

Bite-Sized Info for the Produce Industry

the SNACK

ISSUE 66 APR 2022

THE ROOTS OF RESOLVE

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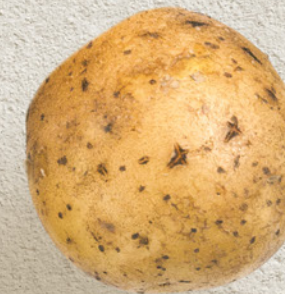
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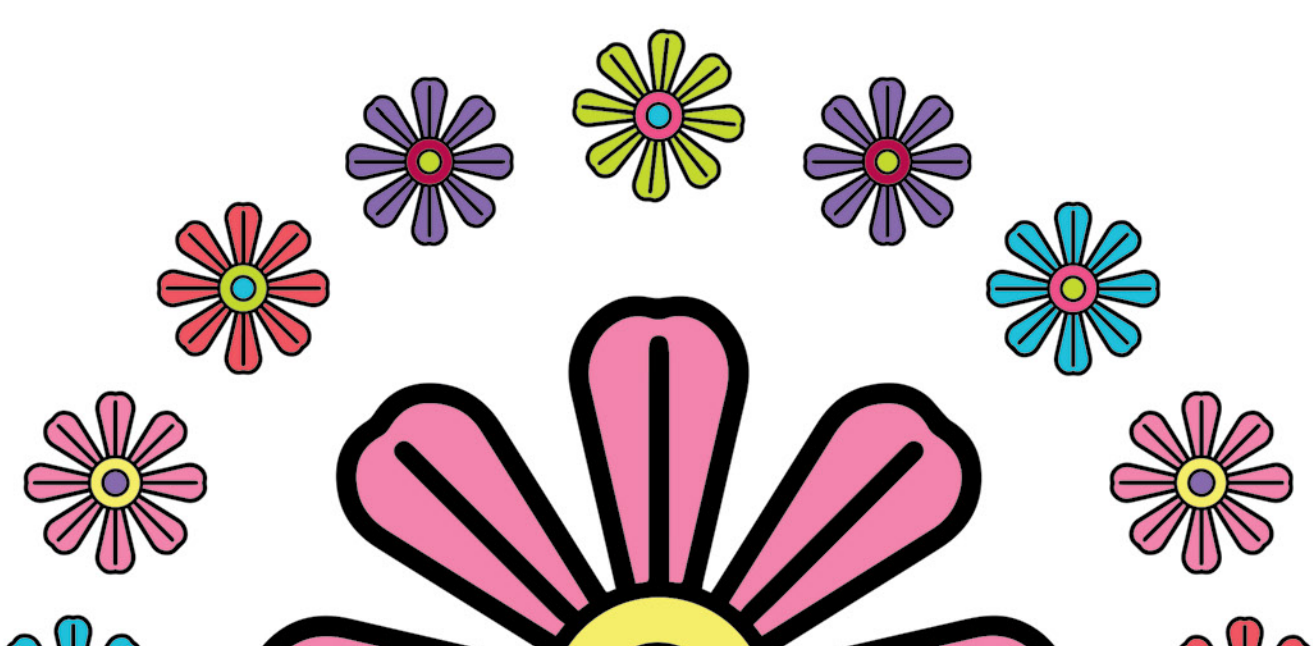
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LEGACY IS MULTIDIRECTIONAL—a word that looks back as much as it looks forward.

Reading through this 66th issue of *The Snack Magazine*, this nuanced concept washes over me, sweeping me back into my own personal lineage as I sit on the edge of my story's forward movement and how that map will unfold. The catalyst could be a milestone birthday at play or it could be the fact that I have been carrying around your stories inside me for over a decade now.



For me, my heritage and my future crystallized at an unexpected juncture recently. It was a rare moment with my grandmother, not unlike any other moment, except I needed to be who I am today and she needed to be who she has grown to become. She turned 99 in January. As I sat across from her, watching her curl a newspaper in her hand, everything felt like it had come full circle.

She has nearly a century of wisdom, and at the cellular level, has lived hundreds of lives. She has been my greatest storyteller and the matriarch of the family. My grandma has taught me, and teaches me still, the beauty in telling stories—one time whispering to me across the table how she lived on a silkworm farm in Japan with her aunt and sisters when she was five years old. How the night was the loudest part of the day.

The silkworms were eating mulberry leaves, she told me, and it sounded like rain.

To sit across from her as a storyteller now, the woman who read me *Momotarō* about the little peach boy, in English, from a Japanese children's book, feels like a promise. Feels something like legacy.

This hope and belief in legacy have been at the forefront of my mind even more so since then, especially as the conversation builds around the next generation of fresh produce growers—a pool of risk-takers that seems to be waning. This is a reality I believe to be momentary. But, yes, it may be quite a long moment. A legacy is not just a

foundation on which you continue to build with one eye on the past, but one that can be an intention set on the horizon, with groundwork laid today.

Entering into this industry as it is this day, with all the production and cost pressures, volatile consumer environment, and day-to-day labor demands, is not without its challenges. But these steep challenges are ones I hope we can reframe for the next generation in a way that, yes, acknowledges the risks they will face, but, more than that, emphasizes the rewards. Feeding the world is no small feat; and betting on the decisions you make today in the hopes they will pay off at harvest and market months or years from now is the stuff of strong character. And becoming a steward of the land is more needed at present than ever before.

It is true, I am not out there at sunrise tilling the land with these strong-hearted many. And yes, my office is much warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer than the orchards, vineyards, and fields of our friends on the front lines battling to feed the world and to support their families.

I do hope, though, that our team can carry your stories toward the next generation, or to the generation already here now who may be looking toward the proverbial greener grass. Let us help you find the center of your story so that we can live in its orbit.

Let us be your amplifier, your megaphone, your archivists, and biographers.

Let us help your story—tell a legacy that builds forward, and one that also looks back. 🍒

Jordan Okumura
Editor in Chief
AndNowUKnow and *The Snack Magazine*

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FEATURES

PRODUCE PRO SOFTWARE

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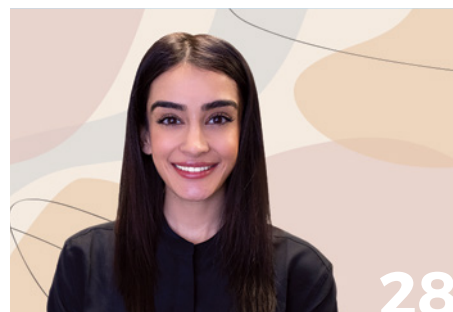
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CATANIA WORLDWIDE MENTORS IN THE MAKING

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APRIL 2022
ISSUE 66

FRESH FOLK

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**RAINIER FRUIT COMPANY
INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT**
WATER CONSERVATION



THE IF LIST
TONYA ANTLE



MY FAVORITE THINGS
BRIANA GIAMPAOLI

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UP CLOSE

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VOICES OF THE INDUSTRY



JOE PRODUCE
LIFE HAPPENS

TRUE TO TASTE

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STRAWBERRIES
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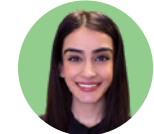
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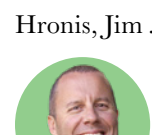
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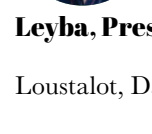


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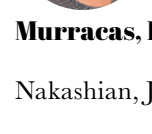


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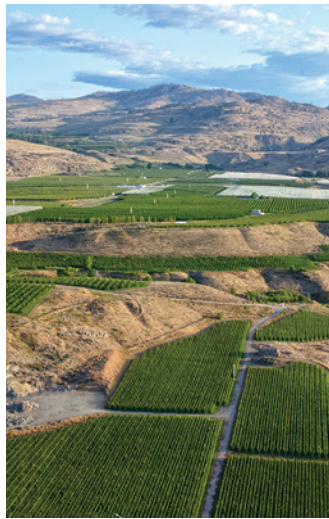
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WATER CONSERVATION

Rainier Fruit Company takes into consideration every contributor in the ecosystem, from the microbes in the soil to the pollinators buzzing around the blossoming flowers. Growing in Washington's desert climate, water conservation is a major factor to include in the big picture. Rainier has made this resource a top priority. So, how is the grower making the most of H₂O?



1 INNOVATION TO THE RESCUE

One heavy-hitter on Rainier's team is technology. The grower uses a software that optimizes production in real-time. With this in place, Rainier can keep track of irrigation levels, tree stress and growth, and fruit size on a block-by-block basis.

2 QUENCHED AND RESERVED

Rainier kept water conservation at the forefront when it switched from overhead sprinklers to foggers/misters, reducing water usage by 53.2 percent per acre.

3 PROTECTING AND NURTURING THE FRUIT

With technology and overhead foggers, Rainier not only helps conserve water, but it also provides better care to its crops. The overhead foggers, along with lowering water usage, help prevent sunburn damage by 98 percent, a 33 percent reduction compared to overhead sprinklers.

4 FROM THE GROUND UP

Having a diverse ground cover helps retain soil moisture. The diversity helps prevent water evaporation, which keeps the soil cooler to provide a beneficial environment for the microbes that help nurture plant growth. Leading to higher nutrient intake, this keeps the trees healthy and the fruit nutritious.

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



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{ what the fork }



ISLAND ICE CREAM BOWLS

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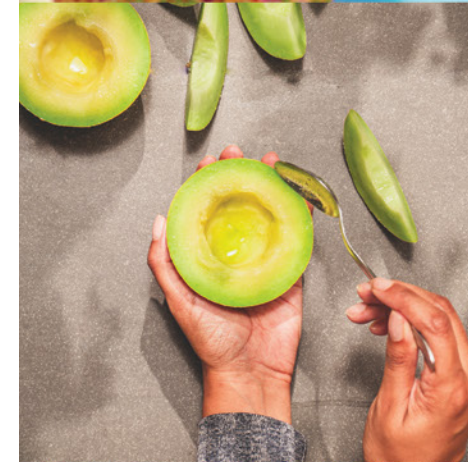
- 2 Pure Flavor® Solara™ Melons
- 1 pint vanilla ice cream
- 2 tbsp coconut flakes, toasted
- 1 bunch mint, for garnish

Prep Time: 15 min
Cook Time: 0 min
Servings: 4

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Halve melons and scoop out the seeds.
- 2 Using a melon baller or spoon, scoop out flesh into small melon balls, leaving some to form a bowl and set both halves aside.
- 3 Using an ice cream scoop, fill each melon bowl with ice cream and add melon balls on top.
- 4 Sprinkle with toasted coconut for crunch, and garnish with fresh mint.
- 5 Enjoy!

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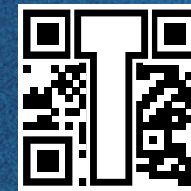


PRODUCE PULSE

Scan me  **QR CODE**

COMEBACK

By Melissa De Leon Chavez



he first time I used a Quick Response (QR) code, it completely clashed with everything I knew about them. Theoretically, this technology was a stargate, transporting a customer or consumer nearly anywhere, from a recipe page to a video directly to the farm.

