

Bite-Sized Info for the Produce Industry

the

# SNACK

ISSUE 82 DEC 2023



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**I'VE DREAMT OF BEING AN ARCHAEOLOGIST SINCE I WAS A LITTLE GIRL.** I was obsessed with ruins, structures, and stories wrapped like a caress into scrolls, onto walls, in sand, and in water.

Chichén Itzá, Angkor Wat, The Alhambra de Granada, the Medina of Fez—small breadcrumbs in a never ending path toward some sense of history. A telescope in which to somehow view the present differently; unearthing truths, moving like a chameleon footprint by handprint through different cultures. Mimetic but also completely alien. The summation of a life and how one lived. There is this sense of sifting through a museum of artifacts, cracked or whole—but telling nonetheless.



At the end of the year, I feel a natural cycle close, and I often wonder what artifacts I will leave behind. Will I be lucky enough that someone will find my writing in a library one day—or is that line of thinking now an artifact in itself? Will someone find my old journal, my favorite pair of gloves, the locket containing a picture of my Grandma Helen? Hideko-*baachan*. Storyteller.

The beauty and the grief of a story is that time passes as you create it—in the moment that you write it down, things inside you shift. I have often woken up in the morning after writing a long draft to find a story I obsessively complicated with excessive symbols and run-on sentences. There is always the question of how to revise such a fingerprint. Because it is, in reality, the mark left behind by exactly who you were in that moment. How true does it stay to the moment and how faithful must you be to other priorities on the page?

I love the work we do here because you are our focus. You are the magic we try to imprint onto the page. There is a sense of immortality in being enclosed and freed inside of a story. A life that lives to be forever read and resurrected, long after you have retired and departed.

An artifact.

A ruin.

Something alive held together with love, in amber.

As the year closes, I always invest time in looking back at the artifacts we have helped to create for ourselves and for you. I feel a sense of unending life and love for being a part of something always bigger than myself.

I know our family at *The Snack* does too.

To the museum of 2023 we have filled with love, we cherish you.

And, 2024, we await to curate your stories and what you do not yet know that you will leave behind. 🍷

**Jordan Okumura-Wright**  
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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# FEATURES

## FRESHCO

### FLOCK OF THE PHOENIX

In just a few years, this grocery brand has shifted the foundation upon which it builds its focus, bringing it back stronger with a produce-forward culture. How have such monumental changes taken place so quickly? Through its people...



54



#### CHELAN FRESH

**COIGN OF VANTAGE: A GROWER'S COMMITMENT**  
Perched on the precipice of fresh innovations, sustainability, and social responsibility, Julie DeJarnatt gives us a bird's-eye view of the pillars of strength the grower raised to drive growth...



#### BLAND FARMS

**FROM SOIL TO SPARKLE: 75 YEARS OF SUCCESS**  
Wielding generational expertise passed down by the supplier's founders, Chief Executive Officer Troy Bland details several driving forces behind the high-powered operation and this diamond milestone...



#### ARABLE CAPITAL PARTNERS

**HARMONIZING FRESH AND FINANCE**  
Opportunities within agriculture are abundant, especially in the financial sector. For those pondering how to structure their operations for incremental growth, look no further than this firm. Derek Yurosek explains...



#### D'ARRIGO NEW YORK

**75 YEARS STRONG**  
How does a founding vision become a guiding light for generations? Gabriela D'Arrigo reflects on years past as the wholesale distributor celebrates its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary and plans for future innovation...



#### LIMONEIRA COMPANY

**EMBRACING CHANGE: THE ENDEAVOR TO GO PUBLIC**  
President and Chief Executive Officer Harold Edwards casts a line back 117 years to outline the citrus provider's evolution that led to its initial public offering in 2010...



#### BESTIES OF THE BEST: THE HEART OF 2023

Our second annual Besties Awards honored those harbingers of fresh pushing the leading edge of marketing and vision to new heights. Discover who took home the glass apple and how they continue to light the way for a progressive fresh produce marketing movement...

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# DEPARTMENTS

DECEMBER 2023  
ISSUE 82

## FRESH FOLK



**27**  
**THE IF LIST**  
CHEF CASEY THOMPSON



**35**  
**MVP HIGHLIGHTS**  
GEORGE HARTER



**36**  
**MENTORS IN THE MAKING**  
GREG PALMER



**60**  
**THE IF LIST**  
CHEF HEIDI INSALATA KRAHLING

## TRUE TO TASTE

### WTF

SUNKIST GROWERS.....	22
OCEAN MIST® FARMS.....	26
4EARTH FARMS™.....	30
DELFRESCOPURE®.....	34
DOLE FOOD COMPANY.....	40
TRINITY FRUIT COMPANY.....	48
LIV ORGANIC™.....	58
RICE FRUIT COMPANY.....	66
PROGRESSIVE PRODUCE.....	70
PRIME TIME INTERNATIONAL.....	82
J. MARCHINI FARMS.....	86

### 84

**LIBATIONS FOR ALL OCCASIONS**  
ORANGE YOU GLAD MARGARITA

## VOICES OF THE INDUSTRY



**32**  
**FOWLER PACKING COMPANY**  
A BAG OF POSSIBILITIES

## 46

**RAINIER FRUIT COMPANY**  
**INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT**  
THE ROAD TO REGENERATION



**80**  
**JOE PRODUCE**  
WE CAN'T STOP THE MUSIC, BUT  
WE CAN GET A HEAD START!

## 88

**SNACK IN THE WILD**

## SNAPSHOTS

### SNACKCHATS

SUPER BOWL.....	28
VALUE-ADDED.....	38
HOLIDAYS.....	52

## OFF THE SHELF

### UP CLOSE

TAYLOR FARMS.....	21
SUNVIEW INTERNATIONAL MARKETING.....	59

### 64

**PRODUCE PULSE**  
BECOME A SOCIAL  
(MEDIA) BUTTERFLY



# BRINGING GROWER PARTNERSHIPS TO MARKET

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- hard squash
- citrus
- potatoes
- sweet potatoes

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- onions
- sweet potatoes

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# Index

Here at *The Snack Magazine*, people are our thing. Check out this short list of some of the names we’ve featured, from the produce industry and beyond...

Alamo, Nelia..... 88

Alvarez, Diana..... 90

Baig, Numair .....57

Barfett, Robin.....57



**Barnard, Christina ..... 38**

Bertaud, Ed..... 76

Bland, Delbert .....41

Bland, Raymond.....41

Bland, Rubye Jean..... 44

Bland, Troy .....41

Borton, Eric ..... 25

Bowman, Hugh..... 36

Cady, Jeff..... 90

Cambon, Jose..... 89

Chow, Jonathan .....57

Clevenger, Gary..... 29

Cossio, Nikki..... 88

Cruz, Robby ..... 88

D’Arrigo, Gabriela..... 62, 77



**DeJarnatt, Julie .....23, 76**

Desrochers, Stephane ..... 36

Dunnum, Thomas ..... 53



**Edwards, Harold ..... 68**

Gauthier, Patrick ..... 36



**Goldfield, Bil .....39, 74**

Gorgisheli, Megan ..... 29

Grossman, Lara ..... 29



**Haerizadeh, Ardy ..... 39**

Harris, Gene ..... 90



**Harter, George.....35**

Hilton, Mark..... 72

Hilton, Stephanie..... 72

Insalata Krahling, Heidi ..... 60



**Keetch, Chris .....52**

Kennedy, Devon ..... 29

Labuckas, Amanda..... 54

Lake, David..... 75

Lawrence, Rex..... 80

Lucia, Bruce..... 35

Lund, Kenny..... 89

Mabs, Scott .....74

Machado, Natalie J. .... 73

Markham, Krysta..... 73

Mast, Bob..... 35

McCumber, Logan ..... 90

McNeece, Charlie and Michele..... 89

Mueller, Khaleesi and Monique.. 53, 90

Nelsen, Sean ..... 32

Noritake, Susan ..... 53



**Palmer, Greg..... 36**

Pandol, John ..... 72

Perez, Veronica ..... 90

Record, Marvin ..... 46

Richards, Greg ..... 49

Rizzuto, Mario ..... 55

Roberts, Mike ..... 88

Rowe, Justin ..... 90



**Shelton, Bryan..... 39**

Shales, Brianna..... 89

Shuman, John ..... 75

Slate, Craig ..... 76

Slayden, Preston ..... 35



**Smethurst, Oleen ..... 36**

Sumption, Aaron ..... 38

Thompson, Casey ..... 27

Thompson, Robert ..... 73

Towell, Nichole ..... 39

Triou, Kathleen ..... 29



**Tuason, Lourdes.....78**

Waters, Erin..... 90

Wetzel, Mitch..... 77

White, Johnny..... 90

Workman, Walt ..... 35

Xavier, Polines .....57



**Yurosek, Derek..... 49**

Zirkle, Bill ..... 46

## A Closer Look at Taylor Farms’ Caesar Mini Chopped Salad Kit

By Jenna Plasterer


Just as Julius Caesar reigned over the Roman Empire, the Caesar Salad rules the hearts—and taste buds—of consumers.

As if the classic salad variety couldn’t get any better, Taylor Farms has rolled out its new Mini Chopped Salad Kits, giving shoppers quick access to a cool and crisp offering. Each kit comes washed and ready to enjoy. The Caesar Mini Chopped Salad Kit includes fresh Romaine lettuce, crunchy cheese, garlic crouton crumbles, Parmesan cheese, and, of course, creamy Caesar dressing.

What differentiates this unique SKU from other salad kits? On top of the flavorful, fresh mix-ins, the mini salad kits are perfectly portioned for single individuals, cutting down food waste while maximizing convenience.

Taylor Farms has eliminated the need to wash or dice anything for consumers because it’s already been done. They must simply open, toss, and enjoy, or it can even be eaten straight out of the bag. This single-serve salad kit is packable for an easy, better-for-you lunch during the work week or as a fast meal option on nights when cooking sounds like a chore.

To inspire shoppers and boost sales, retailers can display the Caesar Mini Chopped Salad Kits alongside protein options like chicken, turkey, plant-based meat products, and the like.

While the famed Caesar salad was not named for Julius Caesar, I have a feeling the ruler wouldn’t mind Taylor Farms’ high-quality Mini Chopped Salad Kit tied to his legacy. 

UP  
CLOSE





# WTF DO I DO WITH Sunkist® Cara Cara Oranges ?

{ what the fork }



CARA CARA ALMOND TART

## INGREDIENTS

### ALMOND CREAM FILLING

- 4 Sunkist® Cara Cara Oranges, segmented
- ½ **cup** butter
- ½ **cup** sugar
- ½ **cup** almond flour
- 1 whole egg
- 2 **tbsp** all-purpose flour
- Powdered sugar, for dusting

### SWEET DOUGH

- ⅓ **cup** cold butter, cubed
- ¼ **cup** granulated sugar
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 **cup** all-purpose flour
- ½ **tsp** sea salt

**Prep Time:** 2–3 hrs  
**Cook Time:** 15–25 mins  
**Servings:** 7

**Sunkist**

## DIRECTIONS

### SWEET DOUGH

- 1 In an electric mixer, with the paddle attachment, combine cold butter and granulated sugar on speed one. Cream together until mixed. Scrape all the way to the bottom of the mixer bowl periodically.
- 2 Add egg yolk, flour, and sea salt all at once. Mix on speed one just to combine.
- 3 Remove from bowl and knead with hands to ensure all ingredients are combined.
- 4 Place in a container and chill for at least 2 hours.
- 5 Crumble dough to ¼" thick, shape inside tart ring. Press dough to fit.
- 6 Bake tart in a pre-heated 325° F oven for 15–25 minutes or until evenly brown and done.

### ALMOND CREAM FILLING

- 1 In an electric mixer, with the paddle attachment, combine butter and sugar on speed one. Cream together until mixed. Scrape all the way to the bottom of the mixer bowl periodically.
- 2 Add almond flour, mix to combine. Add egg, mix to combine. Add flour last, mix to combine. Using a spatula, spread mixture onto baked tart shell.
- 3 Arrange segmented Cara Cara oranges onto almond cream.
- 4 Bake in a pre-heated 350° F oven for 20–25 minutes or until center is done.
- 5 Dust with powdered sugar and serve warm or room temperature.
- 6 Enjoy!

To learn more about Sunkist Growers, visit [www.sunkist.com](http://www.sunkist.com)

chelan  
fresh



# Coign of Vantage:

A GROWER'S COMMITMENT

A Q&A With Julie DeJarnatt,  
Director of Brand Strategy, Chelan Fresh

By Lilian Diep

When I sit down to start a *Snack* project, there's a planning process. There's the pitch, the coordination, the questions, slotting the interview, and then the writing. It's a practice I've become accustomed to. Every endeavor brings a new story, which offers a fresh vantage point.

One company bringing me to a new lookout is Chelan Fresh, which continues to stand as a beacon in the industry. Director of Brand Strategy Julie DeJarnatt is galvanizing for the company as she details just how big a project could be—a 50-page undertaking, to be more precise. Now, we here at *The Snack* are well accustomed to complex discussions, so you know I was more than eager to skydive right in.







**Lilian Diep:** Julie, I was so excited flipping through Chelan Fresh's Joyfully Grown™ Commitment report and seeing familiar faces along with new ones.

What led the company to release this overview of your Sustainability and Social Responsibility commitments?

**Julie DeJarnatt, Director of Brand Strategy, Chelan Fresh:**

Chelan Fresh made a concentrated effort to start telling our story and sharing our rich history a couple of years ago—this is what led to the development of our Joyfully Grown brand. The Joyfully Grown Commitment does exactly that.



There's a real need to educate people, from retail buyers to consumers, as we strive for full transparency, such as water conservation, labor practices, and how we protect the planet. It's easy to say we're sustainable, but it takes effort to showcase that. With this report, we can share our message from the get-go versus just being reactive. We're holding ourselves accountable to share what goes on within our company, whether it's quarterly or annually, and to surpass those statistics.

We had a lot of fun looking through our fifth- and sixth-generation farming history—sustainability and doing the right thing for our food, planet, and people are built into our culture and identity.



OUR FOOD

OUR PLANET



OUR PEOPLE

**“It’s easy to say we’re sustainable, but it takes effort to showcase that. With this report, we can share our message from the get-go versus just being reactive.”**

**Julie DeJarnatt, Director of Brand Strategy, Chelan Fresh**



**LD:** Transparency is a high priority for both retailers and end consumers. How did Chelan Fresh decide on what to put into the report? What made the company choose these features?

**JD:** The features had to be not only accurate and measurable but meaningful to our enterprise partners. We didn't want to put in a lot of fluff or storytelling; we wanted facts and data about what we do in our business. By doing this, we're setting realistic goals to continuously improve.

While we were putting this first report together, we realized how much of our story has never been shared. The team had a great time sourcing content because we are fifth- and sixth-generation growers, and we have a lot of experience, much of which has pioneered growth in the industry.

For instance, while looking at the history page, I realized that the practices we were doing to protect our fruit through quality assurance and storage pioneered some of the earliest storage rooms. We were also on the front end of nurturing and respecting our people by being the first to work with Mexico on the guest worker program. You see headlines casting agriculture in a negative light on topics like abusive labor practices or being reckless with our land and resources. In reality, that's not how our industry works—at least not in farming operations that have managed to survive for six generations. That was something we felt necessary to educate about through this report. To do so, we've identified our pillars as Protecting; Nurturing; and Honoring Our Food, Our Planet, and Our People to keep our vision clear and focused.

Back in 1920, we never would've called that social responsibility. When our growers started farming, what some call social responsibility was just day-to-day business practices to our founders—we do the right thing because it's the right thing to do. Not just to check the box on a new trendy topic. These are methods that we've long been doing for generations, and we are proud to talk about them.



**LD:** It's true that sometimes pointing out the obvious might not be the most obvious choice, but it seems like Chelan Fresh may be at the forefront of that as well. In that case, what are some features that stand out to you? What do you want readers to take away from the report?

**JD:** There are so many! While putting the report together, we talked with our growers and some of the earlier generations to ask what they would like to see in the release. Through them, I learned so much about our company and the people that make it whole.

If I had to choose, I think readers should definitely pay attention early on in the report where we explain why we released our first-ever Sustainability and Social Responsibility report. It features Eric Borton, a third-generation grower, and how we bring modern practices to our farms. We also go into our mission, vision, and three pillars that we stand on.

But of course, the entire report is a great read!

**W**hether it's food, the planet, or the people, Chelan Fresh stands tall to represent its growers and position in the industry. As I dove into the 50-page wonder, I undoubtedly felt a connection to the many stories throughout the report—but I didn't even scratch the surface. Leafing through, I was excited to talk to Julie more about the commitments Chelan Fresh made and is keeping its word on. It's through these relations that fresh produce keeps thriving, and it's through endeavors like these that I learn just a bit more to keep me intrinsically motivated to advocate for our industry. And when you get your hands on your own copy, the Chelan Fresh team is more than willing to jump right in on what's to come.



**“When our growers started farming, what some call social responsibility was just day-to-day business practices to our founders—we do the right thing because it’s the right thing to do.”**



WTF

DO I DO WITH

Ocean Mist® Farms  
Brussels Sprouts ?

