based cleaning products company is putting a new spin on the term "clean eating" with its innovative Fruit + Veggie Wash to keep fresh produce germ-free.

Stocking this alongside top-dollar categories will incentivize consumers to add more fresh fruits and veg to their baskets knowing that a deep clean is only a spray away. The new plant-based product is safe and effective at removing pathogens and residues from fresh produce without leaving an aftertaste. All they need to do is spray and rinse!

Packaged in a convenient and easy spray bottle, ECOS' Fruit + Veggie Wash is sustainable and easy to use. Biodegradable, cruelty-free, and organic, the company's ethos is as clean and clear as the product, a key point of sale as shoppers seek transparency in their spending.

This game-changing product is available in 22 oz bottles, but consumers will be clamoring for more once they have tried it for themselves. 



ECOS[®]

EXCEEDING *the Limits*

By Chandler James

**“THIS
TRANSITION
SPEAKS TO THE
ENVIRONMENT
WE LIVE IN
TODAY, THE
TOOLS WE
HAVE ACCESS
TO, AND THE
INVESTMENTS
WE MAKE
IN OUR
INTERNAL
RESOURCES.”**

-Heather Hammack,
President,
Famous Software



Sometimes the most innovative discoveries come from unpredictable circumstances. Even with carefully laid plans, precise metrics, and calculated data, the best solutions come from unanticipated events. Though this has always been true, the COVID-19 pandemic has breathed new life into the idea, making way for our industry to uncover entirely new ways of doing business, and for one company—a fresh and unrivaled strategy for success.

Famous Software has turned the challenges brought on by the pandemic into opportunities. To get a better sense of how the Famous team made such an epic triumph, I sat down to chat with the company’s leadership.

“When we made the decision to go remote, we didn’t just want to support customers through this time, we wanted to do a better job of supporting them than we ever have,” Heather Hammack, President, told me. “Our goal was to ensure our customers do not experience any negative impacts of this decision, and instead would see a positive outcome as

their software and service provider. We were essentially able to reroute all of our systems, making it so our customers may not even know we weren’t in the office if we didn’t tell them.”

Famous acted quickly in the face of crisis, sending all 100 employees home in one day before shelter-in-place orders even went into effect. The safety of its team members took precedence, though the company’s elite customer service never dwindled. With such uncertainty in the air, Famous’ leadership took action, seamlessly transitioning its staff to remote work with many teams not even missing business time.

“This transition speaks to the environment we live in today, the tools we have access to, and the investments we make in our internal resources. Because of our project management system and our customer relationship management (CRM) system and team, we’re able to connect with each other, work remotely, and have our normal collaboration without physically being in a room together,” Heather explained. “It’s been humbling to know these are the types of people that work at Famous Software.

When something challenging comes to fruition, our team is going to go the extra mile. We're gaining a better idea of what our capabilities are, now and in the future."

It's no small feat to rise above unprecedented circumstances like those we face today—a true testament to how Famous Software has garnered expertise in terms of tech and services. Not only has the company kept its head above water, but it has found strength in the struggle, allowing Famous to serve its customers in a way the team may have never thought possible.

"To be able to transition and leverage technology was integral. We promoted our team's collaboration on this by moving our internal meetings to video. Seeing people's body language and facial expressions communicates a lot, and it's been fun to put that into practice with our customers as well," Heather said. "From a development standpoint, our team has actually been more productive working from home than they were in the office. I didn't necessarily think that

was going to be the case, but when you're not disrupted by regular office interactions, it is much easier to get things done."

As the Famous team put it, everyone feels a sense of lost community when not seeing people on a regular basis. But, from a business perspective, it's actually highlighted improvements that Famous didn't know it could achieve. With that being said, the company had to figure out a way to promote its culture. Some examples include scheduling a weekly virtual coffee break, competing in a step challenge, and doing the occasional "show and tell" exercise (because we should all know each other's pets on a first-name basis by now).

In the fresh produce industry, we are well aware of how important it is to maintain a sense of familiarity and friendliness. It's how we define our interactions with each other and stay at the top of our game. For Famous Software, this idea was simply a strategic turning point



- Sharron Barnier,
Vice President
of Finance and
Administration,
Mucci Farms

"These past five months have been challenging for most businesses and we couldn't be more proud of our team for once again showing their resilience, just as they have throughout our 60-plus years of serving communities with fresh produce. Thankfully, we continued to receive the high level of support from Famous that we are accustomed to receiving which helped us maintain a sense of normalcy in a very unique time."

as the team works to better serve its customers, throughout the pandemic and long into the future.

"Internally, our main focus has been on implementing more webinars and video recordings," Sales Manager Natalie Kaita commented. "We've also pivoted our external events, including the Famous Forum that takes place every year in conjunction with Produce Marketing Association's (PMA) Fresh Summit. This year we have to do it virtually, which we are hoping will attract more attendees. It's going to take place over the course of a few days with multiple different sessions available."

These are the opportunities Famous Software speaks of—openings for a unique style of communicating which may not have come to fruition otherwise. It is this dedication that has fueled the Famous fire leading to an utterly identical customer experience, from maintaining efficient operations to navigating COVID-related challenges.

"We wanted to ensure that they didn't see any delays in our service. We're turning around customer tickets faster than we ever have in the past and have found great success in supporting our customers through initiatives like the USDA Farmers to Families Food Box

**"WHEN
SOMETHING
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TEAM IS GOING
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EXTRA MILE."**

-Heather Hammack

Program. By giving them the ability to track transactions such as this in our system, we have remained unrivaled in our services,” added Support Manager Carolyn Craft.

Support in this capacity has been essential, but when it comes to the day-to-day, Famous had some bigger fish to fry. With the leadership team visiting over 1,600 customers throughout the U.S. and Canada every year, it’s needless to say that some big operational shifts were in order.

“Every year, our leadership team travels to customers’ headquarters to discuss our partnership and forward-looking strategies. Per the usual fresh produce interaction, we’d also share lunches together, go to dinner, and ultimately make a three-day trip out of these visits,” Heather continued. “We are approaching our annual meeting virtually with Robinson Fresh and will turn that three-day trip into four hours of conferencing. Of course, we miss seeing our customers face-to-face dearly, but this is just one example of how we have actually become more efficient. We believe if we can embrace the change and create new opportunities, it will enable us to be a stronger company and provide more value to our customers.”

**“WE’RE
TURNING AROUND
CUSTOMER
TICKETS FASTER
THAN WE EVER
HAVE IN THE PAST
AND HAVE FOUND
GREAT SUCCESS IN
SUPPORTING OUR
CUSTOMERS...”**

-Carolyn Craft,
Support Manager,
Famous Software



Famous Software headquarters are located in Fresno, California

This ideology has translated to Famous’ newer implementations as well—company leadership has continued to see an unforeseen event simply as an opportunity for growth. Three of the company’s newest accounts in North America adopted Famous Software solutions just as the pandemic hit, adding an air of anxiety to an already uncertain situation. Even so, Famous ensured that these new partnerships kicked off without a hitch.

“Typically, these implementations would have been at least half onsite and half virtual. We ended up completing two of those with roughly 80 percent of the work taking place virtually, while we went completely virtual with the third account, as they were located in Canada,” Nick Calderon, Implementation Manager, said. “So, not only are we facing these challenges on a logistical level, but we’ve had to shift the way we implement our own software.”

Though we’d all like to assume “business as usual,” history is rarely made without facing challenges. A part of rising to this particular challenge has been Famous Software’s pivot to virtual networking, shifting its strategic planning team for business services to focus entirely on making this pivot possible. Moving into the virtual space has proved more effective for the company’s customers, though, leading Famous to the idea that virtual business could be the new norm.

“I think our entire office dynamic will change, as well. We don’t need to have a hundred people in the office at any given time anymore. The Famous team is very comfortable with having a hybrid approach in the future,” Heather added. “We pride ourselves on looking at change as an opportunity, and this is going to be a big one.”

The company’s primary product, Famous Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), includes the Business Intelligence (BI) service, Famous Integration Services (FIS), and Warehouse Management Services (WMS), in addition to a line of apps. This suite compiles a complete system of applications and technology designed to manage and automate the integration of information and operational processes. When it comes to tech in the time of coronavirus, support such as this could not be more pertinent.

“A lot of our recent focus has been on electronic communication. So, we do a lot of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) on behalf of our customers, using our FIS platform,” Heather told me. “Buyers can send their requests directly to the supplier through our system, meaning less time spent keying in orders. We’re also processing what we call Famous to Famous Transactions, which means customers don’t need to send a paper purchase order (PO) anymore to another Famous customer. It’s all electronic.”

And with a buy-side network as large as Famous’, streamlining services



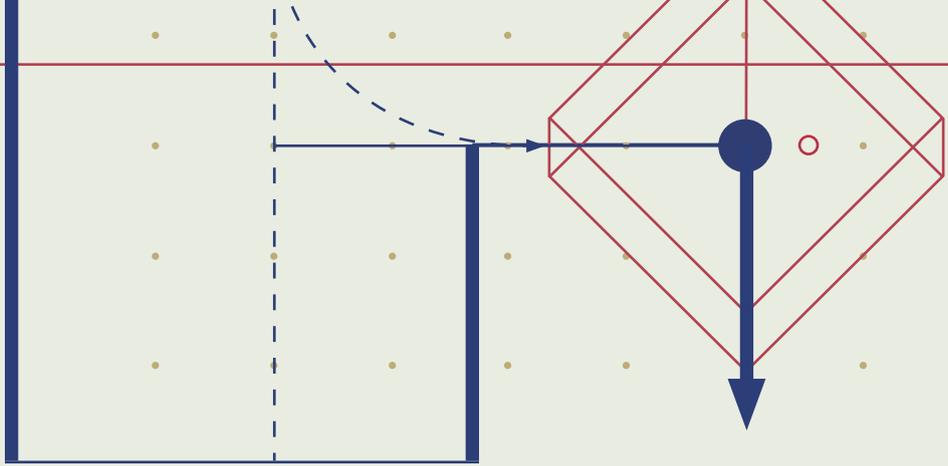
electronically is one of the most efficient ways to maximize value. Roughly 70 trading partners like Walmart, Costco, and Kroger, inhabit the Famous portfolio in addition to several major foodservice operators. Supplier-to-supplier transactions are also prevalent, including shipping and delivery alerts that allow customers to streamline the entire process.

“The BI system has been especially helpful for our customers during this time as it is looking at the data in their Famous database graphically or through visualization, versus rows and columns of data,” Heather pointed out. “This has been interesting because they can see what products are performing, and who they’re performing with. This is particularly helpful for our foodservice customers as they work to keep up with shifting demands during this challenging time.”

The hand-held computers in all of our pockets help, too, with Famous

“Our company has continued to operate through the challenges of coronavirus, and it has been great to have support from Famous available along with us. Our normal day-to-day requests have been answered when we need them, and ongoing projects have continued to move forward like the new Android WMS system for our shipping locations and EDI partnerships with new customers. We even had a wildfire at our door and Famous was ready at 9 p.m. to move our Famous server to a Dataguard server at another site if our building had to be evacuated (thankfully, it wasn’t). We are grateful Famous is able to continue supporting us remotely.”

- Hayes Roberts,
Director of Information
Technology,
Church Brothers Farms/
True Leaf Farms



leveraging all aspects of technology to maintain its position as a full-service provider. The company is building multiple applications that not only consolidate its services, but provides its produce partners with unrivaled resources, particularly amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We’re building a quality control (QC) app that five of our customers are currently piloting. This app allows them to take pictures and identify characteristics of the product, which is also completely integrated in our ERP system,” Heather explained. “Another of our recent projects is a truck check-in app. When a truck driver gets to the supplier, they don’t have to fill out a piece of paper or necessarily even talk to somebody. This is an especially important development in today’s environment as we eliminate some unnecessary person-to-person contact.”

With buy- and supply-side operations on lock, Famous Software is now widening its scope in the supply chain, bringing critical distribution operations into the fold.



-Nick Calderon,
Implementation
Manager,
Famous Software

“We’re known for being the ultimate grower-packer-shipper software suite, and distribution, historically, wasn’t our primary focus. We’re working to change that now by adding to our portfolio of enhancements in distribution and wholesale. This focus on distribution is one of our growth strategies moving forward,” continued Heather.

Distribution inherently goes hand-in-hand with widespread expansion. Anyone in the produce industry has faced challenges when it comes to doing business on both coasts, and Famous Software has long been in talks about bringing its Fresno-based services to the East. Now, with the pandemic inadvertently knocking down barriers, Famous has a renewed sense of motivation to

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carry out this expansion—an accident turned opportunity at its finest.

“This experience has only solidified our opinion that we can do it. Some of our largest customers are on the East Coast, so it would be beneficial to develop wholesale distribution services that cater to everyone,” Heather added. “Now that we know more about our capabilities, it’s about finding the right people and the right space.”