But the app to read the code was severely delayed in loading the destination—if the camera could find the code at all—or crashing entirely, leaving me frustrated and in want of more. Yet, the beauty of technology is its potential to evolve. Endless amounts of cyberspace can be molded and reshaped at one home URL, creating a newer, better destination within the same address. And, when 2020 brought a need to mitigate contact, the technology gods saw fit to revisit QR code applications and give renewed life.

The space I have seen the most significant shift in is restaurants, where the fundamental expectation has changed from being served tangible menus to immediately opening the menu on your phone using a QR code. At the same time, the code is more easily picked up on mobile applications, swiftly connects the user, and delivers the convenience earlier iterations denied us.

This combined improvement and frequent implementation has ensured something vital—the interface's commonplace use.

Now, when I see a QR code, I take a snap to uncover what it will show me. I don't even have to be interested in the item, article, or

tag before doing so. The code hints that there is more to know—a clue I can't help but follow. Packaging, ads, even the skin of a produce item are open opportunities for our industry to explore. In fact, QR codes have been pointed out as one of the catalysts of mobile shopping becoming such a key channel in retail, especially as its usability has advanced.

Behind the shelves, they are becoming a regular part of trade show tech life and will probably continue even more so, as DMA Solutions observed in its trend forecast for 2022*.

Even so, parameters may yet exist according to research. While the pixel barcode is now in a space to easily deliver more with less on-pack information, one survey showed marketers should not use QR codes indiscriminately, but alongside an emotional appeal if their objective is to induce purchase intention in low-involvement settings. Advertisements for high-involvement products reportedly need to combine QR codes with an informational appeal**.

QR Codes already have such potential to serve the ag-food industry that attaching them to curved-shaped products to improve traceability and increase customer satisfaction is a challenge currently being taken up using response surface methodology (RSM) analysis***.

Everyone loves a good comeback story, and in this case, I think it is safe to say the QR code is returned and ready for its encore. 📱



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WTF

DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

Lipman Family Farms®
Organic Mini Sweet Peppers ?



PROSCIUTTO-WRAPPED ORGANIC MINI SWEET PEPPERS

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb clamshell Grown True® Organic Mini Sweet Peppers
- 10 oz cream cheese, softened
- Fresh chives, finely chopped
- 4 oz Pepperoncini peppers, diced
- 12 slices of prosciutto

Prep Time: 20 min
Cook Time: 12 min
Servings: 4-6



DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 425° F and prepare baking sheet.
- 2 Wash mini sweet peppers, then cut each in half lengthwise and remove seeds.
- 3 In a bowl, combine cream cheese, Pepperoncini peppers, and chives. Spoon the cream cheese mixture into each hollowed pepper.
- 4 Slice the prosciutto into 3 strips lengthwise.
- 5 Wrap each stuffed pepper with a prosciutto slice and place on baking sheet.
- 6 Bake peppers for 10-12 minutes, or until prosciutto is crispy. Serve hot and enjoy!

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MENTORS IN THE MAKING

Lila Baig

BY PEGGY PACKER

TO SUCCEED IN THE TUMULTUOUS WORLD OF FRESH PRODUCE, one must be many things; patient, strategic, personable, the list goes on...The number of valuable traits deeply rooted within the luminaries that make up this simultaneously challenging and rewarding industry is limitless.

Enter Lila Baig, a curious creative whose humility speaks almost as loudly as the stellar achievements she has made as Catania Worldwide's Business Development and Marketing Manager. Lila's produce journey takes us back five years, when the visual marketer stepped into the role of Sales and Marketing Assistant for Catania. Under the wing of Mario Masellis, Director of Sales and Marketing, Lila discovered what so many of us do when we first settle into this industry—there is always something to learn.

"Mario is a wealth of knowledge and the perfect individual to introduce and guide me through the industry. Through his can-do spirit, Catania pride, and infinite connections, he taught me how to navigate produce sales, procurement, and marketing, all the while unflagging in his efforts to make me a more confident individual. I didn't realize there was this whole world of fruit and veg," Lila tells me, detailing a familiar perception of simplicity. "I thought, you go to the grocery store, you buy an apple, and that's all there is to it. I had no idea it was its own little world, and I think that's what got me hooked into it: There's so much to learn every single day."

This admirable student mentality was perhaps the driving force behind the marketing ace's growth at Catania, as it was not

long before her expertise began to shine through, even in her personal life.

"In just a couple of months, I found myself at a grocery store with my mom telling her, 'let me pick the fruit out,' because I already learned the secrets of how to choose the best," Lila chuckles.

And, like many dedicated students, Lila's knowledge bank deepened over time, filled with first-hand expertise from Catania Worldwide President Paul Catania.

"Paul taught me everything I know today. From life lessons to teaching me about agriculture and sales and operations, he is my pillar in the world of produce without whom I could not have made it this far," Lila reflects. "He is always inclined to let me try something new. No idea is too bold. He has taught me how to create lasting and genuine relationships with our partners, how to never lose sight of our abilities, and how to stay grounded."

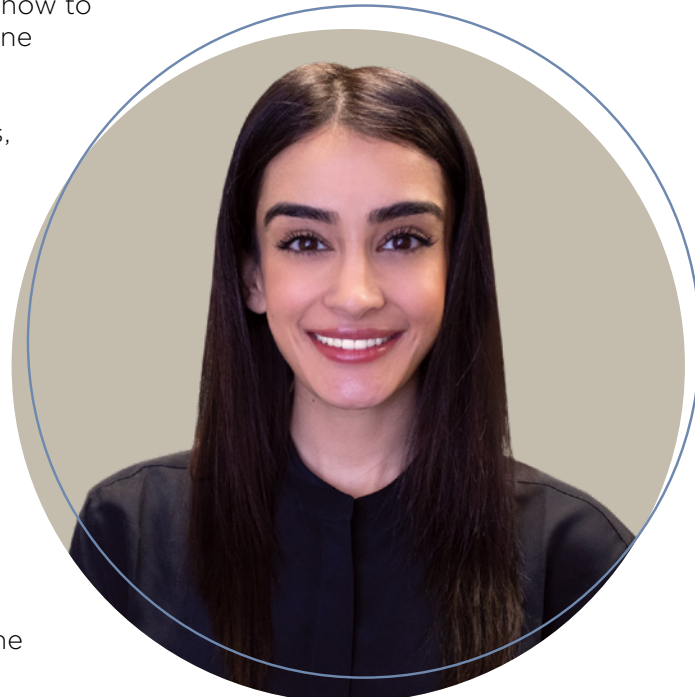
As Lila continued to help Catania's marketing department gain steam, her flame was fueled by a fellow advertising ally, Emily Murracas, Director of Marketing for Mucci Farms, who helped her orient her vision to spark a new phase of evolution for the company.

"Emily is a pioneer in produce marketing. Everything she touches turns to gold," beams Lila. "I started noticing how important marketing is very

early on, and I knew who I had to look to for guidance in bringing my ideas to life. She always made time to help me work out anything I was puzzled about. She is one of the kindest people I have met and an inspiration for my successes."

In tandem with a newfound understanding of supply-side operations, Lila also took the time to hone her buy-side expertise. This opportunity was sparked by a mutual passion for food and a genuine relationship with Costco Produce Buyer Devin Syrovatka.

"Devin and I initially connected over our mutual love of food. Devin is unfailingly generous when it comes to imparting wisdom, and extremely intelligent. He is an extraordinary buyer and truly represents Costco's value in pursuing excellence in quality," Lila notes. "He's open to trying anything and everything, and that's one of my favorite things about him. He is my guidepost for untapped categories, understanding the Canadian consumer, and, of course, restaurants I must try!"



Lila Baig,

Business Development and Marketing Manager, Catania Worldwide

Looking back at each of the building blocks of her impressive career, I cannot help but think of the monumental achievements that lie in wait for the Catania Worldwide marketing department.

With a perennial student of the game at the helm, the opportunities are infinite.

THE MENTORS

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



Mario Masellis, Director of Sales and Marketing, Catania Worldwide

Originally brought on board to assist me with my day-to-day work, I soon discovered the jewel that we know today. It was evident to me early on that Lila was not going to be assisting me for long. Lila came to us with a pleasantly shy personality that now renders refreshing confidence. Her curiosity and eagerness to learn about the produce industry are the keys to her continued growth and success. She asks many questions but does not accept all the answers. In fact, one of the questions that irritates me more than I care to admit is, 'Why can't we do that?' It certainly makes me question the traditional thought in marketing produce. Steven Spielberg said, 'The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves.' Well done, Lila!



Paul Catania, President, Catania Worldwide

In an ideal younger employee, I look for someone who is energetic, willing to learn, enthusiastic, a team player, obviously intelligent, and detail-oriented, but, ultimately, someone who has an inherent feel for our industry. It is rare to be able to put all of those traits together. In Lila, I am watching this package develop like a flower unfolding in stages. Or, in our industry, like a bright fruit growing on a tree.



Emily Murracas, Director of Marketing, Mucci Farms

Lila's success is no surprise to me, as she has developed at a steady pace at Catania while growing and leading the marketing team. She has a contagious energy that allows her professionalism and vibrant personality to impact those around her—a rare asset that truly raises team spirit and corporate culture. In all my interactions with her, she has a humble presence with an inquisitive mind and a willingness to learn. Lila's attention to detail shines across Catania's increased brand presence, and I'm excited to watch her continue to grow and inspire the next generation of produce professionals!



Devin Syrovatka, Produce Buyer, Costco

Lila is all of the best parts of working in the produce industry; she is dynamic, full of knowledge, humble, and her passion is nothing short of infectious. She rolls with the never-ending ups and downs of the seasons, is always quick to communicate, and when something eventually goes wrong, she is the first one to dive into the problem and make it right—even if I caused it! I have had the pleasure of working with Lila on a number of new projects, and you can tell immediately that she is invested in what you are invested in. I cannot wait to see where her career takes her, as there are few with the same exceptional mix of drive and personality. Honestly, find a way to work with Lila. You will be glad you did!

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WORTH SQUEEZE

A Q&A WITH
ANGELA HERNANDEZ,
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, TRINITY FRUIT COMPANY

By Jordan Okumura

A belief is not the same as an idea.

Those who endeavor to be great know this. I feel this viewpoint in my bones, and while only an opinion, I know it can change the way we see choice, events, and circumstances. Beliefs carry impetus and action behind them. Ideas can stay rooted in the mind, similar to the way a seed sits in stillness if left unwatered, there are few who truly believe in their ideas and put action behind them.

While the two notions are not mutually exclusive and are often used synonymously, I find that those who have a belief in why they get up in the morning lean toward action, and an idea is how they get there. That idea can only be as strong as someone's belief in it.

But when the two align, seismic shifts can happen in our personal lives or in our businesses. Beliefs have conviction, are grounded in movement and strength—but also curiosity—down to the atomic level. Truly great ideas are born from beliefs,

are the branches of a tree rooted in truths like courage, resilience, and even risk.