{ what the fork }



BRUSSELS SPROUTS SALAD WITH POPPYSEED DRESSING

INGREDIENTS

**SALAD**  
**1 bag** Ocean Mist® Farms Value-Added Brussels Sprouts  
**1/3 cup** pomegranate seeds

**DRESSING**  
**1 tbsp** yellow onion, finely chopped  
**1 tbsp** raw honey  
**1/2 tbsp** lime juice  
**2 tsp** Dijon mustard  
**1 tbsp** olive oil  
**1 1/2 tsp** mayonnaise  
**1 tsp** poppy seeds

**Prep Time:** 10 mins  
**Cook Time:** 4 mins  
**Servings:** 2-4

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Place the bag of Brussels sprouts in the microwave for 4 minutes.
- 2 Meanwhile, start making the poppyseed dressing by combining the yellow onion, honey, lime juice, Dijon mustard, olive oil, and mayonnaise in a small food processor or blender.
- 3 Pulse until well combined then add the poppy seeds.
- 4 Place the cooked Brussels sprouts into a large dish and add the pomegranate seeds.
- 5 Drizzle the poppyseed dressing over the top and serve immediately. Enjoy!

To learn more about Ocean Mist® Farms, visit [www.oceanmist.com](http://www.oceanmist.com)



» The IF List «

Casey Thompson

Executive Chef, Folktable Restaurant

With Jordan Okumura



From *Top Chef*'s Fan Favorite to Executive Chef and Director of Restaurants for Sonoma's Best Hospitality Group, this Texas native and intrepid traveler has garnered a coveted reputation as one of the most sought-after chefs in California and beyond. Her contagious energy and deep passion come through in each dish she touches and every plate that graces her view. To be as inspired as Chef Casey Thompson, you cannot just love food, you must live it. And that she does. Whether it's back of the house or front of the house, we have a sneaking suspicion there is even more to her than meets the eye. So, as we love to do, we posed a series of questions to dig a little deeper into this harbinger of culinary artistry...

» IF you could have been born in another century or decade, which would it be and why?  
I'd love to be from the '40s and '50s for the clothing and cigarettes only. So chic.

» IF you could be a character in any book, who would it be?  
*Alice in Wonderland*. What a trip she had. Money can't buy those mushrooms.

» IF you had to choose now, what would your last meal consist of?  
Cacio e Pepe from Roma Sparita, Baguette from Maison Julienne-Les Saveurs in Paris with grass-fed butter from Normandy. And a nap.

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

» IF you were stranded on a desert island, what three items would you bring?  
Lighter, sunscreen, and moisturizer.

» IF you had to wear the same thing every day, what clothing items would you pick?  
Duh, sweatpants and a sweatshirt.

» IF you could make everyone watch a movie of your choosing, which movie would you want them to see?  
*Steel Magnolias*. And we would cry together every time Shelby dies.

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

» IF you could enhance one aspect of your intelligence, what part would you want to enhance?  
The math sector of my brain.

» IF you could re-experience an awesome day in your life, what day would you choose and why?  
The day I met my man. I want to remember more about the connection we had that night. It was an amazing night.

» IF you had \$10 million to donate to someone else, who would you choose and why?  
Any company that does animal rescue.

» IF you could give your younger self one piece of advice, what would it be?  
Don't pluck your eyebrows.

» IF you could invent anything, what would you invent?  
Cure for all cancers. 🙏





# SUPER BOWL!

## SNACKCHAT

By Chandler James

**T**he football field won't be the only green consumers will be seeing for Super Bowl LVIII. I'm picturing fresh guacamole, celery bites, and a whole rainbow of other produce varieties that will be at the center of the table on February 11, 2024. Even though I've attended a Super Bowl party or two in my day, I will leave it up to the experts to tell you all about how you can maximize produce sales for the Big Game...



**Gary Clevenger,**

Managing Member, Freska Produce International

"Super Bowl is an important time of the year for the consumption of both avocados and mangos. We work with retailers to make sure product is placed on large displays with adequate signage; having both ripe and unripe product for purchase is important for our customer, along with recipes for blending both together or separately that will make great accompaniments for all the wonderful food during the Super Bowl."



**Kathleen Triou,**

President and Chief Executive Officer, Fresh Solutions Network

"Score Big with Super Bowl Spuds: Perfect Potato Positioning! Get ready to tackle Super Bowl season with a winning strategy for your produce department. The Super Bowl is the second biggest eating day of the year after Thanksgiving, and shoppers will be looking for new entertaining ideas. What would the Big Game be without delicious food? When it comes to game-day snacks, potatoes are the MVPs. Position them prominently to create touchdown-worthy displays of versatile, easy-to-make options like potato skins, loaded fries, and crispy wedges. Highlight recipes and suggest pairings for an unforgettable snacking experience. By leveraging our Side Delights® fresh and fresh-cut potato brand, you'll 'intercept' shoppers' attention and help them create a game plan for a spud-tacular Super Bowl feast."

**Devon Kennedy,**

National Marketing Manager, Highline Mushrooms



"In our house, Super Bowl is more than just the game. It's gathering together with friends, sports banter, the anticipated TV ads, and of course the snacks! Mushrooms are unique and go with almost any snack or meal, so it's fun to put a twist on the traditional and include mushrooms. They add to the taste and the health benefits of the snacks as you cheer on your favorite team. Just eat a mushroom!"



**Megan Gorgisheli,**

Vice President, Marketing Administration & Brand, Giumarra Companies

"Football season and the Big Game are big wins for the produce department. The socializing and snacking opportunities are key consumption timeframes for both fruit and vegetables. We'll have a lot of great items in season, and we're ready to support our customers with their sales goals and game-day promotions, both online and in-store. Delicious and colorful recipe ideas abound, such as football-themed charcuterie boards with grapes and sliced bell peppers, to fresh fruit kabobs and frozen berry yogurt bites. And of course, you can't forget avocados for guacamole and beyond!"

**Lara Grossman,**

Director of Marketing, Ippolito International



"It's the biggest day in football, so go big! Retailers, we hear you when you say you want innovative and flavorful ideas to promote with your shoppers. Remember that consumers want healthy-ish, satisfying, fortifying finger food on game day, so put Brussels sprouts in play. Queen Victoria's Halved Brussels Sprouts are an easy-to-roast, easy-to-top vegetable, and they pair deliciously with soft cheeses, balsamic vinegar, and even bacon. Bacon-wrapped Brussels sprouts is a recipe our customers tell us is a hit! This recipe is easy to prepare, a snack that everyone will enjoy, and loaded with flavor. Take advantage of this win-win opportunity to cross-merchandise and gain new shoppers in the Brussels sprouts category."



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

{ what the fork }



ORGANIC BRUSSELS SPROUTS GRATIN

## INGREDIENTS

**1 lb** 4Earth Farms™ Organic Brussels Sprouts, halved  
**1 tbsp** unsalted butter  
**3 cloves** garlic, minced  
**½** onion, minced  
**1 tsp** Italian seasoning  
**2 tsp** cornstarch, dissolved in **¼** cup water  
**½ cup** low-sodium vegetable broth  
**½ cup** heavy cream  
**½ cup** Parmesan cheese  
**½ tsp** crushed red pepper flakes, optional  
 Kosher salt and pepper, to taste

**Prep Time:** 15 mins

**Cook Time:** 25 mins

**Servings:** 6

## DIRECTIONS

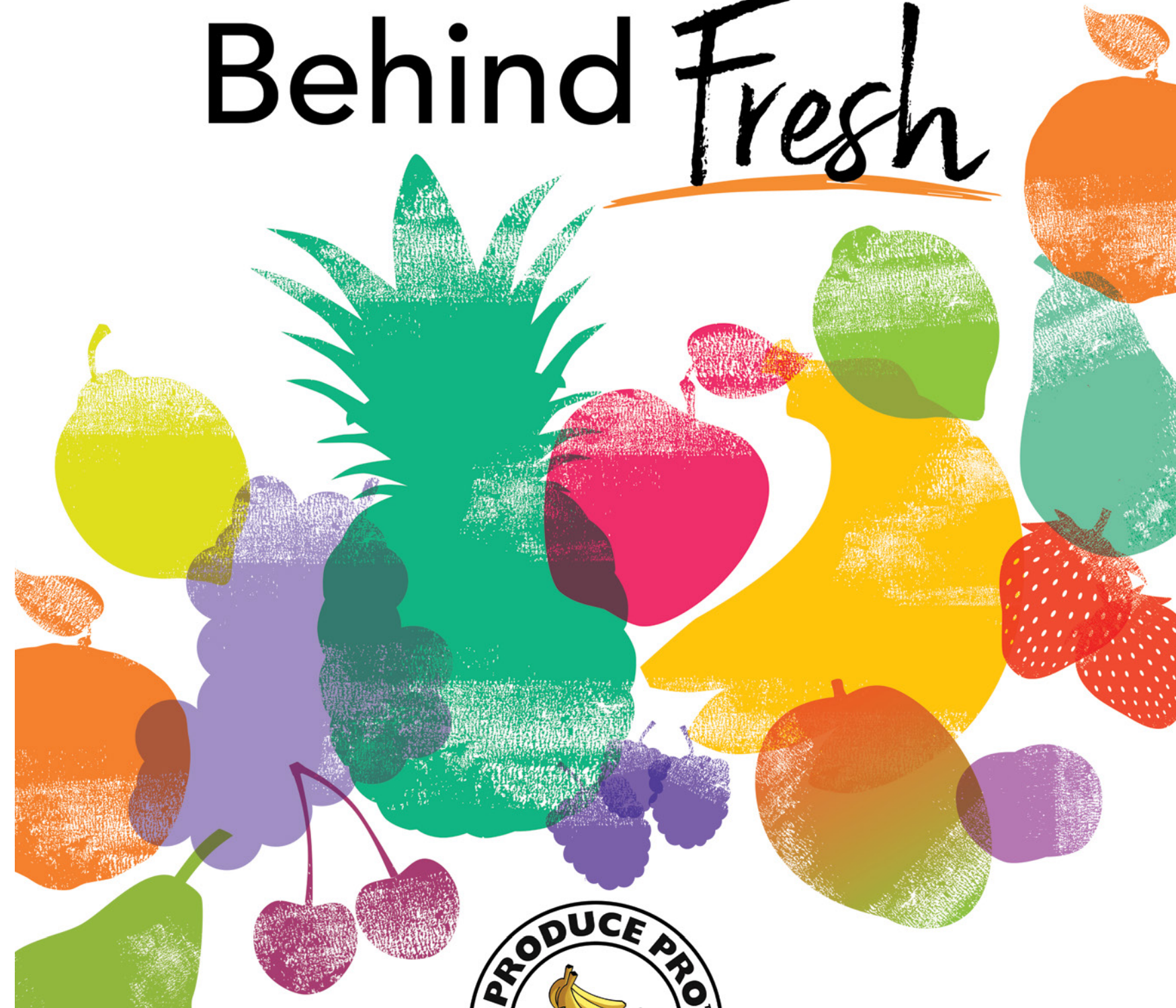
- 1 Preheat oven to 400° F.
- 2 Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Add the Brussels sprouts and cook for 6–8 minutes.
- 3 Drain the Brussels sprouts and set aside.
- 4 In a cast-iron skillet, heat butter over medium-high heat. Add garlic, onion, Italian seasoning, and red pepper flakes (optional) and cook for about 2 minutes. Whisk in the cornstarch mixture. Stir constantly until fully incorporated.
- 5 Stir in broth in the skillet and mix until the sauce thickens. Add cream and whisk until smooth.
- 6 Season with salt and pepper, then spread out Brussels sprouts evenly into the sauce. Stir to coat evenly and sprinkle with Parmesan.
- 7 Transfer the skillet into oven and bake for about 15 minutes, until bubbly and golden brown. Enjoy!

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



Learn more at [producepro.com](http://producepro.com)

# The Tech Behind Fresh



From Aptean







# A Bag of Possibilities

By Lilian Diep

## What comes to mind when you read the word “Peelz®?”

I’m guessing you’re thinking of Mandarins, correct? Now, I need you to broaden your horizons a bit, because Fowler Packing Company is making this well-known brand even more encompassing.

Entering its 20<sup>th</sup> year since it planted the company’s first Mandarin tree, Fowler Packing has dedicated itself to being one of the largest growers in the industry. In 2019, Peelz made its debut with a single product offering: conventional Mandarins. Now, powered by its third generation of leaders, the supplier is thinking outside of the Mandarin bag and has brought a new category to its fruit table: lemons.

“The Peelz brand stands out distinctly within the citrus category. In today’s marketplace, maintaining unwavering quality is essential, yet it’s not the sole criterion for success,” Sean Nelsen, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, shares with me. “Consumers seek authentic brands that resonate with them on a personal level. We’ve departed from the whimsical, childlike imagery often associated with fruits and Mandarins, instead focusing on crafting a comprehensive citrus lineup that caters to diverse tastes. We continuously engage with our partners and consumer insights to understand their evolving needs, resulting in the expansion of our product line to include organics, Dekopons, Navels, and our summer Peelz import program. The introduction of lemons is a natural progression of this commitment.”

Fresh, contemporary, and unified is the aesthetic Fowler Packing aims for with its Peelz lineup. The range epitomizes superior quality as the company connects its products seamlessly with today’s discerning shoppers, even amid pricing pressures.

Since its Peelz inception, the company’s steadfast commitment has been to shoulder the burdens for its partners, allowing them to focus on their core business. By creating a comprehensive one-stop shop, Fowler Packing’s partners can reap the benefits of a unified brand presence, simplified billing and freight logistics, and increased overall volume and sales.

“Consumers continue to prioritize freshness, and they accomplish this by typically shopping at multiple stores each week,” explains Sean. “Our intentionally vibrant product lineup is color-coded by item, offering consistency that drives impulse purchases in-store. We strive to help ourselves and our partners become a one-stop shop. By actively supporting our retail partners with robust advertising promotions and engaging digital activations, we can help ensure that citrus remains prominently positioned in the minds of consumers.”

One way Fowler Packing continues to position the Peelz lineup is by bolstering its presence not only in produce aisles but also on the streets and across digital platforms. Vibrant branding, prominent displays, and extensive digital and advertising support all create a highly effective marketing campaign from in-person to an online experience.

However, the brand impact doesn’t stop at the shelf. Fowler Packing Company has something major hidden within its Peelz bag: the Peelz Road Tour.

“This season, we’re thrilled to bring Peelz directly to the streets through our latest initiative. We will be hitting several cities across the country with our Peelz Airstream trailer to provide samples of our citrus products, distribute merchandise, and offer valuable coupons,” Sean comments. “It’s a direct way for us as a brand to engage with shoppers. We also made strategic investments in prime out-of-home billboard and transit placements in select markets.”

If luck would have it, the touring team would pass by some of them on their way to the next town, peeling a Mandarin or sipping on some lemonade as some much-needed fuel on their adventure.

For consumers not on the tour track, Sean assures me they will still feel the Peelz love, as the company recently launched its most extensive social media influencer campaign to date. Partnering with over 45 social media content creators, Peelz will be showcasing the passion and flavor the brand can bring to the plate to shoppers young and old. Fowler Packing recognizes the value Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and other platforms bring to the table. With many of its core citrus shoppers highly active across the digital world, influencer content will become a driving tool this season as content will be specifically targeted at shoppers near Peelz partner retail stores through May.

A brand legacy sparks the instant recollection of a product or feature. Building one takes time, and maintaining one takes tremendous effort. Whether that legacy has been in the making for 73 years, 20 years, three years, or one, Fowler Packing has the know-how and dedication to maintain that momentum and create avenues waiting to be explored. Strategic marketing, irresistible quality, and immense devotion have all coalesced into one harmonious brand, so, I’d say that Peelz has it in the bag. 🍊



**“This season, we’re thrilled to bring Peelz® directly to the streets through our latest [Peelz Road Tour] initiative...It’s a direct way for us as a brand to engage with shoppers.”**

*Sean Nelsen, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Fowler Packing Company*





# WTF DO I DO WITH DelFrescoPure® Euro Bean The Gourmet Slicing Bean® ?

{ what the fork }



THE EPIC BEAN CASSEROLE

## INGREDIENTS

**3 cups** DelFrescoPure® Euro Bean The Gourmet Slicing Bean®, cut at an angle in 1.5" pieces  
**½ cup** butter  
**½ cup** onion, finely diced  
**2 cloves** garlic, minced  
**3 cups** frozen, cubed hash browns  
**2 cups** chicken broth  
**8 oz package** of cream cheese  
**10.75 oz can** cream of mushroom soup  
**¼ cup** Parmesan cheese, grated  
**¼ cup** bread crumbs  
**¼ tsp** salt  
**¼ tsp** black pepper  
 Crispy onion strings

**Prep Time:** 5 mins  
**Cook Time:** 35 mins  
**Servings:** 6

## DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 400° F. Melt butter in a large cast-iron skillet over medium heat. Add onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until just tender. Add garlic and cook another 1–2 minutes, then remove from heat and set aside.
- 2 Place the Euro beans, hash browns, chicken broth, cream cheese, mushroom soup, salt, and pepper in a large bowl and stir to combine.
- 3 Transfer mixture to the skillet with onions and garlic and spread evenly. Place in heated oven for 25 minutes.
- 4 Remove from oven and sprinkle the top with Parmesan cheese, bread crumbs, and crispy onion strings.
- 5 Place back in oven and bake for another 10 minutes until top is golden brown. Enjoy!

