



MARKET UPDATE

Round Tomatoes: Although there are a few growers harvesting 2nds and 3rds in the Ruskin/Palmetto area, the majority of Florida's tomato production is coming from the Naples/Immokalee area now. We had expected a little more production this week, but rain and cooler weather have kept the numbers about the same as last week's, which is very light. Look for more of the same for the next several weeks, then we should start to see more "normal" volumes by mid-January. Quality on crown picks has been very nice, but there are a few issues on the 2nds and 3rds. Mexico continues to feel the effects of the recent tropical system in both quantity and quality. Older crops in Baja and East Mexico have definite quality issues while the new fruit from the Mainland and West Mexico is slow to get going. The new crop fruit is better, but has still been affected by the massive amount of rain in the growing areas. With all the moving pieces in both the East and West, round tomato supply is expected to remain short until mid-January.

Roma Tomatoes: The Mexican roma situation is slightly better than rounds from a volume perspective, as there are new growers starting to cross product at Nogales. But overall supply remains light and quality issues (particularly puffiness) significantly lessen availability, especially from the older growing areas. Florida has some nice fruit to offer and it is in high demand. Unfortunately, there's not enough acreage or fruit to significantly impact availability.

Grape Tomatoes: Weather challenges in both the East and West have impacted grape tomato availability. Florida's cooler weather has definitely slowed down grape tomato production. However, they will bounce back sooner than rounds and possibly be at normal winter volumes in 2-3 weeks. Packouts have been average, but the end product is nice quality. Mexico's weather event has created some bumps in the transition from Baja to Mainland growing areas, creating a snug few weeks through the holiday. Look for production to get back on track after the new year.

Bell Peppers: We're still riding the peak of the season on bell peppers in South FL, with good supply available on both coasts. Overall quality is good, but

there's still some bruising due to rains. Barring weather, FL should continue with good supply for another 4 weeks, then slow down toward the end of January. There's a lot of jumbo fruit out there, but all sizes are readily available and choice is moving quickly. In the West, lighter volume out of Sonora along with the transition into Sinaloa production has tightened up availability this week. The Guasave/Los Mochis area should see production increase by the weekend, which should help fill the gap.

Cucumbers: There's just a handful of cucs left in Florida; most growers are in the scrap mode. The offshore Honduran program has started but is still light, in part, due to some transportation issues. As more growers get started and the volume picks up, the situation will smooth out. Look for the Honduran flow to remain light for the next two weeks, then begin to pick up with full volume available in mid-January. Mexico's cucumber crossing are still very limited due to crop damage caused by the rain 3 weeks ago. Farms are struggling with mildew issues and the first plantings will not produce to their full potential. Supply should improve somewhat after the first of the year, but full crop recovery isn't expected until February.

Green Beans: There are definitely more beans around despite some weather earlier in the week. There are beans in the lake area, South FL, and Homestead with the strongest volumes coming out of the Naples/Immokalee area. So far, quality is good but we could see a few issues into next week as there is rain in the forecast for the weekend. Mexico's bean situation is also improved this week. Baja is expecting steady volume for the next two weeks and Guasave-area farms should see better quality and quantity over the next few weeks as they move past the beans that took on all the precipitation.

Summer Squash: Although Plant City is winding down and acreage is fairly light in Immokalee, there's decent supply on both squashes in the Homestead area. There are some quality issues on both- scarring and scuffing on yellow and occasional

decay on the zucchini, but there is some good-quality fruit in FL. Fortunately, we are seeing improvements in Mexico's quality and quantity as the weather becomes more farm-friendly and growers move into new blocks.

Hard Squash: Hard squash looks to be abnormally challenging this season. Mexico's northern area started off with extreme heat at the beginning of the growing cycle, causing bloom drop and disease pressure. Then, rain, cold temps, and more rain. Some growers suffered a total crop loss, while others experienced 60-70% loss. The southern fields have also been through huge amounts of rain which has caused mildew, decay, and smaller sizing. Bottom line: With Sonora ending earlier than normal and Sinaloa struggling with new crops, hard squash will get very tight later in January.

Organic Cucumbers: The extreme weather of 3 weeks ago has taken a toll on organic cucumber production. Supply is extremely snug and will remain so until new fields start up in January.

Organic Bell Peppers: Bells are the bright spot in the organic world this week, as availability continues to be steady despite all the weather issues other crops are experiencing.

Organic Squash: Although there was crop loss due to the tropical storm and availability has been snug for the last week or so, we expect to see new fields break next week, which should gradually ease the supply situation as we roll into January.

Organic Roma Tomatoes: Although production has dropped off in Baja, this is where the majority of volume is coming from. Quality is marginal, at best, and won't make retail spec in many cases. A few organic romas have started crossing at Nogales but quality has also been compromised by weather. Look for volume and quality to improve by the first of the year as more crops come to maturity.