Angela Hernandez is at the foundation of such roots, and Trinity Fruit Company is the way in which such a brave belief in innovation comes to life and grows toward the sun.

In this light, Angela tells me, Trinity Fruit creates experiences as evidence of a deep belief in ingenuity and what it can do to the relationship between the grower and the consumer, between the shelf and sentimental. As the company's Director of Marketing, Angela reaches across California to hand me a cool bottled beverage, brightly designed, and perfectly balanced: Squeezed Juice® by Trinity Fruit Company.

It is easy to call such an item a product, but when the idea of a fresh fruit juice program is put into the hands of the Trinity Fruit team, it becomes pure belief—the palpable and drinkable kind. Hang with me for a moment and let's take a sip.



Q1



Jordan Okumura: Alright, Angela, that smile on your face tells me Trinity Fruit has one heck of a juice experience up its sleeve. Tell me a little about it; pretend I am walking toward its destination at retail. What am I looking at?

Angela Hernandez,
Director of Marketing,
Trinity Fruit
Company: With Squeezed Juice, what you are looking at is both a belief in a nostalgic experience and the latest in innovation and research from the Trinity Fruit team.



Our new items come in two flavors, mandarin and pomegranate, and both are 100 percent juice. It was incredibly important to us that these juices were all-natural and not from concentrate. Differentiation in today's fresh departments starts by listening to the consumer, and they are telling us that this is the kind of juice experience they want.

Visually, we took it to another level as well. After all, consumers drink with their eyes first.

“In terms of growth, we have faith and are very optimistic—especially with the positive feedback we have received—that growth is in the cards.”

Angela Hernandez,
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING, TRINITY FRUIT COMPANY

Q2

JO: Nostalgia and innovation are a great pairing and quite a feat. How did this combination of goals influence the design and aesthetic of the new line?

AH: When David White, our President and Chief Executive Officer, shared with me that he wanted to create these juice products, I naturally began to go to work. I did a lot of research on different bottles on the shelf and bottles that weren't on the shelf. What I envisioned was something classy, timeless, and chic, with a “less is more” approach—and a bottle that was ergonomic and easy to drink and pour.

During the bottle research, I came across vintage milk glass bottles. We're farmers, so I wanted to reinvent the farm-look milk bottle for the new age. This vessel, if you will, is what I envisioned: a beautiful, retro-meets-chic and minimalist look that carries the timeless vintage bottle style.

Q3

JO: I love that. You could be talking about a new luxury vehicle, a fashion trend, or an architectural strategy, but you are talking about juice! What inspired this expansion of the Trinity Fruit portfolio?

AH: A vision. David is always thinking of the next thing. As Trinity Fruit has continued to grow, the visions have become realities.

In 2019, David shared his vision of creating a pomegranate and mandarin juice with me, and from that point on, the team took his passionate belief and began to perform what I call magic. We created a blueprint that would make Squeezed Juice a premium juice line and an extension of the produce department with year-round availability.

The experience should replicate the same satisfaction as eating California-grown mandarins and pomegranate arils fresh from the orchard.



Above: Jeri Elsasser, Angela Hernandez, and Jackie Nakashian enjoy the incredible feedback surrounding the Squeezed Juice® premiere

Q4

JO: Let's talk about the expanse and reach of the line at present. What is the availability and breadth of the distribution, and do you plan for continued growth in this arena?

AH: Our product launched mid-February of this year, with the line on the shelf at the beginning of March starting on the East Coast. Availability is year-round, so our partners will not need to worry about not meeting demand.

In terms of growth, we have faith and are very optimistic—especially with the positive feedback we have received—that growth is in the cards. We believe in this line and how it can raise the bar around the possibilities of juice, and really great juice at that.

Q5

JO: I know that this item, while an extension of the fresh produce department, can make its way into many specialty fresh food destinations and departments at the store. Why is this perishable segment such an influential and sales-driving category?

AH: It's another opportunity for shoppers to enjoy fresh fruit. And they want that. They demand that kind of versatility from the companies, in this case, retailers,

where they travel to in the hopes of enriching their experiences. Squeezed Juice is just what fresh mandarin and pomegranate fruit consist of in terms of flavor. Shoppers want fresh, all-natural, 100 percent juice, and not from concentrate, and we find that giving juice shoppers just that is influential to driving sales.

Q6

JO: Speaking to your retail partners and those looking to take a bigger step toward differentiating their fresh vision, what would you like them to know about the features, advantages, and benefits of the new launch?

AH: Squeezed Juice is exactly who we are: fresh and authentic, or in terms of the experience—100 percent juice and California-grown. We are High-Pressure Processing certified, non-GMO, vegan, with a look that belongs on shelves and fresh-fruit flavor that shoppers are waiting to experience. Both mandarin and pomegranate flavors are available in 11 oz single-serve, BPA-free bottles that are easy to hold, healthy, and delicious! And beautiful.

Jordan, as you imagine walking toward all of this on a retail shelf, can you see it now?

I can definitely see it, Angela. And taste it—Trinity Fruit's palpable belief. How the company has arrived at such a focal point of passion is amazing to me, even as I write the evidence here under my fingertips. Part of belief is listening, as well. And in this case, it is listening to the consumer and what makes their experiences more authentic and true. Just put your ear to the environment, open your mind, and don't forget: Believe. 🍊





MORE THAN A Mindset

BY CHANDLER JAMES

Driving the 180-mile stretch from Sacramento to Watsonville, California, my mind drifts off to the image of a bright, freshly picked strawberry—the fresh zest of the stem still floating in the morning sun. The car rolls past towering hills blanketed in green suede, clouds parting just above I-5 to reveal a sapphire sky not so far in the distance.

Out in the strawberry fields up the road from California Giant Berry Farms' headquarters, I follow Kyla Oberman curiously. The Director of Marketing and I travel by car on a dirt path to the top of a hill overlooking Monterey Bay, where we are greeted by Rich Uto, Grower-Owner of Satsuma Farms, one of California Giant's grower-partners. The three of us circle up at a vantage point displaying miles of thriving green crops all around.

"California Giant's goal is to hone in on three pillars—people, planet, profit—and ensure all aspects of sustainable agriculture are being served with intent and attention to better serve our customers and the community," Kyla tells me of the company's evolving efforts toward becoming more sustainable. "We believe sustainability is the foundation for a thriving business, which is why our commitment spans from our fields to our main office headquarters, and beyond."



Kyla Oberman,
Director of Marketing,
California Giant
Berry Farms



Kyla speaks so effortlessly about the strawberry operation's Sustainably Grown Certification from SCS Global Services. While working toward the certification, California Giant teamed up with Measure to Improve (MTI)—a fresh produce industry sustainability team helping organizations measure, improve, and credibly promote sustainability efforts—to implement new programs. The company also achieved Gold Certification under TRUE (Total Resource Use and Efficiency) Zero Waste program at its headquarters and is working toward Platinum. Its farms and headquarters follow strict recycling guidelines as evidenced by the spotless fields that stand before me.

As I come to observe during our morning conversation, the concept of sustainability can be interpreted in

“We believe sustainability is the foundation for a thriving business, which is why our commitment spans from our fields to our main office headquarters, and beyond.”

many ways. For California Giant, true sustainability includes the company's actions being environmentally sound (planet), being economically viable (profit), and its practices being socially equitable (people).

“We are dedicated to growing the performance of our workforce; we prioritize education, community development, and employee welfare, all while nurturing the berries we grow,” Kyla says as she details the pillar of people.

For California Giant and its grower-partners' employees, this means adequate compensation and ensuring safe working conditions. The company has established fair and equitable policies, which include

anti-discriminatory hiring practices that promote diversity at all levels of the business.

Rich looks over his shoulder in thought, then turns back to me. He explains that by supporting his team members, they are able to come together collectively and work toward a common goal.

“The people working here are a big part of our success,” he states. “It takes an entire team, from MTI to California Giant to my employees. Everyone, regardless of their role, is trained every year on the recycling program so they know how to dispose of things properly.”

Mother Earth is clearly another integral individual playing a role in California

Giant's sustainability efforts. In addition to strict recycling guidelines, Rich has worked with his employees and MTI to implement the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Healthy Soils Program.

“As leaders in agriculture, we take our commitment to protecting the Earth seriously because our futures depend on it. We are constantly challenging ourselves to find the best ways to reduce water usage, improve air quality, and support the ecosystems in our growing areas and beyond,” Kyla relays. “This is reflected in our strategic goal of increasing sustainability certifications on 50 percent of our acreage in the next few years.”

“As leaders in agriculture, we take our commitment to protecting the Earth seriously because our futures depend on it.”



While Satsuma Farms is credited as being the first commercial strawberry operation in the world to be Sustainably Grown certified by SCS, its acreage will also be evolving. Rich points to a 14-acre plot across from us, explaining how he is considering converting the land to organic, a feat not to be underestimated.

As he jokes that his success in organics is attributed to luck, Kyla leans toward us and smiles, pointing out that a bit of hard work comes into play as well.

“I put eight tons of the seedling substrate rice bran in per acre, and I got the anaerobic soil layer, which works like a charm,” Rich demonstrates. “I also put my cover crop out there and rotate back and forth every year. I work with the guys I’m rotating ground with, and it’s just a lot of communication.”

He brings it all back to that first pillar of sustainability: people. Both Kyla and Rich note that the three values are entirely intertwined, and you cannot have one without the other. Naturally, our conversation also continuously returns to the third pillar: profit.

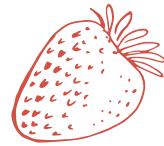
“True sustainability is only achieved with profit. Profit enables investments and the ability to nurture our agricultural and local communities,” Kyla expresses. “Achieving economic success empowers all of us to continue our sustainability journey, investing in eco-friendly technologies and practices to do our absolute best for the planet.”

“To be sustainable costs money. You’ve got to make sure you’re financially sustainable, because if you’re not, then nothing you do will be successful.”



Rich Uto,

GROWER-OWNER,
SATSUMA FARMS



While interviewing the two berry aficionados, off to my right is an acre of mustard seed—a cover crop planted to support the soil health of rotated fields, all while making the growing operation in Watsonville that much more beautiful: another example of Satsuma Farms’ investment in sustainability.

“To be sustainable costs money,” Rich says. “You’ve got to make sure you’re financially sustainable, because if you’re not, then nothing you do will be successful.”

Now that Satsuma is certified Sustainably Grown, Rich is continuing to up his commitment to sustainability by hitting new points of improvement. No matter the outcome, California Giant Berry Farms knows that by taking one step at a time, progress will be made.

“No one is perfect. It’s like following a healthy lifestyle. If you make an unhealthy choice, you start over the next day and don’t eat that cookie,” Kyla jokes. “It is the same thing with sustainability. You can’t afford everything. That’s a challenge, but you can treat your people right and protect the planet as much as possible.”