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



## George Harter

Strategy and Special Projects, CMI Orchards

TIME AT COMPANY: 6 Years

With Chandler James



DECEMBER MVP

HIGHLIGHTS



Dedication is not a word that George Harter takes lightly. For some, it might be a goal to work toward every day. For George, it is a way of life. The sales leader pulls from expertise on both the buy- and supply-sides of the business, now leading strategy and special projects at CMI Orchards. He has taken those lessons learned and turned them into inspiration for the next generation, here in the pages of *The Snack...*

## WHAT YOUR ROLE IS REALLY LIKE

“Today, my role is to help develop people and business opportunities. Being at this stage in my career uniquely positions me to provide guidance and insight to those who may be facing important decisions at a crossroads in their lives. Experience can really help with that.”

## HOW SALES BECOMES A LIFE LESSON

“Sales is the lifeblood of every company, but it’s how we get there and our ability to gain the long-lasting trust of our customers that makes the big difference. This work isn’t always fun, comfortable, or exciting, but allows the platform to bring great products and services to our customers. Each day provides new opportunities to engage with our customers by listening, following through on commitments, crafting innovative ideas to serve them, and exceeding their expectations—all of which develop trust and growth in partnerships.”

## SURPRISE US

“Discovering a new world of hobbies has been really wonderful. I’ve picked up traveling, golf, pickleball, hiking, biking, swimming, and a renewed interest in history and the lessons it provides for current and future living.”

## A MENTOR MENTORED: THOSE WHO HAVE SHAPED GEORGE

“Mentors are so important to the success of developing up-and-coming talent. Starting with the most current, here are the people who have had a big impact on shaping and impacting my career life.”

**Bob Mast**, President, CMI Orchards

**Bruce Lucia**, former Division President, Kroger Company, Atlanta Division

**Preston Slayden**, former President, Super Discount Markets, Atlanta, Georgia

**Walt Workman**, former Store Manager, Kroger Company, Columbus, Ohio

## WORDS OF WISDOM FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

“In this day and age, it’s so important to unselfishly understand the long-term goals of your company and come to work every day with the best attitude you can. Develop a passion for learning, keep empathy for others close to your heart, and make the hard decisions to keep your life in balance as you work to make others around you successful.” 🍷

## VALUES AT THE CORE

LOVE AND COMMITMENT TO FAMILY

— FAITH IN GOD —

HONESTY, HUMILITY, AND RESPECT





MENTORS IN THE MAKING

Greg Palmer

BY MELISSA DE LEON CHAVEZ

IF YOU CAN LAUGH WITH THE UNIVERSE, YOU WILL GET ON WELL WITH GREG PALMER.

"I will never forget—and I think about this far too often—that I had my university graduation on June 1, and June 2 I was in the Costco parking lot pushing carts. I remember taking a Snapchat for my friends that said, 'Greg Palmer, BSc., Cart Pusher,'" the Procurement Director—Root Vegetables, for Loblaw Companies Ltd shares as we laugh together. I hope he has this picture framed at his desk. It is the perfect summary of Greg: Take a leap of faith and find the fun when the drop is further than expected.

"Talk about the universe having a sense of humor and having to match it!" Greg agrees—a mantra for the industry at large. On a whim of a recommendation, Greg had given up a seven-year seniority as a cashier at another grocery company for the seasonal opportunity at Costco. While he found himself immediately back at entry-level, it turns out he was exactly where he was supposed to be.

Not only did Costco offer Greg a versatile management training program with the opportunity to experience every department, it ultimately placed him on the produce path. Now, nearly seven years later, I met Greg when he won the Canadian Produce Marketing Association's Young Professional Award in early 2023. How could I not ask him to join our hall of Mentors in the Making?

"Being so fortunate and having so many mentors, I want to grow by helping other people grow. I think we all look better when we all do better. I sought very good mentors who care, and I showed them that I care," Greg says of how he won the title.

It's a rule he was introduced to early in his career at Costco, when his first coach, Stephane Desrochers, helped Greg through his first buying gig from the ground up.

"Knowing you're only as good as your word; to go as far as you want so long as you don't step on other people to get there; and to have fun

no matter what, that's Steph's voice I'm hearing. I learned to have a blast every day while getting a hectic workday done, and it has led me to so many great people," Greg says.

One of those unequivocal meet-cutes is Oleen Smethurst, Vice President for Loblaw International, whom Greg has continued to work for and learn from across multiple roles.

"I truly admire Oleen, who invites me into greater industry conversations and introduces me to lots of industry executives. She is the epitome of a teacher and coach, giving regular and consistent feedback. There is no ego tied up; instead, she sets me up to meet with suppliers and executives, to learn in situations I may not even see a connection to begin with," Greg explains. "I am so blessed to have such a consonant retail professional who tells things as it is and really wants us to grow through open and honest conversation."

Greg's point reminds me of advice from Researcher and Consultant Brené Brown: Clarity is kindness—especially true in a business as temporally demanding as fresh produce.

"Oleen also creates opportunities for me to get into meetings I often feel I'm underqualified for," Greg laughs. "I am frequently unsure and she not only encourages and brings me in, but she's also letting me ask questions and open a dialogue some leaders might think their junior has no place doing."

This, in turn, raises Greg's confidence, his awareness, and, ultimately, his level in navigating the categories he buys for. It's a talent mirrored on the supply-side by another mentor, Hugh Bowman, Chief Executive Officer of Global Citrus Group.

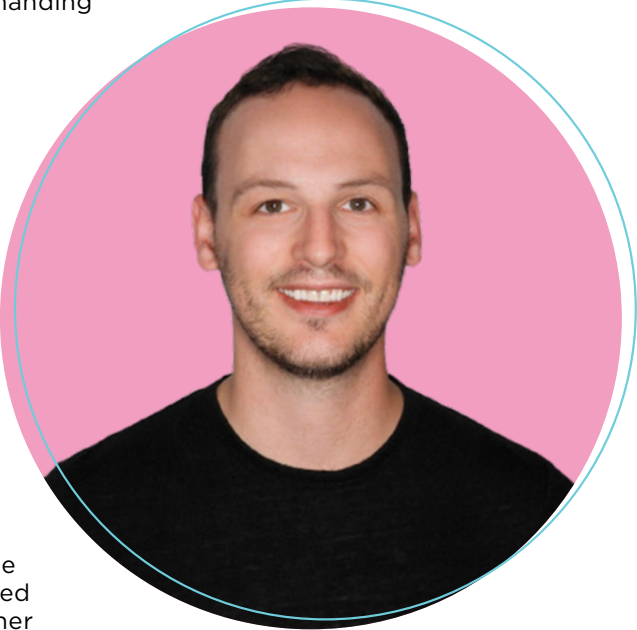
"Hugh and I have worked closely since I joined produce. He is always there for me,

taking the time to explain complex situations and coach me through tough situations. Oleen said, 'If you have questions, Hugh's a great person to talk to,' and he became a sounding board really quickly. He gave me so much industry knowledge across so many categories," Greg shares. "Hugh runs his company and also assists with so many other projects but will sit on the phone with me for 45 minutes. All I have to do is tell Hugh I have questions, and he will take the time and go through it with me from start to finish."

Yet, as Greg and I both observe, Hugh is often zipping from one continent to another putting the "global" in the company's brand. The solution? Greg has found wisdom by popping his head over the cubicle wall to connect with Patrick Gauthier, Discount Produce, Category Director at Loblaw Companies.

"Patrick is a peer mentor, which I think is really important for us as an industry to talk more about," Greg points out. "The running joke for this article has been, 'Greg, I have to write something nice about you that's going to be there forever? Come on.'"

In addition to a parallel sense of humor, Patrick and Greg have always had parallel titles. Now, they have the added benefit of different departments, with the former now in merchandising and the latter in procurement.



Greg Palmer, Procurement Director-Root Vegetables, Loblaw Companies Ltd

"It's a really great feeling. I have a sounding board for everything that happens in my day-to-day, and so does he—I can be up against a nerve-wracking presentation, and Pat can give open and honest feedback really quickly. From a heavy project to the need to vent and ensure you don't bring work stress home, it is so important to have that peer support and mentorship," Greg emphasizes. "Everything he learns and encounters he wants to share with me, and vice versa. It makes us both better at the end of the day because we're much stronger together."

Passion, strength, and a willingness to question are the ingredients to Greg's magic mentor recipe, whether it is the person next to you or an event speaker that strikes a chord.

"People are more apt to give you the time of day when you show you care about the work you're doing. Find people who get you excited when they talk about the industry. If you both see the world in similar ways, that's great, but on the opposite side of the spectrum is finding somebody who challenges you. Who forces you to see things from a completely different angle. By doing that, you're going to make sure that you're well-rounded and you don't get hit from left field. The common thing I have found is that feeling of excitement—if they make you care, follow up with them. Pursue the relationship. It's worth it," Greg promises.

As we complete another year, it's the perfect time to set resolutions and commit to cultivating those connections. For my part, I am grateful to count Greg as a new mentor in the making.

THE MENTORS

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



Oleen Smethurst, Vice President, Loblaw International, Loblaw Companies Ltd

"Working with Greg has been an absolute pleasure. He has such a great personality and willingness to learn! Greg goes above and beyond to make sure his immediate team is trained and given every opportunity to succeed, has a very good rapport with his vendor community, and creates relationships based on transparency and respect while being 'tough but fair.' Greg is always seeking to learn more about the industry and categories outside his current portfolio—he wants to gain as much industry knowledge as possible. He has great drive as well as a great sense of humor, which is an asset in our world of produce!"

POWERED BY JOE PRODUCE



Hugh Bowman, Chief Executive Officer, Global Citrus Group Inc.

"It's been a pleasure working with Greg and watching him further develop both personally and professionally. What struck me as unique the first time I met him—outside his great sense of humor—was the number of questions and comments he presented on both the category and individual products he was buying. I had the opportunity to travel with him as part of a vendor group to analyze seed trials, varieties, greenhouses, and farms from around the world. During these travels, his education on corresponding categories continued to grow. I watched as seed companies engaged him on feedback with pre-commercial varieties looking for retail perspective; this not only included flavor and eating quality, but if the variety could be grown and managed by the farm, the required seasonal time for the grower to learn the life cycle and intricacies of the item, and if the yield would make sense financially for both the farm and retailer. This learning and analysis has helped Greg develop his categories to their full potential while balancing the supply-side and changing retail landscape.

Greg's integrity, honest feedback, transparency, and communication have pushed suppliers to be better at what they do. His food safety and packaging background combined with his continued farm knowledge makes him the best in class. As he continues his career, I am looking forward to watching his further development and where he will take his retail categories.



Patrick Gauthier, Discount Produce, Category Director, Loblaw Companies Ltd

"Greg and I hit it off right away—we have similar ways of doing things, but with different skill sets that complement each other. He took the department by storm when he joined our team and it was refreshing to see him come in. One of Greg's best skills is getting the best out of people—he has definitely done that for me, and I'm better for knowing him. We are on two different sides of the business now, which, if anything, is better at bringing new perspectives and helping us to further map different sides of this journey. We are great at sharing information between the two, bouncing ideas off each other, and consistently having someone to bring a fresh perspective. It is easy to look up when it comes to advice and mentorship, especially when trying to get to where they are, but there is so much value found in the person next to you."





By Lilian Diep

Whether it's pre-cut and ready to heat or pre-packaged and ready to serve, the value-added sector continues to attract the busy shopper—especially now that the holidays are in full swing. So, why not give consumers the gift of time? Time saved from constructing the ever-growing shopping list and kitchen duties can become more time spent with loved ones around a delicious meal. Now, these items may not be wrapped with a bow, but they sure do make for a pretty present...



**CHRISTINA BARNARD,**  
*Director of Marketing, Taylor Farms*

"Shoppers cook a lot during the holidays and deserve a much-needed break. This time of year is perfect for shoppers to grab a bag (or two) of our delicious new Mini Chopped Salad Kits! No bowl is required; they can bring our new minis on the go and eat an indulgent personal salad straight from the bag. With Pizza Ranch, Caesar, Citrus Crunch, Green Goddess Ranch, and Nashville Hot, these snackable salads are mini in size but bold in flavor."



**AARON SUMPTION,**  
*Senior Vice President of Sales, Local Bounti*

"Last year, we debuted our chef-inspired Grab & Go Salad Kit line with Poppy Power and Modern Greek. This product line was an answer to busy, on-the-go consumers who didn't want to sacrifice fresh, delicious, convenient, and healthy meals for affordability. We've seen a massive positive reaction to the line, which led to the debut of our newest varieties: Artisanal Chicken Caesar and Memphis Style BBQ Chicken. By combining the same state-of-the-art growing techniques of our greens with chef-inspired flavors and premium, antibiotic-free white meat chicken, we're responding to demand with these tasty, wallet-friendly options that are also a good source of protein."



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

"Each year when we transition into the holiday season, we see an increase in shoppers' desire for time-saving ingredients. Duda Farm Fresh Foods' assortment of value-added products like fresh-cut celery, Ready Radishes, and pre-shucked corn make entertaining around the holidays a breeze! Our value-added product line serves as a time-saving culinary secret, allowing families to savor moments with loved ones instead of spending their holidays in the kitchen."



**BIL GOLDFIELD,**  
*Director, Corporate Communications, Dole Food Company*

"The holidays often include the fun of sharing recipes and food traditions with friends and family, so it's no secret that shoppers seem more willing to experiment during this season than any other time of the year. At Dole Food Company, we reserve some of our more compelling new recipes for December when time is of the essence. Techniques and recipes favoring convenience when preparing delicious entrées, side dishes, and desserts tend to trend around the holidays, and our products always wow guests. Our host of new, celebration-worthy Dole recipes made with DOLE® Bananas, Pineapples, and other fresh fruits and vegetables are just the convenient solutions your shoppers will turn to this month."



**ARDY HAERIZADEH,**  
*Senior Vice President, Sales and Operations, Calavo Fresh Foods*

"Searching for a value-added solution, we are thrilled with our latest innovation: Avocado Butter, the perfect way to take your toast to the next level! A rich and creamy mix of butter with the health benefits of avocado—heart-healthy fats, vitamins, minerals, and fiber—without the hassle of ripening, cutting, and mashing. Available in convenient 2 oz single-serve cups, shoppers can spread it on breads, proteins, or entrées; use it as a dip for vegetables; or incorporate it into any dish calling for avocado or butter. Holidays are always a hectic time, so we're hoping to ease the stress while adding some health to your shoppers' day, and this is the perfect addition!"



**BRYAN SHELTON,**  
*Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Giorgio Fresh Co.*

"The holiday season doesn't always have the healthiest reputation. However, mushrooms can be the unsung heroes of meals, bringing both umami flavors and nutritional benefits. They're an extremely versatile ingredient, from hearty stews to savory sides. Incorporate mushrooms alongside proteins for a healthier twist, and make mushrooms the focal point of festive meals. Our line of heat-and-serve stuffed mushrooms complements our popular fresh mushrooms in the produce section, creating ease in shopping for the consumer and stress-free holiday meal prep!"





# WTF

## DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

### DOLE® Bananas and Pineapples ?



TWISTED CANDY CANE DOLE® WHIP

#### INGREDIENTS

**2** ripe DOLE® Bananas, peeled, cut crosswise into thirds, and frozen  
**¾ cup** DOLE Pineapple, chopped and frozen  
**¾ cup** DOLE Strawberries, hulled, halved, and frozen  
**½ cup** DOLE Raspberries, frozen  
**1½ cups** unsweetened coconut milk, chilled  
**1 tbsp** powdered sugar  
**¼ tsp** peppermint extract  
Mini candy canes and mint leaves, for garnish (optional)

**Prep Time:** 15 mins  
**Freeze Time:** 15 mins  
**Servings:** 4

#### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Purée 1 banana, ¾ cup milk, pineapple, ½ tbsp sugar, and peppermint extract in a blender on high until smooth; transfer to a large plastic piping bag and freeze 15 minutes. Makes about 2 cups.
- 2 Purée strawberries, raspberries, and remaining 1 banana, ¾ cup milk, and ½ tbsp sugar in a blender on high until smooth; transfer to a large plastic piping bag and freeze 15 minutes. Makes about 2 cups.
- 3 Cut off about ½" from tip of each piping bag; place both bags side by side in a large plastic piping bag fitted with a large star tip. Pipe the 2 flavors into 4 small bowls; serve garnished with candy canes and/or mint leaves, if desired. Enjoy!

*Tip: Pipe the banana mixture into bowls using a piping bag fitted with a star tip for the classic DOLE® Whip look.*

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



# From Soil to SPARKLE: 75 YEARS OF SUCCESS

By Peggy Packer

Troy Bland,  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Bland Farms



**S**eventy-five years of success is no small feat. To withstand the test of time over several decades requires an admirable level of commitment, expertise, and perseverance—all qualities that Bland Farms has wielded to reach its impressive diamond milestone.