The Famous Software team is full of unsuspecting innovators that have managed to shake the very ground their livelihood stands on. Each of them has broken the mold, looking beyond the limits of common foresight, and ultimately growing Famous Software into an unrelenting force. 



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SEISMIC SNACKING

A Q&A WITH JULIE DEJARNATT, DIRECTOR OF RETAIL STRATEGY, CHELAN FRESH

BY JORDAN OKUMURA

Seismic shifts defy trends. They are movements—pressure points from which fault lines give way to the Earth. Or, in this case, they are categorical shifts that give way to movements in how humans navigate time and place in the world. No more evident are these shifts than in the way people, families, children consume their food—a vast need that is never static and always evolving.

Each dinner table is its own little universe. The sun, moon, stars, and planets shift and interact with purpose and hunger. And food allows this

little universe, this solar system, to become self-sustaining.

So, what the heck does this have to do with fresh produce? Just ask Chelan Fresh's marketing maven and buy-side whisperer Julie DeJarnatt, Director of Retail Strategy. The company's innovative and trend-defying Rockit™ apples have caused the category to quake and reemerge with new standards, demands, and a vision for feeding the produce savvy, the apple lovers across demographics and ages, and the modern table that is today's consumer universe.



JORDAN OKUMURA: Who knew such a little apple could make such big waves! With the coveted Rockit apple program now available year-round from Chelan Fresh, how are retailers responding to the demand the variety has generated in recent years, and how have you seen the variety's popularity grow?



JO: This year has already generated a ton of demand around the Rockit apple variety and Chelan Fresh is not only tapping into this excitement, but amplifying it with large-scale marketing efforts. What are some of the key elements of Chelan Fresh's new marketing campaign, and how can retailers tap into the opportunities Rockit provides for driving sales and differentiation?



JULIE DEJARNATT: Retailers are thrilled to have something as exciting as Rockit apples in the apple category. They are truly unlike anything else. There has been a lot of flavor innovation coming into the category as new varieties are introduced, which is already great, and the eating experience of fresh apples has never been better. But, Rockit apples take that innovation to the next level.

JULIE DEJARNATT,
Director of Retail Strategy,
Chelan Fresh

These are one of the only kid-targeted apples that are naturally grown to be miniature in size while also being fully mature. This means that they eat great, hold up in storage, and help bring in new apple consumers—all at a premium price that supports topline sales.

JD: Consumers use a wide range of avenues to help guide and inform their decision-making process on healthy eating. Our campaign is focused on reaching consumers wherever they choose to engage and explore healthy eating tips, seek out new recipes, learn how to get kids to eat more fresh fruit, or mix up their grocery shopping.

With all these buying and eating behaviors in mind, we will be leveraging tools that help apple lovers quickly and easily turn that discovery of Rockit apples into a seamless purchase transaction for the retailer.

“THERE HAS BEEN A LOT OF FLAVOR INNOVATION COMING INTO THE CATEGORY AS NEW VARIETIES ARE INTRODUCED...”

JULIE DEJARNATT,
Director of Retail Strategy,
Chelan Fresh



“WE TRY TO BALANCE ALL ASPECTS OF PACKAGING, FROM KEEPING THE FRUIT SAFE FROM OVER-HANDLING TO ENSURING IT IS CLEARLY VISIBLE TO CONSUMERS TO PROVIDING LONG-TERM SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS.”



Q3

JD: Speaking of playing at a higher level, what are the rules of this new game, and how is Chelan Fresh defining the message and the aesthetic of this campaign?

JD: Making good decisions about health and diet can be overwhelming—not only which foods to eat, but also navigating portion control and ensuring enough nutrients. But eating healthier doesn’t have to be a big deal; Rockit apples are low in sodium, fat, and cholesterol. Apples are a good source of vitamin C and can do a lot for consumers, thanks to plant chemicals called flavonoids, as well as improved immunity and gut health due to the pectin, or soluble fiber, found in the apple’s peel—all in the perfect snack-sized portion.

Q4

JD: I picked up a Rockit apple for the first time only about five years ago. While I was blown away by the apple’s crunch and fresh flavor, what catapulted my basket, and I imagine many others, was the packaging. What packaging and shipping specs do you offer for Rockit, and what inspired you to go these routes with packaging and concepts?

JD: Keeping true to the uniqueness of Rockit apples, we offer them in really distinctive packages. From small grab-and-go 2- to 5-count tubes to 3 lb Shuttle Packs, we have a size offering for everyone. We try to balance all aspects of packaging, from keeping the fruit safe from over-handling to ensuring it is clearly visible to consumers to providing long-term sustainable solutions. Our Rockit Shuttle Packs are made from 100 percent rPET plastic, and we provide a lot of creative ideas for consumers to keep the positive cycle going by upcycling the container into things like mini-greenhouses, bird feeders, or even beautiful lanterns.

We also have seasonal packaging options that tie into retailer holiday themes and help the shopper consider even more fun ways to use and gift Rockit—like back-to-school lunches or holiday stocking stuffers!

Q5

JD: There are so many benefits to the Rockit program. What is the flavor profile for the Rockit variety, and how is the Rockit eating experience tapping into the consumer’s desire for fresh, healthy, and flavorful food and raising the bar across the entire category?

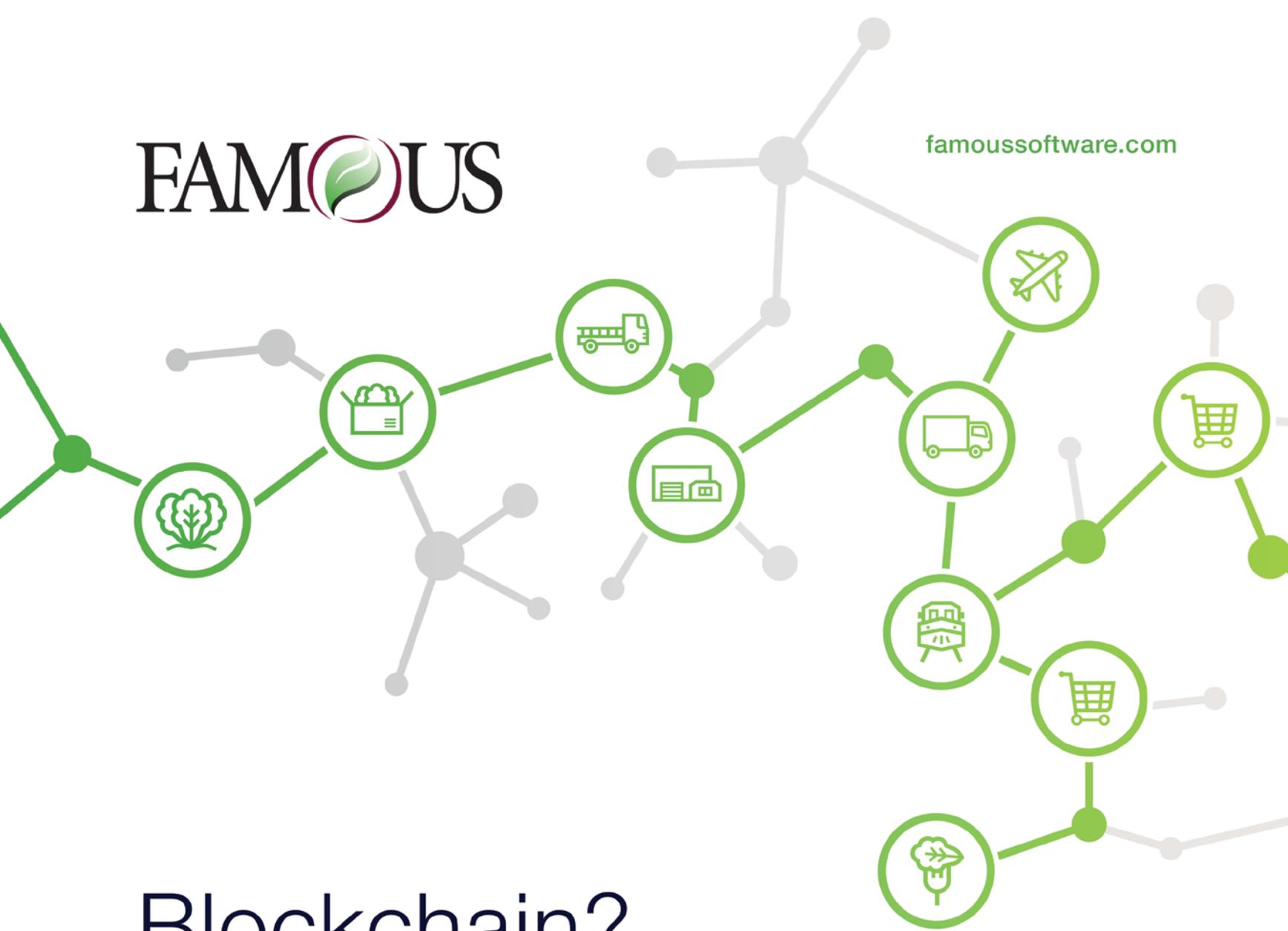
JD: Rockit apples are incredibly crisp and sweet with an eye-catching red blush color. They are the snack apple with a satisfying natural size. A Rockit apple only has 60 calories. Ate two? That indulgence is still only 120 calories and will boost an active lifestyle for both kids and kids at heart.

Rockit apples bring something brand new to a vast and established fresh category. Consumers have responded by buying enough of our little Rockit apples to boost it into the top 20 selling apples by volume in the U.S. this year, according to Nielsen data for the 52 weeks ending August 1, 2020. And they are paying a premium price for it, which supports both our growers and retail partners’ topline sales. We have big plans for the upcoming 2020 crop and selling season as Rockit settles in as an everyday offering on the shelf and a staple in consumer homes.

Groundbreaking fresh produce moves, in my book, are a seismic activity worth making note of! With Rockit’s skyward trajectory across the apple category, could we see more big things presented in smaller packages? Time will tell. Either that or Chelan Fresh will. 🍏



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A vertical stack of four colored bars representing software solutions. Each bar has a large acronym on the left and the full name on the right.

- ERP** Famous ERP
- BI** Business Intelligence
- WMS** Warehouse Management Systems
- FIS** Famous Integration Services

UNWRAPPING *Fresh*

**A Q&A WITH SARAH MILLER,
GENERAL MANAGER, LIPMAN FAMILY FARMS**

By Lilian Diep

As the fresh produce industry continues to evolve and grow, so too do consumer habits and demands. Companies are regularly testing their mettle to keep up with shifting trends, and Lipman Family Farms is among the top tier of those leading the charge. With a new green bean product dropping onto retail shelves, Sarah Miller, General Manager, took the time to expand on what will set the standard in the fresh-cut category.



“We saw a need to provide our partners with high-quality beans that they can consistently count on throughout the year. Lipman can supply that need, backed by a strong footprint in the green bean category.”

- Sarah Miller

GENERAL MANAGER,
LIPMAN FAMILY FARMS

Q1

LILIAN DIEP:

Sarah, Lipman Family Farms is an industry leader in the value-added sector. How will the company's latest move further bolster that position?



SARAH MILLER,
GENERAL MANAGER:

Lipman Family Farms is introducing our new, clipped and cleaned green beans, available in both high-graphic, microwavable, retail-ready bags, and bulk options.

We have identified specific packaging with respiration rates that enhance our green beans' shelf-life, along with packing specifically created to meet and/or exceed customers' specifications, attracting several different markets and demographics with varied pack sizes.

Q2

LD: How will adding this new product, and thereby expanding Lipman's line, contribute to the company's long-term strategies?

SM: Green beans are a signature item for Lipman Family Farms.

With great growth in the fresh-cut category, we thought the next step in expanding our fresh-cut portfolio would be with one of our signature, premium items.



Q3

LD: And what steps has the team taken to ensure the new fresh-cut green beans stand apart from other products in the category?

SM: The answer to this is very simple. We saw a need to provide our partners with high-quality beans that they can consistently count on throughout the year. Lipman can supply that need, backed by a strong footprint in the green bean category.

Our beans are grown by a third-generation farmer that can pick, pack, and deliver to our fresh-cut operation where we cut, clean, rinse, and repack everything to be ready to ship to customers within 24 hours. We also saw it as a no-brainer to provide fresh-cut product in response to the rising consumer interest, as well as the growing need for less back-of-house prep and surety of food-safe product.

Q4

LD: When should we expect this new product to be available through the Lipman Fresh Cut line?

SM: We have already started in a light way in the beginning of October, and we expect to have increased volume in time to support the high demand for the Thanksgiving holiday. From there, we will continue our production for a strong supply year-round.

Q5

LD: With this new product coming out, I have to ask: Are there more new offerings or innovations in the works?

SM: Yes, we have a full team dedicated to new and innovative items. I can't speak to them quite yet, but trust me when I say it will be worth the wait.