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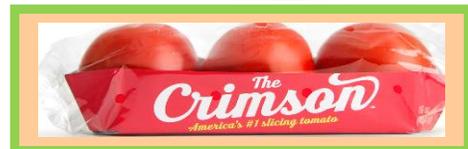
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MERCHANDISING MINUTE

Pump Up Holiday Displays

By: Armand Lobato, www.produceretailer.com, December 17, 2019

“We’re going to pump you up!” So said Dana Carvey and Kevin Nealon of “Saturday Night Live,” as part of a recurring sketch portraying muscle-bound Austrian body-builders Hans and Franz.

Pumping up or building massive produce displays is not uncommon during the holidays. This goes a little against the norm, though, doesn’t it? Usually, this produce scribe emphasizes only a few layers or widening display facings at most, allowing for ease of rotation.

Holidays tend to alter how retailers do business. Think Black Friday.

Prior to a major holiday such as Thanksgiving or Christmas, I always built up my displays, especially before the busiest few days. This meant all the dry tables (onions, potatoes, citrus, apples) were rotated properly, then stocked to the hilt.

Especially with all ad and power (high-volume) items, we’d build massive spillover displays on end-caps. Sometimes the pre-holiday build-up included shipper or orchard bin displays, also stocked bountifully and spilled over. I allowed the wet rack to be stocked only a little extra over normal, as this area needs constant attention and is not conducive to added inventory.

Our goal? To achieve as close to a grand-opening presentation and stock levels as possible. It took a lot of extra work, perhaps an extra-early or overnight shift or two, to achieve, but especially with a modest or higher-volume store, it was definitely worth it.

The question I used to get at this point from some of my less-experienced clerks was, why? How does this help? If the produce department is stocked like this — fresh, level and extra full — it helps in several ways.

First, with added inventory used as part of displays, the holding power can help withstand heavy shopping rushes. This minimizes the need for clerks to have as many stocking carts or drag pallets onto the sales floor. This allows your customers to shop unimpeded, while clerks can be on hand to maintain displays and help customers.

Second, a near grand-opening look with pumped-up displays spurs sales. Large displays convey a sense of abundance and value to shoppers. Think about how ad displays are built a day ahead of time. That large produce display (at regular price) sells much more than normal. So, build up your holiday stock levels, abnormally, for best sales impact.

Third, if a produce department is so well-stocked prior to the holiday crunch time, it helps productivity. Clerks can keep up with stocking easier because the displays are holding up to the extra traffic.

Also, this transfers heavier inventory items to the sales floor, instead of clogging up the back room — which makes putting loads away, keeping up with prep work and keeping organized that much easier.

Arnold Schwarzenegger would be proud.



TRANSPORTATION FACTS

*The National Diesel Average held steady this week at \$3.05 per gallon.

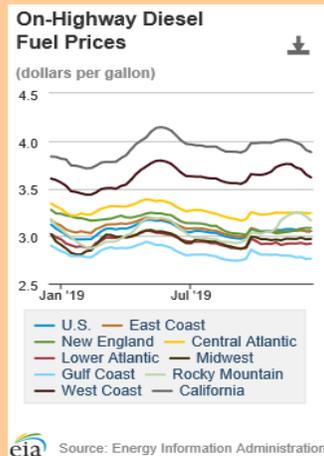
* The average price for a gallon of diesel is \$.08 less than the same time last year.

* The majority of the nation’s fuel zones reported minimal increases or decreases of less than \$.01 per gallon. The exceptions were the Rocky Mountains (up \$.05), the West Coast (up \$.04), and California (up \$.02).

*California’s fuel price tops the charts at \$3.88 per gallon while the Gulf Coast remains the low-price leader at \$2.76 per gallon.

*The WTI Crude Oil price rose 3.7% this week, moving from \$58.76 to \$60.94 per barrel.

*There are slight shortages of trucks in Florida, California’s San Joaquin Valley, and in potato and onion shipping states. All other areas report adequate levels of transportation available.





FRESH CUT FOCUS

Holiday Entertaining

Contributed By: Johnathan Maldonado, Manager of Innovation/Product Development- Lipman Dallas, TX

Lipman’s fresh cut product line provides you with the best of nature, cut fresh and packed for convenience year round. Our product-specific processing and patented packaging drives optimal shelf life – meaning you’ll receive only the best product, every time. And this produce not only tastes good... it helps customers save valuable time in the kitchen, and the convenient packaging also reduces the risk of foodborne illness, by decreasing the opportunity for cross-contamination.

This month’s focus is on holiday entertaining with our fresh-cut products. For more information, please reach out to your usual Lipman contact or one of our fresh cut specialists: Johnathan Maldonado at 214.907.0695, Chris Daulerio- East at 215.870.8956 or Brian Arbini- West at 209.402.5184.



Grape tomato Caprese skewers with olive oil and sweet balsamic glaze



Roasted grape tomato pesto flatbread with fresh basil and mozzarella

Festive Appetizers
That aren't so heavy!