Eclipsing 75 years, Bland Farms has achieved this monumental target while upholding a commitment to maintaining a strong sense of community, pushing agricultural innovation, remaining transparent, and growing its products using sustainable and environmentally responsible practices.

"It's been an incredible and humbling experience to work alongside my father, Delbert Bland, to take my grandfather Raymond Bland's vision beyond what I think even he could imagine. We started as a seasonal business and have grown into a multinational operation," Troy Bland, Chief Executive Officer, says as he begins breaking down the company's highly regarded legacy. "It's an exciting time for us, and as we continue the momentum with new business opportunities, we look toward the future and innovative ways to become an even more responsible and sustainable company."

Quality, community, innovation, sustainability, and transparency make up the pillars of Bland Farms' high-powered operation. Each of these integral values has not only established the brand's dynamic foundation but has also informed its ambitious growth strategies. From the very beginning, the

Photo Credit: h2o Creative Group





“...as we continue the momentum with new business opportunities, we look toward the future and innovative ways to become an even more responsible and sustainable company.”

*Troy Bland,*  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, BLAND FARMS

trailblazer has operated with the goal of providing high-quality produce and delivering consistent excellence to ensure customer trust.

“Bland Farms’ goals and values have not only endured but have grown stronger over the past 75 years. We continue to forge ahead through innovation, and our state-of-the-art, controlled-atmosphere packaging facility is a testament to our commitment to staying at the forefront of technology in the industry,” shares Troy, highlighting a few of the cutting-edge advancements that have helped the company reach its diamond milestone.

This tech-forward controlled atmosphere facility aligns with Bland Farms’ continuous efforts to be more sustainable. The entire facility will be computer-controlled, further reducing energy and waste.

“It’s a giant leap in fresh produce,” Troy says. “The industry has been traditionally sizing and packing in open-air buildings. Having a complete controlled-atmosphere facility allows us to precisely regulate the humidity, airflow, and temperature throughout every stage of the drying and packing process. This ensures we can consistently deliver a better-quality sweet onion with a longer shelf-life.”

All of the facility’s new forklifts are also electric, boosting overall efficiency for the supplier. In fact, within the past five years, Bland Farms has gone from 50 gas forklifts to 15 electric and only 10 gas forklifts. This transition has reduced emissions, energy usage, and waste, all while creating a safer work environment

for its employees. In addition, the producer is actively reducing greenhouse gas emissions through the implementation of tractors and farm equipment with advanced, clean-burning diesel engines.

“Our commitment to sustainable farming practices has also deepened,” Troy continues, pointing to another central company value. “As environmental concerns have become more significant, we’ve invested in sustainable agriculture methods to ensure the long-term health of our land.”

As the industry pushes for sustainability, eco-friendly practices, and the preservation of natural resources, Bland Farms aggressively seeks ways to live up to its mission of “Innovation Through Generations.” This includes contemplating, inventing, and applying new practices to preserve its ecology as the brand pushes toward each individual milestone.

“Being efficient and good stewards is just part of what we think is good business,” Troy adds. “In addition to what we’ve done for years to protect the land and the investments we’ve made to improve the efficiency of our operation, we continue to look for ways to reduce packaging waste, like our e-pack bag that uses 80 percent less plastic and is 100 percent recyclable over the traditional full-wrap bags.”

Packing is a particular area of prowess for Bland Farms, as the grower recently received the 2021 Pratt Environmental Impact Award for its decade-long dedication to sustainable packaging.

“As a grower, packer, and shipper of Vidalia® onions, we recognize the need to be flexible and agile. Whether it’s growing, labor, packing, or numerous other issues,” notes Troy. “Bland Farms has been at the forefront of technological changes in the field and the packing facility. Our packing operation is unrecognizable compared to just five years ago due to various state-of-art improvements throughout the packing process. Bland Farms is packing onions more technologically advanced than anyone else in the United States produce industry. This ensures the greatest freshness for our produce.”

As with all monumental birthdays, this thrilling turning point for the supplier offers a great opportunity to look back at all Bland Farms has accomplished over its 75-year run.

“Our once seasonal operation is now multinational, with operations in Peru and Mexico. Bland Farms’ domestic operations span the U.S., including Georgia, Texas, Washington, Pennsylvania, and California,” explains Troy. “Today, Bland Farms boasts 2,000 acres of Vidalia onions domestically, with 660 hectares in Peru and 400 in Mexico. Recognizing and acting on the rising demand for sweet onions has enabled us to expand production, forming strategic growing partnerships that have proven extremely valuable and allow us to supply sweet onions year-round.”

Complementing this robust sweet onion portfolio, Bland Farms also proudly supplies Lil’ O’s Premium Mini Sweet Onions, organic sweet onions, and Sand Candy Sweet Potatoes, as well as its Vidalia Brands® products, which consist of salad dressings, sauces,





“Bland Farms has been at the forefront of technological changes in the field and the packing facility. Our packing operation is unrecognizable compared to just five years ago due to various state-of-art improvements throughout the process.”

condiments, seasonings, snacks, and more. In a move to avoid food waste by utilizing the entire onion, Bland Farms optimizes the onions not sent directly to stores to produce its Vidalia Brands® products, or sells them to industrial customers to be used as ingredients. All other unsold onions are put back into its fields and used as a natural fertilizer.

While presenting a host of valuable cross-promotion opportunities, the Vidalia Brands portfolio allows consumers to get the coveted Vidalia flavor they crave all year, making it a perfect addition to the produce department and grocery aisles.

With this diverse lineup of offerings, Bland Farms serves as a one-stop shop for its retail allies.

“Bland Farms proudly stands out as the sole supplier, owning both domestic and international farms. With no middleman, we offer a solid and transparent

partnership from Roots to Retail™,” adds Troy. “Our strategically located facilities yield the freshest, highest-quality onions available. Beyond this, we lead in innovation, always championing sustainability and responsible farming practices.”

In June of this year, Bland Farms celebrated its Diamond Jubilee with employees, their families, and friends at the cabin where Founders Raymond and Rubye Jean Bland once lived. Festive decorations and balloons adorned the tent, while bounce houses and games entertained party goers. Every employee of the farm was celebrated with a certificate of appreciation, in addition to a pin commemorating their years of service. Four employees were also recognized for their 30 years of service with a gold watch. A delicious steak dinner rounded out the event—and, of course, what’s a birthday party without cake?

“When Bland Farms was established over 75 years ago as a small, family-run farm, our primary goals and values were rooted in our commitment to quality, community, and the land that sustained us,” Troy concludes. “While some aspects of the industry have changed significantly over the past 75 years, our core goals and values have remained remarkably consistent. The principles that steered us toward becoming a renowned brand known for excellence in the sweet onion category remain steadfast in shaping our dedication to providing top-tier products and exceptional customer service. Furthermore, our unwavering commitment to sustainability and environmentally conscious farming and packaging is not merely a trendy catchphrase; it lies at the heart of the values upon which Bland Farms was established.”

As these few pages have proven, Bland Farms’ undeniable notoriety and industry influence is an inspiring story 75 years in the making.

So bring on the bright lights, the birthday cake, and the upbeat music. It’s certainly a cause for celebration as this longstanding onion brand glides ever so gracefully into year 76. 🍷



Think Holidays. Think Freska.



Offering dried and fresh mangos and delicious avocados, Freska's got your holiday wishlist covered!



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# THE ROAD TO REGENERATION

As energy around the topic of sustainability continues to swell, an unfamiliar phrase has begun to circulate—regenerative farming, also called regen ag. Some may assume it's merely the latest product of the sustainability buzzword pipeline, but you might be surprised to learn this agricultural mindset predates contemporary farming entirely. What exactly is regenerative farming, and how is it practiced today?



## 1 DEEP ROOTS

While many modern regenerative practices were developed more recently, the origins of the movement go back millennia. Since time immemorial, Indigenous Americans have farmed using a holistic framework that considers all parties in the agricultural process: soil, water, animals, and humans alike. Just ask Marvin Record, Head of Orchard Operations at Rainier Fruit Company; a 1961 copy of *How to Grow Vegetables and Fruits by the Organic Method* by regen ag advocate J. I. Rodale sits prominently on his office shelf. Rainier achieved Regenerative Organic Certified® on 230 acres as a verified seal on company-wide practices, but for Record, regenerative farming is simply a mindset—"leave it better than you found it!"



## 2 QUALITY IN, QUALITY OUT

Through regenerative farming practices such as on-farm green composting and integrated pest management, Rainier Fruit actively fosters soil microbes and native insect populations in its orchards. These practices, combined with the inherent sustainability of growing permanent crops with ground cover vegetation, keep both plant and soil healthy and naturally resilient. Not only do these methods make an impact in the field, but on the final product as well—Rainier believes fruit grown from healthy plants tastes and stores better thanks to stronger nutritional balance, helping enable a year-round supply of United States-grown organics.



## 3 REAP WHAT YOU SOW

People are a key pillar of the regenerative farming framework. For growing fruit, this is especially relevant given the labor-intensive nature of planting, training, pruning, and harvesting orchards all by hand. Company Founder Bill Zirkle built Rainier Fruit on the principle of respecting and supporting every person in the operation regardless of position, which is why the company embraced the Equitable Food Initiative's certification standards for workforce practices with plans to reach 6,800 certified acres by 2024. Just as a well-sustained tree rooted in healthy soil yields quality fruit, well-supported people yield quality work.



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.

Happy Holidays!





# WTF DO I DO WITH Trinity Fruit Company Juicy Gems® Pomegranate ?

{ what the fork }



POMEGRANATE CRANBERRY COMPOTE

## INGREDIENTS

**3 cups** Juicy Gems® Pomegranate Arils  
**1 16 oz bag** fresh or frozen cranberries  
**1 cup** sugar  
**1/8 tsp** salt  
**1/3 cup** water  
Zest and juice of one large orange

**Prep Time:** 5 mins  
**Cook Time:** 15 mins  
**Servings:** 8

## DIRECTIONS

- 1 Add all ingredients to a heavy sauce pan and bring to a boil.
- 2 Reduce heat and simmer for 10–15 minutes, stirring often. Compote will thicken as it cools.
- 3 Serve over warm Brie or softened goat cheese. Enjoy!

*Tip: Also wonderful served over roasted poultry or pork.*

To learn more about Trinity Fruit Company,  
visit [www.trinityfruit.com](http://www.trinityfruit.com)



# HARMONIZING FRESH *and* Finance

A Q&A With Derek Yurosek, Managing Director,  
Arable Capital Partners

*By Anne Allen*

*O*urs is an industry fortified by knowledge. When applied correctly, the strategic advantages of a financial partnership and the relationship-driven pathways of the fresh produce industry blend beautifully.

Enter agriculture investment firm, Arable Capital Partners.

Arable was founded in 2016 by Greg Richards and Derek Yurosek. Established with the purpose of bringing investors opportunities in the agribusiness sector, Arable has since provided investors with the access to the sector and growers, packers, and shippers access to necessary funding. In doing so, it's also changing the way produce companies do business.





With a diversified portfolio currently consisting of five companies, Arable wants to be the right partner for the produce industry. Companies such as BlazerWilkinsonGee, organicgirl, Pacific Trellis Fruit, and Royal Ridge Fruits, among others, have turned to the firm when it came time to consider operational and ownership next steps—and Arable has the experience and know-how to make it happen.

Don't just take my word for it, though. Let's have Derek, one of the firm's Managing Directors, lead the way.



**ANDREA ALLEN:** When I think about investment firms, my mind doesn't automatically turn toward agriculture—although that's my own blind spot! Can you walk me through the origins of Arable and how the company connects to ag?

**DEREK YUROSEK,**  
Managing Director, Arable Capital Partners: The firm was really a concept that Greg, Founder and Managing Director, first developed while investing for another ag investment fund that he had started, which was focused on buying land in the Pacific Northwest.



Once we were introduced, we quickly realized we both believed there was a big opportunity to invest beyond pure

# “Arable [Capital Partners] acts like a family office and a family business.”

**Derek Yurosek,**  
Managing Director, Arable Capital Partners

land investments and into ag companies that are more vertically integrated—those that may have land but that are also involved in growing, processing, packaging, and distribution. We also both believed that investing in these opportunities properly would require a long-term approach. Our shared views coalesced into what Arable Capital Partners is today.

Historically, agribusiness has been an underrepresented investment sector. Investors have struggled to match their parameters with the unique challenges these businesses face, especially complexities related to generational transfer and vertical integration. Greg and I both believe that by taking a long-term investment approach, Arable can be a better partner and investor for agribusinesses.



**AA:** Speaking to that history, I know that you've basically been in ag for most of your life, if not your whole life. What has been the trajectory of your career?

**DY:** If you asked me 20 years ago if I would be sitting here having a conversation about Arable Capital, I would've said I couldn't fathom it. I came from production agriculture and then entered investing, something for which I feel very blessed. I learned a lot through osmosis, too, seeing my dad and grandfather in this industry and having them teach me about business and capital.

My time at Bolthouse Farms with Bill Bolthouse and Andre Radandt was amazing. When I was there, we bought tens of thousands of acres and acquired a number of companies. I went through one of the first private equity transactions in produce when Madison Dearborn bought Bolthouse Farms. As part of this transaction, the company went from one with zero debt to one that was significantly leveraged. As Vice President of Ag and Regional Operations, I had a firsthand view of the internal implications and challenges that came with the new financial structure. I had to learn how to think like an investor and financial manager.

**AA:** From there, you must have learned a great deal about what sort of business model you wanted to emulate. Can you explain to me how Arable stands out in the produce sector?

**DY:** We focus on partnering with successful agribusiness in the produce industry, usually companies that are looking for a transfer in their ownership structure or opportunities that require growth capital.

Arable acts like a family office and a family business. This was a concept that didn't really exist in the ag investment world when the firm was founded in 2016. Our focus on creating long-term partnerships and strategic value stands out.

Also unique to us is that, within our growing team, there's a lot of experience on the strategic side of the ag industry. We're not just investors from New York or Chicago, Illinois, right? I live in Bakersfield, California. Greg lives in Bellevue, Washington. We're in the game, and we understand it. We have operational backgrounds from running companies, not just investing or finance.

**AA:** You know the industry and you know the players. With that in mind, where do you see the company best fulfilling the needs of the market right now?

**DY:** There is still a large generational transfer taking place within agribusiness. Especially with changes in the debt market, it's more important than ever to make sure companies are thinking about the right capital structure when transitions occur. This is something in which Arable is well versed.

With a team of ag experts and a portfolio of similar businesses, Arable is also able to help companies refine and execute their strategic plans so that they can continue to thrive in an ever-changing industry. And, with a large network, we can make introductions to help our companies grow through both strategic partnerships and acquisitions. We can provide access that may not have existed before.

Arable is a very relationship-based partner, and we are committed to fresh produce. We hold our reputation paramount and continue to look for ways to help both individual businesses and the industry grow.



When Derek and I closed our call, it was with one sentiment hanging in the air: There's a lot of road ahead—or as Derek might say, a ton of wood to chop—in order to reframe the view that ag has toward financial investors. Arable is focused on proving that with the right structure and guidance, it can create long-term value for its companies and investors. Luckily for the industry, Derek and Greg come from the same earth that its business model supports. 🌱



# Holidays

## SNACKCHAT

By Peggy Packer

The holiday season is known for bringing people together, infusing the air with a sense of gratitude, care, and love. But before we can sit down to enjoy a mouthwatering meal with friends and family, we must first map out those lists, grab our wallets, and set out for the grocery store. Whether shoppers are preparing a baked ham accentuated by sweet pineapple chunks, a plate of latkes (fried potato pancakes), flavorful candied yams, or fresh-filled spring rolls, the produce department is a prime destination this time of year.

Of course, this wouldn't be *The Snack* if we didn't bring you a few festive strategies for fresh success...

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

"The fourth quarter and the holiday time frame provide a great opportunity to highlight everything we have to offer our customers as they gather around the table. Whether it's the staple categories of potatoes, onions, asparagus, berries, and citrus or time savers like ready-to-cook veg or fresh-cut fruit, The GIANT Company produce department checks all the boxes! We merchandise our departments to bring the full color and flavor of the fall and winter season to life. Incremental displays of those high tonnage items is where we put a lot of focus—ensuring we have the product when the customer wants it, whether they're shopping in-store or online."

**THOMAS DUNNUM,**  
Senior Category Manager, National Produce, Sprouts Farmers Market

"The holiday season is prime time for potatoes, onions, yams, and hard squash! At Sprouts Farmers Market, you'll find these items abundantly merchandised alongside other holiday essentials, creating destination displays that allow our customers to easily shop for their holiday needs. As we transition into the new year, shoppers will find our merchandising plan geared toward organics. The new year is a perfect time for displaying and promoting organic items such as citrus, apples, berries, and other juicing items in an effort to help our customers maximize and reach their New Year's health goals."

**SUSAN NORITAKE,**  
Director of Sales, Bako Sweet®

"The holiday season is when family and friends come together around meals to celebrate and give thanks. Nothing quite fits the festivities like a home-cooked sweet potato dish. At Bako Sweet®, we are here to support our retail partners with organic and conventional sweet potatoes in convenient value-added packaging as well as bulk offerings. Our 3 lb bag is the perfect amount for an all-favorite sweet potato casserole, and our microwavable singles and steamer bags can assist even the most time-pressed chef. Help inspire shoppers by merchandising with our eye-catching display bin. The QR code leads shoppers to both traditional and innovative recipe ideas that are sure to delight and add to a heartfelt occasion that is as nutritious as it is delicious. Bako Sweet, grown with love, from California's Sweet Spot."

