

Bite-Sized Info for the Produce Industry

the

# SNACK

ISSUE 73 DEC 2022

THE 2022

# BESTIES AWARDS



Lifetime Achievement Award

Best Marketer to Work With

Annual *Snack* Storyteller Award

Best Merchandising Campaigns

Best Alternative Marketing Campaign

Best Social Media Culinary Artistry

Best Educational Videos

Best *Snack* Ad

Best Podcast

Best Social Media Campaigns

Best Rebrand

Best Behind-the-Scenes Champion

Best Email Ad Campaign

Best Philanthropic Initiatives

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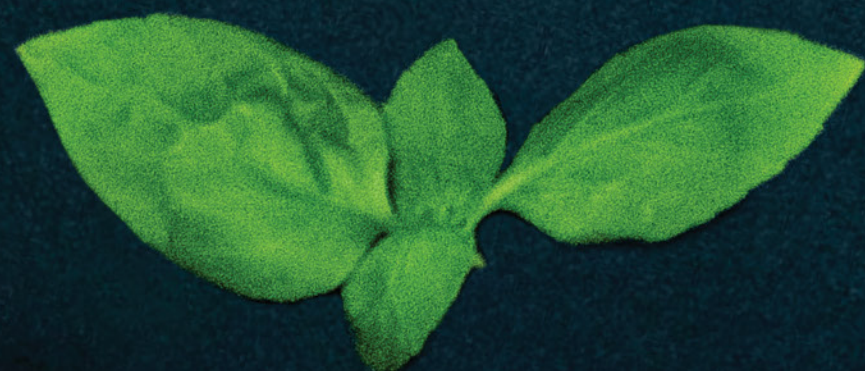
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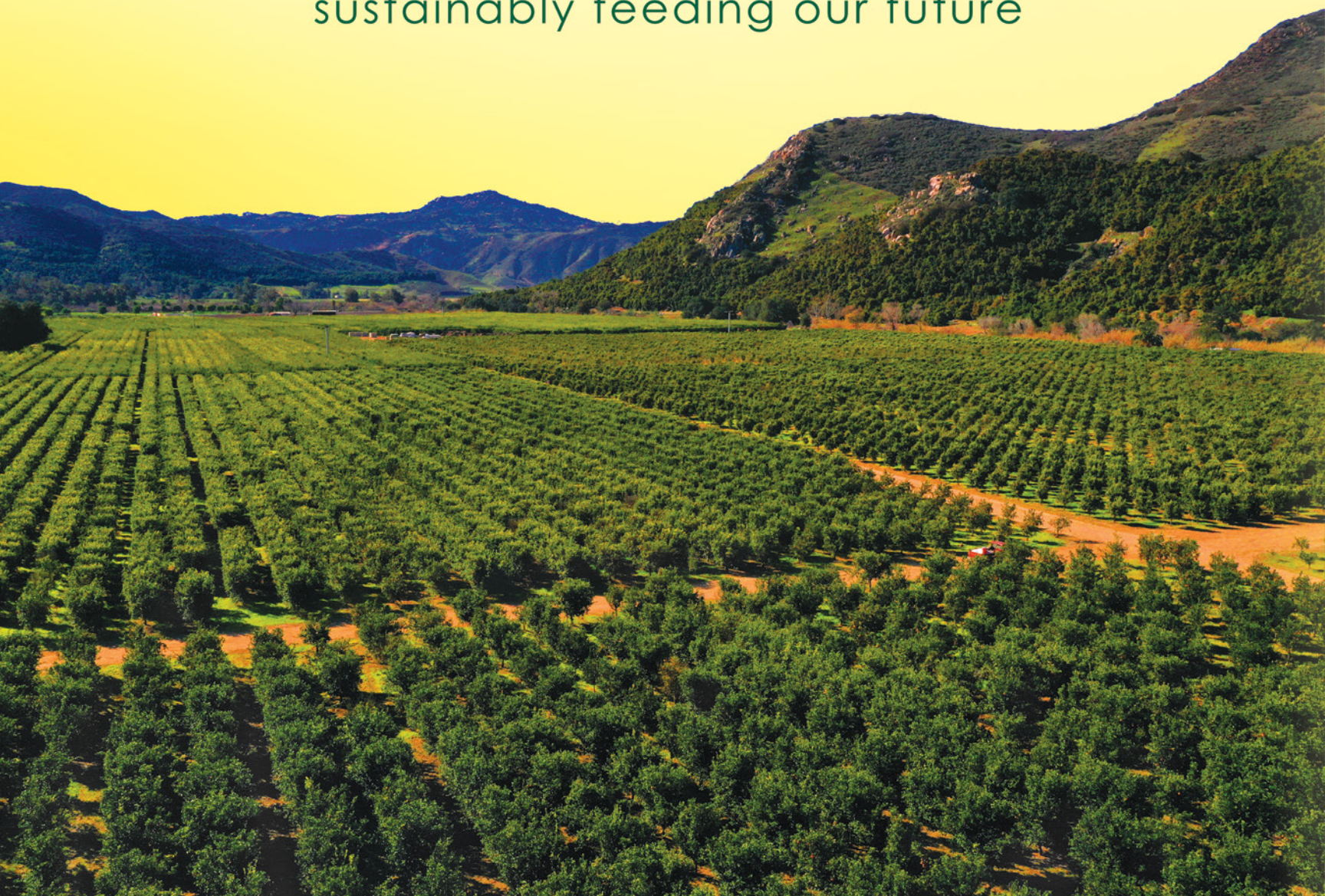


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# Seasonal Favorites

Two large, light-orange butternut squashes are positioned vertically, one on the left and one on the right. They have a bulbous base and a narrower neck with a small green stem at the top. The background is white, and the squashes are set against a dark teal base at the bottom.

Butternut squash are considered winter squash, but are never grown in the winter. They are cultivated in the summer and fall.

We purchase from the following regions throughout the year: Georgia, New Jersey, and Canada.

One of our top suppliers, Ippolito Canada, has been a partner for decades.

Approximately 25,000 are sold to our customers during the holiday season.

Most people refer to Butternut squash as a vegetable but it is actually a fruit.

**T**HE DAYS ARE LONG, AND THE YEARS ARE SHORT.

I often hear this phrase when parents refer to raising their children, but I think it has taken on a more inclusive meaning for us all over the course of the past few years.

In 2020, we talked about how wildly compressed and accelerated yet simultaneously lethargic and measured time felt; its currents ebbing and flowing in an unnatural manner. In 2021, we hit the gas and the brakes at the same time, trying to get our bearings back and leveling our expectations at every turn while other corners demanded our action. In 2022, time buckled like a cleanly cut joist and, for me, collapsed. I was unused to the amplified quickening of time and suddenly found myself thrust into a version of reality that felt familiar, again, though it had evolved into a way of life I was unprepared for.

This year has been a marvel to witness between rising inflation, heightening costs, dynamic climate events, consolidation, and a changing consumer that has become more skeptical but also more invested. 2022 has also been a year of deep connection, authenticity, reinvention, and gratitude, for both our team internally and, without a doubt, for this industry.

No matter how we grapple with time, relationships are everything, and fresh produce continues to be a testament to this statement.

As you may sense, this letter is deeply nostalgic, and it is also a thank you. The trials and tribulations of recent times have been a mirror, showing us who we are, where we have been, and where we can go. Through the looking glass, we will step into 2023 but not without the scars, smiles, and triumphs of an amazing year past.

While 2022 has been a year of heavy planning and strategy for us, it has also been a year of synchronicity. In its simplest sentiments, what I mean by this is coincidence and harmony that make for a larger unexpected meaning. In the traditional sense of the definition: the coincidental occurrence of events that seem related yet

are not explained by conventional mechanisms of causality. The stars aligned in a way that felt planned, but were also completely counter to planning.

I think of the Besties Awards and timing as an example of this: our inaugural event that celebrated those marketers and individuals who carry the torch of leadership and innovation with courage and strength. Yes, this would have been timely for any year we have been in business, but for reasons that feel hard to articulate, it made more sense than ever this year. And we hope you feel it, too.

We have grown up with you, watched you grow up, and seen the seasons change from the same porch. This year was one of welcomed new beginnings. And on the other side of every new beginning is another chapter closed, and ours—as an industry and personally—was especially turbulent. 2022 felt cumulative. A benchmark and a growing pain.

We honor you always. And in 2023, we carry this promise forward. This commitment feels like home—a place of strength and change we enter willingly and with gratitude.

Time percolates, then erupts like a flood most days. It is, in its own right, the pulse of our industry and the currency by which we gamble, stumble, fail, and succeed.

It is a beautiful thing to be a witness to such time passing—a participant, a student, and also a subject.

It is a beautiful thing to be here with you. Another year on the books. Another year older.

And, as always, another year wiser.

Happy New Year, my friends. 🍊



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

## DID YOU KNOW?

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

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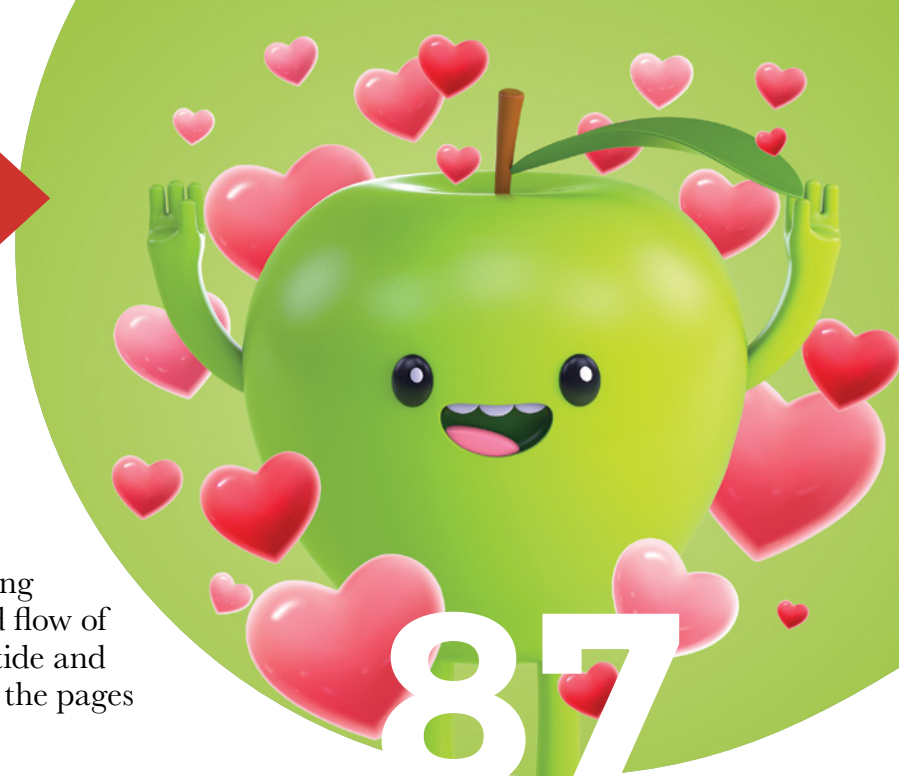


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# FEATURES

## SUNSET®, SUNKIST GROWERS, AND MORE CELEBRATING THE BESTIES OF THE BEST

In 2022, the *AndNowUKnow* and *The Snack* team celebrated our inaugural Besties Awards, honoring the marketers that not only thrive in the ebb and flow of the fresh produce industry, but help change the tide and direction of this sea of change. Find out more in the pages of our December issue...



### FOX PACKAGING AND FOX SOLUTIONS

**DEFINING FOX**  
Celebrating 60 years, Aaron Fox looks back at the packaging pioneer's storied history and reveals how its successes shaped the future of the sector...



### FIRSTFRUITS FARMS

**AN EVIDENCE-BASED EVOLUTION**  
Ditching the pickaxes, shovels, and heavy equipment in favor of numbers and patterns, the fruit provider's team members are becoming miners. Data miners, that is, scanning for facts and figures that will transform how its partners do business...



### GWILLIMDALE FARMS

**MAKING SEASONAL MAGIC**  
Traditions are part of what makes the holiday season so special for consumers, and the root vegetable expert understands. So, sit back and see how the supplier helps its retail partners create magic in the produce aisles as we move into the new year...



### SUPERFRESH GROWERS®

**THE TREETALKER'S CODE**  
While most just see the trees in an orchard, Dave Gleason, Horticulturist and Proprietary Variety Developer, can hear them. Luckily, he is using his extraordinary skills to translate exactly what they have to say in this exclusive...



### WESTFALIA FRUIT MARKETING USA

**LEADERSHIP IS A LIVING PROCESS**  
Always climbing the branches of development and growth, President and Chief Executive Officer Raina Nelson pulls back the foliage to show how the avocado supplier creates modern solutions for today's industry challenges...



### GR FRESH

**OBTAINING OBJECTIVITY**  
Tony Incaviglia conceptualizes the three pillars of sustainability that guide the provider's growth. Learn how objective environmental responsibility, social equitability, and more are changing the game...



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United States

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**TRUE TO TASTE**

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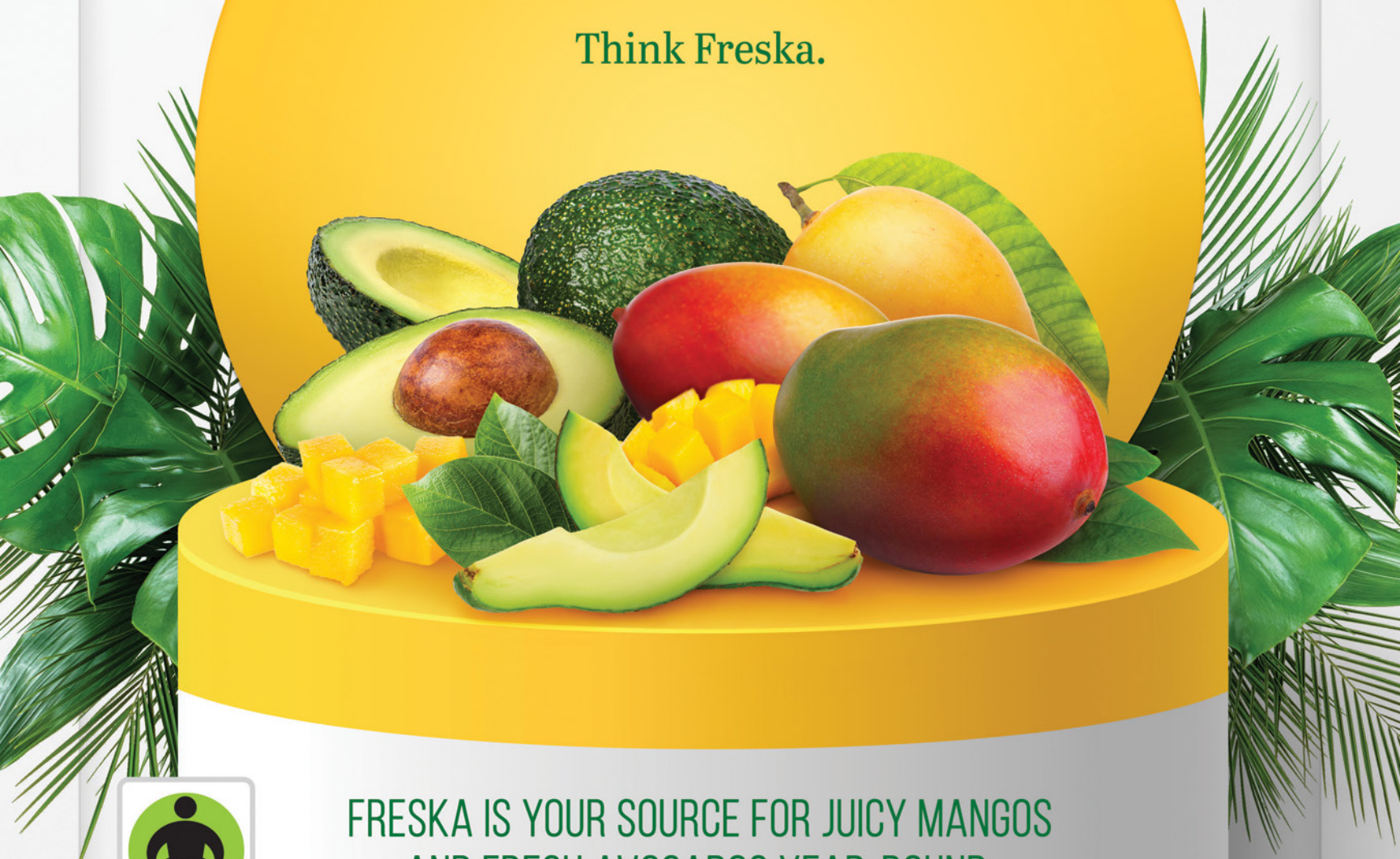
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## HEALTHY SNACKS FOR A HEALTHY NEW YEAR



[www.naturipesnacks.com](http://www.naturipesnacks.com)

WTF DO I DO WITH

Prime Time Bell Peppers  
and Green Beans ?  
{ what the fork }



PRIME TIME BELL PEPPER, GREEN BEAN, AND CHEESE OMELET

INGREDIENTS

- 6 Prime Time Green Beans, trimmed and chopped (can substitute Prime Time Asparagus)
- ½ Prime Time Bell Pepper, in strips
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- ½ tsp garlic, minced
- ½ tsp oregano, dried
- ½ tsp basil, dried
- 2 tbsp butter
- 6 large eggs
- ¼ cup whole milk
- ¾ cup cheese, grated or crumbled (Blue, Feta, Cheddar, or Mozzarella)
- Salt and pepper, to taste

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

DIRECTIONS

- Heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium heat; cook and stir green beans (or asparagus) and bell pepper until the vegetables start to soften, about 3 minutes. Stir in garlic, oregano, basil, salt, and pepper, and continue cooking another 1–2 minutes. Remove from heat and transfer vegetables to a plate.
- Melt butter in clean skillet over medium heat. Whisk eggs and milk in a bowl and pour into hot butter, swirling skillet to cover entire bottom with egg mixture. Pull up an edge of the omelet with a spatula and tilt pan to allow unset egg to run underneath and cook; continue around pan, lifting omelet edge and tilting pan, until all the egg mixture is set. Sprinkle omelet with salt and pepper.
- Spoon cooked green beans (or asparagus) and bell pepper mixture onto one side of the omelet and sprinkle with your preferred cheese. Gently fold half the omelet over the vegetables and cheese and press edges lightly to seal in the filling. Cook until filling is hot and cheese has melted, 1–2 more minutes. Cut in slices to serve and enjoy!



PRIME  
TIME

To learn more about Prime Time, visit [www.primetimeproduce.com](http://www.primetimeproduce.com)



MY FAVORITE THINGS

AMY GATES

Vice President, Greenyard USA/Seald Sweet

With Peggy Packer

On a busy afternoon in the middle of fall, an email from Amy Gates lands in my inbox; in it, some lyrics to *The Sound of Music*’s “My Favorite Things.” This is the perfect introduction to the ambitious yet fun-spirited Vice President, whose short list of favorites will only make you eager to learn more about her as you read on. A self-proclaimed over-achiever with a bright personality and contagious energy—there is much to know and love about this talented member of our industry, and it goes so much further than just raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens...

1

“I rebuilt it with my Dad in high school, and I love to drive it on the weekends.”

2

All kinds, all the time, depending on my mood.

3

I love Safeway’s Signature SELECT flavored coffee!

4

I went to California Polytechnic State University and fell in love with this little beach. My family makes an annual pilgrimage back each year.

5

I always pick a word of the year, and this year, I’m really seeking balance and connection!

6

“I grew up on the river and love to kayak with my kids.”

7

My great-grandma made the best, but I will take any fresh, homemade bread piping hot from the oven.

8

“Bird watching is really just hiking with a purpose; I love finding new areas and species during my work travels.”

9

This is really my favorite thing—they are so sweet and love me, good day or bad.