The envelope of innovation is continuously being pushed in our fresh produce community, and with industry leaders like Lipman Family Farms at the helm, the outcome is guaranteed to be spectacular. And as Sarah pointed out, greatness is worth the wait. 





CHOCOLATE CHIP NAVEL ORANGE MUFFINS

INGREDIENTS

1 Bee Sweet Citrus Navel orange, juiced
¼ cup non-fat, plain Greek yogurt
½ cup butter, melted
½ tsp salt
½ tsp nutmeg
½ tsp cinnamon
½ cup almond milk
¼ cup granulated sugar
¾ cup brown sugar
2 cups all-purpose flour
1¼ cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
2 eggs
2½ tsp baking powder
1 tsp vanilla

Prep Time: 15 min

Cook Time: 17–19 min

Servings: 2–5



DIRECTIONS

- 1** Preheat oven to 425° F.
- 2** Mix together melted butter, granulated sugar, and brown sugar.
- 3** Add in two eggs. Whisk ingredients together before adding baking powder, vanilla, salt, nutmeg, cinnamon, and juice of one Navel orange. Mix all ingredients well.
- 4** Pour in one cup of flour and mix well before adding milk and Greek yogurt.
- 5** Once mixed, add second cup of flour and continue to stir.
- 6** Pour in chocolate chips and fold in gently.
- 7** Add cupcake liners to muffin tin and pour in mixture to the top.
- 8** Heat in oven for 17–19 minutes, or until toothpick comes out clean when inserted in the center.

Optional: Drizzle melted chocolate on top of muffins for added aesthetic appeal!

To learn more about Bee Sweet Citrus, visit www.beesweetcitrus.com



Peel

Your Way Into

Happiness

Kicking off the new season this November



Navel Oranges



Mandarins



Lemons



Grapefruit

WTF DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

LIV Organic Produce
Organic Grapefruit
and Limes

?



ORGANIC GRAPEFRUIT LIME COCKTAIL WITH GINGER AND ROSEMARY SYRUP

INGREDIENTS

2 cups juice of LIV Organic grapefruit
1 cup juice of LIV Organic lime
3/4 cup white rum
Crushed ice
Grapefruit slices, for garnish
Rosemary sprigs, for garnish

GINGER AND ROSEMARY SYRUP

1 large chunk ginger, thinly sliced
10 sprigs rosemary
1 cup water
4 tbsp honey

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

DIRECTIONS

- 1 To create the ginger and rosemary syrup: In a saucepan, combine ginger, rosemary, and water, and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and let steep for 20 minutes. Add honey.
- 2 Fill glasses with crushed ice. Pour LIV Organic grapefruit and lime juice into glasses. Add the syrup and white rum. Garnish with grapefruit slices and rosemary sprigs.
- 3 Enjoy!



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



Citrus Snapshot

Seeking out some fresh ways to brighten up the grocery store this fall? Look no further than these premium citrus varieties sure to stop shoppers in their tracks as they traverse October-time displays. Discover an entire rainbow of untold citrus stories revealed by some of *The Snack's* most prominent category contributors...

Cara Cara Orange

- ATTRIBUTES** Rich pink pulp with orange exterior, seedless
- AROMA** Pleasingly tropical
- FLAVOR** Extremely sweet orange flavor with low acidity



Navel Orange

- ATTRIBUTES** Small navel formation on the blossom end; easy-to-peel; seedless
- AROMA** Sweet, floral
- FLAVOR** Refreshingly sweet and juicy

Valencia Orange

- ATTRIBUTES** Differentiated from other orange varieties by thin, slightly pebbly rind and occasional seeds
- AROMA** Orange blossom
- FLAVOR** Known for their perfect balance of sweet and tart flavors and high juice content

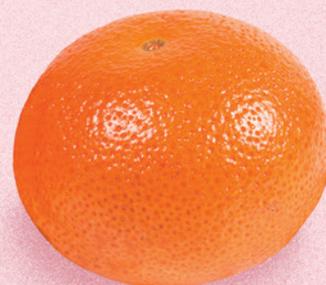


Blood Orange

- ATTRIBUTES** Deep maroon interior with very few seeds and orange/red blushed exterior; easy-to-peel
- AROMA** Mildly floral; warm and fruity
- FLAVOR** Subtly sweet, rich orange taste with a hint of fresh raspberry

Clementine, W. Murcott, and Tango

- ATTRIBUTES** Unique rounded middle, flat top and bottom, medium-sized fruit with deep orange smooth, glossy skin; seedless; easy-to-peel
- AROMA** Sweet, floral
- FLAVOR** Sweet and juicy with less acidity



Page Mandarin

- ATTRIBUTES** Prominent circle on blossom end
- AROMA** Crisp, citrus
- FLAVOR** Rich flavor

Satsuma Mandarin

ATTRIBUTES Varying in shape from flat to necked, peel and segment easily, seedless

AROMA Sweet honeysuckle aroma

FLAVOR Refreshing with warm, tropical hints



Gold Nugget Mandarin

ATTRIBUTES Bright and slightly bumpy rind, seedless, sweet, and easy-to-peel

AROMA Sweet citrus

FLAVOR Exceptionally sweet

Meyer Lemon

ATTRIBUTES Cross between a regular lemon and a mandarin orange; bright yellow or rich orange-yellow color

AROMA Refreshing herbal scent

FLAVOR Subtly sweet and lower in acidity



Eureka and Lisbon Lemon

ATTRIBUTES Two different types are virtually indistinguishable from each other; bright yellow with medium to slightly pebbly skin; among the most popular citrus fruit used in cooking today

AROMA Crisp, floral smell

FLAVOR Distinct tangy flavor that complements both sweet and savory foods



Pink Variegated Lemon

ATTRIBUTES These lemons are prized as much for their beauty as they are for their flavor; pink on the inside with a yellow and green-striped rind

AROMA Bright, crisp

FLAVOR Slightly less acidic than conventional lemons



Grapefruit

ATTRIBUTES Yellow skin with a pink blush, flesh varies from light pink to deep red

AROMA Subtly sweet, sour cherry

FLAVOR Perfect balance of sweet and tart flavors, extremely juicy



Texas Rio Red

ATTRIBUTES An overall blush on the exterior peel with a deep red interior color up to 10 times redder than the Ruby Red

AROMA Bright, floral

FLAVOR Surprisingly sweet with a hint of zing



Oro Blanco and Melo Gold

ATTRIBUTES Oro: Slightly larger than grapefruit, thick green-yellow rind; Melo: Larger than Oro, thinner rind

AROMA Both are sweet

FLAVOR Oro: Juicy, sweet, bitter membranes; Melo: sweet, but less than pummelo



Pummelo

ATTRIBUTES Largest of all citrus fruit; thick, dark green peel that fades to yellow as season progresses

AROMA Zesty; slightly tropical with a hint of jasmine and lime

FLAVOR Sweet with a candied almond aftertaste

Minneola Tangelo

ATTRIBUTES Cross between a grapefruit and tangerine; a deep orange with a knob-like formation at the stem end; few, if any, seeds; peels easily

AROMA Robust, tart orange

FLAVOR Bold, tangy flavor and bursting with juice



Key Lime (Mexican or West Indian Lime)

ATTRIBUTES Generally round with straw yellow flesh and a thin, leathery skin, ranging from light green to yellow

AROMA Highly crisp

FLAVOR Fresh, tangy taste

Persian Lime

ATTRIBUTES Typically sold while still dark green in color, gradually turn light green as they ripen; virtually seedless

AROMA Spicy, floral

FLAVOR Distinctive piney flavor



Finger Lime

ATTRIBUTES Not related to a lemon or a lime; considered a micro-citrus with tiny fruit pearls in a wide range of colors

AROMA Unique refreshing lime

FLAVOR Similar to a lemon-lime-grapefruit combination

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IDENTIFYING AN E D G E

A Q&A with Amy Gates,
President, Frontera



By Melissa De Leon Chavez

Too often, nature and technology are depicted as opposing sides of an endless debate. But grassroots is not contrary to modern, just as cutting-edge can still be authentic. For Frontera, the stances are two sides of the same coin. They are not opposites, but equals in our changing world. And the company has undertaken a centrifugal renovation to balance the scales.

How do you define who you are in an image? This was the question Amy Gates, President, asked herself and her team when it became clear that the technological approach powering the operation was at odds with the brand on the wall.

Frontera, the team realized, had become more than produce.



Melissa De Leon Chavez: When we initially spoke of the brand revolution the company was undergoing, Amy, you specifically asked me to ensure I only wrote “Frontera.” Can you tell me more about that decision?

Amy Gates:

That definitely sets the tone for what we want to achieve with our new brand, and the answer is: Why limit ourselves by saying Frontera Produce?



**Amy Gates,
President, Frontera**

We are growers, but we are also much more. We’ve got a transportation wing, we leverage technology, and we pride ourselves on our compliance department. After I joined the Produce Traceability Initiative (PTI) Board back in 2008, I realized how crucial it was for us to get to the front of the food safety and traceability side, long before it was required. These are just a few of the aspects that make up who we are and what we provide. It’s not just produce, it’s a full-service offering, and by adding or taking away one word, a whole dynamic was being dropped from our brand.

Yes, we do a cross-section of commodities with diverse growing and sourcing options, but that is far from all that we do, and we wanted our messaging to match that exciting modern approach we bring in addition to the produce we provide.

MDC: Choosing to remove that one word makes even the smallest element seem like a huge decision. On that note, I am big into geometric shapes and would love to know more about how the hexagon you’ve incorporated on your website meets the tech-focused, ag-rooted approach of the new brand.

AG: This was a pattern Misty Ysasi, our Vice President of Operations, brought to me. In my mind, this design encompasses our message of both service and solutions. What sets Frontera apart is streamlining assets, one-on-one communication, and technology. It’s being able to be a compact business that increases volume because we’ve successfully leveraged technology to make sure that we and those we partner with are growing.

The hexagon gives a clean, edgy look that still presents the circular fashion of our business bringing all points together. That spirit carried through when Misty brought the concept to me and called it “the honeycomb,” immediately associating it with a hive and the work and growth that entails. Everybody invests a lot in the root system and the grassroots imagery, which of course makes sense. For us, the hexagon has a similar approach

of interconnectedness with a technology spin, still a part of nature but in a more atomic system. We’ve had our hands in the ground for 25-plus years, which is a wonderful part of our core, but we also have our eyes on the future.

MDC: Can you tell me a bit more, Amy, about starting your produce career on the software side and how it has helped shape Frontera’s unique direction?

AG: I am living proof that anyone can appreciate and learn the value of technology. I found a passion for it because I love the ability to streamline without adding more dollars. It has become an instrumental piece of any business, my team included, and is an added aspect in the advantage of maximized resources. I was lucky to join Famous Software at the perfect time to get a solid crash course, building that foundation that I work from now.

Something to remember, too, is that technology is a continuing education. You have to want to keep learning. It is changing all the time. New problems are coming up, along with new solutions to solve them, and it doesn’t have to be at the cost of the human element—in fact, we have seen our human element



“We need people to challenge us, challenge our thought processes, and my team challenges each other to think about things in new ways.”

**Amy Gates,
President, Frontera**



strengthen. Nothing will take that away. The human spirit and integrity are things artificial intelligence isn't going to mimic for you, but you can absolutely leverage it with a small, awesome team to propel your business and keep your overhead at bay.

MDC: On that note, "solutions" imply challenges. How does Frontera navigate issues presented in the industry, even helping to change the narrative of those issues?

AG: In all honesty, everyone in the produce industry has seen hardship, right? I don't have to call out any single event; we all have one. I had mine and it took up five years of my life in the aftermath. It's finding a way to merge these aspects that allow you to streamline your supply chain and offer savings, which is what we're all in business for. I work to be an asset to my partners on the downstream side and on the upstream side, all the while trying to offer the best product that we can and making sure we have a number of backgrounds to bring ideas others might not have had. The diversity of my team, with various socioeconomic, academic, and other personal experiences, ensure every possibility is explored.

"...We offer one-on-one communication. Frontera is not a complex with 19 Senior Vice Presidents of several divisions of an occupation. You're talking to the owners and our key decision-makers."

MDC: And that diversity is far from the only thing to make the company different. You say that Frontera is a one-size-fits-all approach. Can you elaborate on what that means?

AG: This goes back to what I have been working to define since becoming President: What category do we fall into? In addition to providing high-quality produce, we're offering customers the same services that a huge corporation could offer, from ASN notifications, interacting with regard to invoice shipment, event ship notices, digital payments, food safety, and everything in between. Then, we offer one-on-one communication. Frontera is not a complex with 19 Senior Vice Presidents of several divisions of an occupation. You're talking to the owners and our key decision-makers. So, that gives you that same level of real customer service that is the joy of working with a small team, coupled with the same solutions that a big multinational can provide. That's where the tech piece comes in: Blockchain, PTI, and other such "innovations" are concepts often at the forefront of our business. That's what sets us apart from any other grower/importer/shipper—anyone working with us is getting the best of both worlds.