**MONIQUE MUELLER,**  
Director of Communications, Bee Sweet Citrus

"Bee Sweet Citrus' winter citrus line is perfect for the holiday season because all of our varieties are incredibly versatile and definitely have a place on traditional winter menus. Mandarins and Navel oranges are great for shoppers looking to incorporate immunity-boosting foods into their diet, while our lemons and Royal Red oranges are perfect for those interested in adding a pop of color to their favorite dessert or cocktail. Being that winter is the peak season for citrus, we can guarantee shoppers will receive fresh, flavorful fruit every time they turn to our brand."



# FLOCK OF THE PHOENIX

By Melissa De Leon Chavez

## A MESSAGE FUELED BY A MISSION BECOMES A CULTURE.

A foundational belief that produce propels loyalty has fanned flames of change across Sobey's FreshCo, catching and spreading through the team like wildfire. But how do you forge such intrinsic transformation? This is the heart of Project Phoenix, the program that has redefined the grocery chain's perspective of fresh operations and execution.

"Project Phoenix couldn't succeed until everyone from leadership to store clerks believed in it. In this, communication is everything," Amanda Labuckas, Director of Fresh Category Management and Merchandising, emphasizes. "A merchant can sit and build a plan. Guess what? If that plan isn't communicated to the stores



**AMANDA LABUCKAS.**  
Director of Fresh Category Management and Merchandising, Sobey's FreshCo

and to the sourcing and replenishment team, it's never going to come to life. So, how do we understand the right steps, the right people to get involved, so the plan becomes all of ours?"

When this is successful, it's not just Amanda's or even FreshCo's success. A produce department has a great cherry season when it partners with the right grower, when its teams do all the right planning, hit all the right ads, and meet customers' needs—thus creating a win throughout the chain. This, Amanda says, is the key to the messaging that must take wing. To help Amanda navigate this, she took a leaf from her own Project Phoenix handbook by reaching across the table.

“

**A MERCHANT CAN SIT AND BUILD A PLAN. GUESS WHAT?**

**IF THAT PLAN ISN'T COMMUNICATED TO THE STORES AND TO THE SOURCING AND REPLENISHMENT TEAM, IT'S NEVER GOING TO COME TO LIFE. SO, HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND THE RIGHT STEPS, THE RIGHT PEOPLE TO GET INVOLVED, SO THE PLAN BECOMES ALL OF OURS? ”**

**AMANDA LABUCKAS.**

Director of Fresh Category Management and Merchandising, Sobey's FreshCo

"We would not be able to bring this project to life without Mario Rizzuto, District Operator, Special Projects—I always joke around that he was born in a cabbage patch. He goes into stores and knows all the products. He lives and breathes it, talks about it, and creates passion and excitement. Together, we've built this culture where it's not departments working in silos. We are all connecting and looking at how the produce will come to life in a store," Amanda shares.

From the FreshCo merchandising teams and buyers to the franchisees and produce managers, all were critical in the magical resurrection of this mind shift.

"We have partnered with other business units to sit at the table in a way that FreshCo never has before. At one point we operated more independently. We now have become partners. We're working in a way we never have, and it's pretty incredible. And we're seeing the results at store level," Amanda points out. "We have team members who are building displays they're eager to share with us, to showcase how sales are growing or what they are hearing from customers. It's just wonderful what we've been able to achieve in three years."

Franchisees in FreshCo do a phenomenal job in investing in their produce departments, making sure the quality is there; that value is represented through merchandising plans; that there are the key seasonal items, plus the items that are really important to



the demographics that are shopping their stores. Meanwhile, employees are doing their part and receiving recognition via FreshCo's Produce Ambassador Award.

"We created a produce newsletter in which each of our districts can nominate either a produce manager, a part-time clerk, a franchisee, or an assistant produce manager with a story of how they are a produce ambassador for the culture change we're working to bring to life. It's incredible to me when these recipients share this acknowledgment on their socials because they are so proud they won. This is probably the thing I have been the most proud of in my entire career, because it's not just about us," Amanda reflects. "There are great examples of people bringing this to life every day and we are honored to celebrate them. That recognition keeps our culture strong."



**It has taken many individuals coming together under one fresh-focused mission to realize a shift in FreshCo's culture**





In addition to the quarterly accolade, FreshCo has an annual Produce Excellence Award which recognizes an Ontario franchisee and a Western Canada franchisee.

“What it comes down to is how we can showcase the passion and keep that momentum going,” Amanda says. “I’ve learned over the years even the littlest thing today can have an impact on somebody. It’s true for what we do for our customers,

and also for our team. What might seem small can drive and motivate others to then take those extra steps produce needs. Then, to bring that down to their team and their stores.”

While this can be an award, it can also be a word of gratitude amid the day-to-day. Amanda reflects on how, if she is shopping or walking a store, she has learned to take time to appreciate the mechanics of the fresh department: “If I see someone

culling, or they’re in the back room trimming, that’s part of that process of bringing produce back to life. But it is the acknowledgment, the thank you, that brings the culture to life. It motivates the execution we need. That passion we need for a produce-first culture.”

It is the beginning and the end of the circular system of Project Phoenix, which can be broken down into value, quality, seasonality, and culture. Simple enough for all to understand, but critical to FreshCo’s success.

“There were a ton of steps to get to where we are now. It’s not as easy as snapping your fingers to see a strategy come to life. It’s incredible how much we’ve accomplished, and we’re not even close to where we want to be,” Amanda teases.

As the saying goes, birds of a feather flock together. Every individual has been key in igniting the powerful magic that is Project Phoenix, but flying in unison is how the flock weathers any storm. 🍅



“THERE WERE A TON OF STEPS TO GET TO WHERE WE ARE NOW. IT’S NOT AS EASY AS SNAPPING YOUR FINGERS TO SEE A STRATEGY COME TO LIFE. IT’S INCREDIBLE HOW MUCH WE’VE ACCOMPLISHED...”



**MARIO RIZZUTO,**  
Operational Co-Lead of Project Phoenix,  
District Operator -  
Special Projects, FreshCo

#### WHAT IS PROJECT PHOENIX:

“Showcasing seasonality and giving our customers the best eating experience is key. We place value over price—if it is cheap but tastes terrible, customers will not give you credit. Fresh counters are the heart of the produce department and need to shine.”

#### KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Be bold—don’t follow the leader, be the leader
- Ultimately, the key to FreshCo’s success is dependent on the culture established together as ONE team: H.O. at all levels with Franchisees/Operators and their team to align, embrace, and drive the compelling produce strategy to bring it to life for the collective customers
- The FreshCo team focused attention on ethnic diversity to provide the best offerings based on data points; geography will bring and retain customers and set FreshCo apart from the competition, creating a destination for all customers



**NUMAIR BAIG,**  
Bulk and Floral Category Manager,  
FreshCo

#### WHAT MAKES NUMAIR A PRODUCE AMBASSADOR?

- Placed into a produce role specifically to support the launch of Project Phoenix
- Brings dedication, analytical strengths, and a willingness to take risks
- Drives change and support across the strong merchandising program
- Contributes to the success of FreshCo’s produce rebirth



**JONATHAN CHOW,**  
Produce Manager,  
FreshCo

#### WHAT MAKES JONATHAN A PRODUCE AMBASSADOR?

- Always supports the program
- Leads by example
- District trainer to new and existing managers
- Team leader in his store who is always willing to take on more



**POLINES XAVIER,**  
Produce Category Manager,  
FreshCo Ontario

#### WHAT MAKES POLINES A PRODUCE AMBASSADOR?

- Started at Price Chopper at age 17 as a Produce Clerk
- Moved into a produce management role for five years before becoming a Retail Accountant
- Realized his passion lied with produce and moved to merchandising, then Category Manager



**ROBIN BARFETT,**  
Produce Manager,  
Western Canada, FreshCo

#### WHAT MAKES ROBIN A PRODUCE AMBASSADOR?

- The first FreshCo produce manager in Western Canada!
- Creates a culture in her department and with her team that is incredible to watch
- Passionately supported Project Phoenix
- Dedication and attitude make her a valuable resource for others learning produce



# WTF DO I DO WITH LIV Organic™ Butternut Squash ?

{ what the fork }



WINTER SQUASH SALAD

## INGREDIENTS

**1½ lbs** LIV Organic™ Butternut Squash  
**6 oz** fresh spinach  
**¼ tsp** salt  
**⅛ tsp** ground black pepper  
**⅛ tsp** dried sage  
**2 large** Honeycrisp apples, sliced  
**1 oz** blue cheese, crumbled  
**6 oz** toasted pecans  
Olive oil

## ORANGE VINAIGRETTE

**½ cup** freshly squeezed LIV Organic Orange juice  
**½ tsp** orange zest  
**1 tbsp** white wine vinegar  
**¼ tsp** salt  
**1 tsp** honey  
**⅓ cup** extra virgin olive oil  
**Pinch** ground black pepper

**Prep Time:** 15 mins

**Cook Time:** 25 mins

**Servings:** 6

## DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 375° F.
- 2 In a small mixing bowl, add orange juice, orange zest, vinegar, salt, pepper, and honey. While whisking, drizzle in the olive oil. Set aside.
- 3 Cut the Butternut squash into ¼" thick slices. Cut the slices in half and remove seeds. Place the slices on a baking sheet and drizzle with olive oil.
- 4 Mix salt, pepper, and dried sage together and sprinkle over the Butternut squash. Rub the mixture and coat evenly.
- 5 Roast in the oven for 25 minutes, or until tender. Set aside to cool.
- 6 In a large mixing bowl, add the spinach and drizzle with the vinaigrette. Toss to coat.
- 7 Serve the spinach topped with the Butternut squash, pecans, apple slices, and blue cheese crumbles.
- 8 Drizzle more vinaigrette if needed. Enjoy!

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



## A Closer Look at Sunview Carnival Fruit Punch™ Grapes

By Anne Allen

A wintry chill may hang in the air in the Northern Hemisphere, but for those indulging in Carnival® grapes, the winter blues couldn't be further away—especially when the all-new Carnival Fruit Punch™ is here.

This variety delights shoppers with the burst of delicious flavors that harken back to sipping snow cones while waiting in line for the roller coaster. These red seedless grapes, marketed exclusively under

Sunview Marketing International, are the result of years of research and breeding expertise to deliver a brand that satisfies on flavor, sweetness, and texture.

With the brand's whimsical nod to carnivals of old and that iconic Big Top tent, the clamshell packaging is an easy sell for kids and parents alike. Nostalgia plays a large role in Carnival Fruit Punch's marketing strategy, evoking care free summertimes.

Harvested in California at their peak flavor, these red seedless grapes are the must-have addition to table grape programs during the winter months. They add a bright playfulness to the category that will appeal to anyone looking for a healthy snack that packs a flavor punch.

No need to feel like you're walking a tightrope with this offering! You've got a sure deal in Carnival Fruit Punch.

UP  
CLOSE





» The IF List «  
Heidi Insalata Krahling

Chef and Owner, Insalata's Restaurant, and Cookbook Author



With Jordan Okumura-Wright

Nestled in the heart of Marin County, California, is Heidi Insalata Krahling's beloved restaurant Insalata's. As a Michelin-rated Bib Gourmand, Insalata's is celebrating its 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary of serving soulful rustic foods from all parts of the Mediterranean. Food, community, and family are the cornerstones of Heidi's life, guiding her passion, creativity, and philanthropic initiatives each day. From cooking classes and mentorship to her two cookbooks, *Insalata's Mediterranean Table* and *Insalata's and Marinitas—A Story of Two Restaurants*, Heidi has consistently contributed and raised the bar in both her local culinary community and the wider food stage at large. With so much already under her belt, we couldn't wait to discover what she would do with our list of IFs. Drumroll, please...

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

Julia Louis-Dreyfus. But she can't dance in the movie!

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

Floral—except for going to the flower mart in the middle of the night!

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

My dad. He was an extraordinary cook and died so young.

» 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?

Freddy Mercury from Queen and "Don't Stop Me Now." I would sing and Freddy would sing backup and play the piano.

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

Breakfast would be berries and yogurt and for lunch, I'd have avocado and Thai fish crudo. Dinner would be BBQ pork ribs and salad.

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

Instant recall.

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

Probably my wedding day. It went so fast. The memory is a blur!

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

Multiply food for those in need, similar to the parable, Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes.

» IF you had \$10 million that you had to donate to someone else, who would you choose and why?


ExtraFood. I have been on the board for 10 years. Amazing nonprofit feeding our community.

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

None of this goes together but what the heck, it's my last meal!

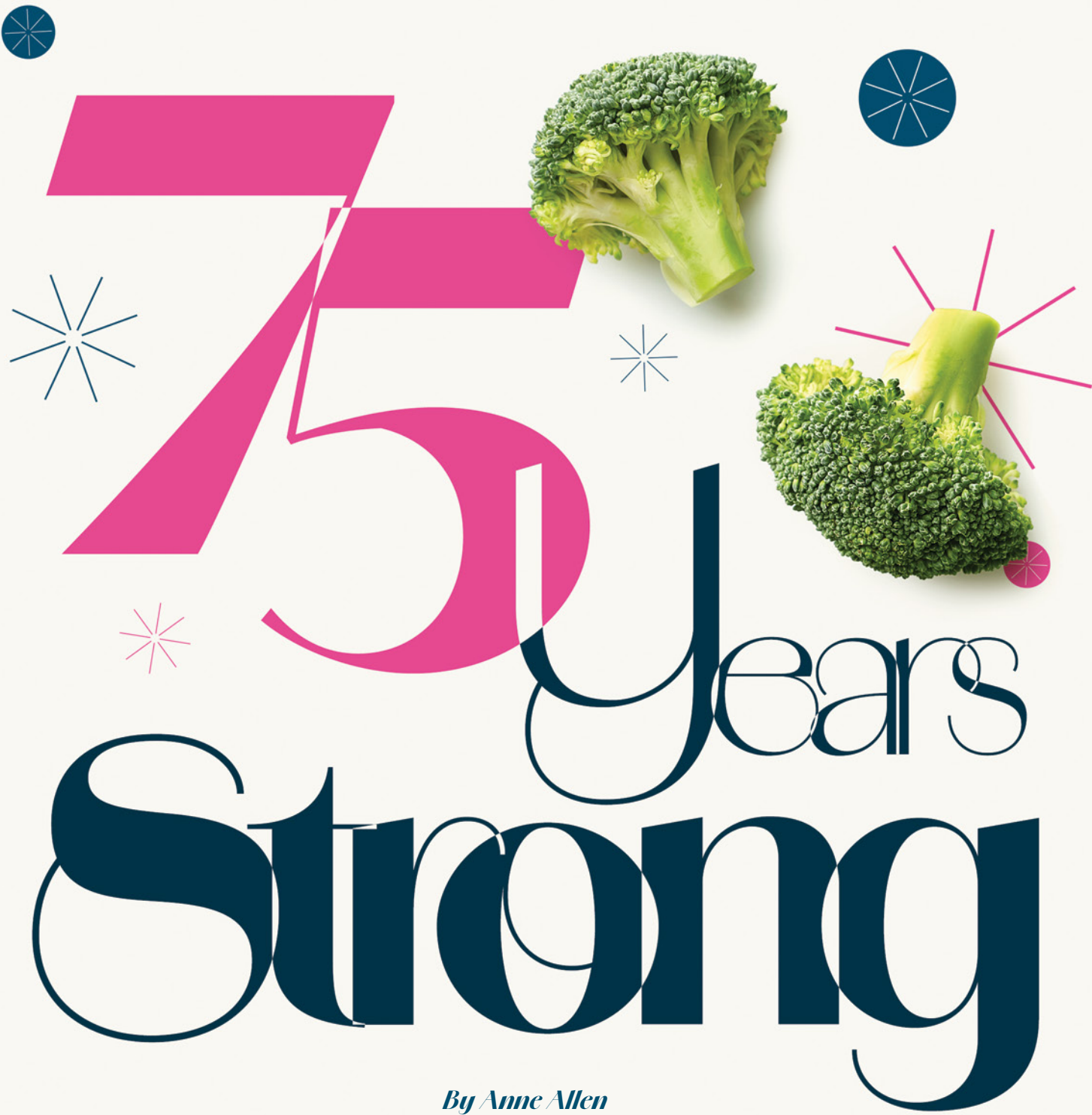
Avocados—any preparation, pasta with wild mushrooms, and freshly made maple bars.

» IF you could give your younger self one piece of advice, what would it be?

Be present. Take every moment in. 



DARRIGO  
NEW YORK



By Anne Allen

Adaptation is much more than reacting to a current business climate, situation, or market change. From behind the scenes, companies work diligently to keep their business operations relevant. In fresh produce, this can be a challenge, especially as technology and shifting buy-side qualifications make each decision a daunting task.