GREENYARD  
SealdSweet

- 1 My 1967 Camaro
- 2 Music
- 3 Coconut and Turmeric Coffee
- 4 Pismo Beach
- 5 Harmony
- 6 Kayaking
- 7 Homemade Fresh Bread
- 8 Bird Watching
- 9 Hugging My Kids After a Long Day

# WTF DO I DO WITH DOLE® Bananas ?

{ what the fork }



GINGERBREAD-BANANA CAKE ROLL

## INGREDIENTS

- 2 spotted DOLE® Bananas, peeled and mashed
- 3 large eggs
- ½ cup raw cane sugar
- ¼ cup mild (original) molasses
- ¾ cup white whole-wheat flour
- ¾ tsp baking powder
- ½ tsp pumpkin pie spice
- ¼ tsp ground cardamom
- ¼ tsp ground ginger
- 1½ cups powdered sugar, plus additional for dusting
- ½ cup dairy-free heavy whipping cream alternative
- ¼ cup natural buttery spread with olive oil, softened
- ½ cup chopped walnuts, optional

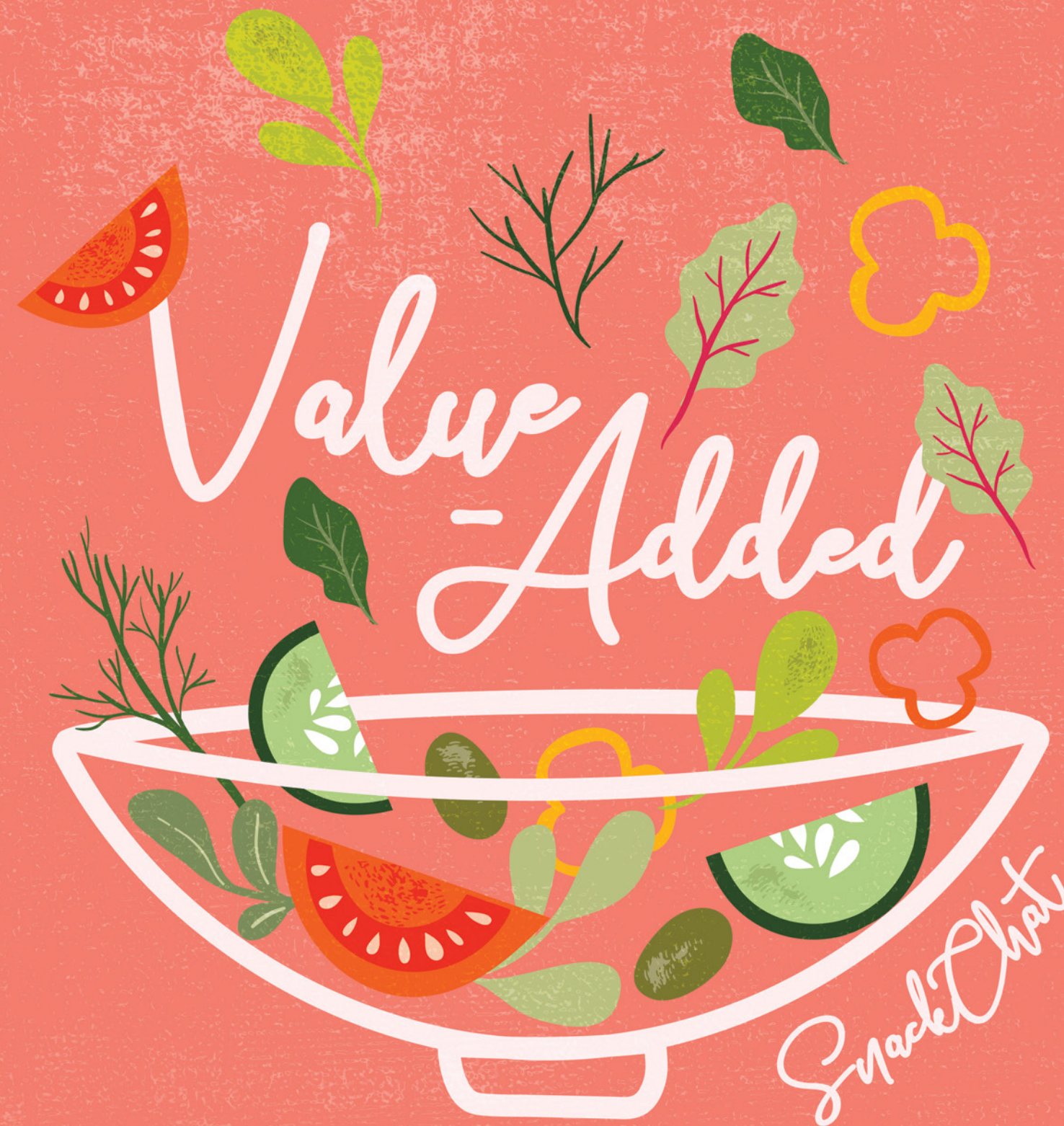
**Prep Time:** 20 min  
**Cook Time:** 25 min  
**Servings:** 12



## DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 375° F. Spray a 15" x 10" rimmed baking pan with nonstick cooking spray; line with parchment paper.
- 2 Whisk eggs and sugar in a large bowl until foamy, then whisk in bananas and molasses. Next, whisk in flour, baking powder, pumpkin pie spice, cardamom, and ginger; pour batter into prepared pan. Bake cake 25 minutes, or until toothpick inserted in center of cake comes out clean.
- 3 Dust a clean kitchen towel with powdered sugar. While cake is still hot, invert cake onto prepared towel; starting from short side of towel, roll up and let cool completely.
- 4 Beat ¼ cup powdered sugar and cream in a medium bowl with mixer on medium-high speed 2 minutes, or until soft peaks form. Beat buttery spread and remaining 1¼ cups powdered sugar in a large bowl with mixer on medium-high speed for 2 minutes, or until incorporated. With mixer on medium-low speed, slowly add cream mixture to buttery spread mixture and beat just until combined. Makes about 1½ cups.
- 5 Carefully unroll cake and remove towel. Leaving a ½" border, spread cream mixture over cake; reroll cake and refrigerate 1 hour.
- 6 Cut cake crosswise into 12 (¾" thick) slices; arrange on serving platter. Dust cake with powdered sugar, if desired, and sprinkle with walnuts. Enjoy!

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



By Peggy Packer

If you ask me, time is undeniably our most valuable asset. As cliché as the phrase, “life is short,” may be, there surely lies some truth to the statement. Here is where the appeal of the value-added sector is found, in its magical and odds-defying ability to grant consumers more time as they grasp at the fleeting minutes of the day-to-day. The value-added space is at the epicenter of convenience, creativity, and conceptualization, and store shelves await the innovations spurred by suppliers who have sought to do the impossible. Buyers, don’t wait another second to make the most of this burgeoning category...

# Bil Goldfield,

**Director of Corporate Communications,  
Dole Food Company**

“Holidays are about sharing, and that often means meals with family and friends. As one of the pioneers in value-added salad kits, Dole has been successfully making the case for including the broad flavor varieties of our fast-and-easy Salad Kits at the holiday table for years. However, the holidays also mean cooking and baking, so we’re excited to add our Sheet Pan Meal Starter Kits to the lineup this year. These are fresh, ready-to-roast vegetables paired with exclusive seasonings and cooked to perfection on a single sheet pan for easy clean-up. To help educate shoppers, we’re arming retailers with original recipes that add turkey, chicken, fish, or tofu to turn this simple, value-added idea into a classic, satiating winter meal or party-worthy side. It’s this year’s easy, healthy, one-pan, holiday meal solution.”



# Helen Kurtz,

**Senior Vice President/General Manager,  
Calavo Prepared**

“Above all, consumers are looking for ways to eat healthy and fresh—and they want to make it easy and stress-free. Calavo has a range of solutions to deliver on these needs on any occasion. Our grab-and-go bags of fresh avocados make scratch eating easy, and our fresh guacamole and salsa dips are a great hack for making fresh snacking a snap. We have veggie starters that take a few steps off of cooking, so people can make adding vegetables to their meals easier than ever.”



# Nichole Towell,

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

“As we transition from the holiday eating season to the new year, shoppers are continuously looking for ways to cut down on time in the kitchen to make room for their busy schedules. Duda Farm Fresh Foods offers a variety of fresh-cut, value-added celery, corn, and radishes to meet consumers’ needs and resolutions. Whether they are looking for something to quickly throw in their bag for an afternoon snack or easily add to a salad for some extra crunch, we have you covered!”



# Meaghan McGrath,

**Vice President of Product Development,  
Local Bounti**

“Whether at home or on-the-go, it can be hard to find time to make a healthy, great-tasting meal. We’ve seen a rise in quick-service salad chains that offer healthy meal options with high-quality produce ingredients, yet they can often leave a hole in your wallet, with single-serve salads easily exceeding \$10–15. We were inspired by the idea that we could present a restaurant-quality experience to the produce department while also making it affordable for consumers. By introducing a line of Local Bounti grab-and-go salads, we were able to do just that—bring together exciting flavors, premium ingredients, and the exceptional freshness of our greenhouse-grown greens so consumers no longer have to choose between quality, convenience, and affordability. Our first two SKUs are vegetarian and vegan-friendly to reach the increasingly flexitarian consumer, with additional SKUs coming in 2023 as shoppers ramp up demand for healthy options.”



# Robb Bertels,

**Vice President of Sales and Marketing,  
Gold Coast Packing**

“Gold Coast Packing’s line of value-added products are all about convenience—both for foodservice customers and retailers. We offer volume items like broccoli and cauliflower florets; salad blends and broccoli slaws; washed spinach; whole and chopped cilantro; as well as whole, half, and shredded Brussels sprouts. In addition, Gold Coast offers a variety of pack sizes—larger sizes for foodservice and smaller, convenience items for retail, as well as private label opportunities. Our focus is always on service and delivering a high-quality product to our customers. We have an on-staff product development and innovation team that focuses on developing products for specific customer needs. With our focus on value-added produce, our team’s goal is to bring unique products to market while filling a need that focuses on convenience.”

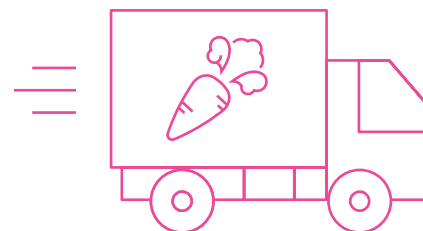




# A STRATEGIC STRONG HOLD

**A Q&A WITH GABRIELA D'ARRIGO,**  
Vice President of Marketing and Communications,  
D'Arrigo New York

By Melissa De Leon Chavez



**F**lexibility is crucial in our industry, yet it's rarely polished. Oftentimes, this ability necessitates grit, a sharp edge, and even a sharp tongue. In a recent issue of *The Snack*, Anne Allen wrote of how it is important to know when to be Dr. Jekyll and when to be Mr. Hyde—this middle space is where we find the ones who will manifest a solution to an impossible problem.

As fresh produce providers have continued to roll with the punches, D'Arrigo New York solidified this space for partners, ensuring a place for fresh produce in any circumstance. Gabriela D'Arrigo, Vice President of Marketing and Communications, sat down with me to talk about establishing that environment, as well as the changes it has spurred for the wholesaler and those it serves.



**Melissa De Leon Chavez:**  
Gabriela, D'Arrigo New York is undergoing a lot of changes. Let's jump in with what it means to be a wholesaler and how that position galvanized the updates the company is making. How has that role crystallized since 2020?

**Gabriela D'Arrigo, Vice President of Marketing and Communications, D'Arrigo New York:** As the middlemen, wholesalers have always had to understand both the challenges of our suppliers and of our customers. Then, we have to be able to provide stability and solutions to all of those challenges. I don't think anybody plans with the potential of a pandemic in mind, but the dead-stop of foodservice made that role very clear. We received calls from the industry with trucks of product and nowhere to go, so we found places for it.

It's important for retailers and operators to know that, because of this, we are handling much more than the perfect product. Plenty of it is finding and placing product for somebody else when another market couldn't. That product is going to be more affordable, we're going to know exactly where it comes from, and, yes, this is a safe place to buy good produce. Quite frankly, it will be more cost-effective for those retailers and foodservice operators who want to buy on a short market, and we are the ones willing to make that opportunity available.

Oftentimes, though, doing this has been received with a negative connotation. But understanding there is a place and a need for all of this supply is how we cut costs, shrink, and food waste.

**"...one of the biggest accomplishments to date is making sure our supplier program is as perfect as it possibly can be. Now, our main focus is our facility, with much more to come as we dig in further."**

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

**MDC:** With all that in mind, it makes sense that food safety and traceability would be in the foreground of the team's strategy. How has the company gone about the food safety changes it is implementing?

**GD:** We welcomed our new Food Safety Director, Pierre Jusim, who brings an impressive background and the experience we need to get an operation our size ahead of the curve. Part of that is in an SQF (safe quality food) certification, which we are currently working toward. This is a huge endeavor with significant impacts, from vendor to customer, when every major retailer and restaurant is asking for your certification and your level achieved. The certification has encompassed renovations, upgrades to coolers and panels, and more. This is significant, especially amid market conditions which have been extra challenging this year. The wholesale world is still very much the Wild West, and we're dealing with everybody else's rejections, shorts, or surplus. So, we're problem solvers by nature.



**Pierre Jusim,**  
Food Safety Director,  
D'Arrigo New York

Finally, one of the biggest accomplishments to date is making sure our supplier program is as perfect as it possibly can be. Now, our main focus is our facility, with much more to come as we dig in further. Pierre has been crucial in clarifying the different levels of influence these moves will have for us and our customers.

**MDC:** It sounds like no aspect of the company is left untouched by this transformation. How do these changes influence both the company on all its levels as well as those it serves?

**GD:** The magnitude of this move is fundamental, so it will impact everyone's daily execution. From those unloading, the foremen who are managing the inventory and ensuring everything is accurately logged, and the salesmen who will now be integral in helping customers find what they need as we begin scanning individually, to those of us telling our story or reporting to leadership—a granular understanding of these steps and changes through every level of our company is crucial. It's going to require a lot more work and a lot more time, labor, and money.

This is an expensive undertaking right out of the gate, but once every kind of SKU gets into the system and we begin to find our rhythm, it will become an integrated part of our routine. That paper trail will follow all the way into our final reports. Because of this, our Food Safety Director has to know all the ins and outs of our business to show everyone what changes will be taking place where.

The certification, upgrades, and change in practices are an incredible amount of work that will mean more labor and more time, ultimately ensuring we continue to deliver the best possible product to customers.

**“We all have to be able to help consumers and customers understand and buy into why it is important to be willing and comfortable paying a little more.”**

**MDC:** With the investments necessary to make such feats possible, I can't help but think about consumer perceptions around transparency and cost. As the middlemen of the industry, any insight into how we can reconcile these for the end-shopper?

**GD:** We have to hunker down and figure out the formula that will inspire that a-ha moment. It is all to make the consumer feel confident in the products they're purchasing from the fresh produce industry.

We know exactly where broccoli goes in the store, but it takes more time and attention to detail, which, ultimately, puts more pressure on the team. It starts there from the receiving end. Something that's going to have to go hand in hand with all of these food safety changes and regulations is implementing major marketing campaigns explaining why consumers and customers are paying for this and why it is so important.

We all have to be able to help consumers and customers understand and buy into why it is important to be willing and comfortable paying a little more.

Ultimately, it is a small amount now to avoid larger economic issues later, and we need to do a better job of communicating that.

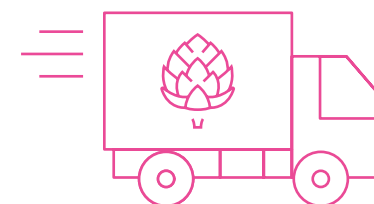


**“Wholesale is the segment of the businesses that has the ability to be the most nimble, and that's very commonly overlooked. To pivot on a dime, especially in a major metropolitan area, is a huge asset we enable our customers to have.”**

**MDC:** While New York City is a unique market, it is a crucial one, setting a standard for many others. Can you speak to why that is and how the Big Apple can be a barometer for our industry as a whole?

**GD:** It's human nature to want to have options, even if you don't choose any of them. New York provides limitless choices in terms of what to do and eat. It makes for a very competitive but active environment, creating something worth following.

For our part, this diversity created a culture of tens of thousands of SKUs because you will remember we gave you that option. On the flip side, weather has gotten more harsh as a result of the different climate changes that have occurred. New York has had to elevate our process in loading and unloading because we don't have any time to leave product on a dock. These elements necessitated more strategic moves on our part. It's high stakes all the time.



**MDC:** In that vein, has D'Arrigo New York experienced a change in the role it holds in the supply chain, or have pre-existing roles surfaced that you can share?

**GD:** I equate our reaction to the current environment to the crisis management part of public relations: Have a crisis management plan in place so you're not paying that top dollar when you do have a problem.

Wholesale is the segment of the businesses that has the ability to be the most nimble, and that's very commonly overlooked. To pivot on a dime, especially in a major metropolitan area, is a huge asset we enable our customers to have. Often, once a menu is set or product is in the ground, that's it—they're committed to it. We have the ability to adjust. That should not be forgotten when it comes to the importance of different segments in the industry.

When you know how to play the market as a buyer and how to use the market as a supplier, it's only going to make you better at the business. Wholesale is that option when you think there is no option, regardless of what the situation is. I promise you: We will find the solution no one else sees.

**T**he ability to recognize a possibility that is shadowed for others is invaluable in an industry as fluid as ours. Sometimes we can step back and see the solution for ourselves, and sometimes we need someone else to find the piece that eluded us.

To show us there is no such thing as no option.

# A FRUIT FOR *All Seasons*



## The Del Rey Avocado Sales Team

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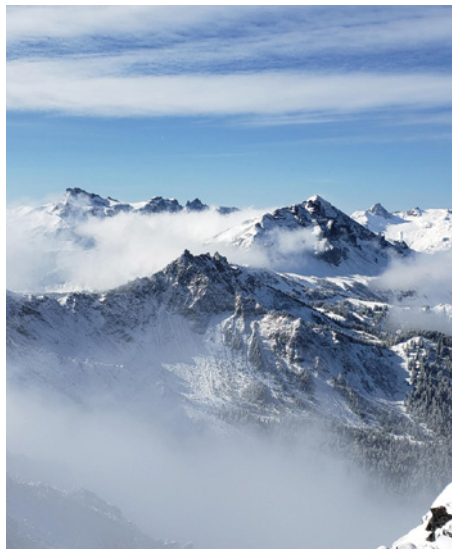
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# CASCADE MOUNTAINS

What could a mountain range have to do with treefruit? Other than being the home of Rainier Fruit Company's volcanic namesake, the Cascade Mountains feed the orchards of Eastern Washington with cool snowmelt in lieu of rainfall. Just because something is plentiful doesn't mean it should be wasted. Rainier Fruit utilizes numerous water-saving methods that conserve resources, all while maintaining quality. So, what makes this agricultural corner of the world so special?



## 1 CASCADE MOUNTAIN RANGE

Stretching 700 miles from Northern California to British Columbia, the Cascades divide Washington State in two—both geographically and weather-wise. The range intercepts nearly all incoming Pacific moisture, supplying Seattle with its famous drizzle and leaving the Eastern side of the state drier than New Mexico.



## 2 WATER IN A DESERT

While the Cascades block rain from falling onto the orchards of Eastern Washington, they don't leave them completely high and dry. The range's 40-odd feet of average yearly snowfall provides a constant supply of water in the form of snowmelt. This water is collected in reservoirs and in-orchard ponds for irrigation, cooling, and frost control.



## 3 IRRIGATION INNOVATION

Rainier Fruit acknowledges this water is a blessing and works to conserve this precious resource through water-optimization practices such as drip irrigation, high-density plantings, soil moisture monitoring probes, and more. Every drop saved reduces energy use and carbon emissions, positively impacting our environment—including the beautiful, snow-capped Cascade Mountains.



RAINIER FRUIT COMPANY INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT represents individuals and ideas making a positive impact in the community through their work, volunteer efforts, sustainability, or health and wellness initiatives.

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FRESH WATER  
FRESH FRUIT



Rainier  
FRUIT

WASHINGTON GROWN  
APPLES, PEARS, CHERRIES & BLUEBERRIES


# A Closer Look at Bard Valley Natural Delights® Truffles

By Peggy Packer

When you want to inspire someone to taste something new, engulf it in chocolate. This sure-fire approach has already expanded the reach of a host of key categories, especially those within the produce department. Now, Bard Valley Natural Delights® is harnessing the power of chocolate to attract shoppers to the date section with its newly released Truffles.

Utilizing wholesome ingredients that pack powerful health attributes, Bard Valley Natural Delights offers a unique twist to most chocolate-covered snacks. This is achieved by using Medjool dates to naturally sweeten its Truffles and provide additional nutritional benefits. By bringing such an alluring innovation to store shelves, retailers can encourage consumers to try dates in ways they may have never thought of before—and even appeal to shoppers who previously weren't interested in purchasing dates at all.

Taking the spotlight today is the Dark Chocolate with Probiotic variety, which features fresh Medjool date pieces wrapped in decadent dark chocolate with added BC30 probiotics. Chocolate Blueberry and Chocolate Cherry round out this flavorful lineup, with each offering intentionally developed based on comprehensive selling data that pointed to these flavors as some of the most demanded within the chocolate sector.

This collection of hard-to-resist flavor combinations is sure to drive traffic to the date category, and the resulting sales gain will be ever so sweet. 

UP  
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*Bard Valley*  
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DEFINING  
FOX

McALLEN, TX

*Fox Packaging*

39



BY ANNE ALLEN

## SIXTY YEARS AGO, KENNETH FOX SUPPLY CO. CAME TO FRUITION.

It's a story that, if I have anything to say about it, will quickly become legend in our industry. Kenneth Fox, Founder, was spreading his wings and coming into his own as a businessman after having previously worked for another packaging company, operating several different territories within four states across the United States. But, like many in our industry, he turned his eyes south and saw an opportunity in Texas.

Aaron Fox speaks of his father with admiration as the Executive Vice President tells me the story of his father's foundation, and of how he laid the groundwork for what would become Fox Packaging and Fox Solutions.

Throughout our conversation, a recurring thread unfolds, detailing how family remains an advantage and a centerpiece as the company continues to build upon that foundation.

"My parents moved to McAllen, Texas, with four children. My father, Kenneth, utilized his packaging experience and identified the many agricultural opportunities available in South Texas," Aaron shares. "At the time, citrus and potatoes were packed into large crates and then loaded onto trucks. My father introduced the packaging concept and ultimately developed the first industry Polypropylene, a woven mesh Fox Leno bag, to assist in this process."