For Rich, sustainability is more than a mindset. The concept runs deep in his veins and is simultaneously something he is always learning more about. I think it all comes down to his—and California Giant’s—vision for the future. While there may be many paths to pursue, there is only one possibility we must be walking toward: a viable and sustainable future for those who will be farming years after us.

“Sustainability in farming rests on the principle that we must meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future farming generations to meet their own needs. This means that long-term stewardship of natural and

human resources is equally important to short-term economic gain. We’re making informed, sustainable choices now to afford future generations the same,” Kyla adds.

Rich echoes that sentiment.

“That is a large part of why we’re doing this, because when you come back and think about the farming part of things, you’ve got to look at the people,” he says. “If I can make it work, then someone else needs to make it work after me.”

Satsuma Farms now serves as a guidepost for many other farms under the California Giant umbrella. In fact, there are two additional strawberry operations currently working toward the Sustainably Grown Certification. In the blueberry fields, growers from South America to the Pacific Northwest have achieved Bee Better Certification™ from the Xerces Society, dedicating at least five percent of their land to promoting pollinator habitats.

With a map of California Giant’s sustainability journey laid out before me, I notice the white afternoon sun hanging low in the sky. Rich turns to me and leaves me with one final nugget to chew on: the “why” behind it all.

“You have to believe in what you are doing,” he tells me. “It’s going to take a

little bit more work, and some growers might hit one point better than others, but that is okay. It is essential that you know the ‘why’ behind what you are doing so you can pass the message on and teach others your process.”

At the end of the day, that is truly what California Giant Berry Farms aims to do. The three of us agree that while a farm might not ever be 100 percent sustainable, it is an ongoing goal to work toward. Success is what we can hold in our hands—improvement is forever on the horizon.

So, I share this rallying cry with you: Sustainability is the key to the future; all we must do is find the door, turn the knob, and walk through. 🍓

“It is essential that you know the ‘why’ behind what you are doing so you can pass the message on and teach others your process.”

Rich Uto



WTF DO I DO WITH RubyFrost® Apples ?

{ what the fork }



APPLE & WHITE CHEDDAR QUICHE

Recipe credited to Marley Goldin in partnership with Yes! Apples

INGREDIENTS

2 RubyFrost® Apples, sliced
 2 **tbsp** unsalted butter, melted
 2 **tsp** brown sugar
 2 **tsp** ground cinnamon

CRUST

1½ **cup** all-purpose flour
 ½ **cup** (1 **stick**) unsalted butter, cold
 1 **tbsp** brown sugar
 ¼ **tsp** salt
 ¼ **cup** ice water

FILLING

4 **large** eggs
 ½ **cup** milk
 8 **oz** white Cheddar cheese, shredded
 1 red onion, finely chopped
 2 **sprigs** fresh rosemary, stemmed and chopped (or sub 2 **tsp** dried crushed rosemary)
 ¼ **tsp** ground nutmeg

Prep Time: 15 min
Cook Time: 1 hr 15 min
Servings: 6–8 slices

DIRECTIONS

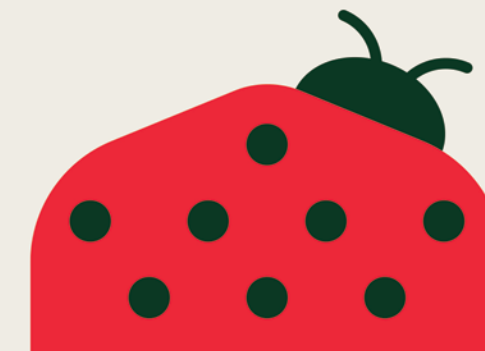
- 1 Preheat oven to 400° F.
- 2 To make crust, add flour, butter, brown sugar, and salt to a blender or food processor. With blender/food processor on high, slowly pour in ice water until dough forms.
- 3 Using clean hands, press dough into a 9" tart pan or metal pie dish. Bake for 15 minutes. Allow to cool slightly before filling. Set aside.
- 4 Reduce oven temperature to 325° F.
- 5 In a large bowl, whisk together eggs, milk, cheese, onion, rosemary, and nutmeg. Pour mixture into pre-baked crust.
- 6 In a small bowl, whisk together melted butter, brown sugar, and ground cinnamon until combined.
- 7 Arrange RubyFrost Apples on top of filling and lightly brush with butter mixture.
- 8 Bake for 60 minutes, or until top is browned and egg mixture is set.
- 9 Cool and serve at room temperature. Enjoy!

To learn more about RubyFrost, visit www.rubyfrostapple.com

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SNACKCHAT

By
Lilian
Diep

Mother's Day

Every day is worth celebrating, but mothers should know that May 8 is all about them. Whether consumers are honoring their moms, grandmas, aunts, friends, or a special someone in their lives, nothing means more than the thought put in—and the food. Peruse on as these produce friends detail how to make the day extra special...



Christina Ward

SENIOR DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL MARKETING, SUNKIST GROWERS

“Eating well is the number one reason shoppers are buying citrus. Whether you’re looking for brunch or homemade gift inspiration for shoppers, we’re bringing Pinterest-worthy ideas utilizing in-season Sunkist® California Star Ruby grapefruit, lemons, and Blood oranges. We also have in-store and online promotions for the ‘month of mom’ in May, including our collaboration with Naturipe Farms and T&G Global Envy™ apples for ‘Strawberry Shortcake: Berry in the Big City.’ Participating retailers will carry limited-edition Sunkist Blood orange packaging and square bins featuring Strawberry Shortcake and her best friend Orange Blossom. With this program, customers can have a lot of fun promoting produce in such a unique way.

As a company of family farmers, Sunkist Growers is all about celebrating moms; we wouldn’t be here without them. Happy Mother’s Day to all the moms out there!”



Blake Belknap

VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES, RAINIER FRUIT COMPANY

“Pink Lady® apples are an ideal apple to help usher in the warmer spring months and Mother’s Day! This year’s harvest saw beautiful coloring and deep, complex flavor. Pink Lady’s versatility and sweet-tart notes make it a retail powerhouse, and showcasing them on-shelf has proven to significantly lift volume and sales. Retailers should remember the power of this variety and its natural pairing with Mother’s Day festivities!”



Susanne Bertolas

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT REPRESENTATIVE, OPPY

“The love my kids passionately pour into every detail of Mother’s Day berry pancakes will resonate in my heart forever. Ocean Spray® never fails to deliver a memorable and delicious experience—and our fully stocked fridge proves it. From blueberry pancakes, strawberries with whipped cream, and bowls of blackberries, to easy-peel citrus, Ocean Spray has our morning brunch bursting with flavor! The always-sweet Happy Berry™ hydroponic strawberries will make Mom even happier on her special day knowing they are grown on tabletops to ease labor, water use, and chemical inputs. Let Ocean Spray bring a smile to your aisle, and treat all moms to an unforgettable day!”



Greg Sagan

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, SALES AND MARKETING, GIORGIO FRESH CO.

“At Giorgio Fresh Co., we strive to make every meal special. Giorgio believes this can be accomplished by working with our partners to understand our customers’ everyday and seasonal needs. For example, around Mother’s Day, consumers shop for ingredients to make a special gourmet meal. Placing our mushrooms, especially our popular stuffed mushrooms, near complementary ingredients such as steak and fresh vegetables inspires creativity in the kitchen to make consumers’ Mother’s Day meals extra special!”



Jan DeLyser

VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING, CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION

“When I was a young mother, I loved the times my girls made me breakfast in bed. What’s better for Mother’s Day brunch than a California omelet (with lots of produce and California avocados, of course) or a California Avocado Eggs Benedict? Mother’s Day is during peak California avocado season. It’s a perfect opportunity to extend the sales lift that comes with Cinco de Mayo (or Derby Day parties) days before. Suggesting Mother’s Day produce usage through retail displays, ads, and social outreach is smart, and the California Avocado Commission offers display bins and other promotion support to help.”



CarrieAnn Arias

VICE PRESIDENT OF MARKETING, NATURIFE FARMS

“Both my mom and grandmothers’ love of cooking had a huge influence on me and my passion for the food industry. My mom is famous for her salads; she has a berries and spinach recipe that is absolutely to die for. It’s basically the whole produce department in one bowl. Avocados, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, and pears (if they’re in season) come together in one salad bowl. She then prepares it on a spinach base with goat cheese, candied pecans, and a dressing made with maple syrup, apple cider vinegar, and Dijon mustard. The best part is how well it pairs with champagne—perfect for a Mother’s Day brunch your shoppers can enjoy at home!”





Patty Emmert

COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND MARKETING MANAGER, DUNCAN FAMILY FARMS®

“Food and flowers are the universal love language; combine them with fresh produce offerings, and shoppers will have many ways to make a plate beautiful to honor mothers on their day. At Duncan Family Farms®, we love to use our herbs to enhance a beautiful salad or make that drink extra special. Not only do fresh herbs add that nice touch, but each one has a meaning: basil stands for love, oregano for joy, rosemary for remembrance, and parsley for gratitude. Imagine a plate of healthy delicious foods not only prepared with love but one that conveys a significant meaning to honor Mom on her day!”



Kathleen Triou

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, FRESH SOLUTIONS NETWORK

“After the past two years, family spending time together around the table seems even more special. Mother’s Day is the perfect time to honor the heart of most families. If Mom is doing the cooking, chances are she is also a doctor, a teacher, a wife—and her time is more valuable than ever. With eye-catching merchandising and a variety of convenient products, Side Delights® potatoes make it easy for consumers to purchase and prepare. Encourage your shoppers to celebrate this Mother’s Day with a traditional breakfast in bed with easy-to-make recipes like our Quick Skillet Potatoes with Eggs or 30 Minute Potato Breakfast Bowl.”



Cindy Sherman

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING AND INNOVATION, FRIEDA'S

“When I think about the perfect Mother’s Day food, I think easy, loving, and delicious. My kids want to feel like they ‘made something,’ but sometimes that can lead to bigger messes to clean up. One way we get around this is with Frieda’s French-style Breakfast Crêpes. My husband can whip up a batch of scrambled eggs, and the kids can wrap them up in the crêpes and pile on toppings like ripe avocados, sliced apples, Brie cheese, and more. Retailers, consider setting up crêpe displays that encourage turnkey brunch options like this!”



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¹California Season (26-wks ending Aug '21) vs. non-California Season (26-wks ending Mar '21)
²2021 California Avocado Tracking Study Q9. If given a choice, which avocados would be your preference? Answers: Avocados grown in...
³Sales Velocity = Dollar Sales per Million ACV. California Season (26-wks ending Aug '21) vs. non-California Season (26-wks ending Mar '21)



Scan the QR Code for more information or visit CaliforniaAvocado.com/Retail

WTF

DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

del Cabo Shishito Peppers ?



Photography by @twoofakindcooks

Recipe credited to knead. bake. cook.

