



MARKET UPDATE

Round Tomatoes: There are still a number of areas in the East with round tomatoes including Canada, AL, NJ, MI, TN and NC. Growers in the mountain areas of NC and TN still have mostly steady volumes although persistent rain has lightened yields and affected quality. We're seeing the usual rain concerns but are still able to make a good pack with most lots. Lipman has just started back in a light way at our VA farms but won't have volume until next week. The first block we're harvesting has lighter yields and some quality issues but that is expected to clean up next week. Canada is bringing some nice fruit from their short-lived field crop season as well. Baja and Eastern Mexico's vine-ripes continue at a mostly steady pace this week. Baja's sizing will likely move toward more mid-sized fruit as they continue to harvest from current crops, waiting for Fall plantings to begin in mid-October, while Eastern Mexico should eventually see more volume as new acreage gets underway soon. As for the CA mature greens, Lipman has been running round tomatoes daily this week but expects to lighten up a little as we move through the next 7-10 days. High temperatures have sped up some harvests, so we'll have a lighter load until crops can catch up in a week or so. Our crops are heavier to J & XL fruit but some other growers have all smaller stuff so the full range of sizing is available.

Roma Tomatoes: Eastern roma volumes vary from light to moderate with TN and NC being the focal points of production. Sizing and quality are both average as farms deal with the same rain concerns as rounds. Mexico's roma numbers are lighter this week as both Baja and East Mexico wait for new crops- East Mexico's sooner and Baja's later in October. CA's volume remains mostly steady now, but is expected to lighten up over the next 7-10 days as prior heat has brought crops on ahead of schedule. Although it varies by grower, it looks like Lipman farms have worked through the quality concerns caused by a long stretch of 105+ degree temps and the fruit is looking nice.

Grape Tomatoes: Overall grape tomato numbers are lighter and are projected to stay light in the East for the next 10-14 days. As quality concerns require us to walk away from some older plantings that we would normally pick alongside new blocks in VA, the volume will be lighter for a few weeks. There's also some fruit in NC, TN and a few other spots, but yields and quality

have been affected by rain, limiting the impact to the market. Looking ahead—we'll move into Ruskin/Palmetto during the first week of October. Western supply is also on the lighter side this week. Baja crops are working through some heat-related quality issues, but should some improvement as soon as next week. Volume is also lighter from our Central Mexico program as it works through a two-week downturn in the growing cycle.

Bell Peppers: There are still a number of states shipping green bells in the East, but overall volume seems to be lightening up. MI's volume has slowed as heat brought crops along early and their quality has been hit or miss. NY and NJ have remained pretty consistent, but we do expect the numbers to gradually decline as they near the season's end in the last week of Sept/first week of Oct. Our NC crops are planned to go through mid-October (if weather permits) with new fields spaced out. Quality has been "average," as daily rain squalls have been relentless on the area. There's also product in IN, KY, VA, and TN with a variety of situations- some with steady volumes and others gapping here and there. The West continues to have steady supply of green bells in Gilroy, Stockton and Arroyo Grande where quality is nice. Demand is perking up a bit, but most sizes are available daily.

Cucumbers: Cucumbers have been pretty snug in the East, but our Fall crops in coastal NC have just started and should bring a boost to supply. We expect good volume for several weeks and should have product until the 3rd week of October. More relief is in sight as GA in on tap to start up in another 10-14 days. Meanwhile, there's still some fruit in MI and NJ with a little left in NY, TN and IN. As for the West, volume remains consistent. Baja will continue with current crops, as there are no new growers left to come online, while Mainland Mexico's volume is picking up slightly. Washington estimates to finish up in another 3 weeks so NW demand will start depending on Baja supply by the end of the month.