Fox Packaging had humble beginnings, with Kenneth utilizing older equipment and borrowed space in the back of a McAllen carrot shed.

"Today, things look a little different for us," Aaron tells me. "Not only have we become a leader in flexible packaging solutions, but we now service produce customers across North and South America. Our facility has five buildings

with remote representation in both packaging and packing automation equipment through sales representatives and partnerships across the U.S."

Aaron takes a beat to reflect.

"It wasn't always easy," he reminds me, as it rarely is in our industry. The company has seen its fair share of challenges throughout its 60-year run, but Fox is all the stronger for them.

"Anyone in the fresh produce industry will tell you that the biggest challenges are the external factors, such as Mother Nature and supply chain impacts. This industry is constantly in transition, yet the goal has always remained the same—make sure good food reaches communities with quality intact," Aaron adds. "Keeping up with customers' needs in this ever-changing industry can be challenging, and we strive to communicate with transparency and honesty. Consumers are increasingly aware of how products complement their lifestyles, and, as partners, it is our responsibility to be advocates, offering peace of mind to packaging buyers who aim to serve those needs."

Over the years, communication has become a critical element of Fox Packaging's operations. It's a lesson imparted from Kenneth, who, after recently celebrating his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, offered sincere words of advice: Remember that you're not always the smartest person in the room and value relationships—personally and professionally.

As a packaging pioneer, the Fox team understands that innovation is inspired by gaps, and that the majority of those gaps are identified by listening to your customers.

"It's critical to competition," Aaron emphasizes. "We've spent the last five decades developing one-of-a-kind bag designs that reduce product damage, showcase the natural beauty of fresh

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**OUR TEAM HAS A  
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MARKETPLACE AND ARE  
DEDICATED TO BEING LIKE-  
MINDED PARTNERS FOR  
OUR CUSTOMERS...**

— **AARON FOX,**  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, FOX PACKAGING  
AND FOX SOLUTIONS

produce, and provide a beautiful foundation for branding and artwork—all while supporting the extended shelf-life of products. This can be credited to our relationship with our customers and to keeping a watchful eye on the market."

Throughout its tenure, Fox Packaging has looked at the marketplace with one goal in mind: to provide fresh produce packers and shippers with flexible packaging solutions that not only achieve cost savings through operational efficiencies, but also positively affect the bottom line with increased demand from retail buyers.

"We encourage our customers to think of Fox Packaging as an extension of their brand, rather than thinking of us as merely a packaging supplier. Whether they are introducing a new pouch program or rebranding an existing product, there is always a way to capitalize on a packaging program that contributes to the story a brand wants to tell," Aaron remarks.

Thoughtful product design delivers a host of advantages to both suppliers and retailers. As Aaron tells me, convenience is the result of such an endeavor, and as automation technology advances, packaging will continue to be a design of preference for both buyers and consumers.

One example of this is how the company develops its products with environmental mindfulness. This is due, in part, to the current focus on sustainability across nearly every aspect of the industry, but also because it's par for the course for the innovative spirit of Fox.

"Our team has a tremendous sense of urgency and drive toward innovation," Aaron shares. "We remain informed of what is happening in the marketplace and are dedicated to being like-minded partners for our customers and a resource for any questions that our industry may have. As a domestic



SINCE THE COMPANY'S FOUNDING IN 1962, FOX PACKAGING AND FOX SOLUTIONS HAS SET INDUSTRY STANDARDS

packaging partner, Fox Packaging can alleviate the expenditure and lead times when compared to imported packaging. With many companies experiencing the current challenges of the supply chain, partnering with Fox can be a solution to these industry hurdles."

In other words, Fox pursues alliances—another tenet of the company strategy as the number of suppliers it onboards becomes increasingly important in how it moves forward. His mentality goes beyond the bag and into packing equipment via wicketed baggers, pouch baggers, Newtec Weighers, Intec Palletizers, and Redpack® flow wrappers.

"We strive to be a one-stop shop for customers by having circular relationships within our industry and by understanding the supply chain to be the solution," Aaron notes.

With 60 years under its belt, the packaging provider has learned how to conduct itself as a thought leader.

"My father was able to build his brand and legacy alongside his family," Aaron says. "We know how much it means to him. He's been able to surround himself with people who are equally as passionate about the work as he is, and my father has seen his family grow the business and take ownership of it. We've always been known as Fox Packaging and Fox Solutions, but at the end of the day we are just Fox."

It's the family name that keeps innovation and progress soldiering forward. As Aaron noted earlier, pursuing a top position in business is so much more than simply being in the mix. The pinnacle of competitive business is a fine line to walk, and it's one Fox navigates with grace and trailblazing speed. Not only has the company maintained its outstanding reputation, but it has continued to conduct itself with great responsibility—for the last 60 years and for many more to come. 🍌

1962



2022



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# SUPER BOWL SNACKCHAT

BY PEGGY PACKER



## THE SALAD WAS THE FIRST "SUPER BOWL."

I mean, what other two words pair together perfectly to describe a creative combination of the beloved fruits and vegetables that make up our dear produce department? The Big Game ignites a steady stream of foot traffic and the chance to score big on produce-centric retail promotions. We all know the watch-party snacking spread plays almost as key of a role as the football game itself, and these supply-side maven are leading you right into the end zone with their unique takes on Super Bowl merchandising...



**ALEXANDRA RAE MOLUMBY,**  
**DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, BAKO SWEET®**

“I’ll admit that I am a sucker for a good Super Bowl appetizer, especially when it uses Bako Sweet® products in a delicious dip such as our Simple Sweet Potato Hummus recipe! Shoppers feel the same about our sweet spuds—which is why we include enticing recipe shots on our colorful display bins, along with a QR code for shoppers to scan. This gives shoppers the inspiration they need to pick up a bag and try a new recipe. In one of our recent campaigns, we saw the sweet potato category lift 6.1 percent in retail sales if a store had one of our display bins. Take advantage of our display bins and bring business to your produce department, which will make a positive impact on your sales!”



**GARY CLEVINGER,**  
**MANAGING PARTNER, FRESKA PRODUCE INTERNATIONAL**

“The Super Bowl is a great time to have a bunch of different foods to share with family and friends while enjoying the game, which means increased traffic to the produce department. Beyond just guacamole and chips, lots of items should be on the table to enjoy. One of our favorites is mango habanero wings—hot and spicy with a sweetness derived from honey is a must for us. Guacamole with mango chunks is another great way to dress up the guac to give it a tropical taste mid-winter and get ready for spring a bit early. Whatever you do, help shoppers enjoy the game with fresh produce items, along with your favorite proteins.”



**ANTHONY INNOCENTI,**  
**MANAGING PARTNER, LIV ORGANIC™ PRODUCE**

“The Super Bowl gives retailers a great opportunity to increase potato sales by showcasing a stuffed potato skin recipe of their choice. Grocers can utilize cross-merchandising, placing all the necessary ingredients for these recipes right next to the potato section to inspire consumers to purchase and create this great Super Bowl dish at home—which is one of my favorites. Putting a recipe in front of shoppers will naturally drive sales for the potato category, especially for smaller-sized potatoes. Bagged Russets are ideal for this because they are hand-held and perfect for any stuffed potato recipe.”



**JULIA SHREVE,**  
**DIRECTOR OF MARKETING - BRAND AND INNOVATION,**  
**MASTRONARDI PRODUCE®/SUNSET®**

“SUNSET® LolloPeppers™ are a game-changer for Super Bowl snacking! These bright red and orange mini peppers are sweeter than sweet and naturally seedless, meaning no prep is required for game-day hosts! Packaged in a convenient 1 lb carrier bag, LolloPeppers are easy to grab on the go and the perfect size for an appetizer. Retailers can highlight LolloPeppers as a fun and healthy snacking option for the whole family to enjoy alongside the traditional Super Bowl smörgåsbord. The packaging pops on the shelf and clearly communicates their sweet flavor, making LolloPeppers a clear winner for the Super Bowl season.”



**BROOKE BECKER,**  
**SENIOR DIRECTOR OF NORTH AMERICAN RETAIL, MISSION PRODUCE**

“Football season is one of the best opportunities for promotions and creative merchandising—our *Avocado Intel* found that over 80 percent of fans say food and drinks are a ‘vital’ part of the Big Game, and I agree. Retailers can cross-promote avocados with chips and dips, or ingredients for salsa and guac to inspire shoppers to purchase more avocados. Mangos can also be added to the display to promote mango salsa and guacamole recipes. And don’t forget to lean into consumer health trends! More than one-third of football fans wish viewing parties offered healthier options—so avocados and mangos are an ideal addition to the mix. Pro tip: Consider promoting bagged avocados during the weeks leading up to the Big Game, then transitioning to ripe bulk avocados during game week to maximize sales for the biggest avocado holiday of the year. Mission Produce offers custom ripe programs on mangos and bulk and bagged avocados, so your shoppers can be game-time ready.”



**DAVID BRIGHT,**  
**VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING, GRIMMWAY FARMS**

“Cheering on your team for the Big Game is serious business that requires readily available refreshments to keep the crew engaged in the action. Grimmway and Cal-Organic Farms Carrots—available in orange, red, yellow, white, and purple—bring not only the crunch, flavor, and dippability, but also enable the sophisticated host to color-coordinate snacks with the colors of more than half of the NFL teams. Perhaps a little blue food coloring in the ranch dip will suffice until we perfect the blue carrot. Mix baby carrots and carrot chips, both available in an array of colors, to inspire the loyalty of the Super Bowl crowd.”



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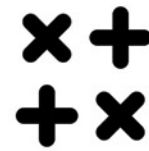
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# DATA-DRIVEN EVIDENCE-BASED

By Jenna Plasterer

It's the year **1848**. The date is **January 24**.

James Marshall, a carpenter hired to build a water-powered sawmill for settler John Sutter, heads out to do a routine inspection, only to spot gleaming flakes of gold glinting through the loose dirt and gravel left behind from the water he had diverted the night before. From there, news of his discovery spreads like wildfire across the country, sparking the start of the Gold Rush—a legendary event that would bring miners from across the world in search of fortune.

What does this have to do with the produce industry? For starters, the West Coast may not have become the agricultural hub it is known as today without these 49ers flocking to the region.

Flash forward to 2022, and there are new miners on the scene, this time staking their claim in Washington: FirstFruits Farms. And just like the pioneers of yesteryear, they are helping shift the course of the industry. However, instead of picks, shovels, and gold pans, the produce maven uses data science and analytics to excavate crucial insights that could spur innovative solutions for its buy-side partners.

// +  
If we fail to look toward the future, we can easily fall behind. By embracing data-driven decision-making, **we're future-proofing our business** and adding additional tools that benefit our customers."



— **Aleisha Loveluck**, Data Science Architect, FirstFruits Farms



"It all starts with data," Aleisha Loveluck, Data Science Architect, explains as she begins to break down the concept of data science and how the apple supplier uses the knowledge it gleans from the samples. "First, we locate the necessary information and ensure it's all accurate, current, and free of anomalies. Next, we go data mining by combing through the figures looking for key insights, important correlations, and trends that help drive business goals. Once we strike data gold, our team transforms the raw numbers into a simple, accessible concept using visualizations, presentations, apps, and reports that clearly illustrate the importance of our findings."

Put that way, data mining sounds simple, but in fact, it is far more intricate than it appears. Behind each detail is a glimpse into the behaviors and patterns of consumers which must be examined and dissected by knowledgeable minds so the information can be best used to drive the apple category—and the industry—forward.

Enter FirstFruits' data analytics, marketing, and sales teams, who put their heads together to create the most effective solutions for the company and its customers.

"Through the combined experience and skills our teams bring together, we can comprehend the mass amount of data in the market and present it in a user-friendly and easily accessible way to our retail partners," says Aimee Peters, West Coast Business Development Manager. "We pride ourselves on being able to draw impactful insights with solutions and suggestions to grow the category. We don't want to point out problems or potential issues; we want to come to the table with tailored solutions and guidance that fit our partners' needs. We do this without bias, so even if it does not directly benefit us at the time, it adds value to the apple category."

While technology and the intelligence it can provide serves as a point of contention for some, data science is becoming essential as the produce market continuously shifts. The concept has become especially valuable



– **Aimee Peters**, West Coast Business Development Manager, FirstFruits Farms



Through the **combined experience and skills our teams bring together**, we can comprehend the mass amount of data in the market and present it in a user-friendly and easily accessible way to our retail partners."

in light of challenges created by COVID-19, port congestion, inflation, and other world events that have drastically shifted shopping behaviors. To put it simply, consumers are evolving, and as an industry, we need to evolve with them. FirstFruits is willing to take the first steps alongside those it serves.

"If we fail to look toward the future, we can easily fall behind," Aleisha offers. "By embracing data-driven decision-making, we're future-proofing our business and adding additional tools that benefit our customers. Any of our competitors can sell our customers apples. We achieve this same feat while also providing partnership, data-driven insights, and evidence-based strategies that help our customers grow their businesses."

Backing up Aleisha's sentiments, Aimee details how vital data is to category management—something that has become invaluable to FirstFruits as a differentiator from its competitors and a practice essential to its customers.

"As data science has been introduced to the produce industry, there is so much information available, making category management necessary," adds Aimee. "As an industry, our goal should be to utilize the data to create intentional approaches, rather than operating off of emotions or feelings. These strategies

lead to a discussion that can ultimately guide both our partners and our team to increase profitability and cost efficiency. In today's world, especially, our industry has experienced turbulence from the pandemic, and it's no secret that we are currently in an inflationary period. Category management is more important than ever as retail customers are looking for solutions from us to help find their footing following such events."

Placing such weight in data mining and category management, FirstFruits has begun to shift its corporate culture. Now, data informs all the company's critical decisions, including growing practices, shipping procedures, pricing strategies, consumer awareness initiatives, sustainability, and promotions, to name a few. The supplier is moving past what Aleisha calls "gut feelings and guesswork" into what she has deemed "an evidence-based evolution."

"Over the past few years, we've grown from a simple data analytics department to a full-fledged data science center of excellence. We've always had brilliant minds spread throughout our company, but now we're bringing them together to share that knowledge company-wide," she imparts. "We embrace cutting-edge technology physically at the farm and virtually in distributed computing infrastructure. We have the knowledge and the means to be true produce innovators."

To further bolster FirstFruits' data science and analytics capabilities, the supplier recently launched its Data Science Center of Excellence. This will help the team integrate multi-departmental knowledge and tools company-wide, ensuring FirstFruits can provide the most value to those it serves.

The program includes 10 crucial employees who all serve different functions, but ultimately, their work impacts the entire company.

Overall, they are dedicated to making change for the organization and beyond, beginning with the utilization of data science, but extending to other facets of its operations starting with the composition of the team, which is half women. This is especially impactful when considering the push for once male-dominated fields like science, technology, sales, and business



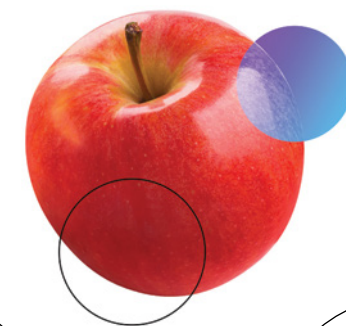
**Emily Autrey**, Marketing Manager, FirstFruits Farms



**Melissa Hunter**, Data Analyst, FirstFruits Farms



**Sara Palmisano**, East Coast Business Development Manager, FirstFruits Farms



to be more inclusive. These women include Aleisha; Aimee; Emily Autrey, Marketing Manager; Melissa Hunter, Data Analyst; and Sara Palmisano, East Coast Business Development Manager, all of whom will use their skills to grow the program and share knowledge with the rest of the FirstFruits associates.



"As the Data Science Center of Excellence evolves, we look forward to developing and implementing an educational program that aims to equip every employee at FirstFruits with the knowledge to utilize category management tools and insights in a way that strengthens our company and retailer relationships," states Emily. "Employees at every level and across all functions will be able to experience and understand the context category management provides for their roles in the company."



...we look forward to developing and implementing an educational program that aims to equip every employee at FirstFruits with the **knowledge to utilize category management tools and insights** in a way that strengthens our company and retailer relationships."

– **Emily Autrey**, Marketing Manager, FirstFruits Farms

Looking into the future, the grower will combine the resources of its marketing department and sales office with its farm on a deeper level than ever before. This integration will help increase the information flow between departments, streamlining its operations and redefining the customer partnership experience.

"The beauty of FirstFruits is that we are a vertically integrated, single-grower system which allows us to extend our reach efficiently across the company when implementing initiatives such as this," adds Emily. "We especially look forward to making our retail partners' jobs easier than ever. Looking at the big picture, we have our eyes and minds set on leading innovation of category management in fresh produce and shaping how suppliers and retailers come together in partnership."

All in all, just like the gold miners that packed up their wagons and headed for the West Coast almost two centuries ago, the team at FirstFruits is striking out in search of something bigger: change. While those panning in streams long ago were looking for riches to better their lives, FirstFruits is looking to inspire industry growth. The lesson we can learn from either miners remains the same, even all these years later...

Take a risk, stake a claim, and you can find gold. 🍏

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

{ what the fork }



4EARTH FARMS™ KUNG PAO BRUSSELS SPROUTS

## INGREDIENTS

**1 lb bag** 4Earth Farms™ Organic Brussels Sprouts  
**2 tbsp** vegetable oil  
**2 tbsp** hot chili paste (such as sambal)  
**2 tbsp** sugar  
**3 tbsp** soy sauce  
**2 tsp** corn starch  
**2 tsp** sesame oil  
**½ tbsp** fresh ginger, grated  
**2 tsp** rice vinegar  
**1 tbsp** water  
**¼ cup** roasted peanuts  
**2** green onions, trimmed and thinly sliced  
 Steamed white rice  
 Salt and pepper, to taste

**Prep Time:** 10–15 min  
**Cook Time:** 10–15 min  
**Servings:** 4

## DIRECTIONS

- 1 In a small bowl, whisk together the hot chili paste, sugar, soy sauce, corn starch, sesame oil, ginger, rice vinegar, and water. Mix thoroughly.
- 2 Wash and trim the Brussels sprouts and slice them into halves.
- 3 Heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the Brussels sprouts and sauté for about 7–8 minutes, stirring occasionally. Season with salt and pepper.
- 4 Pour the sauce over the Brussels sprouts and bring to a simmer, tossing frequently until sauce is thickened and the Brussels sprouts are evenly coated.
- 5 Serve over rice and top with green onions and roasted peanuts. Enjoy!

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



*By Lilian Diep*

The joys of December are something consumers eagerly anticipate all year. While your shoppers may have a difficult time finding the perfect gift for their loved ones, you can help put their minds at ease with strategic merchandising tips and tricks to bring a festive feast to the table. With a month full of celebration in store, these festive fresh friends are sharing the strategies across their floors...



**CHRIS KEETCH,** *Director of Produce and Floral,  
The GIANT Company*

"I look forward to our departments coming to life with the colors and flavors of the season. From berries, citrus, and apples to asparagus, potatoes, and tomatoes, we strive to ensure we have everything our customers need while providing inspiration—whether that be for the traditional holiday meal, a tailgate, or a Saturday night party.

Guided by our brand platform, For Today's Table™, we believe that when meals happen, families connect. And when families connect meaningfully, good happens. We partner with some of the best suppliers in the industry and work closely with them on pricing and promotions to offer the best assortment at the best value possible. Get in touch ahead of the season, so we can come up with a Plan B when Mother Nature throws a curveball!"



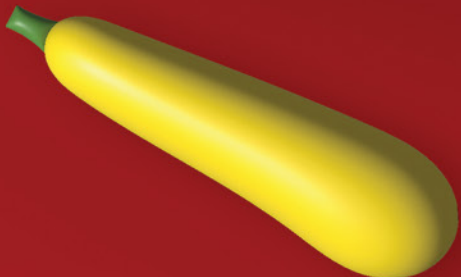
**GABRIELA D'ARRIGO,** *Vice President of Marketing and  
Communications, D'Arrigo New York*

"No other place in the world compares to New York City during the holiday season. We are known as the place to be come November all the way through to New Year's. Retailers throughout the Five Boroughs pull out all the stops to engage with their shoppers. Produce managers take full advantage of all the colorful fruit and vegetable options and put together beautiful and creative displays throughout their produce departments. Whether it's gift-wrapped apple bins, cranberry Christmas tree displays, or fresh Hudson Valley cider offered with apple purchases, your shoppers are sure to enjoy their shopping experience."



**PAUL KNEELAND,** *Senior Vice President of Sales and  
Merchandising, Gelson's Markets*

"Holiday times are the best times! Enjoying family and friends also means feeding them. That's why we get excited here at Gelson's and love to create enticing and appealing displays that sell product! It's really all about the customer experience and imagining what they would enjoy for their holiday fare. I'm thinking massive displays of spuds including baby, purple, whites, yams, every variety of sweet potato—all the fixings for sweet potato pie, yum! As many of our customers entertain this season, small dishes and fresh appetizers will take the spotlight, such as steamed and grilled artichokes; guacamole; peppers, carrots, broccoli, and squash for crudités; and so much more! One thing is for sure, Gelson's will be the holiday destination for customers. Build it, and they will come."