SHISHITO PEPPER PIZZA

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pint del Cabo Organic Shishito Peppers
- ½ pint del Cabo Organic Honey Bunch Tomatoes
- ⅓ oz Jacobs Farm Organic Basil, for garnish
- Pizza dough for 2 personal pizzas
- 4 tbsp olive oil, divided
- 8 oz can of sweet corn
- 2 cups Parmesan or Romano cheese
- 1 tbsp chili flakes, for garnish
- Salt and pepper to taste

Prep Time: 15 min
Cook Time: 30 min
Servings: 2 personal pizzas

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Preheat oven to 500° F.
- 2 Pre-heat a skillet on medium-high heat and add 2 tbsp of olive oil. Lower heat to medium and char Shishito peppers until they turn black and wrinkly.
- 3 Add corn to skillet and cook until it is slightly browned. Set aside.
- 4 Place pizza dough on tray and add 1 tbsp of oil to each. Spread 1 cup of Parmesan or Romano cheese on top.
- 5 Slice Honey Bunch Tomatoes and add to pizzas. Then add Shishito pepper and corn mixture to pizzas. Salt and pepper pizzas to taste.
- 6 Bake in oven for 10 minutes.
- 7 Garnish with fresh basil and chili flakes. Enjoy!



To learn more about Jacobs Farm del Cabo, visit www.jacobsfarmdelcabo.com



» The IF List « Tonya Antle

Co-Founder, Organic Produce Network

With Jenna Plasterer

It is said there are two types of people in the world, those who see the glass half full and those who see it half empty. However, I offer Tonya Antle as a third example, one who is simply grateful to drink from the glass. And drink in life she does! As a shining beacon of gratitude and wonder, Tonya takes us all on a journey through history, connection, and introspection with her *IF List*...

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

The Golden Age of ancient Greece, a time of remarkable cultural growth. Philosophy, the arts, the Olympic games, and, most importantly, democracy were all honed during this period.

» **IF you had to make the choice today, what would your last meal consist of?**

Roasted leg of lamb with lemon potatoes and a tossed green salad, served with a great Napa, California, cabernet and chocolate cake.

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

Broadcast journalism, interviewing vital influencers from around the globe.

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

My dad, Jim Hronis. We lost him way too early. I would have so much fun catching him up on everything.

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

A fishing pole, matches, and Andy Garcia!

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

Black slacks, a cashmere sweater, and flats.

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

Avocado.

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

Broaden my knowledge of history.

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

My wedding day to Rick Antle—THE BEST!

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

The Women's Fund of Monterey County, to help transform the lives of women and girls and make a difference in their communities.

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

The ability to heal.

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

Strive to find balance in your daily life. 🍷





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FORGING THE FUTURE

BY CHANDLER JAMES

Imagine the year **2050.**

You might picture a future where robots putter around in tractors, and compact cashierless stores occupy a space in every town. The modern shopper spends a much smaller fraction of their time floating through grocery aisles, but the time they do spend is filled with intent.

I foresee a world in which organic is not simply *one* choice amongst the sea of fresh produce options, but is considered *the* choice of many. Sustainability is often a foundational element to what is selected off of the shelf, meaning shoppers will turn to brands like Cal-Organic Farms, the organic arm of Grimmway Enterprises, for more reasons than one.

This is the future I imagine while listening to David Bright, Vice President of Marketing, recount the company's more than two decades spent excavating and elevating the organic sector.



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“Grimmway has been a leader in organics and growing organically since 1995,” David begins. “In 2001, we acquired Cal-Organic Farms, and for more than 20 years have fostered a remarkable track record of innovation in organic farming practices that is a model for the industry and exceeds USDA standards.”

Since 2000, Grimmway has increased its organically farmed acreage by more than 45,000 acres across seven states—an effort that continues with great enthusiasm to this day. By following market trends, Grimmway strategically determines which locations and items will be the most beneficial to expand production. Currently, the supplier operates out of growing regions in California, the Southeast, and the Northwest.

“Converting conventional to organic acreage is an ongoing priority across our growing regions. By 2025, we anticipate adding more than 2,000 acres to our organic farmland portfolio,” David says. “As demand grows, we continue to expand our production of organic carrots and vegetables by closely monitoring the marketplace to determine future plantings.”

While David begins painting a picture of dynamic demand patterns in the organic space, I can’t help but return to an image of hovering shopping carts overflowing with organic produce. Demand may have looked one way during the pandemic-ridden past couple of years, but what will it look like 20 or 30 years from now?

“We have noticed the evolution in how shoppers outside the traditional grocery channel purchase

fresh vegetables, and organics in particular,” David tells me. “The growing need for more accessible fresh produce accelerated during COVID as shoppers limited trips to the store and began to rely heavily on home delivery, curbside pickup, and mass and club channels.”

And where there is greater demand, there is sure to be greater supply chain pressure.

“Several online and brick-and-mortar retailers sought our assistance to expand their organic vegetable assortment, but lacked the means to merchandise and deliver organic vegetables, such as wet rack capacity or availability, sufficient produce staff, and protection for the products,” David continues. “Cal-Organic Farms developed a line of bagged organic vegetables that clearly identifies the items as organic, maintains freshness, and facilitates automated order selection for home delivery operations.”

If there is any truth to my vision of an organic-filled future, this demand David and I ponder will only continue to grow—and at an impressive rate. Such growth calls for further innovation, and Grimmway has the tools in-hand to craft the perfect concoction for organic success long into the future.

The first tool? Grimmway’s strategically located operations.

“Regional differentiation supports our mission to make fresh, organic vegetables physically and financially accessible to as many U.S. consumers as possible. Our network enables us to supply locally grown carrots and organic vegetables in season, supplemented by production from California during the rest of



Converting conventional to organic acreage is an ongoing priority across our growing regions. By 2025, we anticipate adding more than 2,000 ACRES to our organic farmland portfolio.



DAVID BRIGHT,
Vice President of Marketing,
Grimmway Farms

the year,” David explains. “This differentiation also reduces shipping time and expense for customers and helps us deliver fresh product to stores more quickly and efficiently.”

Grimmway’s Pasco, Washington, operation includes 4,500 acres of carrots and a fully automated, state-of-the-art packing plant that runs from July to November including an organic potato program in the late summer. This is an integral piece of Grimmway’s year-round organic potato program.

The grower’s Southeast growing operations—encompassing 3,500 acres of carrots and more than 1,100 acres of organic mixed vegetables and blueberries—are headquartered in Valdosta, Georgia, where the production, packing, and distribution for product grown in Florida and Georgia is managed. David reports that here, Grimmway has seen significant growth over the last three years, adding more than 10 organic crops to its portfolio and strengthening its presence as an organic farmer.

“Carrot quality and volume were excellent from our Southeast production during the winter season; we continue to fine tune our organic vegetable operation and look forward to another successful season this fall,” David adds. “Our production in the Southeast brought our East Coast customers significant savings on freight costs in a very tight transportation market compared to sourcing product from California. We began producing a large number of items in the Southeast, and after several seasons of production, we continue to narrow the core group of crops that are best suited to grow in these areas.”

Currently, Grimmway’s primary crops in the Southeast include carrots, cilantro, collard greens, dandelion greens, dill, green onions, green kale, Lacinato kale, red kale, and Italian and Curly parsley.

“We are committed to providing our customers with high-quality vegetables year-round and we have improved logistical efficiencies through our regional operations,” says David. “The diverse processing capabilities and productive land base in the Southeast provided a unique opportunity to grow our regional carrot program and expand our organic division.”

So, what inspired all of these strategic expansions? The answer, David tells me, is simple.

“The impetus for Grimmway’s expansion of production into additional regional production is the direct result in the demand growth for organic vegetables, marketing of regional produce, water availability, and a solution for the transportation and logistics issues the industry faces today,” he sums up.

If you can, revisit the scene you imagined at the beginning of this article. I paused for a moment on sustainability, which is one of the most important aspects of the story. Grimmway’s love song for the Earth is a long and heartfelt one, jiving to the tune of predictable weather patterns and accessible water resources.

“Grimmway has always monitored and tracked weather patterns and adjusted our farming practices and crop rotations accordingly. However, the real wake-up call came in 2000, when we began consistently



Green onions and kale are two items that play an important role in Grimmway Farms’ organic program



Since 2000, Grimmway Farms has increased its organically farmed acreage by more than 45,000 acres across seven states



Regional differentiation supports Grimmway Farms' mission to make fresh, organic vegetables physically and financially accessible to as many United States consumers as possible



Our production in the Southeast brought our East Coast customers

SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS ON FREIGHT COSTS IN A VERY TIGHT TRANSPORTATION MARKET COMPARED TO SOURCING PRODUCT FROM CALIFORNIA.

on freight costs in a very tight transportation market compared to sourcing product from California.



experiencing abnormally dry growing conditions at our ranches in California," David relays. "Subsequent droughts in 2011, 2014, and the worst we've seen yet in 2021, have taught us valuable lessons in effective and environmentally responsible water management and renewal."

The organic pioneer now farms in places that have access to both surface and groundwater to mitigate shortages.

"By having multiple growing areas, we have more flexibility in when and where we plant and are better equipped to manage localized drought conditions," David states. "We continue to relocate some crop production to less drought-prone areas, notably our 2020 expansion into the Northwest's Columbia River Basin, which moves summer production to a more water-secure area."

The sun seemingly never sets on Grimmway's expansion efforts. Aside from physical growth, the company

is building out its commitment to the earth, documenting its ambitious plans for the future in its *Inaugural Report on Environment, Sustainability, and Governance*.

"Grimmway continues to grow sustainably while staying true to our legacy and core values," David concludes. "Looking forward, we plan to expand our infrastructure, advance new research and technologies, and continue to invest in the people who help us supply the world with the healthiest food possible."

While the vision we conjured at the beginning of this article is likely not 100 percent accurate, technology is certainly not going anywhere, and I would argue that neither are organics—the sector is growing in size as I write.

So, what will be the state of organics in 2050? We may not know for sure, but just imagine what is possible. I know Grimmway Farms, for one, will be doing the same. 🌱



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VIDALIA[®] ONIONS

SNAPSHOT

By Anne Allen

Did the stars align to ensure Vidalia® onions would be in season just as North Americans look to their grills for cooking inspiration? We may never know the workings of the universe, but we do have the necessary details on this variety so that buyers might turn these insightful gems into retail predictions that rock spring and summer programs. With a flavor that's tough to rival, the layers behind this premium onion are worthy of a closer look...

APPROXIMATELY 10,000–10,500 ACRES of Vidalia onions are planted each year.

HAND-PICKED

Vidalia onions are generally transplanted and harvested by hand, a labor-intensive process from beginning to end.

32 REGISTERED GROWERS*

The number of growers registered to cultivate this regional specialty.

5.8 MILLION (40 LB BOXES)

The equivalent shipped in 2021.

SWEET, MILD FLAVOR

The signature taste of Vidalia onions was originally a fluke that was stumbled upon by the farmers who planted them during the Great Depression.

STATE VEGETABLE

In 1990, the Vidalia onion was named Georgia's official state vegetable.