In the end, we've all had our share of challenges, and we have chosen to make sure some good arises from those. In that space, we find solutions.

MDC: I love the unique perspective that diversity is intertwined with your solutions-based approach. Could you share more about how that plays out?

AG: Actually, I would go even further than saying it's intertwined—it's integral to solutions. Frontera's diversity, I think, is pretty unique and allows for a different thought process to enter the conversation, bringing lots of different elements to the table. I'm all about promoting from within, and I truly value a variety of opinions. I don't want a room filled with people that think exactly the same way I do, because what good is that?

We need people to challenge us, challenge our thought processes, and my team challenges each other to think about things in new ways. That has really helped drive the dynamic of this servicing solution. I've got folks that come from all different backgrounds, with a spectrum of beliefs and vantage points. And my job is to make sure everybody knows they each have an equal voice at this company. Each person has to be able to present an idea or a concept, and understand those lines of communication openly. Everybody comes to the table with an equal seat.

MDC: A honeycomb-shaped table?

AG: Exactly. Everyone has a purpose in the company sitting at our honeycomb-shaped table.

As an industry of earth, it is natural for brands to focus on the roots that branch out to bring forth the fruits—and vegetables—of our labor. Not wanting to sever that focus, but look beyond it, has brought the Frontera brand and the people behind it, to a different system—one even more atomic than agriculture.

The universe is made of fractal patterns, and these two images are not opposing sides of that design. They are echoes of it and of each other, intricately illustrating one core conviction: We are all connected. 





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BRUSSELS SNACK CHAT SPROUTS

The fall season may elicit images of orange leaves and pumpkins for many, but my heart flies to roasted Brussels sprouts straight from the oven. As the ever-versatile cruciferous veg continues to take center stage in creative table spreads, what are the best ways to maximize the season and drive this category? Some of our industry friends burned to share their favorites, and the gold they're spreading is sure to draw consumers in droves...



DAVID HEWITT

Director of Sales, 4Earth Farms™

“Consumers continue to have a love affair with Brussels sprouts, and it’s no wonder given the number of creative recipes and styles of preparation. They are delicious, versatile, and no longer that same vegetable we grew up with. With year-round production in multiple regions, we now sell nearly as many Brussels sprouts in the summer months as we do in the winter. In addition, we now have the in-house capability to process halved and shaved sprouts as well as Brussels leaves.”



MONICA CORDERO

Sales Manager, Gold Coast Packing

“Brussels sprouts have become a very trendy and versatile vegetable. They are available year-round allowing access to a tasty and healthy superfood. The popularity and growth have also made it easier to find fun recipes to try at home. As a mom of three, it is important that I provide nutritious vegetables for my children daily.

The fact that they are versatile allows me to reintroduce them to my children in various ways, such as a side dish or as an ingredient in a salad! One of my favorite dishes is Brussels sprouts sautéed with onion and bacon!”



DIANA MCCLEAN

Senior Director of Marketing, Ocean Mist® Farms

“Brussels sprouts are a darling of the dinner plate with so many delicious ways to enjoy them! We grow Brussels sprouts year-round, with the fall and winter holiday eating occasions driving higher demand. The Season & Steam value-added product line has become a year-round favorite for its quick prep times, easy flavor personalization, and the gentle steam in the microwave feature.

My favorite quick dish is using one of our Season & Steam packs to start and then either finishing them off by sautéing in a cast-iron skillet and popping them under the broiler, tossing them on the BBQ when we are cooking al fresco, or making them the center of the plate on top of farro with a simple protein on top. I’m a master at one bowl dinners, and this is the best.”



DINO CANCELLIERI JR.

General Partner, Veg-Fresh Farms

“Growing up, I was not a fan of ‘piccoli cavoli,’ which is what my Italian grandmother called them. Now, Brussels sprouts are one of my favorite side dishes. My wife is Canadian and a great cook, and she makes sure that Brussels sprouts make an appearance every year when we celebrate Canadian Thanksgiving. I love that they are a superfood but can be dressed up to taste more savory and rich—she always adds some bacon and bread crumbs when she makes them. The health benefits of Brussels sprouts are a great selling point for health-conscious consumers. At Veg-Fresh Farms, we are seeing a lot of promotable volume from October through December. We are proud to say that our Brussels sprouts program is California-grown during this time of year.”



KATIE HARRELD

Sales Manager/Brussels Sprouts Commodity Manager,
Ippolito International

“This fall, value-added Brussels sprouts continue to enjoy ‘new kid on the block’ status! And to nobody’s surprise, consumers want fool-proof ways to add this veg to their repertoire. As the category expands, the best way to capitalize on that growth is to offer both bulk and value-added. Our 1 lb washed-and-ready-to-cook Brussels sprouts package makes it easy with step-by-step instructions. Fall is the season for roasting, and our Brussels sprouts are great in the oven or can even be microwaved. It is also the time to offer your customers Brussels sprouts stalks, and in a big way! Consumers want to enjoy a festive holiday table, and Brussels-on-the-stalk is an easy way to make a statement during the fall and winter seasons.”



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» The IF List « Stephanie Hilton

Marketing and Business Development, Tom Lange Company

With **Jordan Okumura**



One of the first times I met Stephanie Hilton, we were hopping over modular concrete road work barriers trying to find our way out of Disney World in Orlando, Florida. So, in other words, Stephanie is both a problem solver and an adventurer with a strong will to get things done and keep the ball rolling. I can't help but smile when I think of the occasion, as well as the passionate produce advocate I have had the pleasure to get to know these past few years. Stephanie is full of surprises and, once again, she does not disappoint as she takes us down an exciting path that our *IF List* has paved for her in this 53rd issue of *The Snack Magazine*...

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

Audrey Hepburn: I loved her style and grace.

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

The 1950s. It was a time of great change, but still with a touch of innocence.

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

Guacamole, tacos, and my grandmother's chocolate pie.

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

Strawberries, of course. Strawberries changed my life, provided the opportunity where I met my husband, and brought me the dearest friends anyone could ever ask for.

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

I could not have ever imagined myself in this industry. My background was in computer science, which is where I expected to forge a career, but thank heavens, that did not happen.

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

My husband, a short band radio with unlimited battery power, and a couple of cases of great wine.

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

An otter. They always seem so carefree, happy, and to completely enjoy their life.

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

Who Knew?

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

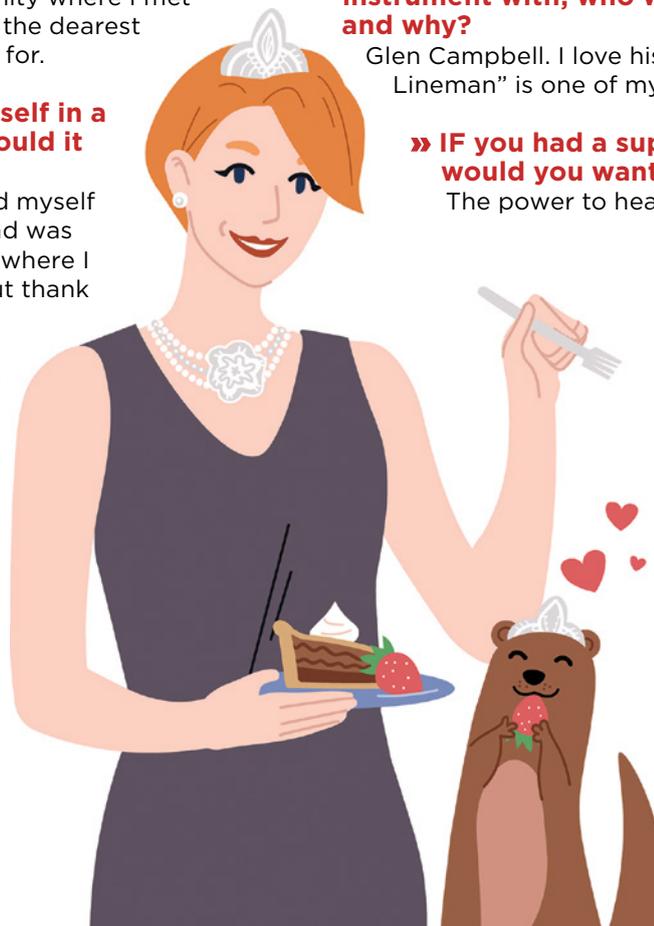
My memory, so I would not forget how small things can mean so much and I wouldn't forget to appreciate every minute of every day.

» **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?**

Glen Campbell. I love his voice and "Wichita Lineman" is one of my favorite songs.

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

The power to heal. 🍷



WTF DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

Mim's Famous Sweet Potatoes

?



STUFFED SWEET POTATOES WITH CHICKPEAS AND ASPARAGUS

INGREDIENTS

- 4 medium-large** Mim's Famous Sweet Potatoes, washed
- 1 cup** loosely packed arugula
- 2 tbsp** extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 (16 oz) can** chickpeas, rinsed, drained, and patted dry
- ½ tsp** salt
- ½ tsp** cumin
- ½ tsp** chili powder
- ½ lb** Progressive Farms asparagus spears, trimmed

DRESSING

- 2 tbsp** tahini paste
- 2 tbsp** lemon juice
- 2 tbsp** water
- 2 tsp** maple syrup
- ¼ tsp** salt
- ¼ tsp** black pepper

Prep Time: 10 min
Cook Time: 1 hr
Servings: 4

Mim's
FAMOUS SWEET POTATOES

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat the oven to 400° F.
- 2 Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Prick the sweet potatoes all over with a fork and then place them on the baking sheet. Bake for 50–60 minutes, or until the sweet potatoes are soft enough to be easily pierced with a knife. Remove and set aside, covered to keep warm.
- 3 In a bowl, mix chickpeas, 1 tbsp olive oil, salt, cumin, and chili powder. Transfer the coated chickpeas to a rimmed baking sheet and roast for 20 minutes, stirring them once half way through cooking time. Remove and set aside.
- 4 Next, on a rimmed baking sheet, toss the asparagus with 1 tbsp olive oil, salt, and black pepper. Place in the oven and roast for 10 minutes. Remove and set aside.
- 5 Meanwhile, to make the dressing, add all of the ingredients in a small bowl or jar. Mix until well combined and smooth.
- 6 When serving, butterfly cut the sweet potatoes. Gently pull them apart to create space in the center. Drizzle about 1 tbsp of the dressing inside each of the sweet potatoes, then stuff with the arugula, asparagus, and chickpeas. Drizzle with the remaining dressing. Enjoy!

Note: Choose your favorite color of Mim's Famous Sweet Potatoes. Available in Orange, Purple, Plum, Red, White, and Medley

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

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Mim'sTM FAMOUS SWEET POTATOES



RED

PURPLE

MEDLEY

ORANGE

PLUM

WHITE

AVAILABLE VARIETIES



SOUTHERN SWEET POTATO PIE

Ingredients:

- 1 lb Mim's Famous Orange Sweet Potatoes
- 1/4 cup butter softened
- 14 oz (Eagle Brand) Sweetened Condensed Milk
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground nutmeg
- 2 cups sugar
- 2 large eggs beaten
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 unbaked pie shell (9-inch standard)

Instructions:

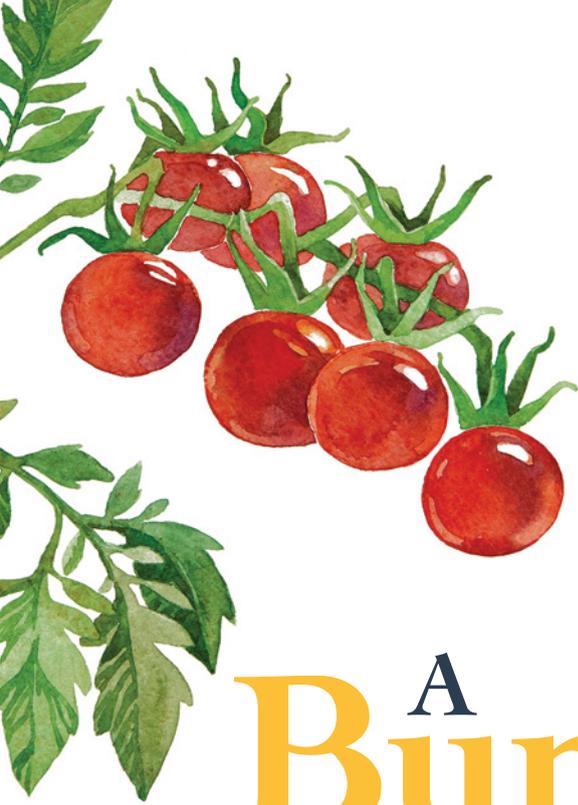
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Boil potatoes whole in skin for 40-50 minutes until soft.
3. Peel off potato skin while hot, use an electric mixer and beat the mashed sweet potatoes and butter in a medium-size bowl until the mixture is smooth.
4. Add the sweetened condensed milk, cinnamon, nutmeg, sugar, eggs, and vanilla extract, mix well.
5. Pour sweet potato mixture into the pie crust. Place pie on a baking sheet and bake for 40 minutes, or until the crust is golden brown and the pie has set.
6. Cool and serve.