Counteracting the pain points of adaptation can be a tricky road to navigate, but certain mindsets and perspectives make the drive smoother.

Take, for instance, the gift that is knowledge, passed down hand to hand over generations. The wisdom of years past can make weathering change all the easier—and ensure decisions aren't made in the heat of the moment.





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

“The produce industry itself is very fluid. You have to be able to adapt in order to survive, and we’ve been doing just that since our inception,” Gabriela D’Arrigo, Vice President of Communications and Marketing for D’Arrigo New York, shares with me. “We like to think of our company as a stabilizing force in an unstable environment.”

No one in the industry would find fault with calling produce unstable—it’s almost like we love it all the more for its unpredictability. For some, this love has transformed business operations into miniature empires in their own right.

For D’Arrigo New York, it’s become a passion gifted to the generations who have followed in its family’s footsteps. Celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, the distributor takes a look back at the dream that started it all.

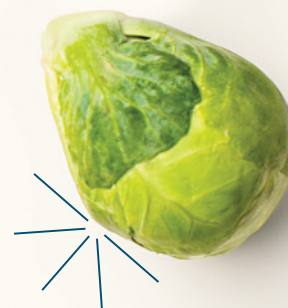
“To be honest, the founding vision is still the vision today. That is what has made us successful. We initially sought to expand the distribution of the brands and labels we sell from our suppliers to the Northeast region of the United States and bring fresh fruit and vegetables to consumers,” Gabriela tells me.

Built from the ground up on strong core values and tireless effort, D’Arrigo New York has come a long way since it began as a small facility in Washington Market—now known as TriBeCa in New York City. In 1967, the company moved to Hunts Point Produce Market, New York, where it has steadily expanded and grown its portfolio of product offerings.

Throughout the ’80s and ’90s, the distributor expanded its previous four stalls—cooler spaces—to 36 stalls. Two additional offsite facilities followed, these being built in the past six years alone.

“We’ve maintained the family business mentality,” Gabriela remarks with pride. “There are nine active members in New York, which have brought us to a more corporate level. The 75-year mark is an incredible feat that I know we are all very proud of. We were built on simple family values that have been instilled in each generation. It’s the cornerstone of who we are today.”

Gabriela notes that the wholesaler’s success is an example of the American Dream realized, a fact furthered by the company’s Fourth of July anniversary date.



The produce industry itself is very fluid. YOU HAVE TO BE ABLE TO ADAPT in order to survive, and we’ve been doing just that since our inception.

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



“We decided to pay homage to our anniversary at a cocktail reception following this year’s New York Produce Show in December. All the suppliers and customers who have helped us along the way were invited to celebrate,” Gabriela says.

Throughout its 75 years, D’Arrigo New York has adapted to the changing needs of the market. The wholesaler has implemented a rigorous food safety program, increased its refrigerated warehouse space, and advanced its trucking department.

The latest step in the company’s growth phase is the launch of an online ordering platform for its customer base.

“This will lead to expanding our distribution network, which I believe will open more doors for growth in our future,” Gabriela asserts. “Over the past several months, we’ve been running a soft launch of this program and are thrilled with the success we’ve seen to date.”

In the past, the company’s customers would place orders face-to-face at the market, by calling a salesperson, or by faxing an order. Now, they can use the platform to order directly through its ProducePro system, where its entire product lineup can be found.

Because orders can be placed online through the web-based platform or a mobile app, this brings the company’s customers new levels of convenience. They can also utilize the help of a salesperson to add to an online order, ask questions about products, or negotiate pricing. The reverse is also a possibility, starting an order with a salesperson and finishing it online.

The fact that the personal connection is still available is one of my favorite aspects of the new platform. Although I myself am not a D’Arrigo New York customer, I know the inherent value of being able to hear someone’s voice on the other end of a telephone line. An adaptation fitting for our relationship-driven industry.

Gabriela and I circle back to the anniversary at the heart of this article. Her pride in what her family has accomplished flourishes.

“Seventy-five years is extremely humbling. It represents a culture of hard work, respect, and honesty. This wouldn’t have been attainable without the loyalty of our customers and the dedication of our employees. I’m beyond proud of what we’ve done,” Gabriela concludes.

Adapting will always be par for the course in the world that is fresh produce, but with drivers like D’Arrigo New York behind the wheel, I know that its customers are in good hands.



# BECOME SOCIAL (MEDIA) BITTERFLY



By Jenna  
Plasterer



*Produce Pulse*



Like



Every Monday, my iPhone sends a notification to remind me of my obscene amount of screen time for the week.

Perusing the breakdown, I find most of it is spent on social media apps like Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest, etc., where I endlessly scroll and absorb content. The same can be said for nearly every consumer with a smartphone, giving suppliers and retailers a prime marketing tool to tap into.

Recently, *The Snack's* sister publication *AndNowUKnow* created a social media section in our newsletter, which I oversee. Through this role, I have discovered a world of fresh produce posts that range from funny and creative to beautiful and informative. This has left me wondering what potential lies in the online realm for promoting fresh products.

As shoppers thirst for knowledge about how their food is produced and grown, social media is an optimal space to showcase the people and processes that bring fresh fruits and vegetables from farm to table. Take it from growers like Chelan Fresh with its Farm Friday segment, Mastronardi Produce® and its Behind the Vines videos, and Ocean Mist® Farms with its processing insights. These are but a few names who have taken audiences behind the scenes of their operations to educate and in turn build brand trust.

For marketers, although the dividends of social media are more difficult to track, it is a cost-effective way to share brand messaging once your product is in the store. These platforms are free to

use, and the audience reach has nearly unlimited potential if utilized correctly. Not to mention, there is a more diverse shopper base that can be accessed, as social media is not geared toward one demographic.

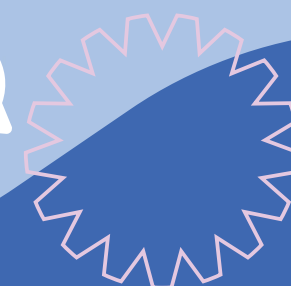
While traditional marketing campaigns are developed over more extended periods, social media can be quickly utilized to supplement space in between, ensuring consumers are more frequently exposed to brands and grocery partners have additional tools to promote products online and even in store.

There is also a great deal of creative freedom and flexibility in the online sphere. By jumping on board TikTok and Instagram Reels trends, suppliers and retailers can garner more eyes on their posts that may not have seen the content outside social media. Especially the future generation of consumers still forming their opinions on products.

Retailers can also utilize their partners' social media to support in-store merchandising and campaigns. By sharing videos and images on their accounts, grocers break up their usual content. They can align themselves with concepts that shoppers value, like locally grown produce, sustainability, responsible growing practices, and more.

Just like the possibility that exists in creating posts, the marketing potential is infinite in this space. So, grab your cameras, get your creative juices flowing, and dive deep into the wonderful world of social media. The water is lovely! 🌊

SUBSCRIBE





# WTF DO I DO WITH Rice Fruit Company Granny Smith Apples? { what the fork }



SLOW COOKER BUTTERNUT SQUASH AND APPLE SOUP

## INGREDIENTS

**3 cups** Granny Smith apples, peeled and chopped  
**8 cups** Butternut squash, de-seeded, peeled, and chopped  
**1 tsp** olive oil  
**1 large** yellow onion, chopped  
**1** Jalapeño pepper, chopped  
**1 tsp** curry powder  
**¼ tsp** adobo seasoning  
**2 cups** chicken/vegetable broth  
**½ cup** apple cider  
**2 tbsp** butter  
**1 cup** heavy cream  
 Salt, pepper, and paprika, to taste

**Prep Time:** 20 mins  
**Cook Time:** 6–8 hrs  
**Servings:** 8–10

## DIRECTIONS

- 1** Sauté Jalapeño, onion, and seasonings in olive oil until fragrant.
- 2** Place all ingredients (except cream) in a slow cooker.
- 3** Cook on low for 6–8 hours or until Butternut squash is fork tender.
- 4** Blend together with an immersion blender for the desired thickness.
- 5** Taste and add more seasonings if desired.
- 6** Stir in cream and serve with your favorite toppings.
- 7** Enjoy!

To learn more about Rice Fruit Company, visit [www.ricefruit.com](http://www.ricefruit.com)



LIMONEIRA®  
SINCE 1893

# Embracing Change:

## The Endeavor To Go Public

BY CHANDLER JAMES



Evolve with the needs of the market.

I know. Easier said than done.

But, at some point or another, we have all become intimately familiar with this pillar of fresh produce. While the industry-wide requirement is, of course, inextricably tied to seasonality and Mother Nature, I am talking about something that goes even further.

“We really wanted to transition the company into becoming very, very customer-focused and market-driven rather than more production-driven and supply-side controlled. That shift has





SINCE ITS FOUNDING IN 1893, LIMONEIRA COMPANY HAD OPERATED AS A FAMILY-ORIENTED, PRIVATELY HELD COMPANY



LIMONEIRA CORPORATE HEADQUARTERS 2022

## “The underlying asset value of the investments we’ve made over the years has become extremely high because the core assets have continued to appreciate.”

HAROLD EDWARDS, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, LIMONEIRA COMPANY

been quite successful for us and was a great change for our company and our shareholders,” Harold Edwards tells me across the 375-plus miles that separate my office in Sacramento, California, from his in Santa Paula.

When Limoneira Company made the decision to file for its initial public offering (IPO) in 2010, the supplier was not only aiming to meet the needs of its growing shareholder base, but to strengthen its brand as a premium citrus provider.

Harold, who was the company’s President and Chief Executive Officer at the time it went public and still holds that title today, explains that the need to file for an IPO was the result of having too many shareholders to keep the company private after more than five generations in operation.

“Since our founding in 1893, we had operated as a family-oriented, privately held company,” Harold begins. “In the 1930s, there was a family shareholder that wasn’t satisfied with the valuation of their ownership, so they filed for a CUSIP number with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) allowing Limoneira Company stock to be publicly traded, and then hired a market maker to basically start trading the shares in a quasi-public way.”

Fast-forward to about 20 years ago, as Harold recalls—the company shares were being traded in very small amounts on the pink sheets, which, he notes, was widely known as a risky way to do so.

“In 2009, we were changing transfer agents, which is the entity that actually creates and exchanges the shares. I received a list of Limoneira’s shareholders, and there were a lot more on that list than I ever imagined,” Harold says before delivering a perfectly timed quip. “I reached out to our corporate council about what I should do, and they basically said, ‘The toothpaste is out of the tube. You have to become public because you have more shareholders invested in your company than the SEC will allow.’ Which, at the time, was 500.”

The opportunity to reduce the number of shareholders below 500 seemed almost impossible, Harold recalls, because a lot of the family shareholders were willing to sell some of their shares, but few of them were willing to sell *all* of their shares. Understandably, they treated their ownership like it was a sacred trust.

“Those shares had been given to them by their parents, which were given to them by their grandparents, and then their

great-grandparents, and so on,” Harold outlines. “I myself am five generations deep in one of those families. So, with that knowledge and a lot of soul-searching, the Board of Directors decided it would embrace becoming public and use the capital markets to accelerate Limoneira’s growth.”

Limoneira officially became publicly traded on June 27, 2010.

“Typically, when companies file an IPO, they hire an investment bank to help raise capital,” Harold goes on. “Because Limoneira had been around for 117 years and operated successfully as a privately held company, we didn’t need to raise any capital. So, as a result, we just filed a Form 10 with the SEC and then floated all of our common stock onto the NASDAQ Global Exchange, and literally became publicly traded overnight. Representatives from our company went to New York and actually opened the NASDAQ market with the debut of publicly traded Limoneira Company public stock.”

In the same year, there was another big change to Limoneira’s corporate structure and its strategic plan that coincided with the IPO. To paint a clearer picture, I’ll have to jump back to 1893, which was also the year the Southern California Fruit Exchange (SCFE), now Sunkist Growers, was founded.

The Limoneira Founders were also Co-Founders of the SCFE—a federated cooperative Limoneira was directly affiliated with for 117 years. At that time, all Limoneira citrus was marketed under the Sunkist® brand name. In 2010, Limoneira elected to leave the Sunkist cooperative and begin to package, market, and sell its lemons directly under its own Limoneira brand.

Along with now having access to ample capital by being a publicly traded company, this decision allowed Limoneira to accelerate its One World of Citrus business model. The whole idea was to complement California and Arizona production with production from Mexico, Chile, and Argentina to perfect the supply chains for customers in Southeast Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, and all through North America.

“What’s great about this is when things are going well and you’re able to have successful financial results, the valuation you receive from the capital markets

directly reflects that positive experience,” Harold relays. “The same holds true when it goes the other way, so one of the negatives about being a publicly traded company is it’s very, very quarter-to-quarter focused and short-term oriented in its view of the financial performance.”

This can cause particular challenges for producers who rely on Mother Nature for a successful quarter. However, Limoneira’s incredibly beneficial agricultural real estate has only increased the company’s value over time.

“The underlying asset value of the investments we’ve made over the years has become extremely high because the core assets have continued to appreciate,” Harold notes. “The public markets reward companies that can sustain consistent and regular quarter-to-quarter earnings and don’t always reflect the sometimes significant value created by asset appreciation.”

Since its IPO, Limoneira identified a certain number of what Harold refers to as non-core assets—land and water assets the producer has invested in over a period of time to monetize or sell to strengthen the balance sheet of the company. This also accelerates Limoneira’s pivot from being a fully vertically integrated producer/packer/marketer/seller into being more of a service provider. Not only does it provide services to its own acreage, but also to all of the other producers that exist in California and Arizona. This gives

Limoneira a much better ability to create more regularity and consistency in its financial results.

“We’ve developed a grower services team at the company that focuses on recruiting, retaining, and providing the best-in-class services to our grower partners,” Harold goes on. “And ultimately, the number-one metric we use for success is to be able to provide the highest returns to our growers—some of which we have been working with for 130 years—for allowing us to represent their fruit.”

This pivot to being more asset-light, as Harold calls it, includes providing its services to outside growers and grower partners, and also offering farm management services to other agricultural land owners.

“In the growth of this model, we see tremendous promise, and that should allow us to provide a much more consistent results basis,” Harold says as our conversation winds down. “Now tying that to a publicly traded vehicle makes a lot of sense, because we’re able to more consistently drive results on a quarter-to-quarter basis, whereas before, when we were more of a farming company, that was a lot more challenging.”

If you have not gotten Harold on the phone yet, I highly suggest that you do. His knack for storytelling seems effortless, and I am positive there is much more to learn from the produce luminary.

For, as we all know, the needs of the market are ever-changing. And alongside that change will be the Limoneira name in bold, black letters. 🍋

## “...the number-one metric we use for success is to be able to provide the highest returns to our growers—some of which we have been working with for 130 years—for allowing us to represent their fruit.”







### CITRUS MERINGUE PIE

#### INGREDIENTS

##### CITRUS FILLING

**4 large** Progressive Farms Navel Oranges  
**3 large** Progressive Farms Lemons  
**¾ cup** white sugar, divided  
**5 tbsp** corn starch  
**½ tsp** salt  
**4** egg yolks  
**4 tbsp** butter

##### PIE CRUST

**1¼ cups** flour  
**¼ tsp** salt  
**½ cup** cold butter  
**3-5 tbsp** ice cold water

##### MERINGUE

**4 egg** whites  
**1 tsp** vanilla  
**¼ tsp** cream of tartar  
**½ cup** sugar

**Prep Time:** 1 hr

**Cook Time:** 40 mins

**Chill Time:** 3 hrs

**Servings:** 8



#### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 350° F. To make the pie crust, combine the flour and salt; cut in the cold butter until crumbly. Add in the water 1 tbsp at a time, tossing with a fork until dough holds together when pressed. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour.
- 2 On a lightly floured surface, roll the chilled dough into a ⅛" thick circle. Transfer to a 9" pie pan and trim edges, leaving a ½" overhang. Fold the overhang under itself and pinch all around to make the crust edge. Line the inside of the crust with parchment paper and pour baking weights, dried beans, or uncooked rice into the lined crust.
- 3 Bake until lightly browned, 18–20 minutes. Remove the parchment paper and weights; bake until golden brown for an additional 8–10 minutes. Remove from oven and cool on a wire rack.
- 4 For the filling, zest 2 oranges and 1 lemon and place in a medium saucepan. Juice until you have 1¼ cup orange juice and ½ cup lemon juice. Add the juice and ¼ cup sugar to the saucepan, set aside.
- 5 In a bowl, whisk together the remaining ½ cup sugar and cornstarch. Add egg yolks and whisk continuously until lightened in color, about 3 minutes.
- 6 Heat your saucepan until just simmering. Remove from heat and slowly add half of the warm juice into the egg yolk mixture while whisking continuously. Once well mixed and the sugar is dissolved, pour back into the saucepan while whisking over medium heat. Continue whisking for about a minute until the mixture thickens and begins to boil. Remove from heat and whisk in the butter until melted and combined.
- 7 For the meringue, using a mixer, beat the egg whites with vanilla and cream of tartar on medium speed until foamy. Add sugar 1 tbsp at a time and beat on high. Continue beating until soft peaks form.
- 8 Transfer the hot filling to the crust. Next, spread the meringue over the filling, sealing to the edge of the crust and swirling with the back of a spoon.
- 9 Bake pie for 16–18 minutes or until meringue is golden brown. Cool on the wire rack for 1 hour and chill pie for 3 hours before serving. Enjoy!