WHITE HOUSE GIFTS

Former President Jimmy Carter, a Georgia native, used to give them to visiting dignitaries.

*Registered with the Georgia Department of Agriculture



SMALL	MEDIUM	LARGE
1-2.25 Inches	2-3.25 Inches	3+ Inches

*Additional sizes include Colossal (3.75 inches and up)



VIDALIA ONION FARM GATE VALUE*

COUNTY	ACRES	VALUE
Tattnall	6,427	\$90,382,901
Toombs	3,076	\$43,257,788
Evans	138	\$1,940,694
Wayne	42	\$590,646
Candler	353	\$4,964,239
Montgomery	629	\$8,845,627
Laurens	2	\$28,126
TOTALS	10,667	\$150,010,021

*Farm Gate Value represents the dollar amount for the industry when Vidalia onions leave the farm

DID YOU KNOW?

1 MORE THAN AN ONION

Once revered for its healing properties, today the "sweetest onion in the world" and Georgia's state vegetable is more than just a cornerstone of southern barbecue—the Vidalia onion is a way of life.

2 GROWING REGIONS

Vidalia onions can only be grown within a 20-county growing region in South Georgia: Appling, Bacon, Bulloch, Candler, Dodge, Emanuel, Evans, Jeff Davis, Jenkins, Laurens, Long, Montgomery, Pierce, Screven, Tattnall, Telfair, Toombs, Treutlen, Wayne, and Wheeler.

3 SO SPECIAL

This 20-county growing region represents a 6,000-square-mile area, in a state occupying 60,000 square miles, in a country composed of 3.8 million square miles.

4 CITY OF VIDALIA, GEORGIA

Vidalia onions are named for the city in Toombs County where they were first sold. But, they can in fact be grown outside of the city limits.

5 ONIONS GALORE

The largest volumes of Vidalia onions are grown in Toombs and Tattnall Counties.

6 TRANSPLANTING

Many people are unaware, but transplanting is a part of the Vidalia onion growing process. This is done to protect the Vidalia onion plants.

7 NEW FIELDS

The plants are moved from seed beds into new fields once they've grown to about the width of a pencil.





We're Growing Sweet Onions

And Future Farmers.

Join us to support FFA students. G&R Farms and retail partners have helped raise over \$238,000 for FFA scholarships & grants.

Supporting Partners



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growingamericafarmers.com



Sweet & Crisp

With notes of honey, caramel, and molasses!

SugarBee® Apples were developed by Honeybees! One sunny day, an adventurous little bee was buzzing around some apple orchards collecting pollen when she landed on some Honeycrisp flowers! The pollen she collected from the other apple trees mixed with the Honeycrisp flowers, nature did it's thing, and the SugarBee apple was born!

Get the Buzz



SugarBee® Apple



@SugarBeeApple



WOMEN *in Agriculture*

Chelan Fresh is proud to salute a few of the many women leaders who contribute daily to their family-owned and operated farms in Washington and around the world!



Kaitlyn: 3rd generation grower + SugarBee® Brand Ambassador



Mallory: Owner of Smallwood Farms, Fruit Stand and Kitchen



Reba: 5th generation grower + Sales Team Lead

THE LANGUAGE OF

TECH

By Anne Allen

Those of us lucky enough to sprout a career from long-held interests know how fortunate we are. To make an example of myself, I never thought an editing gig for *The Snack Magazine* would become my career turning point. But what anchored me in this decision was my love for writing and storytelling—I only needed a vehicle through which to direct that passion.

It's a running theme in this business: taking an advantageous skillset and adapting it to a new field. Although some of us define our journey to fresh produce in different ways, the pull of the business resonates equally.

When Tony Zuccato made the jump to Produce Pro Software in

2004, he had already amassed a wealth of experience in software development. His strong interest in computers and programming languages is a core part of his personality. Tony sees technology in a different light than most; he understands that the language of technology is actually the language of people. This ability to translate and interpret is a skill many try to construct but can never fully execute. We are an industry of people who use advancements, not an industry of advanced technology that comes second to people.

Throughout his career, Tony has exemplified this philosophy and put his strengths to the test by leveling up with every position. And his transition to Produce Pro Software was no different.

“Produce Pro Software was looking for someone to bring more structure and stability to the company to allow the company to grow. At the time, the company had 16 staff members—we’ve since grown to a 120-strong operation,” says the Vice President of Operations, who was originally recruited to run the Professional Services group. “The challenge to help the company grow even more was very exciting for me, and I could see that passion reflected in the management team.”

In 2004, Produce Pro Software had already been in business for 14 years. Throughout that run, the team retained nearly all of their original customers—a fact that impressed Tony immediately.

“It was obvious that management was building long-lasting relationships with customers and was committed to their success. Over the past 17 years since I’ve been in my position, we’ve definitely grown, and it has been quite a ride,” Tony shares.

Building relationships is a key tenet of Tony’s values, one you’ll see reflected throughout his career. Ever since graduating from Bradley University in 1992, Tony knew that interpersonal connection was essential to his success.

It would, after all, ultimately lead him to Produce Pro Software.

Before the company was on his radar, though, he was busy building his career in software development. His first full-time gig was with Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC), where he learned about both programming and consulting. CSC introduced him to large corporate entities such as Motorola and CVS Pharmacy®.

“This exposure to working with larger companies gave me a big-picture perspective of IT, both the good and the bad. Mostly, I learned that personal relationships are still the best way to connect with people,” he notes before diving deeper into the moves that shaped the path to Produce Pro Software.

A position with a small boutique software company, Advanced Information Solutions (AIS),

solidified his interest in growing smaller companies and, as he explains to me, allowed him the chance to make a difference. Working one-on-one with customers to understand what they needed became a core part of his business style—one reflected to this day. It was there that Tony took a lead role in mentoring and growing team members to better the success of the company.

As AIS eventually morphed into a new company called Xpedior, Tony moved into a project and development team management role, where he enjoyed being responsible for the delivery of the solution to the customer while still mentoring and leading others. From there, he moved to Click Commerce as a Managing Consultant, a role that allowed him greater visibility conducting steering committee meetings with senior management.

“In 2003, I was selected to run the Professional Services Division for Click. This opportunity to lead a group of 50 staff members is something I really enjoyed. I was able to bring standard practices and best-of-breed solutions to our group,” Tony remarks of the experience. “I enormously enjoyed the challenge of leading a Services group. I ultimately didn’t see Click as a viable long-term option, so I set out to look for a new opportunity. While I had enjoyed my time in software development



TONY ZUCCATO,
Vice President of Operations,
Produce Pro Software

and project management, I really wanted to find something I could build and grow.”

And here we circle back to Produce Pro Software.

“The biggest turning point in my career was my decision to join Produce Pro Software. Similar to when I left CSC, the folks at Click Commerce could not understand why I would want to leave to join a smaller company like Produce Pro Software. The challenge presented to me was something I was instantly attracted to,” Tony emphasizes. “I kept thinking to myself how Produce Pro Software used technology to solve business problems and create competitive advantages in a specific vertical market like produce would allow me the opportunity to grow. The biggest key, though, was the ability to connect with customers and ensure we are meeting their needs to allow them to have success.”

When Tony first joined the company, he figured Produce Pro Software had done everything there was to do with software for the produce industry.

“With our industry constantly changing, I may have been a little shortsighted in that assumption!” he laughs, commenting on how new business requirements and industry demands always arise. “New technologies are constantly emerging that allow us

“This exposure to working with larger companies gave me a big-picture perspective of IT, both the good and the bad. Mostly, I learned that personal relationships are still the best way to connect with people.”



A core tenet of doing business the Tony Zuccato (right) way—and by extension, the Produce Pro Software way—is interacting with customers in a way that makes them feel like family. Dave Donat (left) and Marc Hatfield (middle) couldn’t agree more

to deliver exciting new solutions for our customers. Because of our business model, we build our software from scratch, providing flexible and tailored solutions for each individual customer. No two customers are exactly alike.”

Celebrating 32 years in business, Produce Pro Software prides itself on being a business partner that understands the tumultuous and challenging world of fresh produce—and how to react swiftly to any challenges.

“Our customers can rest assured knowing our software is the last they will ever need,” Tony affirms. “Our software is an all-in-one enterprise resource planning system (ERP), so our customers just need to focus on one system. The system is also designed to operate for quick ease of use. Developing efficiency and accurate inventory is key, and our customers trust us and our software to run their operations.”

Produce Pro Software provides true visibility into all aspects of an operation while emphasizing this ease of use, so everything is at a user’s fingertips. Customers

can quickly navigate through interactive screens such as: Recall Entry, Forecasting, Sales Board, Work Orders, Dispatch Window, Load Arrival, and Lot Settlement.

Always at hand is Produce Pro Software’s incredible team, which Tony speaks of with great pride.

“It is all about finding and grooming good people to deliver great solutions for our customers. I love the challenge of finding people that will be ‘in demand’ because they do such a great job. Whenever we add new customers or new staff members, we welcome them by telling them, ‘Welcome to the Produce Pro Software family,’” Tony says, elaborating on how the values of the operation instantly aligned with his. “In so many ways, that really sums up the key values of Produce Pro Software.”


Tony explains that, without its customers and staff, there wouldn’t be a company to run. The loyalty of both coincide for a fruitful balance, ensuring both sides of the transaction go off without a hitch.

“Thanks to the loyalty of our customers and the excellent work

of our staff, we’ve really turned into quite a large family! And it is a family I am so proud of, and so happy to have had a hand in developing over the past 17 years,” Tony imparts.

As he closes our conversation, it’s clear Tony feels blessed to have landed at Produce Pro Software.

“Needless to say, I’m excited for the future and the ways we can help our customers drive results with increased organizational efficiency, minimized waste and loss, reduced operating costs, and real-time data. We know we will be there for our customers and do whatever it takes to make them succeed. The strong, long-term partnerships we’ve established and continue to foster mean everything to us,” he concludes.

Tony’s love for programming and computers may have taken him somewhere he didn’t expect, but I don’t think he would change a thing. Searching for a smaller gig paid off big, allowing him to map out growth opportunities for not only himself, but for an industry he’s come to love. 

Sunkist® Navel Oranges
and California Star
Ruby Grapefruits ?

WTF DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }



CITRUS PASTA SALAD

Recipe credited to Stephanie Grasso, RD

INGREDIENTS

- 2 Sunkist® Navel Oranges, peeled and segmented
- 2 Sunkist California Star Ruby Grapefruits, peeled and segmented
- 1 lb orzo pasta
- ½ cup Feta cheese
- 1 bunch mint leaves

VINAIGRETTE INGREDIENTS

- 2 Sunkist lemons, zested
- ½ cup Sunkist lemon juice, fresh-squeezed
- ⅓ cup olive oil
- 1 pinch of salt

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

DIRECTIONS

- 1 In a small bowl, whisk together olive oil, lemon zest, lemon juice, and salt.
- 2 Prepare orzo pasta according to package directions. Drain thoroughly and set aside.
- 3 Combine orzo, oranges, grapefruit, Feta cheese, and mint leaves.
- 4 Stir in vinaigrette.
- 5 Refrigerate for 10 minutes, then serve. Enjoy!