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A Bumble Bee's Perspective

On the Growth of Mucci Farms

By Anne Allen



I became a member of my community garden only recently. My hands more often than not bear the brunt of hard work, of lingering soil in between the lines of my palm. An everlasting smell of lavender and dirt follows me when I leave my plot of earth—even the few scant hours I spend there have the ability to transform me utterly.

It's here that I finally understand the care within our industry beyond the abstract. It's an indomitable trait that fuels the expansion plans of operations like Mucci Farms. It's boundless energy wrapped into something of the earth; and when it touches your hand, there's no going back.

As I write this, it's still hot enough to feel the pen warming in my hand. Perhaps this is simply the muse at work, pouring inspiration through the ink. Or perhaps the muse is the bumble bee that trips lazily through the air next to me. All good things, it says, are born from patience and love.

Mucci Farms easily conforms to those characteristics. A power player within the fresh produce industry, the greenhouse grower has seen strategic warehouse operations, program expansions, and innovative investments within the last few years alone.

"We are extremely enthusiastic about being a driving force in the advancement and expansion of the greenhouse industry," Steve Zaccardi, Senior Director of Sales, shares with me. "Our growth has been centered on increasing our local and regional production to better serve our retail partners with greater



Steve Zaccardi
Senior Director of Sales,
Mucci Farms

efficiency so they can best serve consumers. Consumers across the globe prefer products and services produced close to home, so they can feel confident their buying decisions go toward strengthening their communities."

Both of these new warehouses support Mucci Farms' first Stateside project in Huron, Ohio, a 75-acre greenhouse and warehousing operation. Built in three 25-acre phases, the first phase has been exclusively harvesting tomatoes on-the-vine and servicing retailers. Phase 2's construction is complete, with harvesting just around the corner in November. To increase Mucci Farms' winter production, the entire project is equipped with grow lights, which allow for local production throughout the cold months.

This winter program, I come to learn, is made possible due to something called Lit Culture—a name I can't help but instantly love. The aggressive and strategic investments in grow lights—hence the moniker—allow for an annual installation of new lights. Through this, Mucci Farms is able to work with retailers for year-round local promotions.

"We have the largest Lit Culture acreage," Steve divulges. "Soon, all our Canadian cucumbers, both Seedless and Mini, will be transferring to full-time lit production. We've expanded

our Lit Culture program to include Canadian-grown snacking tomatoes, and we are trialing production for bell peppers—something that has never been done before.”

Over the last year, Mucci Farms has built upon this promise in San Antonio, Texas, and Romulus, Michigan. Expanding its warehouse distribution facilities in these two cities, the grower is furthering its strategic foothold across the United States.

“As with all of our new builds and expansions, both of these facilities are equipped with state-of-the-art automation and technology. They also serve as cross-docks to maximize efficiency. The Michigan warehouse will primarily service the Midwest and Northeast United States,” Gianni Mucci, the team’s Vice President of Operations, remarks. “This location will help us pack, repack, and distribute our full lineup to the region in a timely manner. It’s a great location for us as it allows us to avoid wait times at the border and quickly redirect product to several states.”



Gianni Mucci
Vice President of Operations,
Mucci Farms

The Texas warehouse, which stands at 54,000 square feet in comparison to Michigan’s 66,300, is strategically located to service the industry during the winter months. As a central location within the U.S.’s southern states, this facility is amidst a labor market rich with experience.

“This warehouse is equipped with a unique feature in the loading docks,” Gianni expresses. “With hot temperatures in Texas, our dock allows trucks to back into the warehouse in a manner that doesn’t break the cold chain. The doors actually open up right inside our pre-cooled loading dock, so we are able to preserve product quality as there is no temperature fluctuation transferring product from the truck to the warehouse.”

Another first for Mucci Farms includes its award-winning program, Smuccies™ Sweet Strawberries, which has been in

“We are extremely *enthusiastic* about being a *driving force* in the advancement and expansion of the *greenhouse industry.*”

- Steve Zaccardi, Senior Director of Sales, Mucci Farms



Mucci Farms has invested heavily in grow lights, which allow for local production throughout the winter



Mucci Farms' award-winning Smuccies™ Sweet Strawberries have seen overwhelming success since launching in 2016

“From *five to 25 years*, we don't just say we have a dedicated team — there's *proof in the pudding.*”



- Gianni Mucci, Vice President of Operations,
Mucci Farms

production since 2016. Producing in one of the largest indoor strawberry farms in North America, Steve tells me, has allowed for the success of this first-to-market program to be overwhelming. The original project was a 36-acre greenhouse/warehouse facility, which was built in three 12-acre phases over a three-year period. Demand made doubling that acreage a necessity, and construction on a single 36-acre phase is underway with a target completion date of 2021.

“Our greenhouse strawberry program has been extremely successful due to the flavor and quality that can only be delivered through local production and clean farming practices. Most cold climate regions in North America, particularly in the Northeast United States and Eastern Canada, get their strawberries from California and Florida. Having to account for thousands of travel miles, combined with the delicate nature

of strawberries, has a big impact on quality and taste,” Steve says. “Being able to grow strawberries in Ontario allows us to harvest product at a later stage of ripeness, which improves the flavor. This is a result of dramatically reduced travel miles to get product to market. Since we grow indoors in a controlled environment, our strawberry program serves retailers 365 days out of the year.”

As an extension of its berry program, Mucci Farms is also trialing blackberries. Additionally, the team is looking to expand into offerings that aren't traditionally grown in greenhouses, such as Zukies Mini Zucchini—mini zucchinis that can be eaten raw—and different varieties of melons.

“With an emphasis on sustainability, we are also very excited about new packaging,” Steve notes. “We've introduced Paper



With over 1,400 employees in the United States and Canada, Mucci Farms fortifies its operations with experts in multiple fields

Top Seal, which makes our existing sustainable pack entirely recyclable.”

But like my humble home garden, expansion of this magnitude requires fortification, an infrastructure of worker bees that see the beginning of greatness through to the finale. Luckily for Mucci Farms, greatness comes in spades.

“Our team has grown to over 1,400 employees in Canada and the United States,” Gianni comments with pride. “Our employee appreciation event is an annual opportunity to reward and recognize hundreds of team members who cross milestones for years of service. From five to 25 years, we don’t just say we have a dedicated team—there’s proof in the pudding. That has proven to be critical to our success as years of service means years of experience. Retailers can count on us to be true experts.”

A story told in 2020 would be remiss in omitting COVID-19 and the enduring legacy it has etched into our industry. The



new circumstances have, in many ways, forced our hands and made us adapt more quickly than we might have liked. Mucci Farms though, Gianni expresses, was ready to tackle the challenge.

“It certainly presented new challenges that 100 percent of businesses across the world had no reference for in terms of how to deal with it. Over the past several months, our team has done a fantastic job of working with local governments and public health officials to maximize our ability to mitigate the spread. We have spared no expense for resources that ensure the health and safety of our team and, throughout this

situation, our team has pulled through and delivered for our customers,” he imparts.

The bright side of events like these can be difficult to see, especially in the thick of adaptation. But Mucci Farms, once again, has managed to see the forest for the trees—or the lettuce for the greens.



Ajit Saxena
Public Relations and
Digital Marketing
Manager,
Mucci Farms

“Everyone being online has sped up the industry’s transition into a more digital-based environment, and as a result, we have focused on developing our digital strategy while also expanding our reach,” Ajit Saxena, Public Relations and Digital Marketing Manager, expresses. “We recently launched our ‘Spill the Greens’ podcast, which features various Team Mucci experts discussing a wide variety of relevant topics from how greenhouse farming works

to issues like sustainability. The educational component of this effort seeks to give retail staff more information for their consumers, as well as consumers looking to learn more about greenhouse farming. With a lack of information in the public space regarding this method of growing, we hope it will assist in expanding the canvas for greenhouse-grown fruits and vegetables.”

It’s the connectivity between my own experiences and the powerhouse that is Mucci Farms which briefly overwhelms me. Each is a labor of love, and nothing the universe throws in our way can stop us from tending to the Earth.

The bee circles my workspace again, lands on the arm of my chair, and rests. Inspiration, you see, is hard work. 

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▶ MY FAVORITE THINGS ◀

LAURA HASTIE

Marketing and Public Relations, Independent Consultant

With **Chandler James**

When Laura Hastie isn't charting the course for an industry-leading marketing campaign, there are a handful of personal favorites that she always returns to. From spoiling her fur children to taking a beat for her own peace of mind, love and compassion are two qualities at Laura's core. Take a peek to find out all that the fresh produce advocate does to unwind—in the midst of a global pandemic and otherwise...

1 After seven years, we got engaged this summer and are planning for a 2021 wedding!

2 We have three fur babies, including our new "quarantine pup," Chief!

3 My happy place.

4 Practicing over the past two years has improved my mental and physical health.

5 This is my favorite way to enjoy a good view and get some exercise.

6 My fondest memories are in the kitchen with Grandma. Taco night is a favorite!

7 From business/entrepreneurship to health and wellness. "MOOD" and "Absolutely Not" are my latest!

8 My go-to cocktail. I perfected the recipe during shelter-in-place!

9 My favorite way to unwind is in the tub with a face mask and candle.

LAURA HASTIE
marketing + pr

- 1** My Fiancé
- 2** My Fur Babies
- 3** Lake Tahoe, California
- 4** Pilates
- 5** Hiking
- 6** My Grandma's Cooking
- 7** Podcasts
- 8** Skinny Jalapeño Margaritas
- 9** R&R

NEW!

RAINBOW *Carrot Chips*



Convenience and time-saving options are key in produce snacking, with four in ten shoppers looking for snack-sized fruits and vegetables. Cal-Organic Farms® Rainbow Carrot Chips are naturally low-calorie, fat-free, and packed with nutrients to match their eye-catching colors.

Source: Food Marketing Institute, The Power of Produce 2019



Rewriting HISTORIES

BY MELISSA DE LEON CHAVEZ

Tales of old made new is a magic to strive for with every keystroke and pen-scratch. To recreate the gravity that pulls a story to the heights of myth can polish a shining fossil of words that does not just give us a view of what was, but what can be. If we take care enough, we can even see some of ourselves within its reflection.

One of the oldest of trades is to farm, and while some methods have been reshaped, the act of putting seed to soil is one that hands across time have practiced. As ancient treasures find a contemporary polish in today's desire to reconnect to the past, modern mythology has hit the produce industry.

“Despite a long eating history, dates have not been considered sexy in modern times, so we are making them sexy,” Robert Dobrzanski shares as we dig into how his company, Atlas Produce, first sought to make the ancient fruit sleek and sought-after. “We are seeing a two-fold success: The date category is growing as it becomes more and more familiar, while our brand continues to capture increasing attention. The Fresh Energy™ approach is bold, eye-catching, and gaining momentum as we ride that rising wave of consumers seeking to be healthy.”



ROBERT DOBRZANSKI
FOUNDER,
ATLAS PRODUCE

Like Neil Gaiman's *American Gods* or Madeline Miller's *The Song of Achilles*, Fresh Energy by Atlas Produce shines a new light on



products that have withstood the test of time but might have otherwise been a little dusted in their public perception.

“We are establishing a brand retailers can create a destination around in the store, targeting anyone looking for an alternative to a processed power bar,” Robert tells me as we settle in.

His initial foray into dates, and the inspiration for the rising Fresh Energy brand, was to turn the category on its head. Now, doing so successfully has laid the groundwork for Robert and his team to double down on the bets they’ve made with an organic counterpart, upping the count of the Fresh Energy Dates line two-fold.

“We’ve had such strong growth in organics. We saw that we had the resources and the demand to expand on the Date Rolls, Chopped Dates, Deglets, and the rest of our date products to provide more opportunities and offerings to our customers,” Robert says. “So now, our entire conventional line is mirrored with an organic line.”

I won’t say that Fresh Energy conventional dates, like Narcissus, will obsessively gaze at their organic reflections. It’s far more likely consumers will be the ones doing the staring, drawn to the bright colors of Fresh Energy—brilliant turquoise, deep purple, and the like—hooked by the one final piece of the puzzle: organic.

And if seeing a 50 percent increase to its SKUs isn’t enough, Fresh Energy is taking on an all-new category to further demonstrate its Midas-handed brand’s power.

“Atlas Produce has always helped to provide figs of all kinds—dried figs, California White figs, and Black figs. Now, we are taking the expertise we gathered and have adapted that to our brand to bring a whole new category to the line consumers recognize and have come to trust,” Robert tells me.