**DAVE HEWITT,** *Vice President of Sales,  
4Earth Farms™*

"4Earth Farms™ has a variety of organic and conventional holiday veg options for our retailer customers this season. From creating a display of green beans in grab-and-go handle bags and convenient microwavable packs to offering ready-to-prepare Broccoli and Cauliflower Florets, Rice, or Slaw, we have the items to maximize holiday sales and provide value and convenience for shoppers. And don't forget the Brussels sprouts; build an eye-catching set with whole, halved, and shredded along with stalks to keep the merriment going all season long."



**NICOLE HULSTEIN,** *Produce Category  
Manager, Food Lion*

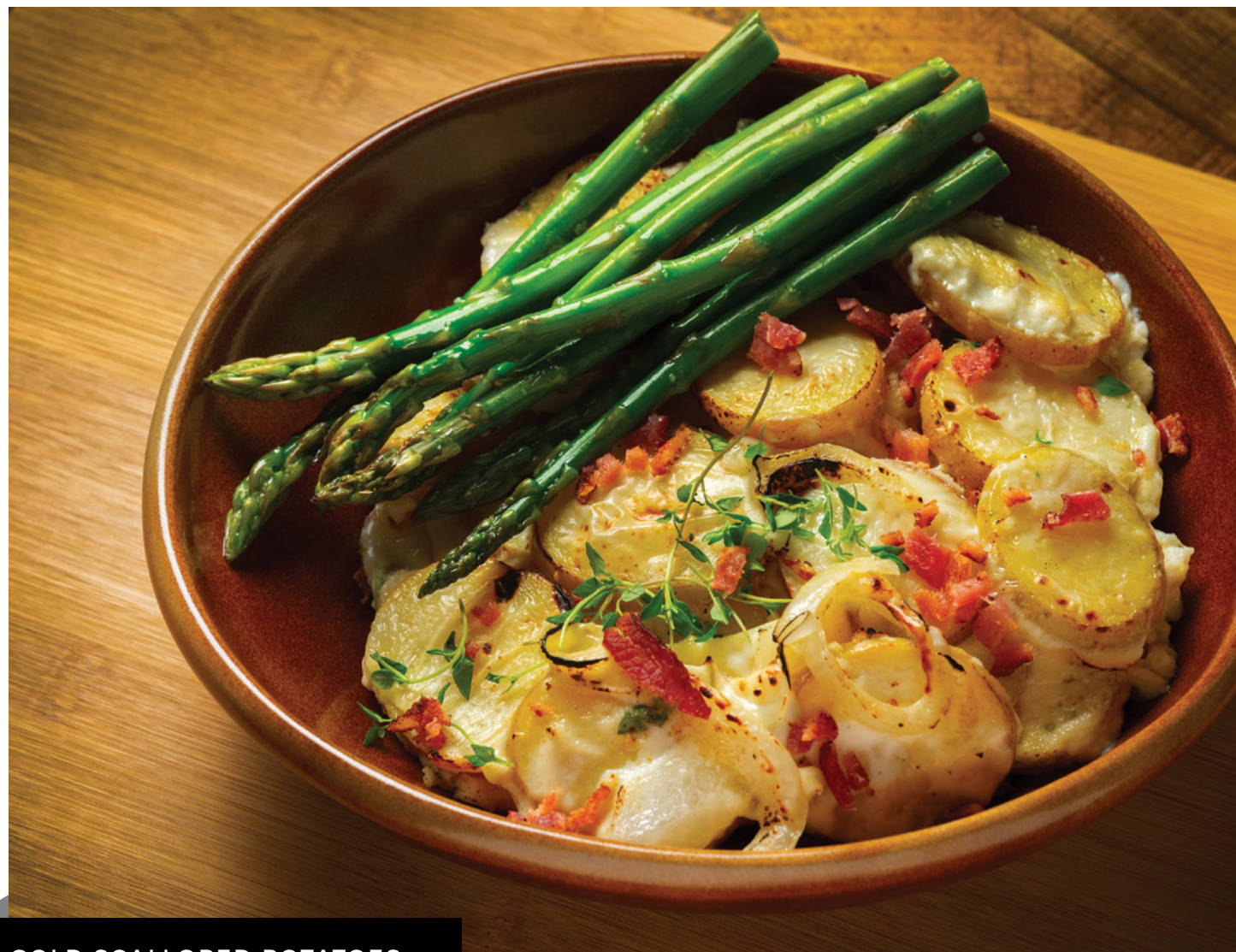
"December is a time for friends and family to gather, host celebrations, and share a bounty of seasonal produce. Berries are a year-round personal favorite. During the holiday season, berries are easy to use across many dishes, such as a fruit tart for a refreshing dessert or a drink enhancement that shoppers can use during the hustle and bustle. The return of domestic citrus and the beginning of the seasonal varieties is an exciting time for us in our produce departments. Apples are also great to have on display. There are so many wonderful varietal options out there with cross-functional usages. They are the ultimate bridge between fall and winter, and who doesn't love a freshly baked apple pie?"



**DANIEL BELL,** *Senior Produce Buyer,  
Grocery Outlet*

"The holidays are a produce retailer's perfect storm for creative merchandising and high-traffic-driven demand and sales. I'm a BIG believer in 'go big or go home' for holiday merchandising on items that drive home our value message. We love to work with growers/shippers and take advantage of any and all point-of-sale (POS) materials to build large impactful displays for baking, snacking, and dessert. It's also a great time for wet rack spillovers on the traditional favorites like carrots, celery, green beans, and cranberries. Don't forget the avocados, though; there are a lot of football and holiday parties that aren't complete without guacamole."





GOLD SCALLOPED POTATOES

### INGREDIENTS

**2 lb** LIV Organic™ Gold Potatoes  
**1 medium** LIV Organic Yellow Onion, thinly sliced  
**1** garlic clove, minced  
**2 tbsp** unsalted butter  
**1 tbsp** fresh thyme, finely chopped  
**2 tsp** fine sea salt  
**1 tsp** black pepper  
**2 tsp** olive oil  
**1½ cups** heavy cream  
**1½ tbsp** flour  
 Cooked and diced bacon for topping (optional)

**Prep Time:** 20 min  
**Cook Time:** 1 hr 10 min  
**Servings:** 8–10

### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 350° F. Slice the potatoes about 1/8" thick. Place the sliced potatoes into a cold bath for about 10 minutes. Drain and pat dry.
- 2 Butter the baking dish. Set aside.
- 3 Toss together potatoes, minced garlic, sliced onions, thyme, salt, pepper, and olive oil in a large bowl. Layer them in the baking dish.
- 4 In a pan, heat heavy cream over medium heat. Add flour, whisking constantly. Reduce heat to low when it begins to bubble. Remove from the heat when the sauce has thickened slightly.
- 5 Pour sauce evenly over the potatoes. Cover the baking dish with foil and bake for about 50–60 minutes, or until the potatoes are tender. Bake uncovered for about 5–10 minutes more to brown.
- 6 Garnish with bacon if desired. Serve and enjoy!

To learn more about LIV Organic™, visit [www.livorganicproduce.com](http://www.livorganicproduce.com)



## Carrie Briones

Head of Sales and Grower Relations,  
LIV Organic™ Produce

TIME AT LIV ORGANIC™ PRODUCE: 4 Years

With Chandler James



DECEMBER MVP

HIGHLIGHTS



Traversing a career that spans over 17 years, Carrie Briones is well-versed in the language of citrus. She represented various packing houses early in her career before moving on to work with large-scale growers and distributors on the supply-side. Today, she specializes in the sale of organic products and has helped build LIV Organic™ Produce's program into the industry pioneer that it is. Her zest for the category is matched by her strong ability to forge relationships with growers, and there is much more in store for this sales trailblazer.

### WHAT YOUR ROLE IS REALLY LIKE

"That's a tough one. Like so many of us in produce, I wear a lot of hats. My focus, though, lies in day-to-day selling as well as working with our local growers on the best timing for harvesting optimal size and flavor in order to provide a product we and our partners can really stand by and be proud of."

### A MENTOR MENTORED: WHO HAS SHAPED CARRIE

**Franz De Klotz:** "My late mentor. He taught me everything from the field to sales and everything in between."

### HOW SALES BECOMES A LIFE LESSON

"Sales has taught me to be nimble and proactive. We are working with perishable products and supply that is constantly changing; no two days are ever the same."

### SURPRISE US

"I love to travel! Every year, I like to go to a place I have never seen before; I love new places and cultures."

## VALUES AT THE CORE

INTEGRITY

DEPENDABILITY

PERSEVERANCE

### WORDS OF WISDOM FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

"My best piece of advice is relationships are better built in person and over the phone. It's really important to interact and be involved with both your customers and growers face to face."



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# Making Seasonal Magic

By Jenna Plasterer

Every year as the winter holidays roll around, my mind drifts back to one of the most memorable Christmases I've ever had.

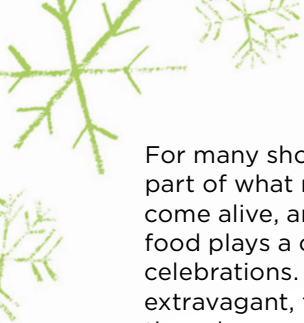
I was six, and money was tight, so in place of expensive gifts, my parents decided to make the holiday magical in other ways. On Christmas Eve, my dad piled us into our 1988 cherry-red Jeep Cherokee, lovingly nicknamed "The Red Bomb" and bearing a striking resemblance to Santa's sleigh, and we drove the streets of our little mountain town in search of Christmas lights.

As we meandered our way down each snow-covered road, Christmas songs like "Feliz Navidad," "Last Christmas," and my personal favorite at the time, "The Chipmunk Song," blared as we sang along. At every—and I mean EVERY—

house with any form of holiday light or decoration, my dad would pull the car over, and we would ooh and ahh before chorusing, "Merry Christmas and a happy New Year. Thank you very much for the warm, fuzzy feeling you've provided for us this evening." No matter how many times we said it, we all laughed and truly felt that spark of joy that makes the holidays unique.

After driving the entirety of the hill we lived on, our family returned home to a Crockpot™ of steaming hot chili, cornbread, and rich hot chocolate to warm us on the cold night—the perfect way to end a fantastic evening.

Over 20 years later, we still do this every holiday season, as it has become an incredibly meaningful tradition.



For many shoppers, traditions are part of what makes the holidays come alive, and like my family, food plays a crucial role in their celebrations. Whether simple or extravagant, the products or dishes they share are a form of connection, as if they are ingesting memories.

Gwillimdale Farms understands the importance of not only the holidays but the foods that make them special, like root vegetables. Products such as potatoes, onions, and carrots are often considered key ingredients in comfort dishes, as they are in the chili my family enjoys yearly, making them essential in the produce aisle all season long. As a family-owned business, the team at Gwillimdale wants to foster these lasting traditions that attach warmth and nostalgia to something as simple as vegetables. So, the grower is determined to keep its partners' shelves stocked with root vegetables and provide merchandising support that will help keep traditions alive while inspiring new ones.

"Our retail customers are part of our family, so we are expanding our marketing efforts to help support them through in-store promos, contests, and cause-marketing campaigns. We also manage most of our domestic transport in-house, ensuring on-time deliveries and guaranteeing our partners have

the products they need to cater to their shoppers, especially during the holidays," explains



**Quinton Woods,**  
Senior Sales  
and Plant  
Operations  
Manager,  
from his desk  
in Bradford,  
Ontario, Canada.

"Gwillimdale is always innovating and looking for alternative items to help expand our retail partners' offerings and give consumers more options in the produce department. With the current economic conditions, our focus is ensuring families can afford to eat nutritious and delicious root vegetables. Therefore, we are working on supplying a full line of #2 vegetables that provide the same nutrition and taste as #1 graded products, but with minor deficiencies in shape or size, to provide a discounted price for shoppers."

While some may think that once December turns to January, the demand for root vegetables drops, the Gwillimdale team sees room for additional opportunities. By making a quick and easy merchandising pivot from holiday traditions to New Year's resolutions, its customers can ride the sales wave of Halloween,

Thanksgiving, and Christmas straight into 2023.

After loading up on holiday fare, including rich stews, meats, and sweets—so many sweets—consumers begin looking for health-forward items that balance out their indulgence while still providing noteworthy flavor. And what could be better than fresh produce? Root vegetables, especially, provide small taste reminders of the holiday meals they just enjoyed and minimize food costs after recouping from seasonal spending.

"January is the time when everyone buckles down and gets a fresh start. Kicking off New Year's resolutions, many people start trading in indulgent holiday treats for vegetables and other better-for-you options," says



**Courtney Enns,**  
Marketing Manager.

"A large increase in healthful trends, especially in the months following the holidays, means more opportunities for our clients to promote nutritious and delicious root vegetables while boosting their sales. Gwillimdale Farms is here to help buyers capitalize on this fresh veg momentum by encouraging



"Our products are amazing because they not only bring strong and delicious flavors to the table, but they're also budget-friendly and extremely versatile, which is something shoppers are in need of now more than ever."

**Courtney Enns, Marketing Manager,**  
Gwillimdale Farms

wholesome root vegetables that provide essential everyday nutrients. Our products are amazing because they not only bring strong and delicious flavors to the table, but they're also budget-friendly and extremely versatile, which is something shoppers are in need of now more than ever."

Courtney details how simple it can be to make this transition from the holiday season into the new year, especially with the display tools and creative ideas Gwillimdale can pull out of its hat. She pauses for a moment before moving into her next vision for value. You can sense the strategies syncing up even more in real time.

"The flexibility and convenience root vegetables offer make them a retail favorite because they are so easy to promote. I mean, you can't go wrong with potatoes, carrots, and onions; they're staples," continues Courtney. "Buyers can merchandise the category with high-quality graphic displays highlighting their versatility to draw more customers to the produce department. Showcasing several different ways these vegetables can be prepared—such as sautéed, roasted, baked, fried, and even raw—will also benefit consumers. This provides shoppers with cooking insights that make eating produce more exciting."

Without a healthy guide of traditional holiday recipes determining what goes into shoppers' baskets, a common question consumers might ask themselves is, "What am I going to make for dinner?" To take the guesswork out of the shopping experience, Gwillimdale suggests that retailers take merchandising further by cross-promoting other recipe ingredients in the produce aisle. Not to mention the supplier provides in-house support for its customers, so if they need inspiration, produce managers and buyers can quickly get in touch with the company's insightful team.

"Consumers are busy, so they are looking for convenience when they hit the grocery store. We want to help make shopping easier, consumers healthier, and sales higher, so at Gwillimdale, we offer products in a variety of sizes to meet the needs of our customers based on their shoppers' habits," Courtney adds. "We want our partners to



"...we are working on supplying a full line of #2 vegetables that provide the same nutrition and taste as #1 graded products, but with minor deficiencies in shape or size, to provide a discounted price for shoppers."

**Quinton Woods, Senior Sales and Plant Operations Manager,**  
Gwillimdale Farms





The team at Gwillimdale Farms is committed to helping its retail partners thrive with consistent supplies, quality offerings, and unique marketing opportunities

succeed and encourage those who may be interested in in-store merchandising opportunities to reach out to Quinton."

With all these ways to keep root veg sales flowing, Gwillimdale's partners will need a consistent supply of offerings to keep shelves stocked. That is why the company has made several improvements to its facilities over the past year, ensuring operations run smoothly as demand peaks.

"Gwillimdale is continuously expanding. We recently underwent a major renovation of our carrot packaging plant in Bradford and introduced state-of-the-art carrot and potato lines this year that allow us to grow in the category, increase efficiency, and divert edible waste, all of which will enable us to better serve our partners, team members, and the Earth as we head into 2023," Quinton shares, bringing his more than 10 years with Gwillimdale to the reflection and the excitement. "We have also implemented new cleaning technologies and doubled our packaging capacity. This new expansion will allow us to maintain a good regular business while giving us extra capacity to handle the holiday surges."

But that is just one way Gwillimdale sets itself apart in the root vegetable category.

"Everything we touch and pack has been grown by us or specifically for us. We produce 75 percent of everything we package and sell, and we don't buy on the open market," Quinton clarifies. "Gwillimdale is also the largest fully integrated grower, packer, and shipper of root veg in Ontario, which is something we pride ourselves on, especially based on our humble beginnings and the hard work and dedication it has taken to get to this level."

In order to reach this point in the company's growth, the root vegetable expert has relied on its dedicated associates and partners to support ongoing expansion. They have been especially integral as Gwillimdale, alongside the rest of the industry, faced unprecedented hurdles caused by the pandemic, supply chain slowdowns, inflation, and more in 2022. Recognizing this, the grower has nothing but gratitude for those who played a key part in its success and uses this appreciation as motivation to give back.

"Looking back on the past year, especially as a family-owned and operated business, we are thankful for all the relationships that have continued to flourish and for the new ones made. Our partners' commitment to us has played a vital role in the growth we have been able to accomplish and the challenges we have overcome. Our owners the Hambly family and our team are exceptional. They always

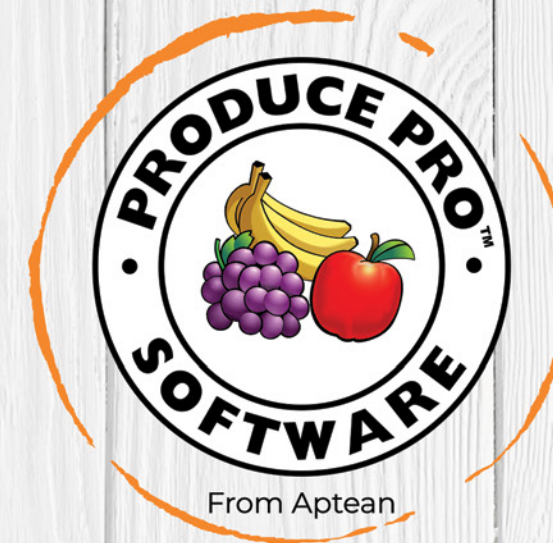
go the extra mile to ensure we supply only the freshest, best-quality vegetables," Courtney imparts. "We're grateful for how we have been able to educate the health of farm fresh vegetables while giving back to our community."

Keeping these individuals close to their hearts as it moves into the new year, Gwillimdale will stay the course, continuing to place its focus on the concepts that mean the most to the company.

"Being a family-owned and operated business, we aim to incorporate family values in everything we do. We will continue to rely on the people, like our passionate team, and the values such as trust, innovation, social responsibility, leading by example, and setting the standard with sustainability, that have played the biggest role in our ongoing successes," says Courtney passionately.

Just as consumers have their own beloved holiday rituals, so too does Gwillimdale Farms. Created to inspire togetherness and joy while bringing health to all, the grower's traditions embody the true spirit of the holidays.

So, let us all take a page from Gwillimdale's book and realize that what we each value is multifaceted and dimensional, it is caring for others and what is special to them that makes this season magical. ❄️



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# WTF DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

## Progressive Farms Asparagus ?



S.S.B.B. (SPEARS SPECIAL BREAKFAST BAGEL)

### INGREDIENTS

**5–6 spears** Progressive Farms Asparagus, washed and trimmed  
**1 medium** bagel, flavor of choice  
**2 large** eggs  
**2 tbsp** milk  
**4 tbsp** unsalted butter, divided  
**¼ cup** Cheddar cheese, shredded  
**3–4 slices** deli ham, or protein of choice  
Cream cheese, flavor of choice  
Salt, to taste  
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

**Prep Time:** 10 min  
**Cook Time:** 10 min  
**Servings:** 1



### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Slice the bagel and toast until crispy.
- 2 Meanwhile, crack eggs into a small bowl, add the milk, salt, and pepper, and whisk vigorously. Set aside.
- 3 Heat a medium non-stick frying pan over medium heat and melt 2 tbsp of butter.
- 4 Pan sear asparagus and deli ham for approximately 5–6 minutes, or until crispy and lightly browned. Remove from pan and set aside.
- 5 Using the same pan over medium heat, melt the remaining 2 tbsp butter.
- 6 Pour whisked egg mixture into the buttered pan, and stir continuously until the eggs have cooked through but are still soft. Add in the Cheddar cheese and continue mixing until the cheese melts.
- 7 Grab your toasted bagel and smear the top and bottom with cream cheese. On top of the bottom bagel half, stack the crispy ham, cheesy scrambled eggs, and seared asparagus. Place the top half of the bagel on top of the sandwich and enjoy!

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



# THE TREETALKER'S CODE:

A GUIDE TO CONVERSING WITH NATURE

BY JENNA PLASTERER

One of the most incredible things about language is its ability to evolve. It's constantly in a metamorphosis, waiting and ready to shift and mold to each development in our society. Words come and go with each day. Terms that meant everything at one point in history are now obsolete, and phrases that used to live on the fringe of our minds can step into the light, holding great power.

That said, I would like to propose a new word with a definition unique to this industry.

**Treetalker/trē-tôkər/:** One who has the ability to walk through an orchard or forest and have an almost sacred communion with the trees.

The origin of the word? Yakima, Washington, as that is where Dave Gleason, Horticulturist and Proprietary Variety Developer at Superfresh Growers®, works his magic interacting with the apple and pear trees that yield the company's coveted fruit.

Watching Dave work, he can seemingly decipher each arbor's wants and needs with a glance. Occasionally, he pulls a special magnifying glass from his pocket—one that was passed down from his father—to examine the leaves and bug populations that inhabit them, cutting a figure of a produce industry Sherlock Holmes.