To learn more about Sunkist Growers, visit sunkist.com/recipes



► MY FAVORITE THINGS ◀

BRIANA GIAMPAOLI

Marketing and Product Innovation, Live Oak Farms

With **Lilian Diep**

Whether she's on skis or it's après-ski, Briana Giampaoli is a down-to-earth soul who's always up for some fun. Her adventurous spirit drives her to take on challenges, but her deep-rooted lifestyle gives her the strength to traverse the toughest climes. At the heart of it all, family is what keeps her centered, and her outlook is what spurred us to ask for her favorite things...

1 I have a newfound appreciation as an adult.

2 My 3-year-old Goldendoodle goes everywhere with me—definitely a best friend!

3 They're everything to me; I have a large family and definitely am lucky.

4 I love taking a moment to watch the sun go down.

5 My goddaughter was born the day after my birthday and has my heart.

6 As a fourth-generation farmer, I love this state and believe it's important to keep farming alive.

7 Spending time with my family and friends on California's Lake Don Pedro in the summer is the best.

8 The season's window is so short! I look forward to it every year.

9 I'm a huge 49ers and San Francisco Giants fan, and I love going to live games during their seasons!



- 1 Skiing
- 2 Olive
- 3 Family
- 4 Sunsets
- 5 Margaret
- 6 Advocating for California Agriculture
- 7 Houseboating
- 8 California Cherries
- 9 Sports

Easter

SnackChat

By Peggy Packer

The most colorful holiday of the year is inarguably incomplete without the fresh and vibrant varieties that decorate the produce department. As shoppers start off on the search for pastel-hued Easter eggs, hop on new opportunities for seasonal sales with these beloved offerings. Hear from several category connoisseurs themselves as they reveal how to bring the thrill of the Easter egg hunt to the aisles this spring...



Dave Hewitt,

Vice President of Sales, 4Earth Farms™

"It wouldn't be Easter without a family meal featuring side dishes of green beans and Brussels sprouts. We encourage retailers to build large, eye-catching displays of organic and conventional green beans and Brussels sprouts to provide their customers with value and convenience. 4Earth Farms™ offers washed and trimmed green beans in a microwaveable bag or random weight beans in a grab-and-go tote, as well as Brussels sprouts in an earth-friendly mesh bag or whole, halved, or shredded in a microwaveable bag. We will have excellent quality and supply to match the expected high demand over the holiday window."

Prescott Leyba,

Sales Account Manager, Bako Sweet®

"Who doesn't look forward to a healthy but tasty (emphasis on the latter) meal after a day filled with egg hunts and way too much candy? Sweet potatoes are a long-tenured fixture at the Easter dinner table, and our wide assortment of high-quality and convenient, value-added sweet potatoes give shoppers the flexibility they need when planning out their menus. In what is sure to be a busy shopping season, secondary displays like our high-graphic Bako Sweet® display bin, and cross promotions—like cinnamon and marshmallows near the sweet potatoes, for example—will make the experience as easy as possible for the shopper."



Anthony Innocenti,

Managing Partner, LIV Organic™ Produce

"Easter is always a great time at LIV Organic™. With the spring months comes the peak season to promote our core items, which consist of organic sweet potatoes, organic colored potatoes, and organic citrus. Make the most of our varieties by expanding those displays and placing all of these items front and center."

William Goldfield,

Director of Corporate Communications, Dole Food Company

"Spring is a great time to promote pineapple. Shoppers are looking to move away from the cold months with a feeling to switch their eating to something that conveys the change to warmer weather and new freshness. Tropicals, like pineapple, fit that need. On top of that, pineapples are an excellent source of vitamin C. Communicating the nutritional benefits of pineapple as a source for boosting vitamin C levels to help immunity is a great marketing message for retailers as people gather for Easter."



Andrew Amodeo,

Sales, Catania Worldwide

"This Easter holiday, we should all take a moment to appreciate all that we have. Working in the produce industry has been a challenging road to steer in the past few years. We would like to thank every sector of the supply chain that keeps food on our tables. Here at Catania, we love to promote our fresh figs during the Easter holiday. They are a great addition to salads, enjoyed with crackers and cheese, dipped in chocolate (perfect for Easter!), or simply eaten whole. Our Black Mission variety from Mexico is available this Easter season across North America!"



Mike Stephan,

Sales Director, Monterey Mushrooms

"Mushrooms are so versatile and make an ordinary dish extraordinary! When planning for Easter, don't forget mushrooms are perfect for brunch. Whole Baby Bella mushrooms are a culinary delight when added to hash browns, omelets, quiches, and breakfast potatoes. Retailers that merchandise and display our 16 oz or 24 oz of Whites and Baby Bellas will capitalize on an impulse purchase and expandable consumption. Whenever family or friends gather for a holiday meal, mushrooms make the perfect partner."

John Alderman,

Eastern Sales Manager, Duda Farm Fresh Foods

"This year, the Easter holiday falls in mid-April, making it the perfect time to get outside and fire up the grill for some corn on the cob! Though traditionally considered a summer dish, corn is extremely versatile for the Easter holiday and can be used in recipes like corn casserole, creamed corn au gratin—if you're trying to be fancy—and more. Retailers can entice shoppers with in-store merchandising that calls out different recipes where corn can add some sweetness, like salads and salsa. Even better, Dandy's tray pack sweet corn is pre-shucked, pre-washed, and ready to cook for an added convenience. There are so many ways shoppers can utilize corn this Easter holiday!"



Danielle Loustalot,

Marketing Manager, Jacobs Farm del Cabo

"Organic Cherry tomatoes and fresh, snappy green peas are springtime staples for Easter appetizer trays and garden salads. Fresh herbs like chives, sage, and cilantro complement potato salads and every roasted vegetable dish around. From Palm Sunday through Easter Sunday, families in Latin America celebrate Holy Week, where tomatoes and fresh parsley complete traditional recipes like classic Spanish Easter stew, picadillo, and more. In the spirit of Earth Day just a few days later on April 22, make sure to carry your favorite organic products and eco-friendly packs from local and sustainable growers!"



Carey Jimenez,

Sales Manager, Atlas Produce

"During Passover, Easter, and Ramadan, demand for Fresh Energy™ dates will be at a yearly high, as dates play a vital cultural role during these holidays. Atlas Produce encourages retailers to have multiple displays throughout the store to help shoppers find dates fast. Cross-merchandising secondary displays in baking, wine, and cheese aisles will add complementary sales as you maximize visibility with our date line. Dates always bring something special to the table for your customers' celebrations as a healthy snack, hors d'oeuvres, or an addition to any menu."



WTF DO I DO WITH 4Earth Farms™ Organic Vegetables ?

{ what the fork }



VEGETABLE STIR-FRY

INGREDIENTS

- 1 4Earth Farms™ Organic Yellow Bell Pepper, sliced
- 1 4Earth Farms Organic Red Bell Pepper, sliced
- 1 4Earth Farms Organic Green Bell Pepper, sliced
- 1 cup 4Earth Farms Organic Sugar Snap Peas
- 1 cup 4Earth Farms Organic Snow Peas
- 1 4Earth Farms Organic Cauliflower Florets
- 1 cup 4Earth Farms Organic Broccoli Florets
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 1/2 cup carrots, sliced
- 1 1/2 cup Cremini mushrooms, sliced
- Sesame seeds as garnish, optional

SAUCE

- 4 4Earth Farms Organic Garlic Cloves, minced
- 3 tbsp soy sauce
- 1/4 cup honey
- 1 tsp sesame or grapeseed oil
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- 1 tbsp corn starch

Prep Time: 10 min
Cook Time: 8 min
Servings: 6

DIRECTIONS

- 1 In a wok or large skillet set over medium heat, add extra virgin olive oil.
- 2 Add bell peppers, peas, florets, carrots, and mushrooms. Sauté until veggies are almost tender.
- 3 In a small bowl, whisk together soy sauce, honey, garlic, oil, chicken broth, and corn starch. Pour over veggies and continue cooking until the sauce has thickened.
- 4 Plate and garnish with sesame seeds if desired. Enjoy!

To learn more about 4Earth Farms™, visit www.4earthfarms.com





APRIL MVP



HIGHLIGHTS

Dan Canales

Senior Vice President of Sales, Marketing, and Processing, Ippolito International

TIME AT IPPOLITO INTERNATIONAL: 6 Years

By Jordan Okumura

Success in sales and marketing takes on a mastery at some level in the game, an experience aimed for by many but achieved by few. This industry leader is one of the select bunch who not only thrives in his produce career, but sees produce as life. Here, in his own words, Dan Canales shares some of the insight and knowledge that has skyrocketed his journey, and, metaphorically, made his career cosmic...

WHAT YOUR ROLE IS REALLY LIKE...

“When it comes to what I do today, it feels like I’m strapped to a rocket ship with one heck of a ‘ground control’ to make sure we have a successful mission every day. We all work in unison, and I’m only as good as those I’m surrounded by. I’ve been fortunate to have a good team to lead, but none of this would be possible without our other department managers and certainly the support and vision of the Owners, Ron Mondo and Joel Ippolito.”

SURPRISE US

“One thing I love to do outside of my passion for produce is repurposing old wood—making something as simple as a potting bench or small tables. I’m no craftsman by any means, but taking something that has been discarded and making something new out of it provides a great mental getaway and certain satisfaction for me.”

HOW SALES BECOMES A LIFE LESSON

“Sales has taught me how you need to be adaptable. Part of that is being able to handle the many different facets of what my job entails and also to control my emotions when things get real dicey. This is not just a great way to go about work, but life as well.”

A MENTOR MENTORED: THOSE WHO HAVE SHAPED DAN

“I have been so lucky to have had amazing people in my life to guide my path. Here are just a handful.

Steve Griffin - An ex-Produce Manager at Alpha Beta over 35 years ago, Steve taught me so much—not just in produce, but in leadership and follow-through.

Stephen Griffin - The former President of Misionero was a true leader and mentor in every sense of the word. You never wanted to let him down because of how well he treated and respected you and each person in the company. He got back what he put into each relationship in spades.

Joe Sandoval - My uncle and member of the Maggio Company, Joe put me to work in the carrot fields and sheds when I was 11 years old. He taught me how to work hard and be accountable for my decisions.

Mark Shaw - This Markon vet has a level of integrity that is hard to match. Although we have had some spirited discussions over the years as ‘buyer and seller,’ he always challenged me to be better as he wasn’t giving up those POs easily!

There have been many more teachers in my life that also taught me what not to do or who to be, and I have to thank them as well.”

VALUES AT THE CORE

- INTEGRITY
-
- HONESTY
-
- PERSONAL ACCOUNTABILITY
-
- LOVE OF FAMILY AND CLOSE FRIENDS

WORDS OF WISDOM FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

“Never lose the personal connection in this business. Without that, it’s all just POs and sales orders.”