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

# THE BESTIES OF THE BEST: *The Heart of 2023*

By *The Snack* Editorial Team

**W**e like to think of them as code breakers—the elite professionals of our industry. Translators destined to steer the direction of fresh produce. Instead of following the tides and the currents, they are making them. Within this progressive task, they surface time and time again pivoting the way we listen to consumers, clients, and the economy. They tune the rest of us into how the world is changing and how we must change along with it.

For our second annual Besties Awards, these individuals amplify not only the companies they work for, but what they individually and collectively stand for—constantly breaking out of the echo chamber of marketing and communications

messaging into a more nuanced and creative way. Rebuilding and recharacterizing what the definitions themselves offer.

As we wrap up 2023 and look to 2024, these Besties Awards winners have helped reshape the way we view and perceive excellence and, for that, we thank them.

Please join me in congratulating these trailblazers. These highlights are shared on behalf of our editorial team who individually composed each piece for our sister publication *AndNowUKnow*.

We thank these award winners for their ability to make the progressive a standard, and passion something more than palpable, but tangible.



Lifetime Achievement Award

Mark Hilton

Industry catalysts, innovators, and visionaries—these are the architects that build our fresh produce industry into the progressive, vital, and passionate force that it is today. Time and time again, they inspire us to new heights while strengthening our roots by being the connective tissue that binds us all together. Mark Hilton is one of these remarkable individuals. Bringing nearly 50 years to his fresh produce tenure, Mark is an example of how one person can inspire the many through his own hard work, mentorship, and dedication. And, while we thank Mark for all that he has done, Mark, true to form, shared that he is the thankful one.



Mark Hilton,  
Former Vice President of  
Produce Merchandising,  
Harris Teeter

"I have had the good fortune to work with many great leaders and mentors during my 47-year career! When I reflect on those influences, I have to say that those that were hard on me and challenged me the most helped shape me into the leader I have become. What I am most proud of is the team that worked alongside me, both in the office and in our stores. To see them grow and have the

same passion for produce as I have is very rewarding. When it comes to what I cherish most about my time in the industry, it is definitely all the friendships I have made over the years. Had I not been in this industry, I would have never met my best friend and wife Stephanie!"

By Jordan Okumura-Wright, Editorial



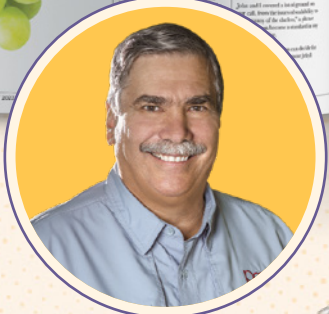
Snack Storyteller Award

John Pandol

I'd never worked with John Pandol before, but when we connected to write "The Making of Fresh Produce's Jekyll and Hyde," I instantly knew John's was a voice I couldn't stifle. With trademark candor, the Director of Special Projects for Pandol Bros. utilized his industry know-how to win himself the Besties for the Annual Snack Storyteller Award.

"To say it as a marketer, 'I differentiated my authentic self enough to stand out in the minds of the panel of industry peer judges. YES! Spike the ball and do the silly end-zone dance. It feels good every time I receive an attaboy. I want to continue to provide rigorous analysis, relevant insight, and bust myths. My brother Louis was this quiet figure in the corner for years...yet the know-it-alls always asked him questions...now he's treasured for his observations and vision in his areas. That's thought leadership. When your competitors poach your opinions so they sound more informed."

By Anne Allen, Editorial



John Pandol,  
Director of Special  
Projects, Pandol Brothers

Best Marketer to Work With

Natalie J. Machado

We are an industry full of close-knit relationships, of hugs and handshakes over phone calls (when possible), and collaboration for the betterment of all. Few know this better than Natalie J. Machado, National Director of Marketing, FreshSource. Her ability to connect, create, and galvanize others and her company are just a handful of the reasons why we love to work with her and why the industry can't get enough of this inspiring individual. "A rising tide that lifts all boats" was an aphorism written about people like Natalie, so we knew, without a doubt, that awarding her with the 2023 Besties Award for Best Marketer to Work With was as natural as the fresh produce we grow.



Natalie J. Machado,  
National Director of  
Marketing, FreshSource

"I am beyond grateful and blessed to be considered for this incredible honor and to be recognized as the 2023 Besties recipient for the Best Marketer to Work With. The pleasure has truly been mine. Working with AndNowUKnow has always been wonderful throughout the years. The team's professionalism, ideas, ingenuity, and attitude have always been things I admired and find contagious. They have such warmth and a positive outlook which always makes the

work fun and a pleasure! makes it such fun and a pleasure to work! Keep up the great work! It truly shows in everything the AndNowUKnow team puts together!"

By Jordan Okumura-Wright, Editorial



Best Alternative Marketing Campaign

Nature Fresh Farms®

In the marketing world, going beyond the ad or campaign to create a visceral experience can capture new customers and skyrocket popularity. That is exactly what Nature Fresh Farms® set out to do with its Greenhouse Education Center (GEC), a unique approach to educating shoppers about where their food comes from while encouraging them to invest in its products. Because of this outside-the-box approach, the greenhouse grower earned the 2023 Besties Award for Best Alternative Marketing Campaign. The Greenhouse Education Center is a mobile greenhouse that travels to retail stores and additional destinations across North America, showing consumers how greenhouse vegetables are grown. It is a 38-foot-long mobile snapshot of the grower's combined 250 acres of greenhouse farm in Leamington, Ontario, Canada, and Delta, Ohio.

"Educating consumers using innovative and creative marketing techniques can set you apart from the competition, so our team is continually focused on bringing new ideas to the table that will allow us to stand out to consumers amongst a sea of sameness. The Greenhouse Education Center has allowed us to do this."

By Jenna Plasterer, Editorial



Krysta Markham,  
Communications Manager,  
Nature Fresh Farms®



## Best Educational Videos

### Homegrown Organic Farms

Getting produce into shoppers' baskets is no small feat. The journey from field to packing to retail is a journey few consumers truly understand, but it's one that informs their buying decisions nonetheless. How do suppliers take this mountain of information and condense it into bite-sized pieces that appeal to both the buy-side and the shoppers frequenting their organizations? For Homegrown Organic Farms, winner of our Besties Award for Best Educational Videos, the answer came in the form of its GROWN by video series.

"We see education as a responsibility. Helping people understand how their food is grown and who grows it should be something we all are dedicated to. We sought to communicate a boots-on-the-ground perspective, allowing

viewers to experience everything from cultivation to harvest, while witnessing the successes and struggles our growers face each day. Our goal was to provide a deeper understanding of the realities of farming and help to educate and empower both consumers and buyers."

By Anne Allen, Editorial



Scott Mabs,  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Homegrown Organic Farms



## Best Merchandising Campaign

### Dole Food Company

When it comes to a merchandising campaign, vision, communication, and partnership come to mind. In all these things, I see the Dole Food Company marketing strategy. From a cohesive vision, message, or partnership in each campaign to clear communication between its team, the retail customer, and the end consumer, the brand shines when it is put on display on the screen and in the store. It is no surprise, then, that Dole was nominated for the Best Merchandising Campaign and selected for the title.

"Thank you so much for the award. It's beautiful and sits right on my desk. We really appreciate it. Consumers want information about

the product and how to use it, and not everybody can be everywhere, even as produce managers do such an excellent job. Merchandising can do so much to help with something exotic like a pineapple or something as familiar as a banana. Embracing and showcasing in-store point-of-sale, versus how they are generally utilized now, is how I think campaigns can be elevated. If you can put a sign up of a size that makes sense to you, you give the shoppers the power to make more decisions. It doesn't have to be a big display or sign, we used to do a great job of this in the early 2000s, and I think we can get back to that by finding a balance between less clutter and the information and education shoppers have told us they want."



Bil Goldfield,  
Director, Corporate  
Communications, Dole  
Food Company

By Melissa De Leon  
Chavez, Editorial



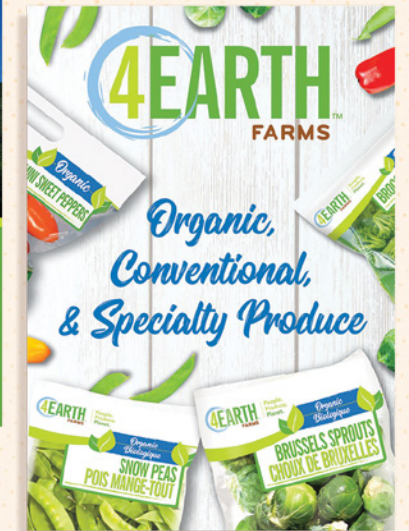
## Best Email Ad Campaign

### 4Earth Farms™

Advertising is an educated guessing game. Already one with moving targets, the constant change of fresh produce demands makes marketing even more of a challenge. Recently, 4Earth Farms™ confirmed a bullseye, winning not just a nomination for the 2023 Besties for Best Email Ad Campaign, but securing a win from our panel, many of whom are a part of the audience such strategies hope to engage.

"The 4Earth Farms team does a town hall meeting every Wednesday to talk about what is happening at the company, and the Wednesday following Organic Produce Summit was a great one because I had the opportunity to let everyone know we won a Besties Award this year. Our email ad, which won the votes, was, in part, driven by some of the things AndNowUKnow was trying and experimenting with to get the message out there to our target audience, making the decision easier. We were collaborating on methods of communication. The team came up with a compelling idea on how to get our message out, what we do, and how we do it."

By Melissa De Leon Chavez, Editorial



David Lake,  
President, 4Earth Farms™

## Best Philanthropic Initiative

### Shuman Farms

My favorite thing about the produce industry is the willingness to give back. Every day, I see examples of companies using their time and resources to make a difference in the communities they serve, and it never ceases to inspire me while also warming my heart. Among them is Shuman Farms, led by John Shuman, which continues to stand out as a pioneer when it comes to philanthropy. Because of its unique initiatives, the supplier was honored with our second annual Besties Award for Best Philanthropic Initiatives. The team at Shuman Farms and its sister company Healthy Family Project have donated more than \$7.5 million to those in need and 18 million meals to Feeding America® through its various charitable projects and programs.

"Shuman Farms believes that, as farmers and food producers in the United States, it is our responsibility



John Shuman,  
President, Shuman Farms

to shed light on hunger in America. Our team is made up of individuals who go above and beyond because they are passionate about making a difference in the world and the communities where our products are sold. We have been very blessed to help countless families across the country understand the importance of living a healthy life, which starts with access to nutritious food."

By Jenna Plasterer, Editorial





## Best Podcast

*Fresh CrEd*

To be in the produce industry is to be in constant conversation with your fellow industry members. Oftentimes, things are moving so quickly that we keep these conversations short and to the point. The Fresh CrEd gives us an opportunity to breathe new life into those conversations, which is what earned the podcast a 2023 Besties Award. Co-Founders Craig Slate, Chief Executive Officer of SunFed, and Ed Bertaud, Director of Retail Sales at IFCO, had a passion for podcasts, and although they were unsure of the execution at first, they vowed to get it done and continued learning along the way. This was only the beginning of a content journey that continues to evolve today.

"Receiving the award for me was very special. It indicated at least there are a few people that enjoy the show and maybe take something away from listening to our conversations. I only started out this venture as a passion project, with a desire to learn. I did not expect two years later we would be doing live interviews from different parts of the country, with a multitude of different people. Thanks so much to ANUK and the Besties Awards! It really means a lot and gives us reason to keep moving forward."

*By Chandler James, Editorial*



*Craig Slate,*  
Chief Executive  
Officer, SunFed



## Best Rebrand

*Chelan Fresh, Joyfully Grown™*

Freshness always wins in our industry, but sometimes you need a little change to freshen things up just a bit more. One company comes to mind: Chelan Fresh. The Chelan, Washington-based grower values its place in the industry to its core, and this shows through its latest brand refresh. Joyfully Grown™ is its newest program and brand identity, putting its values at the forefront of its company mission. Chelan Fresh's Besties win highlights its attention to detail, brand messaging, and creative marketing. Not only has the new brand identity caught our eyes but also the hearts of shoppers. With a high-graphic design, Chelan Fresh reinvented itself in the eyes of consumers while echoing its company culture.

"Winning a Besties award for Best Rebrand means a lot to the Chelan team. We've put a lot of work into

creating the Joyfully Grown name and program. Our Joyfully Grown brand identity focuses on where the fruit came from, how it was grown, and who these families are. We hope this will continue to make buyers and consumers more interested in learning about how we nurture, honor, and protect the three pillars of the Joyfully Grown brand—Our Food, Our Planet, and Our People."

*By Lilian Diep, Editorial*



*Julie DeJarnatt,*  
Director of Retail  
Strategy, Chelan Fresh



## Best Snack Ad

*Sunview Marketing International*

We are creatures of curiosity, with minds in a constant search of expansion. Sunview Marketing International has met that need time and time again—bringing forth engaging and creative ads that truly communicate the Sweet Carnival™ table grape experience. That is precisely why we recently named Sunview as the recipient of our Besties Award for Best Snack Ad.

"The inspiration started with the amazing taste and flavor of our Sweet Carnival grapes. The consumer-eating experience was so different than any of our other proprietary varieties that it just screamed for new and innovative marketing to build awareness for the brand. The genesis for the idea of our virtual reality ad was to recreate the thrill of a carnival that matches the experience of eating our Sweet Carnival grapes. That ad was so well received that we knew we had to up the wow factor of the ads to match the wow factor of our grapes. This season, we will be introducing Carnival Fruit Punch, another amazing brand and what we believe to be another amazing advertisement in *The Snack Magazine*."

*By Chandler James, Editorial*



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

↑ scan the QR code to try it out!

## Best Social Media Campaign

*D'Arrigo New York*

With last year's introduction of our official Besties Awards, we aimed to bring industry members well-deserved recognition for their unbelievable achievements in the world of produce. Gold nuggets of inspiration, innovation, and incredible impact can be found in every corner of our industry. D'Arrigo New York's social media strategies are a dynamic combination of all three—which is exactly why the wholesaler was honored with a Besties award for Best Social Media Campaign. D'Arrigo New York caught our attention with a host of social media posts spotlighting its most integral associates. Not only does this unique social media play put a well-deserved spotlight on the people of D'Arrigo New York, but it also humanizes the company and gives the brand a more personal feel.

"For as long as I can remember, starting with my grandfather, D'Arrigo has always spoken internally about



how important our employees are to this company. We cannot do what we do without them—we are not the same company without them, period. After hearing this for so many years, spotlighting our employees seemed like a no-brainer. The thought process behind it was that we wanted to start spotlighting the people that make us D'Arrigo New York."

*By Peggy Packer, Editorial*



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



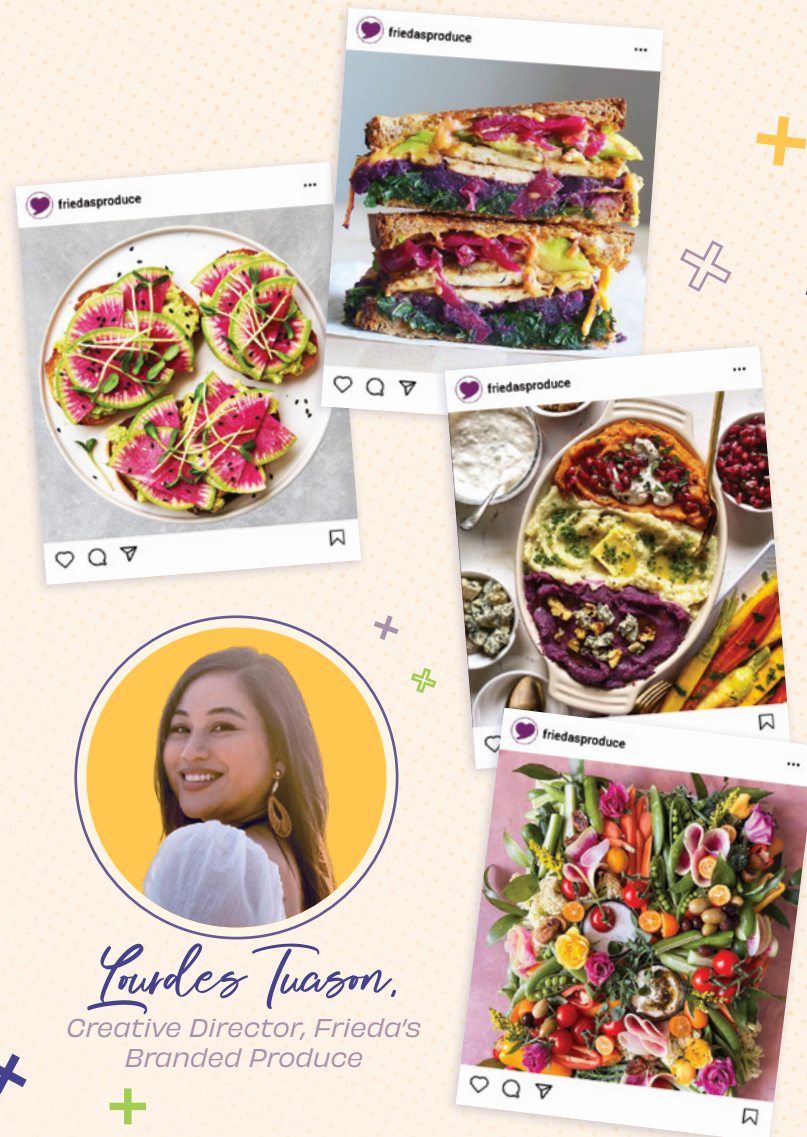
## Best Social Media Culinary Artistry

### Frieda's Branded Produce

I'm sure I speak for most consumers, we eat with our eyes first. The shine on the fruit, the steam rising from the plate, or the curious colors and shapes on a piece of produce not on our radar, these attributes and more are what drive our stomachs—and wallets. Social media has been a powerful tool in helping amplify fresh produce aisles, and Frieda's Branded Produce has proved its strength in utilizing this platform to put out tasty creations. Choosing the company that represents the Best Social Media Culinary Artistry category was no easy feat, but this year's winner goes to the company that embraces the uniqueness all around us—and puts it onto the plate.