Newly revealed, Fresh Energy Figs offer Golden, Black Mission, diced Mission, organic Mission, and organic California figs, with total marketplace

"THE FRESH ENERGY™ APPROACH IS BOLD, EYE-CATCHING, AND GAINING MOMENTUM AS WE RIDE THAT RISING WAVE OF CONSUMERS SEEKING TO BE HEALTHY."

Robert Dobrzanski,

FOUNDER, ATLAS PRODUCE





customization to the retailer. The new frontier for Fresh Energy is yet another fruit whose long history is worth dusting off. This, I think, is a company that shares my fascination with ensuring history is not only remembered, but valued.

Instead of tattered stories, though, Robert's passion lies with turning produce underdogs into the modern gods (read: superfoods) of today.

"I think retailers realize that these offerings are strong, shelf-stable options that are easy to handle," Robert comments when I make my observations. "By encouraging larger displays and ensuring strategic product placement in the store, they are making important moves to set the category up for success. I also think the consumers are becoming more aware of the health benefits of dates, figs, and other 'exotic' categories."

Ensuring those strengths are known in an aesthetically pleasing and convenient way, Robert explains, is key in seeing this success continue year over year.

"Our labeling calls out a lot of information to reach the consumer,

**"WE ARE ESTABLISHING A BRAND
RETAILERS CAN CREATE A
DESTINATION AROUND IN THE
STORE, TARGETING ANYONE
LOOKING FOR AN ALTERNATIVE TO A
PROCESSED POWER BAR."**

communicating all that they are looking for without being too busy. In turn, placing these products next to those with similar benefits is a huge contributor," Robert tells me. "Placing dates next to bananas, for example, is perfect because people seeking bananas are looking for potassium. They can then see how to get that potassium while adding more variety to their diet."

It doesn't hurt, either, that Atlas ensures its line reaches both longtime date lovers

and those who don't know they love them yet, offering classic conventional and organic Medjools for the former and rolling some offerings in tasty additions like coconut or nuts for the latter.

Will the figs get this same tasty treatment? Robert says we are in for quite a few surprises when it comes to the Fresh Energy line, including, but not limited to, its newest official addition.

"There's still so much in the works, both

product-wise and with packaging. We are experimenting with a few more additions that will roll out soon, but not before we are absolutely positive that they will deliver in the way both buyers and consumers have come to expect from our brand,” Robert shares.

For the most part, he plays this close to the vest, giving me just one small hint of what is going on in research and development within the depths of Atlas Produce.

“As growers and farmers, we’ve always been sustainable because if we aren’t, then we can’t continue to grow. Likewise, we’ve changed some of our packaging to more sustainable and recycled materials for the actual clamshell. Soon, our dates will be in 100 percent recyclable packaging. That is just the tip of the iceberg for what we have under our hat at the moment,” Robert teases. “We’re just looking at ways to use less materials, yet still provide eye-catching packaging. And there will be much more soon enough, I can assure you.”

Ancient ways have gripped the modern world—a fresh spin dusts off our ancestors’ wisdom, making it glisten. No marketplace does this more than the good-for-you corner, which celebrates the ways of old as the secret to health and wellness.

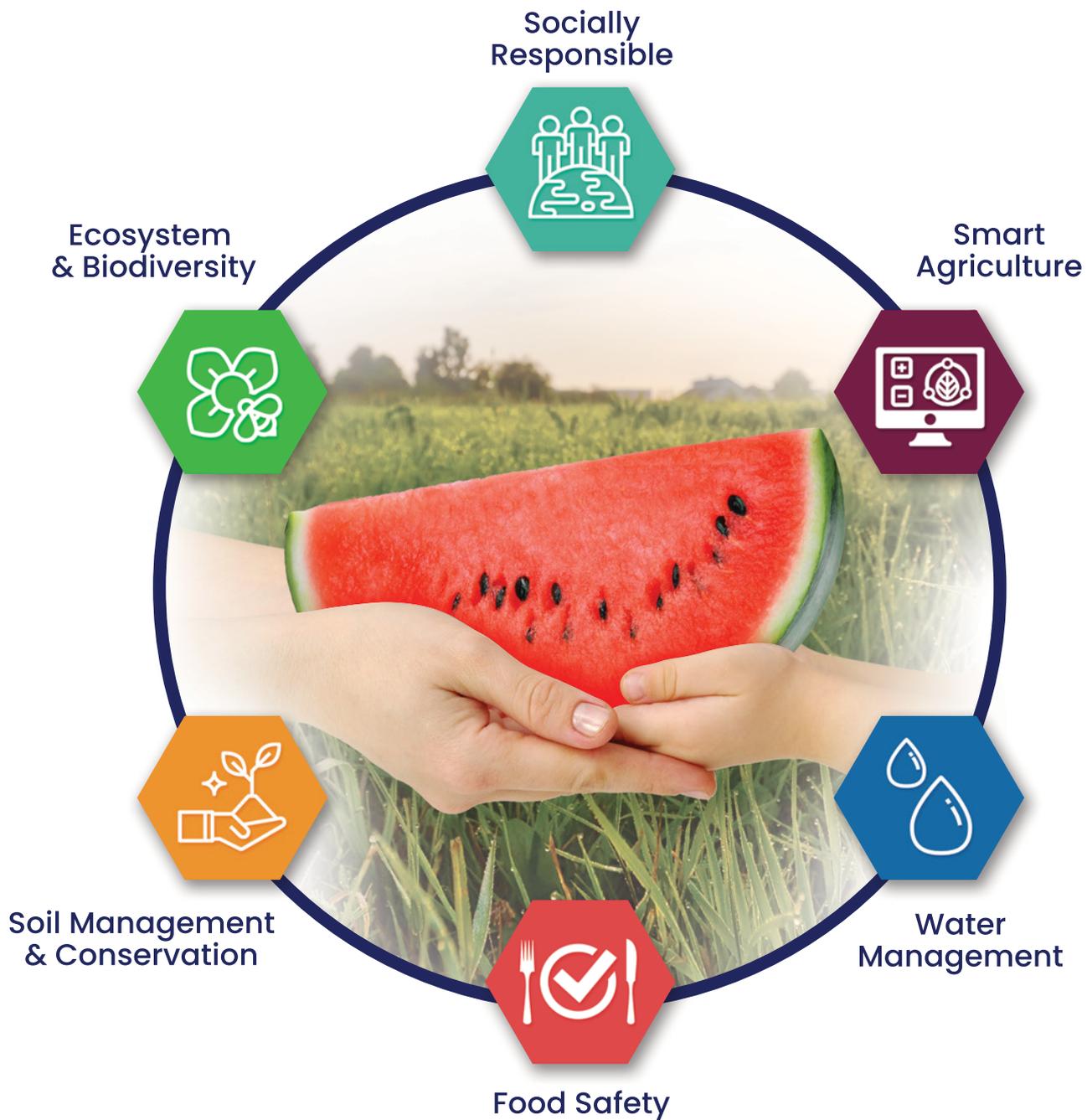
Dates and figs have been around longer than most of our methodologies, and indeed all of our marketing approaches, yet they are seeing new life that does more than make them attractive to the modern consumer—an enchantment they once held in times when stories were the certitude of the world around us and everyday items held magic within them.

An air of fresh energy. 

“...WE ARE TAKING THE EXPERTISE WE GATHERED AND HAVE ADAPTED THAT TO OUR BRAND TO BRING A WHOLE NEW CATEGORY TO THE LINE CONSUMERS RECOGNIZE AND HAVE COME TO TRUST.”



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A Closer Look at EarthFresh 100 Percent Compostable Paper Bags

UP CLOSE

By Lilian Diep

In a game of Rock-Paper-Scissors, paper is my go-to choice. It may be because people usually choose rock, but I have always leaned toward the paper route in life, especially when it comes to grocery shopping.

EarthFresh has thrown its own hand in the game with a new bag look and an aesthetic twist with its latest release—a 100 percent compostable paper packaging option for its potatoes.

With the category already a staple product in most baskets and carts, EarthFresh is looking to drive demand even further. Shoppers are always looking for something convenient, healthy, and mindful. This new format is the embodiment of all those needs with the added bonus of organic appeal. If the rustic green and brown didn't elicit an image of nature, the bold organic wording will surely drive consumers to grab the bags straight from the shelves.

The innovative producer is rolling out this sustainable alternative for its complete product line of organic and conventional potatoes, and produce praisers and sustainability supporters will find themselves reaching for this new packaging. Available in all pack sizes, including baby potatoes in 1 lb and 1.5 lb bags and A- and B-sized potatoes in 3, 5, and 10 lb bags, the new packaging requires less carbon to manufacture and returns nutrients back to the Earth.

EarthFresh has shown its hand in the green game, and everybody who partakes leaves a winner. 🍅



BRANDING

A NEW ERA:



A Q&A with **Scott Mabs**,
Chief Executive Officer, Homegrown Organic Farms

By Chandler James

Isn't it fascinating to see trends evolve from generation to generation? Everything from fashion fads to eating experiences are touched by the hands of time, with high-end brands and health-forward, ethical grocery offerings taking precedent amongst the Millennial generation.

Not only do these consumers want to freshen up their looks, but they expect the imagery around them to be aesthetically equivalent. Enter the age of minimalist modernization. As Gens Y and Z garner more buying power and seek out those uniquely simplistic experiences, it is essential that fresh produce suppliers pivot their branding strategies. Homegrown Organic Farms, for example, has turned its attention to a new visual appeal in 2020, introducing a landmark rebrand that reinforces its presence as a leader in the organic sector.

Who better to delve into this strategic rebrand than Homegrown's Chief Executive Officer Scott Mabs? Self-proclaimed organic champions and fierce, fresh produce advocates, Scott and his team have set the pace for organic operators, and this monumental rebrand is only part of the equation.





Chandler James:

Scott, Homegrown Organic has always carried a trusted brand presence in the eyes of the consumer. What inspired you to rebrand at this time?

Scott Mabs, Chief Executive Officer, Homegrown Organic Farms:

Our brand has remained the same since we originally created the Homegrown Organic Farms label, which was about ten years ago. Since then, there's been a lot of growth for Homegrown and the organic industry as a whole. We've taken our expansion in stride, bringing in new items and launching new marketing tactics in tandem. After ten years of this, we needed to step back, reassess, and get everything in order to make sure we were communicating strategically to consumers through our packaging and our brand.

We're staying on top of visual trends that drive demand by creating more of a simplistic aesthetic that appeals to today's consumers. Our top priority was maintaining the hominess that we have long been known for, and I think our new branding accomplishes that. In doing so, we are moving forward with our key value propositions:



keeping a 100 percent organic, fresh-fruit focus, and leading with our expertise as a family- and farmer-owned company with a combined 300 years of organic experience.

CJ: When I look at your original and rebranded labels side by side, the differences I notice are extremely intriguing. How do these changes communicate the message you want to convey?

SM: Our logo's design is still very similar, with a cleaner and more modern-looking image and text. That, in addition to a minimalist theme incorporated in our brand image, will generate and accelerate sales at retail. This new look will trickle down to anything representative of our brand—such as marketing materials, packaging, and so forth. The essence of who we are and what the company stands for remains the same. Our tagline, "Always organic, always homegrown" is still oh-so clear and evident in what we do.

Our wholesale and retail partners have commented on how much they love our new look and how it truly speaks to the aesthetic we are aiming for, which is very on-point and on-trend right now.



CJ: Homegrown has invested heavily in this new era of consumers. In what ways have you maintained this critical self-awareness surrounding their shopping habits?

SM: There's always a new generation of consumers coming into the market. If you don't stay relevant to shoppers, you're missing out on an opportunity to show them who you are and engage with them in a real way. I think we have a very strong message because we are experts in organic exclusively, and we want consumers to recognize that this is our primary focus. The consumer in all of us makes purchasing decisions using our eyes, so we're bringing that visual element to the forefront of our strategy.

CJ: Organics have become a centerpiece in produce aisles everywhere. How has the brand been able to bob and weave in order to remain an industry leader in this space?