On this day, he is making his way through an Autumn Glory® orchard, the sun shining behind him as he cranes his neck to inspect a group of creatures on the underside of a leaf.

"A whole city can live on a leaf," he explains, briefly glancing up from the glass before returning to watch the insects steadily march across the foliage.

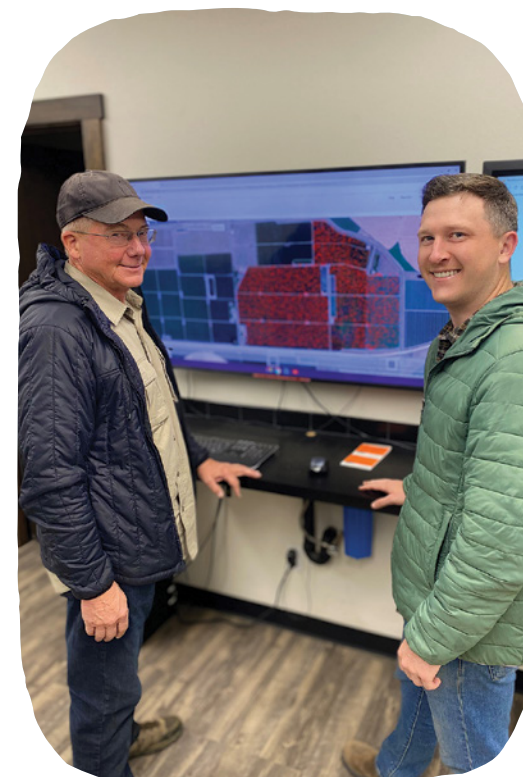
At this moment, it becomes clear that Dave is more than passionate about his job; he is completely enthralled with it. Walking the orchards is not just part of his duties; it is an experience in which he can form a deeper connection with the Earth and embrace the wonders of the natural world. How he sees the

branches, leaves, fruit, soil, and bugs is poetic and beautiful. This idea is further cemented when he talks about his love for mountaineering and the hike he took up Mount Cleman before coming to the orchard at 8 a.m.

It is this dedication that recently earned him the 2022 American Fruit Grower Apple Grower of the Year Award and the Washington State Tree Fruit Association 2021 Silver Apple Award.

The fascination with nature Dave fosters was formed in his youth, growing up in Washington's Yakima Valley.

"My grandfather had a farm I grew up on. He was teaching me all the time, and I was consistently learning, but I didn't realize that until later in my life," Dave says, magnifying glass now tucked back in his pocket. "In my younger years, I didn't like the work, but I liked being outside. Much of the work was repetitive in nature, and on a small farm, I was usually working by myself. It was lonely and tedious. I was hand-thinning apples, moving bins around with a tractor, and



Dave Gleason has been working on farms throughout his entire life, picking up invaluable tricks of the trade while developing a passion for the people and processes involved in growing



**"NEW LANGUAGES ARE LIKE A CODE, AND I WANTED TO FIGURE OUT WHAT THEY WERE SAYING. I'M CAPTIVATED BY LANGUAGE..."**

**DAVE GLEASON,**  
Horticulturist and Proprietary Variety Developer, Superfresh Growers®



mowing—which I always found most exciting."

Although he did not always enjoy the tasks that come with farming, a spark had been lit in Dave's mind that only grew as he continued with school, learning more about agriculture. Throughout high school, he was part of the Future Farmers of America (FFA) program. For all four years, he was cheered on by his teacher to explore every aspect of the industry, from livestock and row crops to plant identification, fertilizer, and water application. From there, he was hungry for new knowledge of agriculture and answers to the questions about each aspect of the industry he found so fascinating.

During this time, he also found another passion that, unbeknownst to him, would play a vital part in his role with Superfresh Growers—his interest in other peoples and cultures.

"Many Mexican immigrants that came to the Yakima region worked with my family, and that spurred my curiosity

in different cultures," he tells me. "New languages are like a code, and I wanted to figure out what they were saying. I'm captivated by language, so I took Spanish in high school and studied German and Spanish at Central Washington University—I wanted to become a Bible translator. Specifically, I wanted to go places without a written language, translate it, and use that to interpret the Bible."

However, Dave met his wife Babs, and they decided to remain in Yakima to raise their children, where he would soon pick up the language that has allowed him to converse with nature.

When a strike broke out at his meat-cutting job, Dave's father invited him to work with him, consulting on crop protection. He spent two years learning alongside his father before branching out on his own to manage orchards and, as they say, the rest is history. Over the last 20 years, he has been working for Superfresh Growers, reigniting his passion for learning, and picking up knowledge about packaging, sales, and marketing.

"I enjoy engaging with customers and learning their needs," Dave explains enthusiastically. "My job is navigating the challenges of growing the perfect apple. Getting the perfect fruit delivered to the right customer is extremely complicated. Difficult things happen when you grow things outside because it's an uncontrolled environment. We don't have power over the weather. But, I try to take negatives and make them into positives. It's about mitigating what you can with things like frost protection, disease/insect protection, and irrigation management."

As Dave continues to devour knowledge about his art form, he imparts that one of the most crucial subjects he studied is soil fertility and management.

"There is so much complexity of life and nutrients in the soil. We manage these nutrients, so they get into the tree and not into the groundwater; it's a delicate balance that takes time to understand. We always want to make sure that the trees get what they need. No more, no less," Dave describes, showing me exactly why having the skills of a

**“MY JOB IS NAVIGATING THE CHALLENGES OF GROWING THE PERFECT APPLE. GETTING THE PERFECT FRUIT DELIVERED TO THE RIGHT CUSTOMER IS EXTREMELY COMPLICATED. DIFFICULT THINGS HAPPEN WHEN YOU GROW THINGS OUTSIDE BECAUSE IT’S AN UNCONTROLLED ENVIRONMENT.”**

treetalker is so essential. Some people can’t read trees the way Dave does, comprehending their needs based on the color of their leaves.

Dave is committed to sustainable practices and is inspired by his love of nature and people. However, for him, the word sustainability does not only apply to the company’s farming practices; it’s also connected to a larger picture that includes the industry as a whole, then stretches to encompass all living things.

“We want to sustain life in general. So, I ask myself, ‘What can I do to sustain my life, those of everyone working around me, and of the trees?’” Dave enlightens me, looking around at the trees as if explaining his process to them, making them more than just the subject of our conversation, but participants in it. “Here at Superfresh Growers, sustainability is about nourishing the life of the crops we work with and the soil that supports that life. It is also important to sustain the employees and environment that tend to the fruit. We are then producing a product that sustains this business and the relationships we build in it over time. As you can see, the concept is much more intricate than it appears.”

For his and Superfresh Growers’ role in the process, they use regenerative farming techniques that maintain the land and crops they work with while also improving the environment for future generations. This includes practices like adding compost and returning prunings to the soil, using organic farming methods, and actively avoiding inputs that could hurt the growing system.

They are also doing their part to encourage their fellow produce companies to commit to sustainable practices. No man is an island; everyone is needed to ensure the industry thrives.

“So much of our industry’s business revolves around more than making a profit; it’s about surviving,” Dave articulates. “There needs to be complementary ideas that allow us to work together for the sake of the future, and we must consider the effects we create for our descendants. Therefore, we must ask ourselves, ‘What are we leaving behind?’ Are we honoring

**“...IT’S A DELICATE BALANCE THAT TAKES TIME TO UNDERSTAND. WE ALWAYS WANT TO MAKE SURE THAT THE TREES GET WHAT THEY NEED. NO MORE, NO LESS.”**

the work of the generations before us, whose work allowed us to get where we are today and be who we are? Are we honoring the generations ahead of us and leading by example?”

Instead of waiting for answers, Dave is taking action and using his voice to spread knowledge to his community.

Currently, he does volunteer work with industry organizations. This includes making positive impacts as part of the Washington Tree Fruit Research Commission’s Apple Protection Committee and Technology Committee and helping teach in the Washington Tree Fruit association’s Ag Leadership Program. Additionally, Dave is part of Washington State University’s (WSU) Apple Breeding Advisory Committee, working on analyzing and developing new apple varieties. He has presented to WSU’s ‘Next Generation Tree Fruit Network’ as well as the Apple & Pear Australia Limited grower association.

“Throughout my career, so many people have given to me and donated their wisdom. I realized I couldn’t repay people for how much they’ve contributed to me and my development, but I can pay it forward,” Dave says, once again putting things in a new perspective.

With this stake in the industry’s future, Dave is excited to see how agriculture and Superfresh Growers will continue to develop as new names and faces bring their inputs to the sector. As his mind reels with exciting potential for what these advancements entail, Dave begins to spout off some ideas that immediately pop into his head.

“Continuing to improve the varieties that are the mainstays of our industry, engaging with varieties that can tolerate climate change at a higher level, evaluating test blocks and researching new varieties, watching to see which varieties respond best to hot sun, discovering how plants can better tolerate hot conditions,” he lists.

I can’t help but smile in these moments, because it has been a long time since I’ve seen someone so genuinely excited about a subject. My happiness only grows when I learn from Dave that the industry’s future might rest in the hands of his relatives, especially after he has explained how hugely important family is to him.

“My family has tolerated my obsession with apples,” he chuckles. “Right now, my grandkids are becoming interested in what I do and enjoy going along with me to the orchards, where they ask all kinds


of insightful questions about trees and orchard infrastructure. I love engaging with the next generation because they are switched on. Now, it’s about asking myself how I can keep that light of curiosity on for them. How do you get them interested enough to ask, ‘What is going on here?’”

Just like trees that bloom in the spring and sleep in the winter every year, Dave’s life is like a cycle, and everything seems to be coming full circle. Talk about poetry. As a writer, I couldn’t lay out the story myself any better, even if I tried.

As we part, Dave leaves me with one final piece of advice.

“So many people are asleep, just looking toward the next weekend. But the moment we are in is pretty spectacular,” he expresses sagely.

What I wouldn’t give to experience life through Dave’s point of view as a treetalker. Because while most of us can only see the beauty of the trees, he can hear their unwritten language in the form of soft murmurings, lively songs, and urgent pleas, adding a rich essence to the world beyond our wildest dreams.

Luckily, Dave is an excellent translator. 



► MY FAVORITE THINGS ◀  
**JESSICA PRESS**

*National Sales/Business Development, Lipman Family Farms*

With **Jenna Plasterer**

If adventure is out there, Jessica Press will find it. After getting to know the intrepid leader, she has become my poster child for a life of excitement and happiness. In other words, she has an outlook I believe we should all strive for. So, come with us as we dive into some of the beautiful things that make every one of Jessica's days more memorable than the last...

1 “I cherish them because they make life special.”

2 “As my husband and I like to say, ‘Yay! Adventure!’ We love exploring new places.”

3 “It’s a fun way to express myself.”

4 “I don’t always love it in the moment, but I always feel better afterward.”

5 “If music be the food of love, play on.”  
- William Shakespeare

6 “It’s more than just a job; I love the people I work with daily.”

7 “Our pup. She is always so happy and brings us constant joy.”

8 “Seeing them passed down from generation to generation is very special.”

9 “No explanation needed. Who doesn’t love to laugh?”



- 1 Family and Friends

4 Working Out

7 Ivy
- 2 Adventure

5 Music

8 Traditions
- 3 Style

6 Working in Produce

9 Laughing

# HOLY SHEET

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# Libations

FOR ALL OCCASIONS:

## HOT-CINNAMON SANGRIA



By Melissa De Leon Chavez

An ice-cold beverage may bring a reprieve, but a warm one is comfort in a cup. From childhood hot cocoas to the toasty libations of adulthood, the ability to embrace a steaming mug is something I look forward to as the seasons turn colder.

And as soon as the chill set in around our Sacramento, California, headquarters, I was at local haunt Karma Brew for a mug of mulled wine, and it was a ritual I missed the first winter after moving away. So, a few internet searches and home trials helped me generate my own, what I've come to call, Hot-Cinnamon Sangria. In the years since, I've mixed and matched ingredients to my heart's desire. Now, you and your consumers can too!


This is an effortless creation with all the decadence of a laborious treat—for example, it will only take five minutes to get where we need to go at the right temperature. You do not want to keep the wine

cooking past the point steam starts to rise off the surface. So, for those of us who want to crank up the heat to quicken the process, take it from me, it is worth that small wait.

I am not the cook in my house, and the least likely to deviate from the instructions when I do. But, you really can't go wrong with additions to shake this up—the closest to disaster I've managed was admitting I loved some batches less than others.

Citrus, ginger, berries, apples—even dates worked with one particularly adventurous attempt.

My point is, this libation is yours to play with, no matter your culinary level. Whether you're positioning the brandy and Merlot in the produce department or serving a customer in the restaurant, the knowledge that they can take it home is almost as comforting as the drink itself.

*We'll take a cup of kindness yet, for auld lang syne.* 

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 regular** oranges, or **3 small** ones. Blood oranges set a fun holiday tone
- 1 bottle** of affordable dark wine, Merlot or Grenache (Garnacha) preferred
- ¼-½ cup** brandy, to taste
- 1-2 tbsp** maple syrup, to taste  
*Option: substitute your favorite honey*
- 2** whole cinnamon sticks
- 3** star anise
- 3** whole cloves  
*Tip: You can use 2 bay leaves in lieu of cloves and star anise*
- Optional garnishes: About **¼ cup** fresh blackberries, cranberries, and/or strawberries; additional cinnamon sticks; additional orange rounds or half moons

**Time:** 20 min  
**Servings:** 4 glasses

*Slow Cooker Option: Combine the mixture in your slow cooker, cover, and cook over low heat until steaming, about 30 minutes to 1 hour.*

### DIRECTIONS

- To prepare the oranges: Slice 1 orange into rounds and slice the others in half through the round middle. Place rounds in a medium heavy-bottomed pot. Squeeze the juice from the remaining oranges into the pot.
- Pour the wine and brandy into the pot. Add 1 tbsp of syrup or honey to start, cinnamon sticks, and spices—whether that is bay leaves, star anise, and/or cloves.
- Warm the mixture over medium heat until steaming (about 5 minutes) and keep a close eye. Reduce the heat to the lowest setting when steaming, just as any bubbles begin.
- Taste carefully; add syrup or honey as preferred to sweeten. To spice, continue cooking over very low heat for another 5-10 minutes. Check frequently as you do.
- Remove from heat, cover, and rewarm over low heat if necessary. Serve in mugs with your desired garnishes. I prefer blackberries and oranges, but cinnamon sticks and cranberries are ideal for a festive holiday party.
- Keep on the lowest heat setting if serving the entire batch in 30 minutes, or keep on a warmer for guests. Leftovers will keep in the refrigerator for a couple of days, covered. When saving, pour through a strainer to keep the desired flavor.

Photography by Craig Wheeler



# SEIZING OPPORTUNITY

A Q&A WITH BRIAN MILLER,  
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT,  
PRIME TIME INTERNATIONAL

BY ANNE ALLEN

*“How much I missed, simply because I was afraid of missing it.”*

It's a surprising entry on a website espousing inspirational quotes for businesses. As a Brazilian novelist and lyricist, Paulo Coelho might not strike many as an immediate source of motivation for fresh produce vets. Even if the connection is tenuous in your mind, you can probably relate to a missed opportunity or a path not chosen, and subsequently regretting it.

Perhaps the quote's resonance stems from a simple truth. Fear will dog your steps, no matter how hard you try to shake it loose or your desire to live fully. Fear will influence growth in the only way it knows how: negatively.

I know each opportunity for expansion in our industry is weighed heavily. No one is rushing into something without going over the details with a fine-toothed comb. I attribute a lot of this thoughtfulness to the family-oriented messaging of most companies in agriculture; the understanding that too many people's livelihoods rest on a decision for it to be made with haste.

Prime Time International saw such an opportunity when it added a new asparagus program to its portfolio, one that has seen tremendous growth in just a few short years. Spearheaded by Brian Miller and Fabian Sojos, Director of Grower Relations, this program is a testimony to implementing operational success across multiple channels.

Settle in as Brian, the Director of Business Development, and I reveal how this opportunity came to be.



**ANNE ALLEN:** Brian, I can remember first reporting on Prime Time's asparagus program when it began a few years ago. Since then, it's already seen substantial growth. Tell me, what drove the decision to add this category to your portfolio?

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

Over the years, Prime Time has been a premium grower, packer, and shipper of a variety of fresh produce items. Some of those items have been staples in our product lineup, while others have been seasonal novelties. Colored peppers have remained the primary superstars since day one, but it was time to share the spotlight.



Mini peppers became part of the mix for Prime Time nearly 10 years ago, and our asparagus debuted in 2017. This trio of products is now the backbone of the product line. The strength of Prime Time's customer and grower relationships showed true alignment and opportunity for success. Several of our bell pepper and mini pepper partners in Mexico also grow asparagus; the seasonality is complementary and the two crops pair well together. Likewise, peppers and asparagus fit nicely with the customer relationships Prime Time has built and nurtured over the past three decades.

**AA:** I love when opportunities like this read like the stars aligning. It all came together so well. As this program developed, what were some defining moments that let you know you had a good thing going?

**BM:** The commitment and dedication to build the Prime Time asparagus category was a twofold effort from the ownership, Mike Way and Jeff Taylor, as well as myself. When I came to Prime Time in the spring of 2017 with my own knowledge of the asparagus business, I also brought my experience and a number of relationships.

As the category rapidly grew into an extremely successful venture for Prime Time, it became apparent that asparagus was here to stay.

**AA:** It sounds like a match made in heaven! When you speak about the asparagus program to buyers, what else do you tell them that signifies the company's differentiation?

**BM:** Year-round availability of both organic and conventional asparagus has been a key component in Prime Time's growth. Both retailers and consumers love seamless programs, so we knew it was important to respond to a common need in the marketplace.


We've also seen exciting growth opportunities through an expanded distribution model, with operations in both McAllen, Texas, and Miami, Florida.

**AA:** You've got an impressive thing going here. Where do you see the program headed in the future?

**BM:** Prime Time is focused on advancing quality and strategic production windows to better service customer needs. With the addition of Fabian and an office in Miami, Florida, we began sourcing asparagus from Peru to complement the program in Mexico.

Fabian has worked tirelessly to fill the gaps in our existing production to help Prime Time become a year-round asparagus shipper. With consistent supply, Prime Time is a much more valuable partner to its customer base, a vital lesson learned from shipping peppers 365 days a year for over a quarter of a century. Overall, we see tremendous opportunity and growth ahead.

Since its inception, this program has proven that opportunities should be grasped by the horns. Once synonymous with bell peppers, Prime Time's name now evokes both that crunchy veg and the speared stalk of asparagus. Where would we be if fear had prevented this from happening? Arguably, in a much less interesting world.

So next time you come across a Paulo Coelho novel, take a beat. You might find inspiration to tackle your own opportunity the way the Prime Time team has so beautifully done theirs. 

**“YEAR-ROUND AVAILABILITY OF BOTH ORGANIC AND CONVENTIONAL ASPARAGUS HAS BEEN A KEY COMPONENT IN PRIME TIME'S GROWTH.”**

**Brian Miller,  
Director of Business  
Development,  
Prime Time  
International**

# WTF DO I DO WITH Opal® Apples ?

{ what the fork }



OPAL® APPLE TART

## INGREDIENTS

### FRUIT

**3** Opal® Apples, cored and sliced into 1/4" slices  
**1/2 cup** fresh cranberries  
**1/2 tsp** cinnamon  
**2 tbsp** sugar  
 Squeeze of lemon juice

### FRANGIPANE FILLING

**1 stick** unsalted butter, room temperature  
**1/2 cup** sugar  
**1 cup** almond flour  
**2** eggs, room temperature  
**1 tsp** vanilla extract  
**1 tbsp** all-purpose flour  
**1/4 tsp** salt  
 Zest of 1/2 orange

### PIE

**1** pie crust, store-bought or homemade

**Prep Time:** 15 min

**Cook Time:** 50 min

**Servings:** 1 tart (9")

## DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 375° F.
- 2 Lightly spray a tart pan with a removable bottom with cooking spray. Roll out the pie dough and trim the sides. Place the tart crust in the fridge to chill.
- 3 Using a stand mixer, combine all the frangipane ingredients together until smooth and creamy. Set aside.
- 4 Toss the apples and cranberries together with the cinnamon, sugar, and lemon juice.
- 5 Spread the frangipane mixture in an even layer on the bottom of the tart shell. Place the apples on top of the frangipane in a circular or decorative pattern. Scatter the cranberries over the top and place the tart on a parchment-lined baking sheet.
- 6 Bake for 45–50 minutes until lightly golden and the filling is set. Cool the tart before serving. Enjoy!

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## » The IF List « Julia Shreve

Director of Marketing - Brand and Innovation,  
Mastronardi Produce®/SUNSET®

With **Chandler James**

**A**re you ready to hear Julia Shreve ROAR? The Director of Marketing - Brand and Innovation at Mastronardi Produce®/SUNSET® is a welcome visitor in *AndNowUKnow* and *The Snack's* inbox, and boy, were we excited to see this roundup of responses. Throw on a pair of sweats and some classical music, or go full-throttle and jump off the side of a mountain with a parachute strapped to your back. Either way, you will get a taste of the adventurous life led by Julia and even get a peek at her "what IFs"...

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

Tacos. I will never pass up a good taco. Followed by cheesecake, of course.