Summer Squash: We've hit the point in the season where a number of the local deals (that were everywhere!) are winding down, reducing the overall amount of product available. The always troublesome yellow squash is still the

short suite, especially as MI and several other areas have quality and yield concerns. Currently, the best spots for supply seem to be NJ and TN. Our NJ programs are experiencing lighter yields right now, but there's plenty of acreage to continue to offer decent volume. Supply should improve over the next week as our fall coastal NC crops will have light to moderate volumes to offer and a few GA growers get started with new crops. As ideal growing temps continue in Western growing areas, we are experiencing steady production out of CA which should continue for a couple more weeks. Cooler evening temps, along with the start of shorter days, will begin to play a factor in overall supplies sometime over the next 2-3 weeks. Baja will also have some fruit but volume has declined and will remain very light for the remainder of the season.

Eggplant: Overall supply has lightened up in the East, but there is sill product in a variety of areas with the most volume in MI, NJ and SC. There are some small local programs with stronger than usual volumes (VA, KY, NY) but the acreage is comparatively minimal and has little to no effect on the market. Quality is a mixed bag of tricks but there is some nice fruit out there. We look to see fall crops out of NC and GA in the next 2-3 weeks. Eggplant has become snug in the West as the CA Central Valley fruit has slowed down due to the high heats we had about 10-12 days ago. We should see an increase in supplies within the next 7-10 days once the plants have time to recover. Fortunately, Coachella will be back in fall crops by mid-September.

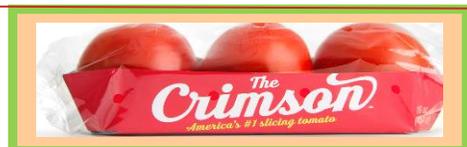
Hard Squash: Aside from a few small local deals in NC, TN, VA, etc, there's hard squash available in MI, NY, and KY. Our KY partner is at full fall volume now and has plenty of product to move. We're starting to see more growers come online in NY where volume will build over the next few weeks. Northern CA's production is steady, providing good availability and quality in the West.

Green Beans: Eastern bean production has rebounded with improved availability. Aside from MI, TN, NY and a few other spots, one of the major growers has transitioned from PA back down to VA where they have more significant acreage. The West is short on green beans as the active growing areas have only minimal volumes or are in a skip this week.

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MARKETING MINUTE

Curbside: Take the Lead, or Get Left in the Dust

By: Tom Cook, www.qsrmagazine.com, August 2020

No doubt curbside pickup has emerged as a key service delivery method as a result of COVID. It enables all restaurant brands, and particularly those without drive-thru, to provide their customers with contactless pick up.

Curbside also enables restaurant brands to help offset sales declines that have resulted from having to close down or limit their dine-in service. That being said, curbside pickup is here to stay post COVID, primarily because customers see it as a safer and more convenient form of takeout.

Curbside: The Current State

When restaurant sales plummeted as a result of COVID, many restaurant brands scrambled to implement curbside pickup. Not surprisingly, these quick-fix curbside solutions consist of rudimentary elements such as a minimal signage package, a few designated parking spaces and a restaurant employee to hand deliver the customer orders curbside. While these initial solutions are contactless and convenient, they deliver a generic, non-memorable customer experience.

Curbside 2.0

There is a significant curbside business- building opportunity as we continue on with the “new normal” created by COVID. Specifically, this opportunity involves advancing curbside from a generic experience to an ownable, branded and memorable customer experience. Innovative solutions are needed. Here are just a few examples to consider.

- Design a curbside customer experience that looks and feels like no other
- Create a prominent welcome and pickup zone that makes your curbside experience unique
- Observe and understand how customers use curbside, and make continuous improvements that create a dazzling customer experience
- Consider a specially designed area where your customers can “drive inside” during inclement weather (the curbside corral)
- Reduce perceived wait time and improve the customer experience by providing entertaining merchandising and communications. Give waiting customers something to read, do and enjoy.
- Create innovative packaging, both structure and graphics, that is designed specifically for your menu and curbside experience.
- Brand your curbside experience. By doing so customers will easily be able to differentiate and remember you’re your brand’s curbside experience and benefits

Think in terms of curbside *innovations*. Not just curbside improvements. Improvements include things like better wayfinding, improved parking, easier-to-use mobile apps. Improvements result in a better version of curbside than what competitors are doing. And they are worthy initiatives. But innovation is about creating something entirely new—an idea, service or feature that has never been implemented before. The need for it may never have been expressed by customers. But they are a game-changer. Think of Apple’s introduction of the smartphone. That’s innovation.