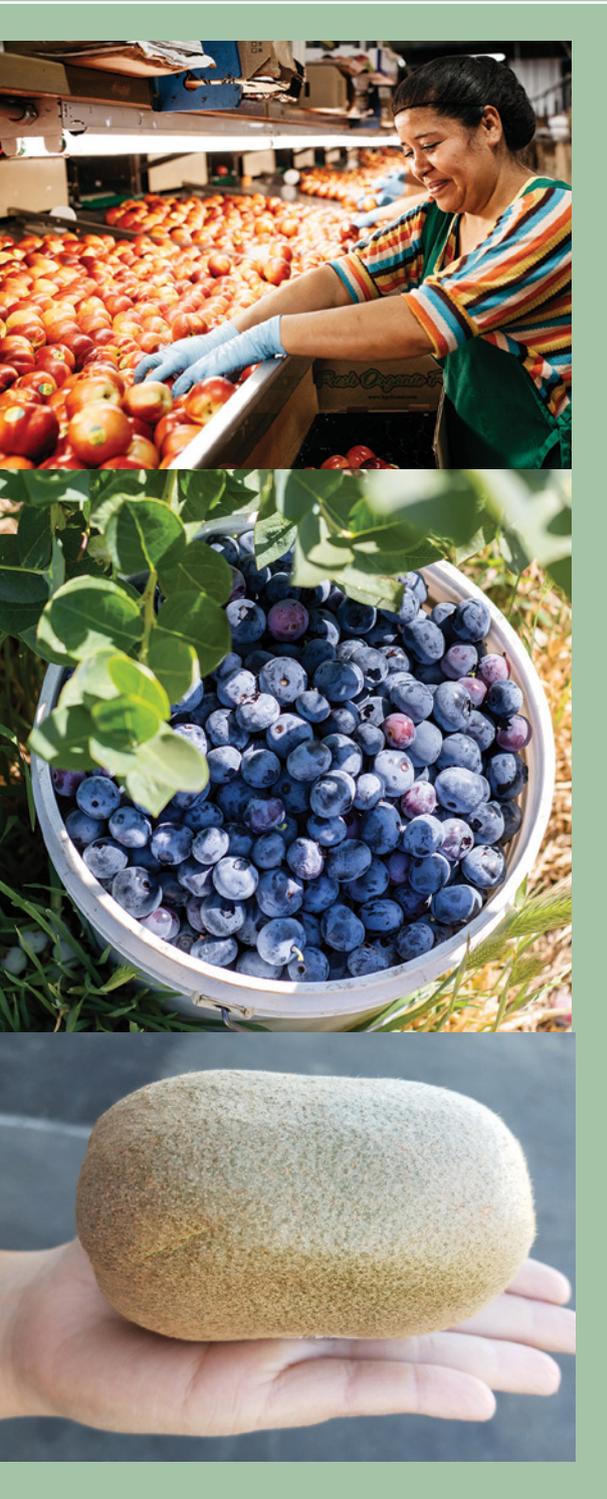
SM: Pretty much every major retailer is now working with organic products and has made them a key part of their produce department. We're seeing the availability and consumption of organics rise, and I think that will continue to look different as we walk into the future.

Organics experienced an incredibly high growth rate when they initially became mainstream—that trajectory is beginning to level off some. With that comes changes in the market and a look back at the reality of our grower returns. So, in a way, not only are we reevaluating Homegrown's image in the eyes of the consumer, but we are taking a closer look at how we can stay ahead of the rapid movement throughout the organics sector.



“If you don’t stay relevant to shoppers, you’re missing out on an opportunity to show them who you are and engage with them in a real way.”

- Scott Mabs, Chief Executive Officer, Homegrown Organic Farms



CJ: In addition to this revamp of your logo, Homegrown has recently rolled out multiple initiatives to support the company’s expansion. Can you speak to how this supports the new brand image you are pursuing?

SM: In May, we announced that we completed the Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) certification process for our California-grown organic stonefruit. We are proud to be the first in offering an EFI certified organic stonefruit program to the consumer. EFI facilitates cross-department collaboration and personal development: We are now at the forefront of systems improvement for the farm supply chain.

We launched three additional growth initiatives in June and July: We announced that our Oregon blueberry production has been officially Bee Better Certified™, and we rolled out a partnership with Valles del Sur to introduce a new organic Chilean blueberry import program. Lastly, we revealed an incredibly exciting addition to our portfolio, introducing a new jumbo kiwi variety. Adding this product to our organic lineup was a natural next step as we continue fulfilling our buyers’ organic fruit needs. We have remained on the cutting-edge of variety development, even in unique products such as kiwis.

All of this further exemplifies our commitment to bettering the brand. We are confident that these new additions to our label will bolster Homegrown’s presence on the shelf, both from a retailer and shopper perspective. We want to appeal to shoppers from a visual standpoint, but it’s also important that they have an extremely positive eating experience. In turn, we want our

products to become a staple in more households as these shoppers continue to make repeat purchases.

CJ: Rebrands such as this can’t happen overnight. When can we expect to see the new look across Homegrown’s entire portfolio?

SM: This transformation will take place over the next couple of months as our different commodities come in and we roll out our new packaging for each. We are a year-round program of organic, fresh fruit, so we’re taking it on a rolling basis from that standpoint.



Organics aren’t going anywhere, and Homegrown continues to ensure its place at the category’s helm. From this strategic rebrand to methodical moves across its fresh produce portfolio, the company’s growth continues to trend upward. And I, for one, believe that this is a trajectory worth keeping our eyes on.

As for the next generation’s brand preferences? We can’t say for sure, but I’m betting Homegrown Organic Farms’ fresh fruit will be in their kitchens. 



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WHAT'S IN A TOMATO?

A Q&A *with* Chris Miller,

Produce Director, MOM's Organic Market

By Anne Allen

The word simplicity evokes an immediate connection to fresh produce. How else could you describe a slice of tomato, generously sprinkled with salt, as its acidity and sweetness bloom on the tongue?

These are the notions that kickstart my conversation with Chris Miller, Produce Director for MOM's Organic Market. A bit of a produce and category chameleon, Chris brings a distinct and unequivocal passion to MOM's, one noted for its straightforward attention to detail. It's the little things, like our tangential discussion about the merits of a 12-dollar hothouse tomato, that highlight why simple is powerful.

Simplicity has long been the cornerstone of the organic grocer, whose operations were first established in 1987. Its approach to the fresh produce department is a study in clarity, in how letting fruits and vegetables speak for themselves undoubtedly creates a story more arresting than we could ever concoct.

In this vein, I will let Chris' words on MOM's mission, its alternative approach to cross-merchandising, and his own personal vision for 2020 take you away.

Q1

ANNE ALLEN:

Before we dive into MOM's approach to expansion and your understanding

of what 2020 has brought to the market, I want to know more about your career trajectory and how you've helped the company flourish in this organic space.



AA: With an expected 21-store count by the end of

Q2

2020, what are some of the key factors behind MOM's expansion in the retail space, and particularly in organic?

CM: It's been a relatively measured expansion over the last ten years. We've been through some quick growth spurts, but for the past three years, we've been sitting at a 19 store count in order to really hone in on our systems before we jumpstart the next phase of growth. That's been the strategy for us: tempered and measured. Our goal is a couple of new stores every year, if everything goes as planned. We're always looking at where we are and moving strategically forward from there.



Chris Miller,
Produce Director,
MOM's Organic Market

CHRIS MILLER: I started at MOM's Organic Market as a Produce Clerk just after I graduated college in 2010. At the time, we had four stores. Over the next couple of years, we began to grow as a company fairly significantly, and my position with MOM's grew as well. I went from Assistant Produce Manager to Produce Manager to Regional Produce Manager—when we had about ten stores or so—and then I took a bit of a sidewinder's trip back to managing product, because I couldn't imagine not working with producers and suppliers.

For the last six years or so, I was overseeing Category Management for produce, as well as category management for meat and seafood. In the past year, I've stepped into the Produce Director role. I am back to managing the people and product side of things, but I'm still heavily involved in category management. I got all of the fun stuff, is the way I like to look at it.

AA: Absolutely! You wear many hats.

CM: The finest hats at the haberdashery, if I may say so. Meat and seafood tie into produce in a lot of ways, insomuch that they each face a lot of the same challenges. It's been a really natural fit for me. Produce has been the cornerstone of my career at MOM's.

Q3

AA: No one could have predicted COVID-19 at the beginning of this year, but what—in addition—has been top-of-mind for you and MOM's during 2020?

CM: In the beginning of 2020 and up to now, MOM's has been focusing on what's at our core. That means focusing on organics, limited packaging whenever possible, and expanding our selection, while also staying true to ourselves. We don't have super large produce departments; instead, we focus on fresh deliveries and turning over product. We essentially reset our departments every single day. At any given time, we typically have roughly a day-and-a-half or so worth of inventory. This allows us to stay sharp, fresh, and dedicated to great customer service.

On the optimistic side of the 2020 coin, I feel like MOM's is seeing a lot of new customers, and the customers that are loyal to us are purchasing bigger carts—a trend that appears across the industry. People are getting back into their kitchens and really figuring out how to work with new fruits and vegetables and break out of their routines through experimentation. I've personally spent more time working in the produce departments since the outbreak of COVID-19, which has been awesome to do, once again interacting directly with customers with my Produce Clerk hat on.

As I've come back into this sort of role with customers, I've been getting a lot of 'What do I do with this?' sort of questions, which are the most fun to answer. It just goes to show that people are actively looking to experiment and learn new ways to play with fresh fruits and vegetables.

For the organic side of things, we don't always have the availability of conventional, so suggesting alternative options is of great help to shoppers. For example, if asparagus is out of season, we suggest broccolini.

We haven't increased our packaged items. In the produce world, we've largely stuck to what we're good at and our customers have been very receptive as we've stayed the course with our produce strategy.

AA: As a shopper, I know that my habits have changed drastically, from bulk buying to limited outings. How have you seen the consumer change during COVID-19 and beyond?

Q4

“Opportunity-wise, the goal is getting more people familiar with how to use fresh produce and the endless ways in which produce can be used. That's always an opportunity, no matter the situation.”

- Chris Miller,

Produce Director,
MOM's Organic Market

CM: We saw an uptick on packaged salads right at the beginning, but I wouldn't consider it a game-changer in terms of the bulk and loose side. We're selling a lot of ginger and citrus, garlic, and other items that help boost immunity. People are doubling down on purchasing healthy foods during a time when health is, unfortunately, uncertain.

Q5

AA: As you've weathered this particularly difficult year, what issues, concerns, or opportunities have you seen at retail?

CM: Opportunity-wise, the goal is getting more people familiar with how to use fresh produce and the endless ways in which produce can be used. That's always an opportunity, no matter the situation. A lot of people are working to crack the code on this, and we've tried many different tactics over the years, whether that's recipe cards or online posts. But, I think it always comes back to having awesome, passionate people in the department who thoroughly enjoy what they interact with every day, that can steer shoppers in the right direction. We're encouraging shoppers to try new things and play. That direct, one-on-one customer impact has always paid off for us.

As we've seen demand go through the roof for certain items, the industry as a whole has to ask: Where is the extra space within the

organic supply chain? Is there wiggle room around the edges, and how do we build a little bit more resilience into it for the next unexpected moment?

AA: Your approach to produce merchandising is known in the industry for its uncomplicated nature. Just how does MOM's go about designing its produce department?

Q6

CM: One of our tenets is having a lot of open space and allowing our shoppers to have a stress-free shopping oasis. That means we have wide aisles throughout the store, and we don't do any shippers, shelf-talkers, or signage. For the most part, we limit signage so that the products ultimately speak for themselves. That falls back into how we look at our produce departments: The produce is the highlight.

For the business that we do, we have a relatively small produce department, but it goes back to what I was originally saying: Our intent is not to stack it high and watch it fly. It's about being able to put our hands on everything and creating an environment where customers can shop with their eyes closed. Every piece of product is going to be something that we're proud they're able to take home. And having smaller departments really allow us to do that.

Q7

AA: What spurs the decision to forgo cross-merchandising? How does it differentiate you?

CM: This ties back into the stress-free shopping environment that we foster in the store. We are striving for simplicity.

Our Owner, Founder, and CEO, Scott Nash, is really passionate about just letting the produce shine. The goal has always been to give shoppers the feeling that they're walking into a farmers market stall. A farmers market isn't going to have croutons and lemon bottles sitting adjacent to it. Conventional wisdom would say that there are sales opportunities with marketing those items next to produce, and I'm sure there are, but when we step back, we think it's best to stay simple and be true to who we are and hope that leads to long-term loyalty. We know that these shoppers are grateful to shop in a department that's just produce, straight up.

Perhaps it's the passion that Chris infuses into his day-to-day, but by the time we've hopped off the phone, I can practically smell the sweet sharpness of tomatoes. After all, isn't that what we hope for in our shoppers? That they will be so enamored with the product itself that all it takes to drive them to purchase is to follow their nose?

For Chris and the MOM's Organic Market team, this hope is the everyday. 



MOM's Organic Market drives its fresh-forward vision through visual artistry, deeply passionate relationships, and a desire to build the consumer's basket in new and exciting ways

MUSHROOM TEA

By Melissa De Leon Chavez





As this category continues to expand its flavorful reach, I'm hoping the term *magic mushrooms* will soon gain the meaning it truly deserves instead of the nefarious one it currently carries. Because, at this point, it seems as if you could add *mushroom* to just about anything, and consumers will be on board.

The latest territorial takeover to cross my desk, nay, my virtual shopping cart, was mushroom teas.

To start, I love tea already. So, I was completely on board to order some—in the name of research, of course—out of sheer curiosity, as umami is not a flavor heavy in my tea cabinet.