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

I really enjoyed my time in consulting because I got to experience a whole range of industries. It's so interesting to see what sets industries apart and also what is common across them. I learned a lot about what keeps leaders up at night and what matters most.

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

Chopin. I'm a pianist, and he's always been one of my favorites to play. His music is infused with so much emotion and his life experiences sounded fascinating. A tortured soul, but one with good stories and perspectives!

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

Yoga pants and a sweatshirt. I'm all about being comfortable!

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

A giraffe—feet on the ground with a unique perspective above the trees. And very calm and serene.

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

*The Sound of Music*! It brings me so much joy! My kids have the whole thing memorized now, we watch it together every year.

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

Starbucks' Egg White and Feta Wrap. Good any time of 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?

Lady Gaga! I love her musicality, creativity, and boldness.

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

The day I went paragliding in the Swiss Alps. I conquered my fear of heights and jumped off the side of a mountain with a parachute. I was rewarded with the most amazing, gorgeous views on the way down.

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

Flying. I love seeing new places and could get there much faster (and cheaper) if I could fly!

### » IF you had to choose one song to be the soundtrack of your year, what would it be?

"Roar" by Katy Perry. I turned 40 this year and have realized how empowering it is to not let myself be held back by what other people think. 📢



# Leadership is a Living Process

A Q&A With  
**Raina Nelson,**

President and Chief Executive Officer,  
Westfalia Fruit Marketing USA

By Jenna Plasterer

## Great leaders grow.

This is a phrase that's been floating around my mind since I read Ken Blanchard and Mark Miller's book by the same name many years ago. It perfectly summarizes the need for those in leadership positions to maintain an open mind, stay flexible, and continue to explore new ideas to fulfill their highest potential.

In the book, one of the main characters asks a question that is valuable to all leaders—and especially pertinent to our industry, which we know is in a constant state of evolution, ebbing and flowing with each passing day.

"Will you be a leader who is always ready to face the next challenge, or will you be a leader that tries to apply yesterday's solutions to today's problems?"

When I brainstorm a list of companies in fresh produce that fit the first definition, one immediately comes to mind: Westfalia Fruit Marketing USA.

Since its initial inception in 1949, the avocado maven has stayed on the cutting-edge of sustainable agriculture and has expanded its global footprint across several continents to provide the best quality products to its partners.

In other words, the supplier has maintained steady growth for more than 70 years, always looking for the next branch it can climb in its mission to reach the top of the tree.

To learn how Westfalia reached its current perch, what challenges the company is taking on, and what strategies it has up its sleeve to make it to the next limb, I connected with Raina Nelson, President and Chief Executive Officer, Westfalia Fruit Marketing USA, a formidable leader in her own right.

Q1

**Jenna Plasterer:**

Raina, seven decades in fresh produce is no small feat for any company. As the industry has grown over all these years, what differentiates Westfalia

from the pack and makes it such a valuable partner for retail and foodservice buyers?

**Raina Nelson,  
President  
and Chief  
Executive  
Officer,  
Westfalia Fruit  
Marketing USA:**

Partnering with Westfalia provides access to premium programs with unparalleled service and, arguably, the world's most knowledgeable team of #avoexperts. Our avocado program literally begins with the seed because we want to ensure that the best fruit nourishes lives across the globe. Our vision is to make Westfalia fruit available to all plates, everywhere.

Westfalia is proud of our global footprint with the world's most diverse avocado supply chain spanning several continents. Our exceptional supply chain ensures our customers receive the highest-quality fruit possible when and where they need it. We offer a unique experience when it comes to an avocado partner because our collective global knowledge and expertise provide an unmatched offering supported by the most innovative programs, from rootstock development to extraordinary service and premium fruit.

Our most important asset is our global team, which is more united than ever as we've successfully integrated our operations worldwide to optimize our avocado expertise. We are truly better together.

Q2

**JP:** Wow! It seems like Westfalia has its hands in just about every part of the avocado supply chain. Can you share more about your global supply chain and what goes into producing Westfalia avocados?

**RN:** We start in our nurseries, established across the world, which are fully accredited and recognized for providing premium-quality avocados. We have avocado estates located on continents including North America, South America, Africa, and Europe. Our avocados are grown and carefully evaluated for quality and maturity attributes before we hand-pick them from all of our orchards.

In addition to growing our fruit, Westfalia also sources, ripens, packs, processes, and markets quality avocados year-round, all in a sustainable manner. We are experts at ripening and marketing avocados, and retailers and consumers will surely benefit from the Westfalia difference in delivering an excellent product.

Q3

**JP:** While I can see Westfalia's global presence is vital to the company's value proposition, I also know its ethos makes it stand out. How would you describe Westfalia's culture, and how does that impact your industry relationships?

**RN:** Our mission is to do good, and our corporate culture reflects that in all facets of our business. We always hold our values of quality, innovation, inclusivity, health and safety, and integrity in the highest regard, and we look to them as our guideposts.

We use these tenets to form incredibly strong partnerships with our customers and do successful business together—this has been our special recipe for success and has been effective worldwide.

Additionally, we are passionate about sustainability, which is something we won't let take a back seat. We want to be the best stewards of the environment. We're dedicated to actionable, sustainable practices to future-proof the avocado industry and are aligned and committed to the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Overall, we aim to be carbon-neutral by 2049, which will be the best way to celebrate our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Q4

**JP:** That would be a huge milestone to celebrate alongside, well, another colossal milestone! With sustainability as such an integral part of Westfalia's operations, how have you seen demand for sustainable practices grow, and what action is the company taking to meet that call?

**RN:** Demand is rising, and Westfalia is ready to meet it.

Our company is rooted in sustainability, and the vision of our Founder, Dr. Hans Merensky, has guided the success of these ever-evolving initiatives over the past seven decades, shaping the company's environmental ethos.

We are wholly dedicated to producing safe, exceptional-quality fruit while

ensuring sustainable, ethical, and responsible management of its bio-resources for the environment and communities in which we operate. Proactive steps are taken daily to achieve zero waste to landfill, carbon neutrality, and reduced pesticide usage on farms. At Westfalia, we are genuinely living out actionable sustainability—it's our responsibility and thus why Westfalia is the first Fairtrade-accredited avocado supplier worldwide. Our comprehensive sustainability strategy prioritizes the environment, local economies, and, most importantly, our people.

An example of our commitment can be seen in our low-flow drip technology that uses small pipes to emit less than one liter of water an hour (per nozzle) and is just enough to replace what's been lost through evaporation and transpiration.

This not only saves water, but the technique improves the air in the soil and produces higher yields and healthier soils, allowing Westfalia's growers to use up to 43 percent less water while also increasing the output and economic value of the fruit.

**"Our most important asset is our global team, which is more united than ever as we've successfully integrated our operations worldwide to optimize our avocado expertise. We are truly better together."**

**Raina Nelson,**  
President and Chief Executive Officer,  
Westfalia Fruit Marketing USA



Q5

**JP:** Talk about the magic of science. That is a fantastic feat! Speaking of programs, what other areas is Westfalia currently focusing on, Raina?

**RN:** Currently, we are expanding globally and entering new markets, including India and other parts of Asia. We are also opening up new nurseries in emerging growing regions across the world to create a sustainable, quality supply of avocados, supporting that vision of providing a Westfalia avocado to every plate in the world.

In terms of product innovation, Westfalia is looking for creative ways to use the whole avocado for an array of value-added offerings.

Last but not least, we are expanding our ripening capabilities and capacities in the United States. By the end of 2022, we will double our ripening capacity in our Oxnard, California, location and incorporate the Westfalia ripening technology we utilize in other regions of the globe. This will support significant growth for our Deuces foodservice line and give our customers a highly customized ripening specification for the perfect piece of ripe and ready-to-use fruit.

Q6

**JP:** With so many exciting plans already underway, I can't help but be curious about what's on the horizon for Westfalia. Can you share any details?

**RN:** Right now, the company is focused on taking the avocado category into the future and breaking down barriers that customers and consumers find challenging. We will introduce new technology and innovation to our processes and products that will strengthen the Westfalia value proposition while remaining true to our sustainability initiatives. We have some exciting product development initiatives that will be ready to launch soon, transforming shelves and delighting dishes in 2023—stay tuned!

As Blanchard and Miller explain in *Good Leaders Grow*, leadership, whether in a relationship or an industry, means not resting on one's laurels because leadership is not a title. Instead, leadership is a living process, and life is characterized by growth. If that is true, Westfalia is a perfect example of a leader, from the roots up, always daring to take the next step forward, always learning, and always searching for solutions to challenges that will help our industry and our world thrive. 🌱

**"At Westfalia, we are genuinely living out actionable sustainability—it's our responsibility and thus why Westfalia is the first Fairtrade-accredited avocado supplier worldwide. Our comprehensive sustainability strategy prioritizes the environment, local economies, and, most importantly, our people."**



## A Q&A WITH TONY INCAVIGLIA, VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES AND MARKETING, GR FRESH

By Chandler James



### BJECTIVITY IS A GUIDING PRINCIPLE IN MY LIFE.

In a world where so many aspects of humanity are up for interpretation, I've come to hold this characteristic very

close to my heart. It is what keeps me grounded in moments when I get caught up in the stories I tell myself. The dangerous rabbit hole of doubt and discomfort.

Thus, I coax myself toward what I know is true. What are the facts? I have to identify objectivity before I can move forward, because the reality I experience in my head is rarely the same as what is staring me in the face.

In speaking with countless industry members about sustainability, I

find the same to be true. We often conjure images of an idealistic utopia when, really, what we need to be working toward can already be held in our hands. In stepping outside our own heads and looking at the bigger picture, we can begin to take proactive steps forward—to let go of those intangible ideals and begin to make real change.

Objectivity allows us to see what needs to be done and to see that we cannot do it alone. Too much subjectivity can render us paralyzed or unable to see the true path ahead and how to get there.

What's true: The Earth and its economies and cultures are not sustainable without our engagement. What's false: the story we tell ourselves that it is someone else's job, or that we have more time.

It's not just our vision for the future, but the actions we take every day.

Everything comes back to creating objectives. Achievable goals with actionable steps to accomplish them. When you know who you are, you know where you're going.

I learned this from Tony Incaviglia, who recently sat down with me to discuss GR Fresh's refined sustainability vision. The Vice President of Sales and Marketing rolled out the roadmap to a more sustainable future, though I was surprised to find these guideposts along the way.

Take a moment to read for yourself how the vegetable grower makes sustainability a reality.

1



**CHANDLER JAMES:** We've all heard the same question asked before: What actions are you taking to become a more sustainable company? Heck, I myself posed this open-ended question to many interviewees as I was earning my stripes in this industry. Instead, though, I'll ask you this: In your journey toward becoming a more sustainable company, what areas of your operations have become the most important to nurture?

**TONY INCAVIGLIA, VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES AND MARKETING, GR FRESH:**

GR Fresh is focused on three specific sectors that have become the company's pillars for success: production, distribution, and transportation. Through these efforts, we've been firmly rooted in the fresh produce industry and stick by our strong beliefs in sustainability, social responsibility, and excellence in safe food production. Thanks to our six-decade-long presence in Mexico, we are ready to enter demanding domestic markets to develop relationships with partners who share our goals and vision.

We are dedicated to ensuring our customers receive the freshest and highest-quality produce through the use of innovative technologies while upholding high standards throughout production and distribution. The GR Fresh team prides itself on high-yield production practices and a strong social commitment to our partners, employees, and the environment. Our promise is that, by choosing us, we will always uphold these standards for your satisfaction.

**“FOR US TO BE TRULY SUSTAINABLE, WE MUST BE ENVIRONMENTALLY AND ECONOMICALLY SOUND, BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, SOCIALLY EQUITABLE.”**

**TONY INCAVIGLIA, VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES AND MARKETING, GR FRESH**

2

**CJ:** Personally, what piques my interest most is the social responsibility component of your sustainability vision. It's been said many times before that this is a relationship-focused industry, and I think that is often said in connection to business partnerships. But, what you seem to be saying is that social responsibility comes down to the relationships and respect that is built between the employer, employees, and growers. Am I understanding you correctly?

**TI:** Absolutely. Here at GR Fresh, we are only as good as the people we employ and choose to team up with.

For us to be truly sustainable, we must be environmentally and economically sound, but more importantly, socially equitable. We believe we are sustaining because we have focused on our people and have grown by caring for and improving our work environment.

Further proof of our sustainable business practices is in the development of our own socially responsible Agro For People platform. I believe we are one of the few, if not the only produce company, in the industry that has developed such a program for our employees. Human rights, family values, and gender equality are cornerstones of our program, and we provide personal development opportunities through classes that further their education.



3

**CJ:** Of course, we cannot talk about sustainability without mentioning Mother Earth. Our natural environment has changed drastically due to unsustainable choices humans have made over the years. While we may not be able to reverse it immediately, we can certainly put an end to it by making more conscious choices with the objective of sustaining our planet long into the future. How does GR Fresh work to minimize its environmental footprint with this goal in mind?

**TI:** In our business, sustainability suggests doing business without negatively impacting our environment, community, or society as a whole. Our mission of achieving a sustainable business strategy is to make a positive impact in all of those areas. When companies fail to accept responsibility, the opposite can happen, leading to issues like environmental ruin, inequality, and social injustice.

We take into account a wide array of environmental, economic, and social factors when making business decisions. It's important to consider the impact of our operations to ensure that profits today don't turn into liabilities tomorrow.

Other sustainable efforts include using plant-based materials for our value-added packs, such as our new compostable packaging, which can be naturally degraded into the soil without leaving harmful toxic residues. It's been a hot topic for several years now, and we are ready to play in that arena.

**“IT'S IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER THE IMPACT OF OUR OPERATIONS TO ENSURE THAT PROFITS TODAY DON'T TURN INTO LIABILITIES TOMORROW.”**



**THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OBJECTIVITY AND SUBJECTIVITY IS CONTROL.** When you take those stories you've told yourself at face value, you surrender to a reality that is not grounded in truth. Objectivity puts truth in the palm of your hands, allowing you to make decisions based on outside forces that influence your journey. And while we might not be able to control all aspects of our sustainable evolution, we'll take what we can get.

After speaking with Tony, I can now say I have a new perspective on sustainability. A strong foundation to any plan is a rock-solid identity, and GR Fresh knows itself through and through. 🌱



# WTF DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

DelFrescoPure®  
YES!Berries®

?



STRAWBERRY CINNAMON ROLLS

## INGREDIENTS

**1 package** YES!Berries® Strawberries,  
chopped in small pieces

**1 package** of Pillsbury™ Grands!™  
cinnamon rolls

Maple syrup, optional

**Prep Time:** 10 min

**Cook Time:** 25 min

**Servings:** 5

## DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven according to Pillsbury package directions. Line a baking tray with a silicone liner or parchment paper.
- 2 Set aside ½ cup of berries to add to the icing later.
- 3 Carefully open each cinnamon roll and sprinkle in berry pieces. Roll each one back up and tuck a few more pieces in around the top. Continue with each cinnamon roll equally.
- 4 Bake for 20–25 minutes until the tops are lightly golden. While they are baking, mash the remaining ½ cup of berries and stir into the icing provided.
- 5 Remove cinnamon buns from the oven and drizzle with strawberry icing. Serve warm and enjoy!

*Tip: Add maple syrup to the bottom of your baking tray for a delicious, golden, and sticky base!*

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



# Celebrating THE BESTIES

OF THE

BY THE SNACK EDITORIAL TEAM

# Best

**O**ur team is, in many ways, here to be witnesses for this industry.

From our seat at the table, we sift among the traffic, bustle, and glory of the newswires, trade shows, burgeoning relationships, quiet conversations, origin stories, progressive visionaries, and advocates to find those diamonds—both in the rough and glistening brightly—generating volume, magnitude, and light.

We are here to acknowledge those harbingers of change that we like to call our marketers, and to celebrate them for their unabashed drive, will to inspire and be inspired, and their deep

love for the industry in its present and legacy.

This past July of 2022, we honored those marketers and companies with vision, foresight, inventiveness, and artistry with our inaugural Besties Awards. Our team created the Besties to celebrate produce branding, marketing, and overarching achievements, as well as to advocate for those members striving to keep our industry on the leading edge of competitive messaging, vision, and action.

As we wrap up 2022 with an overwhelming sense of connection and gratitude, our writers came together to share with you the individual stories on *AndNowUKnow (ANUK)* for each award, and we bring you the winners once again as we step behind the curtain to let their lights shine bright.

# 87

## Lifetime Achievement Award

### Nichole Towell

Nichole brings an effortless blend of industry knowledge, creative marketing, and enthusiastic energy to each interaction and project that meets her desk. Our team has worked closely with Nichole since the early days of *AndNowUKnow*, conceptualizing, innovating, and executing ideas and projects that made us better as a company, and crystallized in our minds the kind of marketer, human, and advocate that we wanted to go to bat for every day.

“I am incredibly pleased and honored to receive the inaugural Lifetime Achievement Besties Award. Our industry is filled with talented people, so to receive this award is humbling. I have always enjoyed pushing the marketing and publicity envelope with the entire *ANUK* team. Our first field video shoot included a helicopter in Belle Glade, Florida—it was before drones were used—and we flew with *ANUK*’s President and Chief Executive Officer, Robert Lambert, tied in but hanging out, with the doors taken off and the camera in his hands. From there to shooting in 3D and using Oculus to show and give buyers the true infield growing experience, I am thankful for all the moments and learning experiences we have enjoyed with *ANUK*.”



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

## Best Marketer to Work With

### Megan Gorgisheli

Industrious, creative, perceptive, discerning—these are just a handful of the words we use to describe Megan Gorgisheli. As the Director of Marketing Administration for industry giant Giumarra Companies, Megan has a keen sense of what retailers want, what her company’s vision is, how artists think, and how to bring all levels of collaboration together into a seamless campaign, packaging design, advertisement, or, simply, a conversation.

“I am honored to be recognized by the team at *AndNowUKnow*. We have been working together for over 10 years, and some beautiful, unique ideas for Giumarra have emerged as a result of our collaboration. *ANUK* does a great job of bringing our products and programs to life through a variety of creative vehicles—like print, video, digital design, and photography—that help our customers learn about our offerings in a fun and exciting way. Our process is one of mutual trust and feeling comfortable with stepping outside of our comfort zones, communicating what is and isn’t working, and throwing in a healthy dose of humor. The Besties Award on my desk will remind me to not shy away from asking ‘What if we...?’ during the creative process.”



*Megan Gorgisheli,*  
Director of Marketing  
Administration,  
Giumarra Companies

## Annual Snack Storyteller Award

### Brianna Shales

Stories shared across family gatherings are the bonds that tie us together. Those experiences are exactly what Stemilt has managed to share through its bins, packaging, and marketing strategy. It makes complete sense, therefore, that the maven of these has identified as a storyteller all her life. Brianna Shales, Stemilt’s Marketing Director, is our first recipient for this award, for consistently finding the heart of a story, what makes it unique but universal, and making us feel truly connected to the company’s operations through words and imagery.

“To receive this was really special to me because I’ve been telling stories since I was a little kid, so it was really fun to be recognized for storytelling and to go home and share it with our marketing team, my husband, and kids. It all comes down to our mission to cultivate people and delight consumers through excellence. We are a family-owned business, and one of our main values is to practice integrity and trust—that relationship side is what has helped us transcend over time. We want everyone to become a part of the family, and that happens through sharing stories and experiences.”



*Brianna Shales,*  
Marketing Director, Stemilt

## Best Merchandising Campaigns

### Mission Produce

From Mission Produce’s Size-Minded display signs, AvocaDOs and DON’T’s back-of-the-house signage/resources, and Shelf Talkers to the vibrant packaging that adorns its products, it was clear to us that the avocado maven should receive this award. We view Mission as a leader in the category and an innovator in its own right.

The avocado and mango sectors are two areas where we’ve seen impressive growth in terms of consumer demand, and that is due in large part to the creative merchandising efforts implemented by Mission and its retail partners.

“Mission Produce is honored to accept the Besties Award for Best Merchandising Campaigns! At Mission, our campaigns are crafted to help create solutions for our customers and drive category growth. We aim to generate demand for every avocado on the tree by utilizing educational messaging, consumer-friendly packaging, and creative merchandising. Thank you for recognizing our commitment to innovate within the avocado category.”



*Jennifer Anazawa,*  
Senior Category Manager,  
Mission Produce

## Best Alternative Marketing Campaign

### Sunview Marketing International

**H**arnessing the power of outside-of-the-box thinking and striking visuals, the table grape savant has garnered attention for its Sweet Carnival campaign catapulting its buy-side customers and shoppers right into the fairgrounds, complete with carnival games, rides, a big top, and of course, delicious table grapes. From a 3D pop-up carnival tent to augmented reality experiences and scratch-and-sniff stickers, Sunview Marketing International continues to bring new fresh produce experiences that stop consumers in their sweet table grape tracks.

“Sunview has a history of being at the forefront of innovation, and Sweet Carnival is another example of our commitment. Unique marketing for this brand has helped break through the clutter and deliver a clear message that Sweet Carnival is different from other grapes. As a result, our retail partners have experienced incremental category growth with this grape and our other proprietary brands. We are a third-generation family farm that has been committed and will always be committed to innovation and being our customers’ single source for grapes out of California. Thank you for recognizing us with the Besties Award.”