"Our team is over the moon to have received the Besties Award from our friends at *AndNowUKnow*. Being recognized in the Best Social Media Culinary Artistry category is a tremendous honor. This award isn't just for us. It's for every foodie friend who's joined our culinary adventure, every grocer who's displayed our products, and every fork that's dug into the creations we've shared. We promise to keep cooking up creativity!"

By Lilian Diep, Editorial



*Lourdes Tuason*  
Creative Director, Frieda's  
Branded Produce

Creativity and passion are contagious, and we hope by honoring these select companies and individuals that their actions will influence the many. Whether it is taking risks or simply following their heart, fresh produce holds a special place in the marketing arena and on the wider food industry stage.

Congratulations, 2023 Besties Awards winners!

THE 2023  
**BESTIES  
AWARDS**



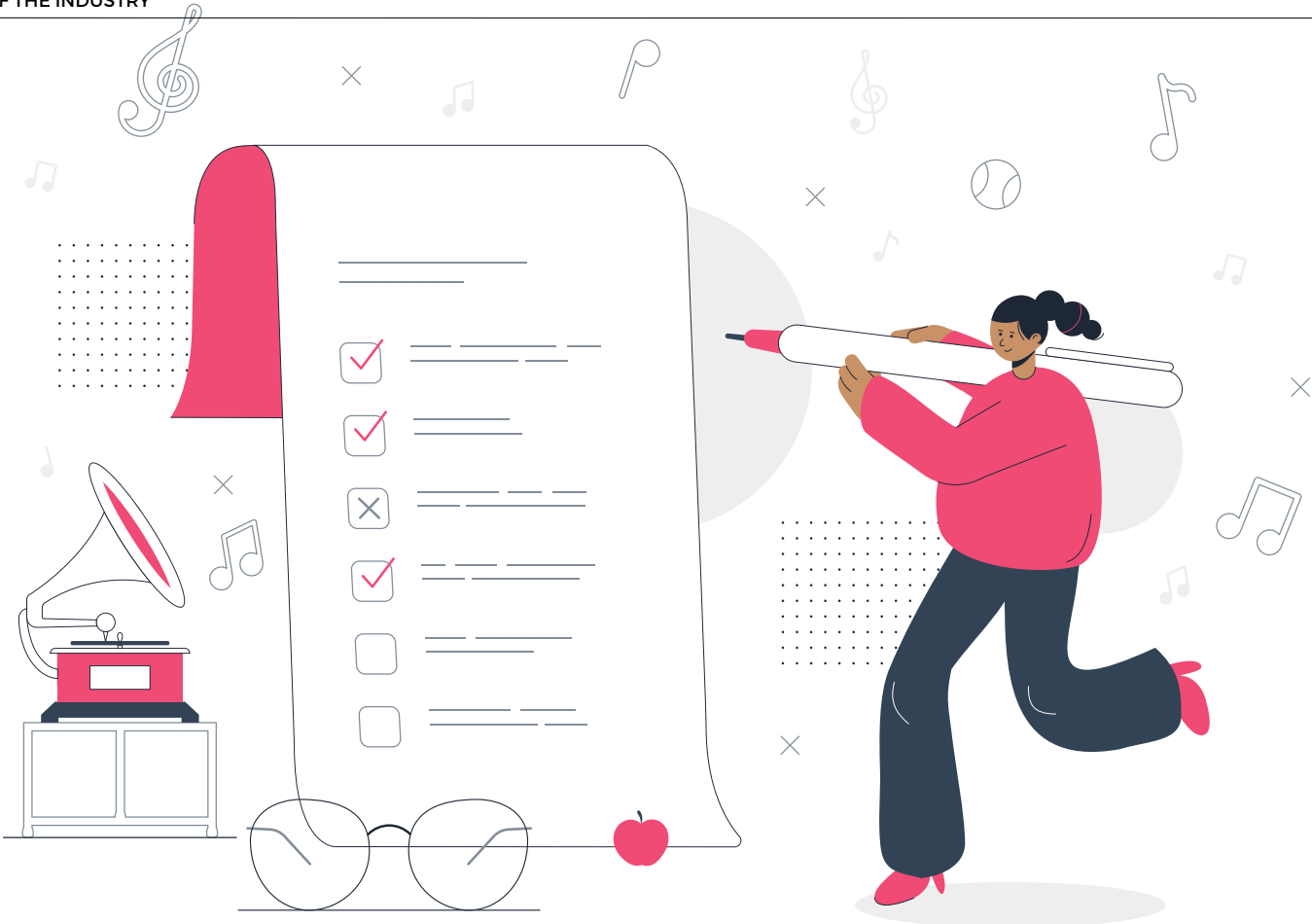
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# We Can't Stop the Music, But We Can Get a Headstart!

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

**2023 has been an interesting year in our business.** That is to say, the people/search business. Q1 started off a bit slower than usual with some significant global uncertainties. With all the talk about interest rates, the stock market, recession, and the worsening Russian/Ukrainian War—even when the produce business was going relatively well, with water, weather, and consumption, etc., many of us had “pulled in our horns” and acted a bit bearish with spending and hiring.

It made sense, as most of 2022 was very busy with hiring. 2022 was the catchup year from the core COVID era.

By the end of Q1, the business bounced back into full swing. Despite all the craziness happening in the world, consumers continue to eat fresh produce. The bulls are running again! As for hiring, the facts are that our industry is feeding the world and we still have many Baby Boomers. More about that later.

So, let me peer into my crystal ball... Around November 15, everyone's minds shifted to the holidays, family, and buttoning up the year in

business. Now, it's onto tax and bonus season. Around January 15, employers emerge from their year-closing cocoons and employees from their post-holiday bliss.

Now what? It's time to get to work! Employers look around and decide to get busy with the tactics that align with their next year's strategies, including new initiatives, projects, and, yes, new hires. Then, we are in to February.

What about the employees? Well, some of them have decided that 2023 or 2024 is their last year on the hamster wheel. More Baby Boomers are 65 and older than ever; their 401Ks are looking pretty darn good, and they are retiring at an increasing rate.

The second largest group, by age, are millennials—the eldest in that group are in their 30s now. So, there's a gap. We have groups of people who are looking to fill those Boomer seats and/or the seats of those filling the Boomer seats. Yes folks, it's musical chairs and the music will start playing as soon as January 15.

**You can't stop the music!**  
**You can prepare.....**

**Employers: Get a jump on your competition and look ahead!**

I know, this is the produce business and what we do well (and secretly love) is put out fires. If it's not a fire today, we'll work on today's fires and “deal with that ‘other stuff’ like succession planning and carefully and strategically hiring people later.”

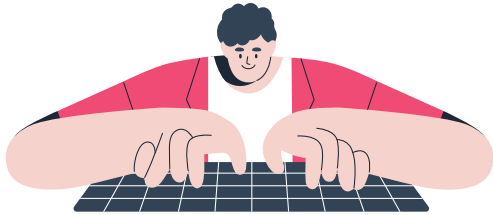
Start now, in Q4! Get a jump on the competition and take advantage of a quieter new search/recruiting period. You'll most likely hire the final candidate in Q1 of the new year when you're ready for them to start, when they're finished with the holidays and ready for a fresh start themselves.

**Job Seekers:** Don't laugh—you're just as bad. You're trying to make a great first impression for that six-digit job with your zero or two-digit resume. Even worse, you may have no long-term destination, plan, or path. Your career strategy is based on how happy you are today and whether you can make \$20K more this year to buy a (fill in the blank).

My ongoing joke with my wife is our weekend *Along Came Polly* plan; the “no-plan plan.” Hey, don't get me wrong, I love those weekends sometimes. They're some of the most fun and least productive weekends ever! But, not the way you want to describe your career path.

So, take the time now and make a plan. That very well could include staying right where you're at with a great employer and plenty to learn and places to grow. Perhaps not. Frankly, I could go on here—in the interest of time and space for this story, I'll share a few past articles which you can access via the QR codes here.

**Wishing you all a healthy, happy, and productive 2024! 🍎**



Joe Pro Resumes<sup>TM</sup> is a professional resume writing service. Our approach to resumes is based on decades of studying the resume audience and how best to communicate throughout the review and decision sequence. We have written hundreds of resumes for professionals in the produce business in addition to various related sectors. We begin with the end in mind.

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What's the Value of a Resume?



# WTF DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

## Prime Time Asparagus ?



PRIME TIME ASPARAGUS, HAM, AND CHEESE IN PUFF PASTRY

### INGREDIENTS

**18 spears** Prime Time Asparagus, trimmed  
**1 sheet** of puff pastry  
**6 slices** ham  
**6 slices** cheese (Cheddar, Gouda, or mozzarella)  
**1 egg**, beaten  
**1 tsp** poppy seeds  
**1 tsp** sesame seeds  
 Fresh basil (optional)

**Prep Time:** 10 mins  
**Cook Time:** 12-15 mins  
**Servings:** 6

### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 400° F.
- 2 On a floured surface, roll out the puff pastry into a 1/4" thick rectangle. Cut into 6 equally sized squares.
- 3 On each square, lay down a slice of ham diagonally, then 3 asparagus spears, and top with a slice of cheese.
- 4 Bring one corner of the puff pastry over and brush the tip of it with a beaten egg, then fold the opposite corner, so it overlaps. Press down to seal.
- 5 Arrange on a parchment-lined baking sheet 2" apart, brush the top of the pastries with a beaten egg, and sprinkle with poppy and sesame seeds.
- 6 Bake for 12-15 minutes until golden brown.
- 7 Garnish with fresh basil leaves, if desired. Best served warm. Enjoy!

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





# Libations

FOR ALL OCCASIONS:

## ORANGE YOU GLAD MARGARITA



By Chandler James

Photography by  
Reid Monsma

Aperol-based cocktails transport me back to an evening I spent at Café Gustave in Paris, France. With the Eiffel Tower stretched out above me against a twilight sky, I sat down at a red and white checkered table and ordered what had become my staples for the trip: a chilled spritz and a side of sizzling pommes frites.

Upon returning Stateside, Aperol spritzes were my drink of choice for many months, but I began longing for the flavors of home. Hence why I began my search for other ways to use Aperol in my libations.

When I discovered an Aperol margarita, I

knew I had struck gold. Being the produce-obsessed consumer that I am, I quickly substituted some of the ingredients for freshly squeezed juices to elevate the cocktail, making it an indulgence that will carry those springtime Parisian vibes through the long California winter.

This Orange You Glad Margarita will be a beacon of light to shoppers looking for citrus-inspired recipes. That arresting red hue of Aperol catches the eye, and when displayed beside a mountain of fresh oranges and limes, there is a good chance it will promptly land in consumers' carts. For who can resist a taste of France? 🇫🇷

### INGREDIENTS

**1½ oz** tequila blanco  
**1 oz** Aperol  
**1 fresh** lime, juiced  
**1 fresh** orange, juiced  
**½ oz** agave nectar  
Salt, for glass rim  
Orange twist, to garnish

**Time:** 5 mins  
**Servings:** 1

### DIRECTIONS

1. Combine the tequila (my favorite is Casamigos), Aperol, 1 oz fresh lime juice, 1 oz fresh orange juice, and agave in a cocktail shaker with ice. Shake until the mixture is chilled.
2. Wet the rim of your favorite cocktail glass with the lime juice and dip into salt.
3. Pour the margarita mixture into the glass over fresh ice, garnish with an orange peel twist, and let your mind drift off to a European summer.

Recipe by *Beautiful Booze: Stylish Cocktails to Make at Home*





# WTF

## DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

J. Marchini Farms  
Cardone

?



JOE'S PREMIUM FRIED CARDONE

### INGREDIENTS

**1 bunch** Joe's Premium Cardone  
**3 lemons**  
**2-3 cups** flour  
**3-4 eggs**  
**2-3 cups** bread crumbs  
Light olive oil/frying oil  
Salt to taste

#### GARLIC AIOLI SAUCE

**1/4 cup** mayonnaise  
**1 tbsp** lemon juice  
Garlic  
Salt and pepper to taste

**Prep Time:** 20 mins

**Cook Time:** 1 1/2 hrs

**Servings:** 6



### DIRECTIONS

- 1 Wash Cardone and remove side and back ribs; be cautious of thorns. Cut into 1-2" slices.
- 2 Place in pot filled with water and one lemon cut in half. Bring to a boil and let simmer for 45-60 minutes, or until tender.
- 3 Strain and refrigerate for up to 5 days. Now your Cardone are ready for frying, sautéing, baking, and topping.
- 4 Preheat your light oil in a frying pan.
- 5 Place flour, eggs, and breadcrumbs each in 3 separate bowls. One at a time, dip Cardone in flour, then eggs, and finish with bread crumbs.
- 6 Fry breaded Cardone in the hot oil pan and cook until golden brown.
- 7 Mix Aioli ingredients in bowl and serve with Cardone and lemon wedges. Enjoy!

To learn more about J. Marchini Farms, visit [www.jmarchinifarms.com](http://www.jmarchinifarms.com)



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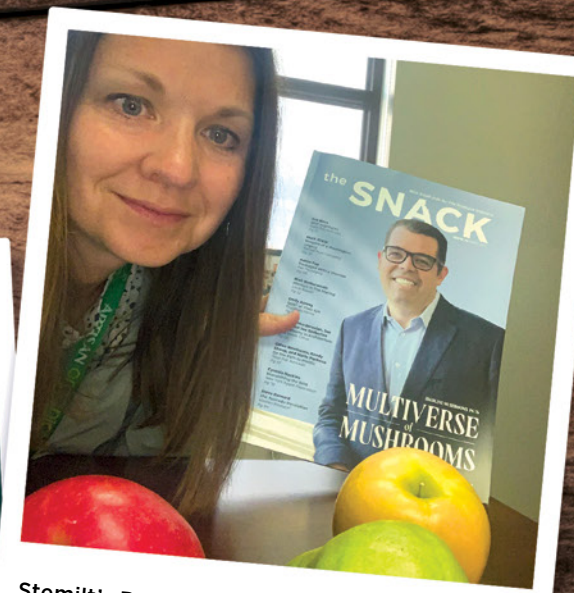
Target's Robby Cruz has *The Snack* cracked open to a *What the Fork* recipe as he tries his hand at a Bako Sweet® creation



Charlie McNeece, Michele McNeece's fur baby, points out one of his favorite issues



*The Snack* enjoys its showcase Nature Fresh Farms®-style



Stemilt's Brianna Shales enjoys her snacks with *The Snack*!

# *Snack* in the Wild



The Mastronardi Produce® team enjoying *The Snack* behind the scenes of some filming



Sisters Nella Alamo of Markon Cooperative and Nikki Cossio of Measure to Improve—enjoying *The Snack* in the best way possible—with some drinks and friends!



Harps Food Stores' Mike Roberts sets the stage well for his September *Snack* pic



Allen Lund Company's Kenny Lund can't just choose one when it comes to his favorite *Snack*!

**W**e love discovering where our *Snack Magazine* calls home. Whether it is with furry friends, on an office coffee table, or in the hands of at-home chefs, each picture we receive holds a special place in our hearts. Thank you to our industry friends and colleagues, this snapshot is for you!

It makes our day each time we receive a picture from our friends throughout the year, so please send yours to [pr@andnowuknow.com](mailto:pr@andnowuknow.com). We may just feature yours!



Highline Mushrooms' team proudly shows off the September issue with Chief Executive Officer Jose Cambron on the front



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						Remaining 60

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Johnny White, Erin Waters, and Logan McCumber from Shuman Farms take a gander at the latest issue



Bee Sweet Citrus' Monique Mueller and her cat, Khaleesi, about to dive into the September issue



Gene Harris with the latest and numerous previous issues of *The Snack*! He loves reading each issue!



Jeff Cady and Justin Rowe flash a smile at Tops Friendly Markets' corporate office in Buffalo, New York



This is the good life. Yes, it is! Thank you to our friends at Pure Flavor®



Veronica Perez and Diana Alvarez at Ippolito International share their copy of the September *Snack*!





♪ LET IT GROW! LET IT GROW! LET IT GROW! ♪

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