Mushrooms are becoming increasingly available in this rising space, of which I can say there is a die-hard following that continues to grow. The versatility of tea options and occasions rivals that of wines and brandies, something all shopping generations are catching on to.

It turns out, too, that, like many other produce items of variety, mushrooms provide different flavor profiles to enhance the drinker's experience. The most popular seemed to be chais, with sweeter options showcasing Lion's Mane mushrooms and richer ones with Reishi mushrooms.

Celebrated with a history of being used for health benefits among various cultures for thousands of years, if you think yoga and Thai massage have gripped the West, just wait to see what this tasty trend does.

I, for one, will be watching over the rim of my absurdly large mug. And that's the tea. 🍄

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Sweet Potato



Is there anything sweeter than digging into a piping hot sweet potato? A classic staple that graces the dinner table in either salads, casseroles, or on its own, the sweet potato lends itself to enjoyment in a myriad of ways. Consumers clamor for the category and producers praise it, so why not take advantage of the season with this favorite that shines in fall? We could go on about the many ways to promote sweet potatoes, but we thought we would ask the growers who know them best...



Alexandra Rae Danell,

Marketing Manager,
Country Sweet Produce

"Growing up, my mom would make a sweet potato and marshmallow casserole for Thanksgiving. She used canned sweet potatoes, and that was really the only time of year I ate them. Now, I incorporate sweet potatoes into my diet regularly, and consumers are doing the same as they focus on self-care and seeking out healthy products that deliver functional benefits like boosting immunity. Sweet potatoes are a nutritious superfood, and consumers know it, as United States sweet potato consumption increased by 42 percent from 2000 to 2016. There are so many different ways to cook them, and I try new recipes year-round!"



Scott Leimkuhler,

Senior Vice President Sales and
Marketing, **Progressive Produce**

"This holiday season, we will be launching Mim's Famous Sweet Potatoes. Our new specialty sweet potato line will offer different varieties and flavor profiles, including the Beauregard Orange, Charleston Purple, Garnet Red, Bonita White, and Japanese varieties, plus a Classic Medley pack. Mim is the beloved grandmother of one of our Progressive team members, and besides being one of the best grandmothers ever, Mim is famous for serving a sweet potato dish at every meal. Whether baked, roasted, fried, or mashed, sweet potatoes are a simple and delicious way to celebrate family traditions that always taste like home."



Jeff Thomas,

Director of Marketing,
Scott Farms

"Sweet potatoes are a great compliment to many center-of-the-plate menu items. Adding color and flavor to enhance the dining experience whether in a restaurant or at home, there are so many creative ways to prepare and enjoy. Having a busy family schedule, one of my favorites to prepare at home is stuffed sweet potato skins. Roast a sweet potato, cut in half, then top with your favorites such as shredded chicken, cheese, bacon, or whatever you choose. It's a quick and easy meal or snack."

Rebecca Scott,

Grower Accounting and Marketing Director,
Nash Produce



“Sweet potatoes provide the best of both worlds—sweet and savory! Packed with several essential nutrients, they are the perfect addition, or main attraction, to any meal. Charming the produce aisle with various shape and size options, you can’t go wrong whichever way you decide to cook them! Demand for a healthy, budget-friendly, and versatile product is on the rise, and sweet potatoes are the perfect fit to satisfy any craving. Our locally grown potatoes raised under optimal conditions here in North Carolina leave taste buds ready for the next bite. Don’t believe me? Give them a try!”



Stephanie Cutaia,

Marketing Director,
EarthFresh

“Food trends that support the consumption of more healthful and colorful foods have continued to encourage sales of sweet potatoes in both the foodservice and retail marketplace. From sweet potato pie to sweet potato fries, this is one vegetable that has endless possibilities in the kitchen!”

Thanks to their sweet taste and vibrant orange color, sweet potatoes pair well with both sweet and savory dishes. With the steady rise in interest, we are excited to launch new, innovative products that support demand for this nutrient-dense veggie. Our 1 lb Steam & Go Baby Sweet Potatoes offer convenience consumers are looking for while our 1 and 1.5 lb Baby Sweet Potatoes offered in a BioBased mesh pack meets sustainable packaging demands. Both of these offerings are also available in organics, which is a rapidly growing segment in the marketplace.”

Eric Beck,
Marketing Director,
Wada Farms



“Sweet potatoes continue to be discovered as a new superfood for daily meal plans. It is good to see consumers find new and creative ways to eat sweet potatoes quite regularly, especially as social media provides a catalyst for discovering new mediums to enjoy this highly nutrient-rich vegetable. Our value-added microwavable sweet potatoes are perfect for this time of year because it brings both convenience and nutrition to the table within minutes.”



COMMITTED TO Continuous Improvement



California leafy greens farmers work together to review the latest scientific research and develop risk mitigation techniques for their farms. By engaging in LGMA subcommittees and technical working groups, members are able to continuously improve industry-wide standards for water, equipment sanitation; adjacent lands and soil inputs in a collective effort to prevent future outbreaks.

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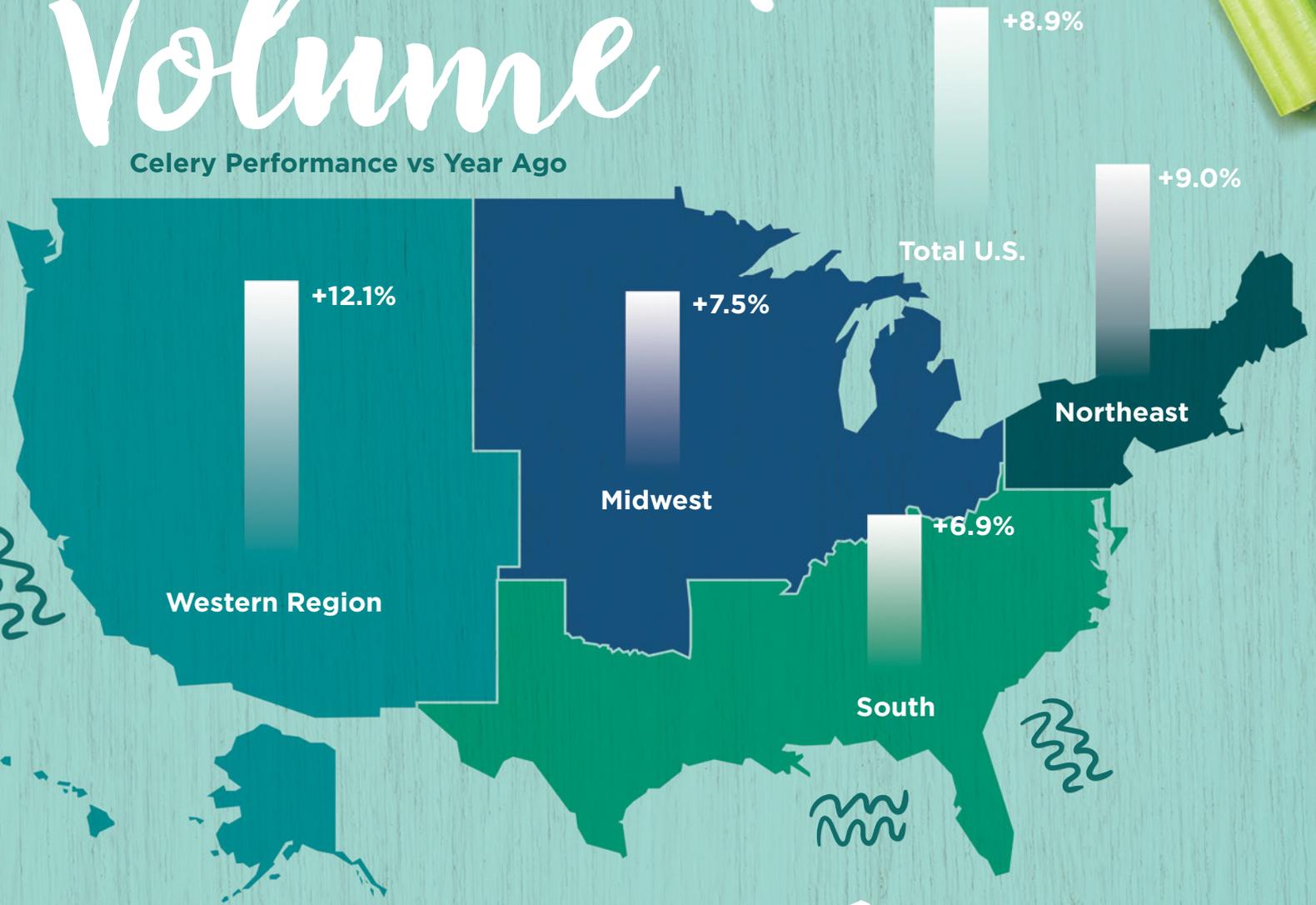


Celery Snapshot

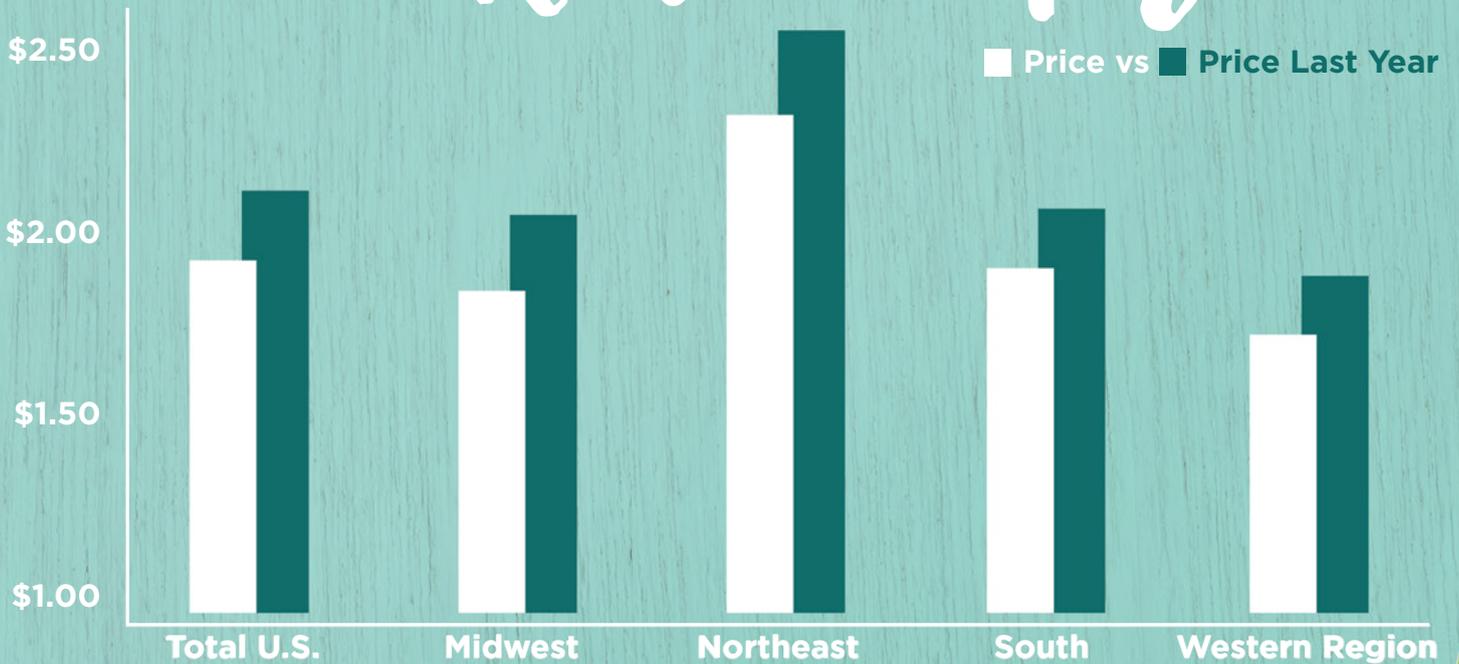
Texture and flavor are everything when it comes to cultivating the excitement behind today's fresh produce varieties, and one category that is evolving in both research and development and popularity is the celery destination on the plate and in the produce department. Crispier, crunchier textures are combined with fresh, clean flavors to impact the way that the consumer views food possibilities and takes "stalk" in what they put in their bodies. Category Partners, powered by Nielsen, joined us to share the latest on the celery craze and what trends we can see in packaging and buying behaviors...

Volume

Celery Performance vs Year Ago



Retail price



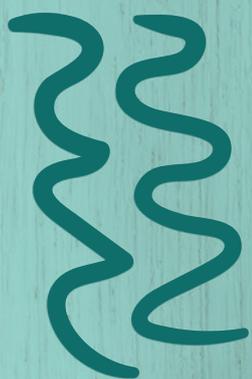


 The celery plant can grow over three feet tall and retains much of its nutritional value when steamed

 In the past, people used celery to treat problems like toothaches and arthritis

 Nibbling on celery stalks helps clean your teeth and mouth after a meal

 Celery contains vitamin C to help heal your cuts and wounds



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