*Mitch Wetzel,*  
Vice President of Sales  
and Marketing, Sunview  
Marketing International



*Julia Shreve,*  
Director of Marketing - Brand  
and Innovation, Mastronardi  
Produce®/SUNSET®

@sunsetgrown

## Best Social Media Culinary Artistry

### Mastronardi Produce®/ SUNSET®

**T**he distinctive SUNSET® brand from Mastronardi Produce® sets a new bar in social strategy, presenting produce as a craveable commodity. The digital age, and the access it has given our industry, has broadened the capabilities of lending food preparation and possibilities to the masses, and this company among many has truly stood out. With in-house innovation in food science and flavor combinations—not to mention strong attention to detail in aesthetics—Mastronardi Produce continues to capture the attention and palates of every sector or buyer, consumer, and trade news writer.

“We were so excited to receive this award. We saw an opportunity to leverage social media in a much greater way to connect with consumers, looking at what engages best and also what represents our brand. Now, we are in a remarkable space in which influencers reach out asking to partner with us. So, we are very proud of where we are today on social media.”

## Best Educational Videos

### Chelan Fresh

**T**he locks to many doors in life can be opened with education-shaped keys, and the produce industry is no different. Offering retailers, consumers, and fellow suppliers critical insights into the world of growers through its farm education videos, Chelan Fresh understands this concept. That is why the fruit connoisseur recently took home a Besties Award for Best Educational Videos for campaigns from #FarmFriday videos to videos spotlighting female growers in the industry.

“At Chelan Fresh, we have found that not only do our retail buyers want to continue to learn more about our farming operations, but consumers are also especially fascinated by everything that growers do to bring a crop to the retail shelves. Our farm education videos are some of our best-performing content across our social media channels as consumers continue to soak in all of the knowledge that growers provide in these videos. It allows consumers to connect directly with our brands and feel a part of the fruit they enjoy.”



*Lorinda Oscarson,*  
Brand Content Manager,  
Chelan Fresh

## Best Snack Ad

### Pure Flavor®

**T**he *Snack Magazine* is committed to visually elevating the fresh produce industry, driven by our passion to publish not just a trade magazine, but a book that could rest proudly next to *Vogue*, *Food & Wine*, or *Travel + Leisure*. Add in the mindset that we are a team of creatives who see categories instead of commodities, and you see how words like specialized, unique, and diverse may also contribute to the aesthetic of this publication. This award gave us the ability to showcase those who also see categories, brands, and stories worth being spotlighted. And when it came to selecting the Best *Snack* Ad, no one reflected that vision like Pure Flavor®.

“When it comes to advertising, I think this award says a lot about what we’ve done, and we are blown away to be the best ad of the year. I am humbled and very proud of my team for bringing our Solara™ ad to life. You do have to have the right product and right timing, but most importantly the right message. Everything is focused on inspiring people and creating more consumption. I use *The Snack* as a benchmark for our creativity, and you see in everything we do an intention to be for everyone.”



*Chris Veillon,*  
Chief Marketing  
Officer, Pure Flavor®

## Best Podcast

### Mucci Farms

Since *Spill the Greens*' inception in 2020, Mucci Farms has been harnessing this wide-reaching channel to bridge the gap between consumers and the supply-side, and with great success. We were incredibly excited to honor Mucci Farms for its innovative efforts to bring valuable insights to light and arming consumers and everyday people with vital knowledge about controlled environment agriculture and the fresh produce industry.

"We were excited to find out that we received the inaugural Bestie for Best Podcast. It means a great deal to us as we continue to expand our communication strategy and establish our footing in the podcasting world. We don't just want to grow great fruits and vegetables—we also want to grow our company and our industry. Our podcasting efforts are one piece of the puzzle that helps us continue on our mission to be North America's preferred supplier. One of the goals behind *Spill the Greens* was to utilize our knowledgeable staff to provide information about controlled environment agriculture. The long-form podcast format gives us the ability to have full-length conversations with experts that can provide detailed responses to common questions so our audience can see the entire picture of a given topic."



*Ajit Saxena,*  
Public Relations and  
Digital Marketing  
Manager, Mucci Farms

## Best Rebrand

### Red Sun Farms™

When Red Sun Farms™ debuted its new logo in February 2021, we at *AndNowUKnow* and *The Snack Magazine* were all captivated by that little butterfly. The vibrant colors, clean design, and welcoming visuals create a new brand experience all its own, strengthening the gravitational pull of the greenhouse category on shoppers' baskets. That is exactly why we recognized Red Sun with this first-ever award. Attractive paper trays, clamshells, and bags now line the shelves of produce aisles, adorned with Red Sun's lively new logo that facilitates instant brand recognition. With the importance of branding as prevalent as ever, conscious efforts to improve visibility are a supplier's ticket to maximizing ROI, and that benefit can be seen on the retailer's end as well.

"We are truly honored to receive the Besties Award for our recent Red Sun Farms rebrand! The positive response from retailers and the industry has been overwhelming. We are excited to showcase our amazing tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers through this new design."



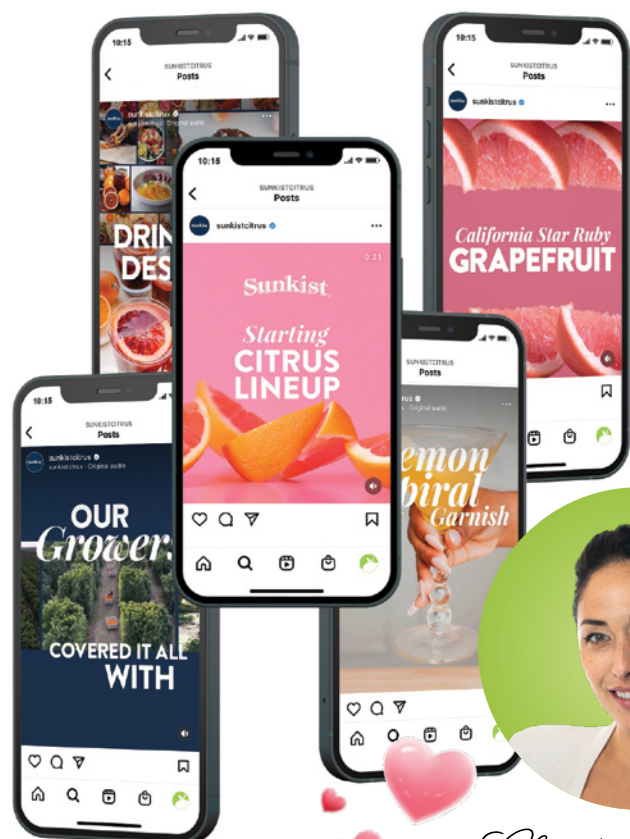
*Leona Neill,*  
Director of Marketing and  
Packaging, Red Sun Farms™

## Best Social Media Campaigns

### Sunkist Growers

We have yet to see the social media zenith, but some of the brightest minds in the fresh produce industry hope to usher in this era. Creative campaigns in social media can rally consumers and beguile buyers. It's no wonder that we focused on the sector for our Besties Awards, and little wonder still that Sunkist Growers took home this award for its clever, attention-grabbing, and creative messaging, presentation, and thought leadership.

"At Sunkist Growers, everything we do is for our growers—it drives us to be innovative leaders within the produce industry. Winning a Besties Award, especially during the inaugural season, for Best Social Media Campaigns is truly an honor. We are focused on campaigns that hit the sweet spot—balancing both the beloved legacy of our 130-year-old cooperative with current trends that engage our target audiences. On social media, we focus mostly on millennial and Gen Z shoppers through educational, engaging content. As the longest-standing agricultural cooperative in the nation, being recognized within the crowded digital and social media landscape is excellent, but engagement and conversion are the most important."



*Christina Ward,*  
Senior Director of Global  
Marketing, Sunkist Growers

## Best Behind-the-Scenes Champion

### Rainier Fruit Company

Rainier Fruit Company has long been a champion for its own team members, growers, customers, and growing consumer base; celebrating everything from the ins and outs of the company's orchards to its sustainable farming practices. A worthy recipient of our inaugural Besties Award for Best Behind-the-Scenes Champion, campaigns like its Wholesome Heros program and *The Snack Industry Spotlight* features continue to shine a light on the best, and yes, the brightest.

"Rainier has always been committed to doing what's right for the land and our people. A lot of this work is done without the intention of winning any awards, but this recognition is something we value very much! We thank the *ANUK* team for honoring us with this Besties Award. We'll continue to be active in pursuing and sharing the most sustainable farming practices to grow the best fruit we can. Educating consumers and buyers can be one of the most challenging things to do and the best way is with boots on the ground but that's not always achievable. Our vision is to let the people doing the work in the field and warehouse talk about it! It's best to hear about what is happening directly from the source."



*Blake Belknap,*  
Vice President of Sales,  
Rainier Fruit Company

## Best Email Ad Campaign

### Divine Flavor

**D**ivine Flavor's vibrant aesthetic and clean messaging truly align with how we here at *AndNowUKnow* also cultivate visual messaging. The Divine team constantly thinks outside of the box and looks for ways to come up with creative campaigns that speak to consumers' wallets while on retail shelves in addition to shining a spotlight on the delicious greenhouse-grown products the grower is known for. For, as we all know, our eyes eat first.

"It's a great recognition. Our creative team deserves the credit for this. Our Brand Manager, Luis Urbina, and his creative team do an excellent job trying to capture and highlight products; there are only so many ways that you can highlight tomatoes, cucumbers, and bell peppers. But one thing that he and the team really try to do is incorporate flavor, freshness, and stylistic colors to capture the audience's attention. Between the marketing department, Luis, and me, we brainstorm ideas. You get this one opportunity to catch the viewer's eyes, and it takes a bit of strategy to make sure it's engaging."



*Michael DuPuis,*  
Public Relations  
Manager, Divine Flavor


## Best Philanthropic Initiatives

### Allen Lund Company

**A**s if helping to bring a vital source of fruits and vegetables to market is not already an impressive feat, there are some companies that continuously go above and beyond to be a pillar in their communities. This is what made Allen Lund Company (ALC) the perfect fit for this award. From raising funds for notable charities to helping bring groceries to food-insecure families during the holiday season, ALC takes every opportunity within its reach to maintain this legacy and continue giving back to those in need.

"From the company's founding, Allen Lund taught all those who would come to work at ALC that it is critical to be grateful for our opportunities and the blessing of hard work and to share success with others in need. In his final address to the company's leaders, he requested that we continue our Acts of Kindness initiative to give back to the communities in which we operate. Winning this award indicates that we are continuing to honor his legacy. This recognition means so much to all the employees who have worked to assist others in need and to share our blessings."

*Kenny Lund,*  
Executive Vice President,  
Allen Lund Company

**W**e are nothing without you, our friends, our partners, and our colleagues. May you each recognize the potential in yourselves, and may we help to share your stories, your vision, and your contagious enthusiasm for this wild and wonderful industry of fresh produce. 



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## A Q&A With Oscar Guzman, Director of Marketing and Sales, Progressive Produce

BY LILIAN DIEP

### ROOTED.

After getting to know Oscar Guzman, this is the first word that immediately sprouts in my mind when it comes to both Progressive Produce and the Director of Marketing and Sales.

Our industry knows roots very well, for without strong roots, the very livelihood we all share would become quite difficult to maintain. This thematic presence makes itself known throughout many applications, not just in fresh produce.

Roots, branches, the applications of a tree in its entirety, they're all used to portray similarities and connections

in our day-to-day life, such as corporate entities, website domains, or familial lineage. The Tree of Life is a fundamental archetype we all know well; and just like this spiritual life force, Progressive Produce provides its own sustaining energy.

Built on five key tenants—or branches, if you care to continue my earthly metaphor—the supplier's marketing department extends life into the world of produce with innovative products and effective go-to market strategies. The fierce marketing team is known for producing more inviting products than just fresh produce, and Oscar was more than happy to dig into the company's foundations with me.

1



**LILIAN DIEP:**  
When I think of Progressive Produce, creative recipes and intriguing marketing campaigns come to mind, but I know there's more to it than meets the eye. Can you tell me what drives you while working at Progressive, Oscar?

**OSCAR GUZMAN, Director of Marketing and Sales, Progressive Produce:**  
At Progressive, we are built on five Core Values. Our team is relentless in our pursuit of excellence. We do what we say we will do, and we care about our business like we own it. Our team members bring high energy and a great attitude every day in order to work as a team and be respectful of others.

Every one of us works hard to uphold these values. We put all that we have into the company and our communities to not only be better but provide goodness. That's our go-to-market strategy: uphold these values, live our mission, and embrace our purpose and passion to seek our vision.

2



**LD:** It seems like the workplace is always vibrant and engaging! Taking this strategy into consideration, how does Progressive make its mark in the industry? Why is marketing an integral part when it comes to fresh produce?

**OG:** We are constantly thinking about the future. Eating fruits and vegetables has been taught to us since we were young, so we have to explore innovative ways to generate interest and expand consumption. Marketing is typically considered the department that makes things look "pretty," but that's not necessarily the case. We can be seen as something like the Jack/Jill of all trades.

One of our Founders, Charles Gilb, once said, "The innovative ideas that we had at Progressive are now a standard in the produce business."

Our department is always exploring what innovations can become the next generation of produce standards. We have our own marketing research and development, and we always think about the bigger picture. Our marketing team works with all aspects of the company, from sales and operations to food safety and more.

3

**LD:** Ah, if I remember correctly, the saying goes, "A Jack of all trades is a master of none, but oftentimes better than a master of one?" I can't say I've heard it often used for describing a marketing department. What are some of those duties and responsibilities? How does the company benefit from the marketing team's input?

**OG:** When we discover new trends and shopper habits, we convey that to the rest of the departments. Identifying key innovations and category opportunities helps tie in the sales and commodities departments, while packaging design keeps us in front of buyers' and consumers' eyes. The creative output we generate directly and indirectly impacts the rest of the department, and that's just the sales side.

We also maintain the company's presence throughout the industry by connecting with our customers and consumers. That said, we are also in charge of grower relations and employee engagement to keep both parties thriving.

Marketing also seeks out beneficial partnerships, such as our recent collaborations with Border X Brewing and Heart of Compassion. Progressive's limes are used in Border X Brewing's Pepino Sour Beer, and that is always a fun undertaking.



Progressive Produce is built on five Core Values, allowing the marketing team to thrive and collaborate on creative recipes, campaigns, and media projects



Heart of Compassion is a local nonprofit we always look forward to helping. We've participated in events benefiting children such as back-to-school and Toys for Tots, but we also try giving back to communities through endeavors such as Heal the Bay's Nothin' But Sand beach cleanup. Progressive has also started participating in local compost organizations to reduce our impact on the environment.

4

**LD:** I take it you're not the only one taking part in these activities! Who are your fellow team members by your side?

**OG:** I am definitely not alone! Our branch is small, but we're nimble. Jaime Greger, Senior Marketing Coordinator, started in produce almost nine years ago at Progressive, and she has marketing in her blood. She used to work closely with her father Bob Bornhoeft, who was one of the pioneers of In-N-Out's artwork and marketing campaigns. Jaime really is the glue of our team; we've been focusing on employee engagement this year, and she's spearheaded a lot of projects to bring everyone together.

Amanda Nojadera, our Digital Marketing Coordinator, joined Progressive over two years ago. She's only been in the produce industry for four years, but she brings a fresh, new outlook to our team. Amanda graduated from Loyola Marymount University, and she successfully completed the Fresh Produce & Floral Council apprentice program in 2019.



**JAIME GREGER,**  
Senior Marketing  
Coordinator,  
Progressive Produce



**AMANDA NOJADERA,**  
Digital Marketing  
Coordinator,  
Progressive Produce

"We are constantly thinking about the future. Eating fruits and vegetables has been taught to us since we were young, so we have to explore innovative ways to generate interest and expand consumption."

**OSCAR GUZMAN,**  
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND SALES,  
PROGRESSIVE PRODUCE



Progressive Produce's "In Search of Paper" video has received three different awards while its "Heroes" video received two on top of multiple packaging and design awards

5

**LD:** As a team then, how do you, Jaime, and Amanda navigate the competitive space that is fresh produce marketing? What are some ways you stay fresh in the industry?

**OG:** There are so many ways we stay fresh and sustainable in our industry. Our team creates award-winning content that spans videos, packaging, ads, and more. Each one shines in every aspect we all work so hard for.

"In Search of Paper," a video about Progressive's 100 percent recyclable paper packaging for potatoes, received a 2022 Bronze Telly Award, a 2022 Gold AVA Award, and a 2022 Marketing Excellence Award. Our team also produced "Heroes," which earned a 2021 Bronze Telly Award and a 2022 Platinum AVA Award. We've also received a 2021 Gold Viddy Award for our Walla Walla Sweet Onions in addition to several GDUSA Graphic Design and Packaging Awards for our citrus packaging, Peruvian asparagus ad, citrus ad, Mim's Packaging, and baby potato packaging.

Our packaging features modern, high-graphic designs that are great for merchandising while also meeting our sustainability standards. Designing consumer bags that invite themselves into shopping carts is an art, and we are proud of our marketing team's continued effort to combine the right packaging materials with imagery that connects us to the produce. Clean, convenient, and with a clear message—I love how our bags amplify the produce they display.

We also maintain our presence digitally, both externally and internally. Our website is full of dynamic content and information to satisfy the curiosity of any buyer or consumer looking to learn more about a product, recipe, or us! The website will continue to grow and evolve with new media we develop throughout the year including recipes, how-to videos, grower profiles, and more.



What also sets us apart is our dedication to employee engagement. We are constantly creating new events and forms of digital communication to ensure that our team stays strong, even with today's environment of hybrid-remote and face-to-face work.

This year, we introduced *Progressive Quarterly*, or *PQ*, an internal celebration of our team. *PQ* contains fun and engaging articles that allow us to learn more about our teammates around the country, celebrate employee achievements and milestones, share important information, and announce upcoming events. There are so many great stories to tell about our team members, and we are excited and looking forward to learning and sharing them with everyone.

6

**LD:** Progressive's marketing team is quite agile and flexible as you mentioned earlier. Would you say this is necessary when you react to today's changing needs?

**OG:** Very much so! Consumers change, and shopping habits change. Being based out of Los Angeles, California, has helped us stay on our toes and become experts in navigating our landscape.

Los Angeles is known for its melting pot of demographics, and being able to understand and service this market is no small task. Based on our studies, and depending on the geographic location, consumers are looking for one of the following: value, innovation, convenience, and/or intent. What provides the most ounce per dollar? Is this product different and new to market? Can the product be easily consumed? Is it transportable? Do these products align with shoppers' beliefs?

Market strategies today must be very specific in intention and execution. We know that sustainability and social responsibility are top of mind for today's consumers, and we have over 50 years of expertise to back up our promotions. While we can't prevent every plastic bag from ending up in the landfill, we challenged ourselves to make a small difference within the produce industry by expanding our Earth-friendly packaging options and offering more sustainable solutions for our customers.

This has led us to developing our sustainability and social responsibility initiative, Rooted, over the past few years, which is based on three pillars: people, planet, and practices. We're doing our part to build a better tomorrow by ensuring workplace well-being; giving back to our community; minimizing our carbon footprint; and using sustainable growing, packing, and shipping practices.

We're still growing, both in practice and people, so I anticipate we'll have more blueprints to unfurl.

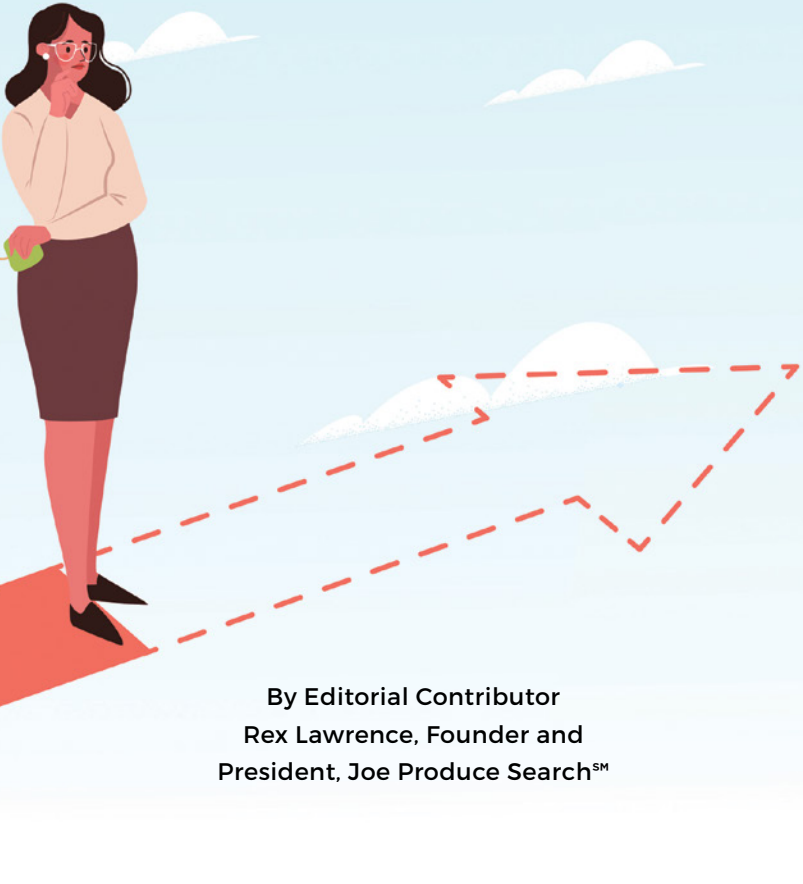


I liken Oscar to the California state tree, the Redwood—sturdy, respected, and ever-growing with opportunity in an environment he was born to be in. With roots planted firmly beneath and around him, he's with similar minds as he expands his reach across the industry. Keeping his hands stretched toward the skies and mind wide open, Oscar helps us see the forest for the trees. So, let's go out and explore, shall we?