Meaningful Benefits

For restaurant customers, curbside provides contactless pickup, which is “the new gold standard,” greater convenience than takeout and no delivery fees.

For restaurant brands and operators, the benefits of curbside are immediate and direct:

- More profitable sales than delivery
- A cost-effective investment and solution to increase sales
- A superior service delivery method that will drive incremental traffic
- The time to develop and implement is shorter than many other business building initiatives

Keep in mind, the curbside restaurant winners of tomorrow will take the lead to develop a proprietary and memorable branded curbside experience.



TRANSPORTATION FACTS

*The average US diesel fuel price rose slightly this week, moving from \$2.43 to \$2.44 per gallon.

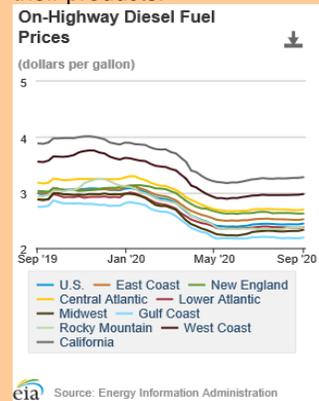
*The average price for a gallon of diesel is \$.54 lower than the same time last year.

*All areas reported price increases with the most significant coming from the Midwest (up \$.02).

*As usual, California has the highest price at \$3.28 per gallon, while the Gulf Coast remains the low-price leader at \$2.19 per gallon.

*The WTI Crude Oil price has fallen 3.6% over the past two weeks, moving from \$42.93 to \$41.37 per barrel.

* Trucks are coming up short in VA, IL, and WA this week. As vegetable production begins to transition, we’re also seeing some slight shortages at Mexico/Texas crossing points, NC, and MI. CA shipping districts still have adequate trucking options available to move their products.



Fresh Cut Spotlight

Fresh-Cut

VEGETABLE NOODLES

READY TO EAT

These thinly sliced spirals hold the texture of a noodle, but none of the guilt! As a healthier alternative to the standard pasta noodle, squash noodles make for a great base to many dishes. They are sliced directly from our facility, so you can expect to receive fresh, crisp vegetables every time, without the labor and preparation.



DEPENDABLE
Individually stored, processed, and packed at ideal temperatures.

SIMPLIFIES
Eliminates preparation time and risk of in-store operation injuries due to cutting, lifting, and waste.

COST SAVING
Reduces insurance costs, workers compensation claims, and space required for storing.



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PRODUCE BAROMETER

ITEM	QUALITY	PRICING
Bell Pepper	Varied	E-Higher; W-Higher
Cucumber	Good	E-Steady; W-Steady
Eggplant	Mostly Good	E-Steady W-Higher
Green Beans	Good	E-Steady; W-Steady
Jalapenos	Good	E-Steady; W-Steady
Squash-Hard	Mostly Good	E-Steady; W-Steady
Squash-Soft	Varied	E-Steady; W-Steady
Tomatoes	Fair to Good	E-Steady; W-Steady



SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

Sep 15-Oct 15
Hispanic Heritage Month
September 4th
National Food Bank Day
Bring Your Manners to Work Day
September 5th
National Cheese Pizza Day
Franchise Appreciation Day
September 7th
Labor Day

Clinton, NC Weather

Sat Sep 5	Sun Sep 6	Mon Sep 7	Tue Sep 8	Wed Sep 9
86° F	84° F	87° F	87° F	87° F
64° F	65° F	69° F	72° F	73° F
NNE 13 MPH	NNE 9 MPH	NE 6 MPH	ENE 8 MPH	ENE 7 MPH
Precip 30%	Precip 10%	Precip 10%	Precip 30%	Precip 40%

NEWS IN THE GROCERY TRADE

Survey: Most Grocery Shoppers Favor In-Store Purchases Amid Pandemic

By: Russell Redman, www.supermarketnews.com, August 26, 2020

Despite concerns about COVID-19, nearly two-thirds of U.S. grocery shoppers still prefer to make purchases in physical stores, according to a survey by business news website The Manifest. Of 501 U.S. adults polled in late July, 62% said they have favored buying groceries in person at the store over the past three months. At the same time, however, nearly one-quarter of respondents (22%) said they used contactless services such as online grocery delivery and pickup.