LIPMAN INGREDIENTS:

- Coin-Cut Cucumber
- Halved Grape Tomatoes

KIT VERSATILITY:

- Foodservice items
- National accounts
- Salad bars
- Behind the glass deli
- Kits sold for repack at store level



Cucumber rounds with herbed cream cheese, halved grape tomatoes and thyme

PRODUCE BAROMETER

ITEM	QUALITY	PRICING
Bell Pepper	Mostly Good	Steady
Cucumber	Varied	Steady
Eggplant	Varied	Lower
Green Beans	Mostly Good	Lower
Jalapenos	Good	Steady
Onions	Good	Steady
Squash	Varied	Steady
Tomatoes	Fair to Good	Higher



DECEMBER CALENDAR

All Month
Love Your Neighbor Month
December 21st
National Hamburger Day
Winter Solstice-Shortest Day of the Year
December 22nd
Hanukkah Begins
December 25th
Christmas Day

Estero, FL Weather

Fri Dec 20	Sat Dec 21	Sun Dec 22	Mon Dec 23	Tue Dec 24
75°F	77°F	76°F	72°F	76°F
65°F	67°F	60°F	58°F	65°F
NE 17 MPH	E 16 MPH	SSW 13 MPH	WNW 14 MPH	NNE 11 MPH
	Precip 50%	Precip 40%	Precip 30%	

KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE CONSUMER

Chef Chatter: A Guide to Captivating Gen Z

By: David Young, www.fastcasual.com, November 26, 2019

While the foodservice industry was focused on marketing to millennials, Generation Z emerged, making up roughly 32% of the global population, according to Forbes. If maintaining the interest of millennials was difficult, captivating a generation that was raised with the ability to Yelp every restaurant in a 10-mile radius, book a table without speaking to anyone and order a cab to get there — all in less than 5 minutes — can seem like a daunting task to say the least. When guests are overloaded by the same brands and culinary options repetitively, they become disinterested and disengaged. This phenomenon is even truer of the Gen Z population.

The convenience factor alone won't win over a generation that is not only tech savvy, but spends roughly 10 hours a day on electronics. These digital natives are even more prone to what we call brand fatigue and can find other dining options easily, resulting in a loss of guests and food sales. So, how can you combat brand fatigue once and for all?

Transport guests around the world

According to Business Insider, Gen Z travels on average 29 days a year and is far more exposed to different cultures and food experiences. Upon return from a trip, they expect to see dishes from their travels readily available. Offering guests expanded menu options with cultural favorites can keep engagement and interest high.

Having grown up in a globalized, modern world, Gen Z grew up being exposed to new and different cultural cuisines at an early age leaving them unsatisfied with the mundane mac and cheese and instead reaching for more adventurous menu items and ingredients. Encourage your chefs to monitor industry trends and allow them enough creative space to implement new culinary concepts. This will captivate guests and keep them returning day in and day out.

Start with the Spices

Offering a truly authentic experience starts with the ingredients. If you're trying to emulate traditional cuisine, substituting spices is a surefire way to throw off the flavor profile, raising a red flag with Gen Z in a matter of bites. If you're serving up Indian, utilize cardamom, mustard seed and coriander. For a Japanese dish, stock up on the rice vinegar and mirin. Once you've got traditional recipes mastered, add your unique flare to the dish.

You can't buy authenticity

For Gen Z, how "Instagram-worthy" a meal is has become just as important as the taste of the meal itself. When it comes time to pick a restaurant, they're doing their research beforehand and expect the entire experience to be five-star from the wall décor to the serving wear. A bad atmosphere can ruin a great meal, so set the vibe and your spot will be trending in no time.

Instagram "likes" might seem trivial to the seasoned chef, but a good marketer understands how valuable a word of mouth endorsement truly is. Gen Z finds traditional advertisements to be disingenuous. Instead, they are looking at influencers for direction. If you can get the foodie stamp of approval, consider it a major win.

Keep the novelty alive

Now that you've attracted a solid guest base, encapsulated a truly authentic experience down to the décor and gained the influencer stamp of approval, you're going to want to preserve the novelty of it all. Taking a proactive approach to eliminating brand fatigue isn't an industry standard, but it does keep guests on their toes. It could be as simple as adding an LTO on the menu, but if you're dedicated to kicking brand fatigue for good, a daily special alone won't cut it.

Rotating menus on a seasonal basis allows for guests to enjoy the first time experience at every single visit and captures the attention of this adventure-seeking generation. Knowing the menu is only available for a short time will prompt guests to return more regularly because it evokes a FOMO. If there's one thing Gen Z hates, it's knowing they missed the opportunity to try something truly unique.

FRESH TOMATOES

the best of nature™

MARK YOUR CALENDAR
& PACK YOUR BAGS!

February 27-29, 2020

Southeast Produce Council's Southern Exposure
Tampa Convention Center
Tampa, FL
www.seproducecouncil.com

March 22-27, 2020

United Fresh Produce Executive Development Program
Statler Hotel & Executive Conference Center
Cornell University- Ithaca, NY
www.unitedfresh.org/events

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