# Offering & Accepting Promotions

## Making the Right Choice



By Editorial Contributor  
Rex Lawrence, Founder and  
President, Joe Produce Search<sup>SM</sup>

I can't tell you how many times a week over the past decade I have had conversations with people where I found I was concurrently coaching them and speaking to my younger self. Truth be told, sometimes I was speaking with my current self.

I've run into the following issue enough times over the years that I thought it worth sharing here in *The Snack* so that it may benefit others—both employees and employers.

Recently, I had a conversation with an industry veteran of 20-plus years who had a challenge, or opportunity, depending on how you look at it. Let's call him Joe. Joe's "challenge/opportunity" was being presented with a new job by his current employer. He had been in sales for years, and the company was offering him a role managing grower relationships and its supply chain. On one hand, he was excited about the opportunity and change; on the other hand, there were the challenging "what ifs;" What if it didn't work out? What if he wanted to return to sales? What if he gives up all his customers? The list went on.

It's totally natural to feel nervous about change, especially when those changes are significant. I believe the answer is to shift the decision from feelings to facts—from emotional-based decision making to information-based.

This particular employer had not presented Joe with any real information. I get it; we're all busy, and sometimes

it is just easier to "ready, shoot, and aim" or "float a trial balloon" and go from there. In this particular instance, however, the balloon could have popped.

My recommendation for employers is to be better prepared before you excite and/or worry your valued people. Smart employees will have questions that both help them prepare for the role and help you as the employer define the position as well before the parties commit. Having answers to the list below will help you to be better prepared when making an internal job offer or promotion.

As an employee receiving an internal offer for a new role, there are questions you could and/or should ask:

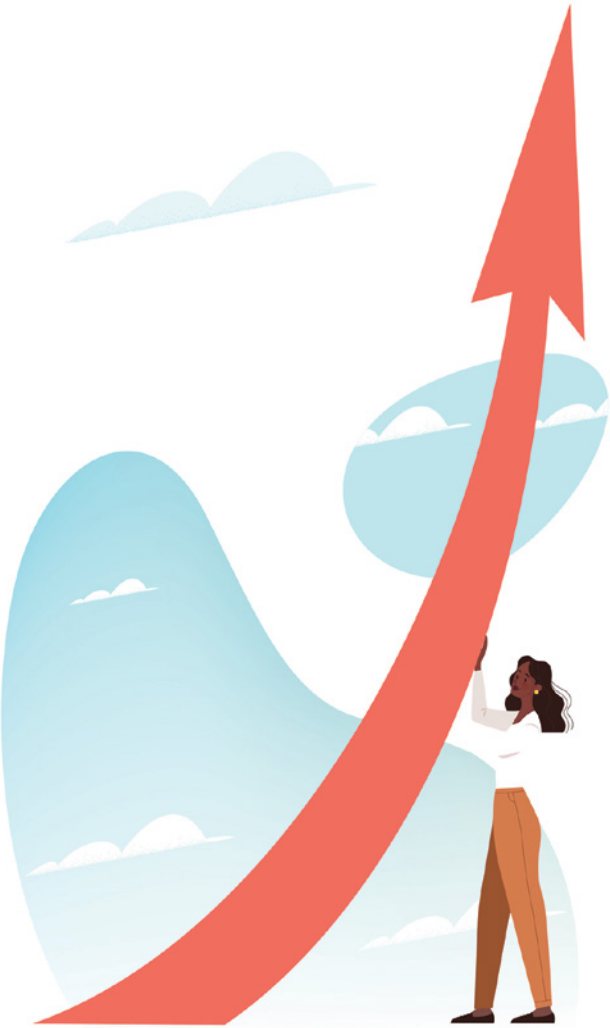
1. Can I see a job description?
2. What defines success in this role?
3. What will my key performance indicators (KPIs) be?
4. What are your expectations for the first 30, 60, 90, 180, and 365 days?
5. What does a "day in the life" of this role look like?
6. What is the compensation?
7. Will there be an opportunity for a bonus? If so, what is it based on?
8. Who are the stakeholders for this role?
9. Can I see the organizational chart to understand the people and roles around me?
10. Are there other changes in this department or role that are being discussed and/or planned?

It's always important for both the employer and employee to gather information before committing to a role transition. That is only one half of the equation, though! For people in Joe's shoes, now you need to look inward before you accept a new role.

Employees, here are some questions you need to ask yourself, and please be 100 percent honest. Commit these questions and answers to writing:

1. What do I like to do?
2. What do I want to do?
3. What makes me happy?
4. Am I ready to make a change?
5. Am I ready to be uncomfortable and not have everything dialed in each day?
6. Am I ready to learn and grow?
7. Who will be my mentors?
8. What is my long-term career goal and path?
9. Does this new opportunity take me forward in the direction of my long-term career goals?

To get a better idea, I suggest you compare your current position to the new position. Create two lists—in writing—outlining the pros and cons, and either answer the questions above or draw on other bits of information you think would help you make a better-informed decision.



**TIP:** Set compensation aside while evaluating your decision. Of course, we all work for money, but you first have to be happy with your job each day. Money does not make a miserable job that much better.

Changing jobs is a big deal, even when it's an internal shift. Take your time to carefully evaluate the opportunity and how it fits you, your short-term objectives, and your long-term goals and path. Life is short, so invest your time wisely. 💡

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**JOE Produce Search**



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

# WTF DO I DO WITH YOOM® Tomatoes ?

{ what the fork }



SPINACH-RICOTTA TART WITH YOOM® TOMATOES

## INGREDIENTS

15 YOOM® Tomatoes, chopped  
 1 **pack** puff pastry  
 1 **egg** (for brushing)  
 2 cloves garlic  
 2 **tbsp** sour cream  
 1 **pinch** pepper  
 1 **pinch** salt  
 1 **small package** baby spinach  
 2 **tbsp** olive oil  
 1 **cup** ricotta

**Prep Time:** 5 min  
**Cook Time:** 20 min  
**Servings:** 4

## DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 350° F.
- 2 Mix the crushed garlic, sour cream, pepper, salt, and spinach into the ricotta.
- 3 Roll up the edges of the puff pastry and brush with egg.
- 4 Spread cream mixture evenly over the pastry and add the chopped tomatoes.
- 5 Drizzle with olive oil. Bake for 15–20 minutes.
- 6 Let cool and enjoy!

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 visit [www.yoomtomato.com](http://www.yoomtomato.com)

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**Verdant**  
TECHNOLOGIES



**A Q&A WITH GORDON ROBERTSON,  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, VERDANT™ TECHNOLOGIES**

**BY CHANDLER JAMES**

## **WHO IS VERDANT™ TECHNOLOGIES?**

When we put this story on the editorial calendar for our December 2022 issue, I was already familiar with Verdant Technologies and its innovative HarvestHold® post-harvest solution. Still, I felt there was so much more to learn. I asked myself: What drives this company to bring shelf-life-extending products to market?

Who is Verdant Technologies, *really*?

The answer, I found, is that the solutions provider pulls from the same well of inspiration as many fresh produce growers do: to bring nutritious, fresh food to the masses. Post-harvest technology is the vehicle through which Verdant accomplishes this goal.

But, I'll let the company's Chief Executive Officer tell the tale himself. Ladies and gentlemen, I give you Gordon Robertson.

ONE

TWO

THREE

FOUR

FIVE



**CHANDLER JAMES:** Gordon, I am so intrigued by your product, and even more so by your vision. For those of us looking to learn more about Verdant Technologies, can you explain the company's mission statement?

**GORDON ROBERTSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, VERDANT™ TECHNOLOGIES:**

At our core, we're an innovation company focused on bringing nourishment to more people in more places. Our team is passionate about introducing solutions that unlock new value for growers and retailers through delivering longer-lasting, better-tasting, and more nutritious products.

Our 20 years of experience in the fresh sector has led to 241 patents filed around the world. We have globally recognized experts in cyclodextrin and 1-MCP (1-methylcyclopropene) on our team, and we are uniquely positioned to create significant value while providing nourishment to the global community.



At our core, we're an innovation company focused on **BRINGING NOURISHMENT TO MORE PEOPLE IN MORE PLACES.**"



**CJ:** From what I have learned about HarvestHold, I know it is a post-harvest solution for suppliers that helps extend shelf-life and deliver the freshest fruits and vegetables. I'm curious to hear more about the mechanism behind the product and what sets it apart from other shelf-life extending products.

**GR:** Our team developed a unique, patented technology, which provides a breakthrough delivery method of industry-standard 1-MCP, a plant growth regulator that slows the aging process of produce and flowers. As fruits, vegetables, and flowers are harvested, growers and packers simply insert a recyclable sheet containing our solution into their packaging from which 1-MCP is released using a plant's natural chemistry. The technology can be applied wherever and whenever it's needed most, significantly reducing waste, offering unmatched storability and portability, and extending the usable life of produce and florals by up to 50 percent.

Shelf-life extension technologies, including solutions with 1-MCP, aren't new to the produce industry.

Part of our challenge when we launched was to help inform growers that HarvestHold is different than other technologies in the market. Post-harvest solutions, including many using 1-MCP, required growers to invest in new infrastructure or ways of working that haven't yielded consistent results. HarvestHold not only answers many of the questions and concerns the industry has had with other shelf-life solutions, but it also continues to exceed expectations and creates new opportunities for our customers.

**GORDON ROBERTSON,**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Verdant™ Technologies

**CJ:** I think that is a very important distinction to make with HarvestHold—that it opens the doors for boundless possibilities for operators on both the supply- and buy-sides. In collaborating with other companies to bring this solution to life, how can HarvestHold help reimagine the supply chain?

**GR:** As we launched HarvestHold over the past year, our conversations with growers have evolved from discussing the efficacy of HarvestHold to thinking of new ways we can work together to unlock new value and products for growers, retailers, and consumers. Through our technology and the extra days of freshness it provides, growers can expand their geographical markets, helping their products reach more customers in more places.

For decades, many new varieties of fruits and vegetables have been bred for longer shelf-life, often at the expense of flavor. Now, with HarvestHold, growers can approach breeding and new product introductions in a new way—leading with innovation and bringing better-tasting products to consumers.

We're also working with broccoli growers and packers to remove ice from their packaging, allowing them to pack more broccoli into their boxes—instead of ice—and ultimately ship more broccoli per pallet and truckload. By adopting HarvestHold into a broccoli operation, customers receive cost savings from no longer using ice, but also reap substantial sustainability benefits by the removal of water from every box they ship.

These are just a few ways that our innovation is transforming the supply chain and challenging the industry to think of the new possibilities and markets that are now available to them.

**CJ:** That seems like a win from the sustainability perspective, too! I know broccoli is just one example of the produce categories HarvestHold has had a positive impact on. How has the product performed in the market and where does it excel?

**GR:** The exciting part of working with a new application method for a well-established technology is that we have years of data on 1-MCP. From a research and development perspective, we've approached our testing with an open curiosity to explore how HarvestHold works across a wide range of crops. Due to the longer release that HarvestHold provides compared to other solutions, we've found that we're able to extend the shelf-life on fruits and vegetables that were once believed to not respond to the treatment of 1-MCP.

In addition to our own tests and the numerous trials we've conducted with customers, we place a significant amount of value on the scientific research and testing of third-party organizations and universities. Over the past couple of years, we've worked with CIAD (Centro de Investigación en Alimentación y Desarrollo) in Mexico to test HarvestHold on broccoli, tomatoes, melons, avocados, and papayas, all showing positive benefits from HarvestHold applications compared to untreated.

This year we also worked with the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Science to study the effects of HarvestHold on grape tomatoes. The results further validated our internal trials and the previous testing by CIAD. Compared to untreated grape tomatoes, our solution reduced weight loss by 50 percent, had 25 percent less water, and maintained firmer tomatoes throughout storage when brought to room temperature.

We're currently working on additional trials in a variety of crops, and we're looking forward to sharing the results in the coming months.

**CJ:** Speaking of looking forward, do you have any teasers for us about what is to come for Verdant Technologies?

**GR:** I'm tremendously excited about our future and the unique benefits our solution will provide our customers, the industry, and society. Our innovation allows growers and retailers to achieve more freshness with less effort, which will increase profitability without increasing workload—something truly game-changing for their operations and customers. When growers, retailers, and consumers experience the post-harvest power of HarvestHold, it's a moment to behold.

**T**here is something about the shared endeavor to feed the world that moves me. Even when we think we can't put a piece of fruit directly into someone's hand, we can play a role in its journey from point A to point B. And, as it's been said, the journey is the destination.

So, who is Verdant Technologies?

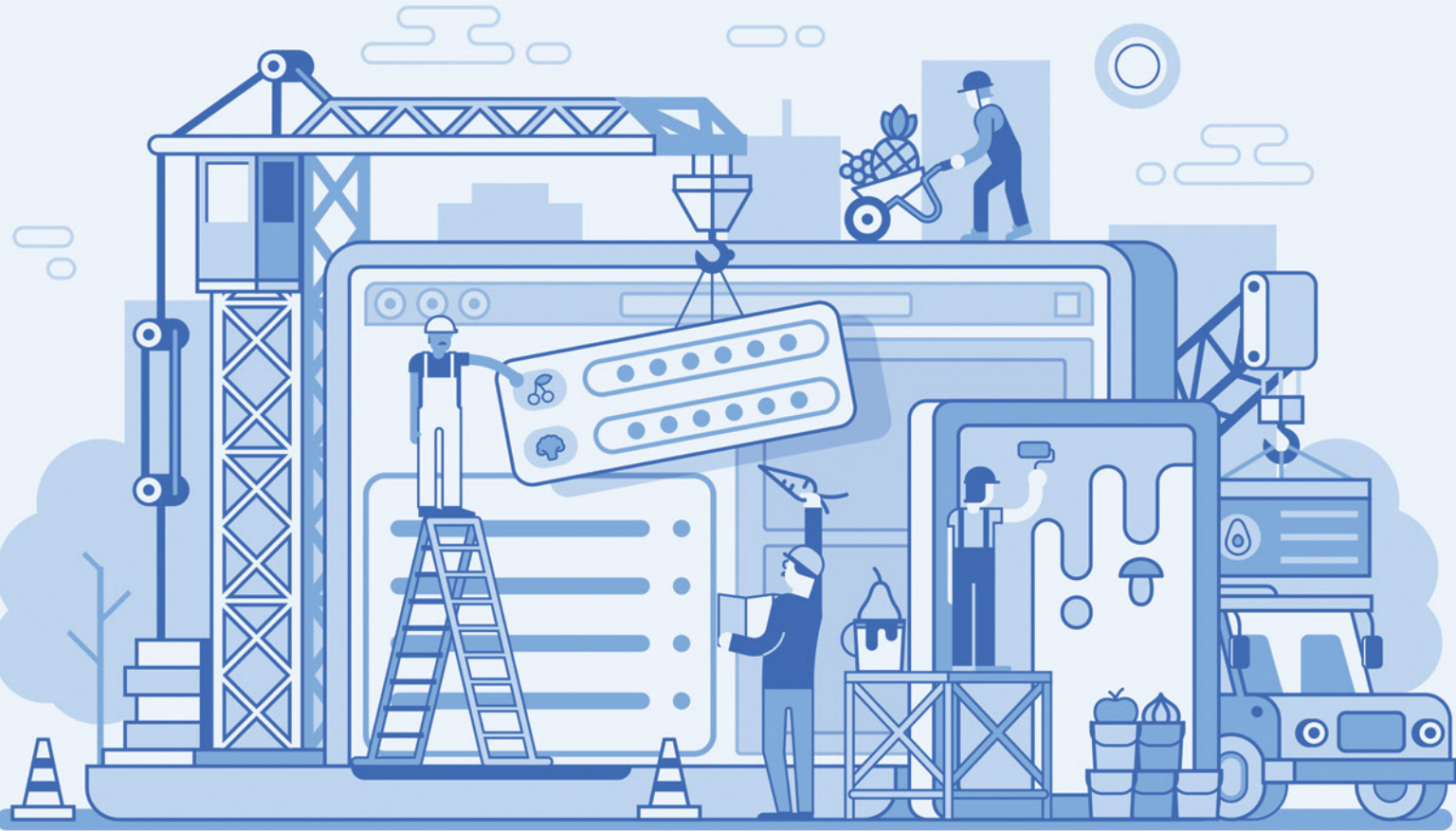
More than you might think. 



PRODUCE PULSE

# DECONSTRUCTING THE MARKETING CONSTRUCT

BY ANNE ALLEN





I've been thinking about Jacques Derrida and his theory of deconstruction a lot lately. No, it's not the post-grad-school nightmares talking.

Don't get me wrong. Derrida and I have beef. I've read *Of Grammatology* enough times my eyes *still* beg for death at the mention of it, and somehow I remain uncertain of my understanding of it. So why, exactly, did I find myself going through textbooks while writing this article? Why was there the nagging thought at the back of my brain that Derrida would certainly have something to say about marketing?

A crash course in deconstruction would be this: If anything can be constructed, it can be deconstructed. Seems pretty standard. But it inevitably gets tricky, because the process of taking the thing apart is where we uncover contradictions, conflicting definitions, and overlaps. For example, if I speak of the concept of justice, you would assume I'm speaking of a natural concept, whose meaning is pure and true. (Stick with me now.) In reality, I am speaking only of the thing as it has been culturally constructed in my narrow worldview, and therefore I am only reporting to you my limited understanding of it.

Spoiler alert: You'll never know the "objective" meaning of anything—you'll just get to better understand the sum of its parts.

I've dragged you through this academic hellhole—and for what? To tell you that marketing is a construction, a language in its own right? Not exactly.

There's a reason marketing is such a tough job. Every company ascribes meaning to the word in a way that is hyper-specific to itself. Every company hopes that an attuned marketer will make the nebulous more tangible, give it a

definition that changes it from a cost to an investment.

How do you ask this of a marketer?

You don't, actually.

That's nowhere in the job description. But that's what's implied—why a good marketer embodies the characteristics of everything from technology platforms to sales team members. It is to become as close a thing to God as business gets.

I can feel you shaking your heads at me. "Anne, knock off the hyperbole." Or, more aptly, "Cut the crap." But I think we have to explore this juxtaposition of a role that simultaneously defies definition and demands definable results.

The world in which we live depends upon being plugged in. There is no space in society without a phone or a computer; every bit of us is rigged to the things that augment reality while simultaneously shaping it.

So, is it possible to create a language people inherently know how to speak? The closest thing I've seen is Duolingo's mascot, an irreverent, often murderous, bird that became a social media sensation. How did the marketer know we'd speak that language?

Maybe they didn't. Maybe it was a lucky gimmick that struck gold. Or maybe it was someone taking a concept apart at the fault lines and, in that ambiguity, finding a sense of meaning.

Where does the aspiring marketer go from here? The enormity of your endeavor is not lost on me, but perhaps you can take comfort from this: There is no answer, because there are multiple. 



# WTF DO I DO WITH Foxy® Strawberries ?

{ what the fork }



STRAWBERRY GLAZED DONUTS

## INGREDIENTS

### GLAZE

**1/3 cup** Foxy® Strawberries, chopped  
**2 tbsp** milk  
**1 3/4 cups** icing sugar

### BATTER

**1 cup** all-purpose flour  
**1/2 cup** granulated sugar  
**1 tsp** baking powder  
**1/2 tsp** baking soda  
**1/4 tsp** salt  
**1** egg  
**3/4 cup** milk  
**1 tbsp** vegetable or canola oil  
**1 tsp** vanilla extract

**Prep Time:** 15 min

**Cook Time:** 15 min

**Servings:** 10 donuts

## DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 350° F. Lightly grease 10 large donut wells.
- 2 In large bowl, whisk together the dry batter ingredients: flour, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.
- 3 In medium bowl, whisk together the remaining batter ingredients: egg, milk, oil, and vanilla. Gently fold egg mixture into flour mixture until batter is smooth. Divide batter evenly among prepared donut wells, filling each about 3/4 full.
- 4 Bake for 12–15 minutes, or until golden and a tester comes out clean when inserted into donut. Let cool in pan for 5 minutes, then transfer to wire rack and let cool for 12–15 minutes.
- 5 Meanwhile, to create the glaze, add strawberries and milk to a blender and blend until smooth. Strain into medium bowl (discard solids). Add icing sugar to strawberry mixture; stir together to make a glaze.
- 6 Dip donuts halfway into glaze and gently shake to remove excess glaze. Transfer to parchment paper-lined baking sheet and let stand until glaze is set. Enjoy with fresh sliced strawberries!

To learn more about BlazerWilkinsonGee, visit [www.bwgberries.com](http://www.bwgberries.com)



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