People continue to shop in grocery stores, but they limit how frequently they shop each month by stocking up on more items at one time," The Manifest said in its research report. Indeed, the study found that consumers are spending more on groceries during the pandemic. Though 47% said their grocery spending hasn't changed, 38% reported shelling out more money for food shopping. Only 15% indicated a decline in grocery spending.

"With limited restaurant and eating options, people's spending habits on food have changed. More than one-third of people say their average grocery bill has increased during the pandemic," according to The Manifest. "About one-quarter of people (23%) say their grocery bill has increased by more than \$50, while 15% say it has increased by less than \$50."

Among those using online grocery services, delivery holds a slight edge. Twelve percent of consumers surveyed said they use grocery delivery versus 10% using pickup. On the delivery side, that percentage represents a more than tripling of the share of U.S. grocery shoppers using that service.

"While only 12% of people have used grocery delivery services during the pandemic, this change still indicates a significant uptick in the popularity of grocery delivery services," The Manifest noted.

With many people seeking safer ways to buy groceries, they're also recognizing the convenience offered by online services. More than half (52%) of survey respondents cited time savings as the main draw of grocery delivery, followed by safety (11%), no parking or fuel expenses (10%), personalized order history (7%), bulk ordering (4%) and online discounts (4%).

"As people switch to using grocery delivery services, they consider the benefits: an on-demand service versus traveling to a grocery store," The Manifest explained. "Saving time can be a major asset to a busy consumer. Ordering groceries online allows people to search for items quickly, select the type of food they want and order it to their home at a time that works best for them. Using the past-order history button can also make reordering groceries easier than scanning the aisles for individual items."

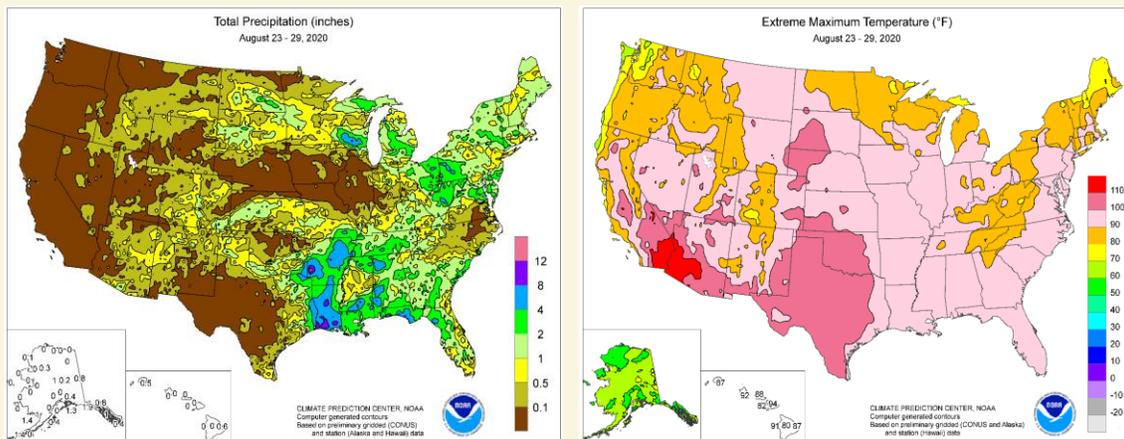
Still, as more people have used online grocery services, they've encountered some pitfalls, such as added expense from delivery and service fees, unacceptable produce and inconvenient delivery/pickup times. Twenty-two percent of grocery shoppers polled by The Manifest named fees as the top challenge in online grocery, followed by produce quality (17%), drop-off times (11%), customer service issues (10%), waste (9%) and data security (5%).

"The majority of people still shop in physical stores to buy groceries, which indicates that delivery services have room to improve, such as with fees and produce quality," The Manifest said in its report. "Grocery delivery services still have a long way to go in terms of customer experience: People say fees are too high and the produce selected is not always ideal," The Manifest's study concluded. But the report added that the grocery e-commerce channel continues to build a sizable consumer following. "With large numbers of people trying out grocery delivery services for the first time and liking them, supermarkets may need to prepare for long-term competition."

**Note: This article has been edited for space and content. To view the entire selection, please visit www.supermarketnews.com*

NATIONAL WEATHER SPOTLIGHT

Last Week's Precipitation Totals and Extreme Maximum Temperatures



RESTAURANT INDUSTRY NEWS

4 Diner Personas Reveal What Motivates Restaurant Customers in the Age of COVID

By: Patricia Cobe, www.restaurantbusinessonline.com, August 28, 2020

After several months of quarantine, many consumers embraced the return of restaurant dining. But others are still wary, venturing out only to pick up a meal curbside or have dinner delivered to eat at home.

Meanwhile, restaurants are scrambling to enforce health and safety protocols, juggle takeout and delivery with dine-in service, set up outdoor seating and create menus that cover all these scenarios.

The good news is that 38% of consumers are looking forward to dining out again in the next three months, according to a new survey conducted by YouGov and commissioned by SevenRooms, a data-driven guest experience platform. But every potential customer has different needs and expectations.

To make it less challenging for operators to navigate the new dining landscape, SevenRooms grouped these needs into four “diner personas” based on the survey results.

The pickup patron: These consumers won’t be ready to dine out until there’s a vaccine. Nearly 1 in 4 (23%) will only order for takeout or delivery for the remainder of 2020. Restaurants seem to be doing a good job with these platforms—about half of all Americans continue to feel comfortable ordering food to go.

The safety-savvy consumer: It’s no surprise that customers want to see restaurants following health and safety guidelines. Face masks and 6-foot social distancing are givens, but this group of guests is looking for more. Over one-third of respondents (37%) want physical barriers between tables, 33% want personal hand sanitizers placed on the table and 24% want their food covered when it’s served to them.

The tech-conscious contactless diner: About 1 in 7 consumers (13%) will only visit restaurants that offer a contactless dining experience. Topping the list are virtual waitlists, with 22% of respondents saying they want to join a waitlist before they arrive so they can be seated immediately. Around the same number (21%) want operators to use contact tracing technology, and 17% are in favor of QR codes for ordering and paying.

The carefree guest: This diner persona is eager to dine out in restaurants and less concerned about risks and restrictions. While 29% are comfortable sitting indoors at a restaurant, many more (42%) are limiting visits to outdoor venues. Familiar restaurants are more likely to be on their list—37% are more comfortable dining at places they’ve been to before, but 25% would visit a new restaurant. Bars are not a priority; only 15% of consumers would patronize a drinking establishment.

“As local economies across the country continue to reopen, restaurant operators are navigating the right balance between safety and traditional models for hospitality,” said Joel Montaniel, CEO and co-founder of SevenRooms. “Our research has made one thing clear: Operators need to be flexible. Whether it’s in regard to outdoor dining, virtual waitlists or contactless order and pay—guest have different needs.”

YouGov PLC conducted the survey with 1,237 Americans from July 31-Aug. 3. The four diner personas are identified in the company’s new report, “Restaurant Reckoning: Dynamic Diner.”

FRESH

TOMATOES


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September 21-25, 2020
United Fresh Washington Conference Online Event
To learn more, visit:
www.unitedfresh.org/events

February 25-27, 2021
SEPC’s Southern Exposure Swan & Dolphin Resorts Lake Buena Vista, FL
www.seproducecouncil.com/events

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