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THE ROOTS OF RESOLVE

BY JENNA PLASTERER

Carlos Visconti,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
USA AND CANADA,
RED SUN FARMS™

“When I joined Red Sun Farms, I wanted to bring with me the best concepts and operational practices from outside industries, which in turn challenged our methodology and ways of working.”

CARLOS VISCONTI,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, USA AND
CANADA, RED SUN FARMS™



The air is frigid, wind rushes past me, and a bright yellow Sony Walkman cassette player is firmly gripped in my little hand, delivering the sweet sound of the Spice Girls to my ears. I’m bombing down the mountain on my skis, and life couldn’t be better.

In that childhood moment, if you asked me what I was going to be when I grew up, I would have looked you straight in the eye and, with as much conviction as a six-year-old could muster, said a professional skier. Or Sporty Spice.

Considering I am sitting here now typing this article and am not decked out in fashionably baggy track pants with platform sneakers or having brought home gold for Team USA at the 2022 Winter Olympics, I think we can tell things did not pan out how I thought they would. But, they did turn out for the best. I was not cut out for the life of an international pop star, and skiing every day of my life would have taken some of the excitement out of the experience.

This got me thinking about the leader at the center of this article, Carlos Visconti, Chief Executive Officer of Red Sun Farms™, USA and Canada. Growing up under the Mexican sun, would his six-year-old self imagine that someday he would be heading a company like Red Sun Farms?

While I can’t go back in time and ask Carlos the child, I do the next best thing; I sit down with Carlos the man—a leader with years of experience under his belt, a plethora of memories to sort through, and a passionate mind fine-tuned for growth.

From the start of our discussion, it becomes clear that Carlos is well-traveled, with a life—and career—spanning several countries. Born and raised in Mexico, his focus was not always set on the produce industry, instead, he was a graduate of Industrial Systems Engineering and went on to earn an MBA from Tecnológico de Monterrey. Additionally, he acquired certifications in upper management and quality control.

“When I joined Red Sun Farms, I wanted to bring with me the best concepts and operational practices from outside industries, which in turn challenged our methodology and ways of working,” Carlos enlightens me. “With the support of a dedicated team, these outside perspectives have helped the business evolve into the company we know today as Red Sun Farms.”

This knowledge he speaks of comes not only from his education, but from working in the automotive industry. Before coming to Red Sun Farms 11 years ago, he was using his skills at Hella, an international German automotive parts supplier. Showcasing his natural leadership ability and penchant for growth, Carlos served in a variety of roles including Vice President of Operations at Hella Mexico, where he oversaw the manufacturing operations while directing more than 1,200 employees. He then climbed the ladder to the position of Vice President of Product Development in the company’s North American region.

Following his foray into the automotive world, he fatefully decided to enter the produce scene, leading Carlos to where he stands today.

He made the pivotal move to Red Sun Farms back in 2010, coming on board as Chief Operating Officer. Bringing valuable expertise to the table, he was promoted to CEO of U.S. and Canadian Operations in 2018. In this current role, Carlos is wielding his natural forward-thinking ability to enact continuous improvements—a key part of the company’s mission statement.

Day after day, backed by this optimistic attitude and forethought, Carlos is helping to craft the company’s long-term evolution strategy that will launch Red Sun Farms into the stratosphere of consumer brand loyalty.

“As CEO, I am consistently working to build trust for our brand, promoting the high-quality produce we grow that continuously exceeds customer expectations,” he explains. “All of this is done while my team and I strive to deliver innovation and operational excellence.”

And deliver he has. Throughout his time with Red Sun, Carlos has played an intricate role in streamlining operations for all North American distribution centers, centralizing the company’s logistics, and executing the opening of new facilities, including the company’s largest distribution center in Pharr, Texas, and a high-tech greenhouse in Dublin, Virginia.

However, as Carlos explains, none of this would have been possible without the group working alongside him, all of which have made a crucial impact on his career. As he tells me, each of his crew members were strategically chosen based on their unique backgrounds, experiences, passion to deliver, and overall commitment to the company’s culture. The result is a force to be reckoned with, working day after day to defy expectations and deliver high-quality produce to the people.

“I am most proud of my team,” Carlos imparts when I ask him about his most fulfilling achievement while in the industry. “I

have surrounded myself with the best possible colleagues to achieve a professional corporate environment that is focused on exceeding expectations. Our world-class team is defining the standards in customer service, quality produce, and year-round availability.”

But it’s more than just his team that is special. To the CEO of Red Sun Farms, it’s all of the individuals across fresh produce that make the industry such a unique environment to work in.

Just like Carlos, the people in fresh produce have a mind for not just meeting expectations, but exceeding them. After more than 11 years, that is what continues to impress the leader, feeding his drive and passion for expanding the boundaries of what is possible.

“There is a connection and interaction amongst produce teams, with retailers and within the growing community,” he beams. “Some of the most unique qualities pertaining to the produce industry stem from its close, tight-knit community and strong relationships. There is a personal connection between growers and retailers—that is what we are building at Red Sun Farms as we develop our team to ensure we deliver customer-centric service. We strive to build supportive relationships within our team, with our customers, and with our suppliers. This is achieved by understanding the needs and balancing our customers’ requirements through investment in acreage, technology, and people.”

Although successful in continuously meeting these goals, challenges did exist along the way. However, Carlos takes each of these hurdles in stride, using each instance as fuel to power Red Sun forward. In essence, he sees these obstacles as lessons.

“The produce industry is unique in that well-thought-out business plans are often

“As CEO, I am consistently working to build trust for our brand, promoting the high-quality produce we grow that continuously exceeds customer expectations.”



Middle: For Carlos Visconti, the people on his team, including Leona Neill (left) and Nicole Hebert (right), help to drive his success and desire to bring the best quality products to market

challenged by outside forces such as climate, crop yields, sales demands, regulations, etcetera,” Carlos explains. “This environment demands a business to be agile and flexible in order to adapt to its volatile nature. These distinct challenges to our industry create new learning opportunities each day.”

Hearing Carlos’ passion for evolution through adversity, I begin to wonder what he does to decompress at the end of the day. How does he sit back and soak in the fruits of his labor and appreciate everything that he has created? While his career is marked by a fervent dedication to advancement, at home, he is Dad and Husband.

“I love to spend time with my family—my beautiful wife, Susy, and our two sons and daughter,” he conveys. “Together, we enjoy backyard barbecues. I like to consider myself a BBQ master, always in search of my next epicurean challenge. When we aren’t enjoying our time in our backyard, we love to travel together to experience new cultures and adventures.”

Speaking about his family and their explorations, Carlos radiates happiness. While for some, downtime could slow success, for him it seems to only strengthen his resolve, fueling his spirit as he guides Red Sun Farms into the future.

This balance Carlos maintains allows him to see the long game for both family and company. And for the company, his vision is nothing short of ambitious, because growth is always top of mind for this leader.

“I am committed to expanding the Red Sun Farms operations within Canada, the U.S., and Mexico. Equally important, I am passionate about developing the next Red Sun Farms generation by supporting the progression of the business and investing in our people and culture,” he tells me. “Ultimately, we will create a sustainable business model that will continue to offer the best produce in the industry.”

Wrapping up my conversation with Carlos, I reflect on all that I have learned from him as he shared a piece of his story, thinking back to my original ponderance about childhood. Although it is hard to picture him as a kid at first, clearing away the years of business acumen, travel, and life experience from his personality; once I do, I can see the link that still exists between the man and child—tenacity.

While the type of knowledge one like Carlos has garnered could overpower the imagination we hold so dear as children, the one that tells us we can be the next Sporty Spice or professional skier, he has simply fine-tuned it to lead his journey and Red Sun Farms into their next phase of evolution.

Whether it be my adult perception or my inner child coming through, I can’t help but be impressed, and I can’t shake the feeling that if I could go back in time and tell young Carlos this story, he would be too. 🍅

WTF DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

Progressive Produce
Brussels Sprouts, Baby
Potatoes, and Onions ?



GRILLED BRUSSELS SPROUTS, POTATO, AND BEEF SKEWERS

INGREDIENTS

1 lb Progressive Farms Veggie Bites Brussels Sprouts, trimmed, halved if large
1 Pacific Gold Onion
1.5 lb Nature's Bounty Organic Baby Potatoes, cleaned, halved if large
1.5 lb beef sirloin, cut into **1½"** pieces
 Olive oil
 Garlic powder
 Salt and black pepper

Prep Time: 20 min

Cook Time: 10 min

Servings: 8

DIRECTIONS

- Place baby potatoes in a medium saucepan with enough water to cover. Bring to a boil, then simmer until potatoes can be pierced with a knife but are not completely tender, about 8–10 minutes. Drain well and set aside in a medium bowl.
- Once the potatoes are cooled, using the same bowl, coat with olive oil and season with garlic powder, salt, and pepper. Stir to mix. Repeat the process with the onion and Brussels sprouts in their own separate medium bowls.
- Using a zip-top plastic bag, combine the beef sirloin with olive oil and season with garlic powder, salt, and pepper. Seal the plastic bag and shake to mix.
- Preheat grill or a grill pan to medium heat.
- Using metal skewers, thread the meat, potato, sprouts, and onion in an alternating pattern. Do not push too tightly together.
- Place skewers on the grill, turning once halfway through and cook until desired doneness, approximately 8–10 minutes.
- Serve with your favorite evening cocktail, like an Irish Mule, and enjoy!

Note: To spice things up, consider adding different spices like cayenne pepper, red pepper flakes, or a Cajun seasoning. For something more subtle, consider using an herb blend like Italian seasoning.

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



A Closer Look at Pure Flavor® Solara™ Mini Melons

By Chandler James

Spring is all about new beginnings. Consumers in the Northern Hemisphere flock to the outdoors to soak up the first signs of sun, usually with their favorite fresh fruit in hand. A new palm-sized offering will be the star of many picnics this month and beyond, as Pure Flavor® is launching its new Solara™ Mini Melons.

Beige and netted on the outside and emerald green on the inside, these new single-serving melons are truly one of a kind. The name itself—translated to “of the sun” in Latin—is a nod to the unique greenhouse growing practices Pure Flavor implements to bring forth a soft, sweet, and juicy melon.

Over five years of research went into this product launch, bringing the fanfare of specialty fruit to a protected environment in order to ensure consistency of yield and availability. The most astonishing aspect of these new melons, though, is their

UP CLOSE

miniature size, weighing in around 500 g each—roughly equivalent to the size of a grapefruit.

Gone are the days of fridges full of leftover melon that eventually makes its way to the garbage. Shoppers want to cut down food waste, and I cannot think of a more convenient way to do so than by reaching for a single-serving option that still satisfies those spring and summertime cravings.

Your ticket to landing the Solara Mini Melons in shopping carts is to showcase their unique size and diverse usability. Cross-merchandise Solara with other fruits, yogurts, or packaged salads, and prominently display images of the melons in use.

Put shopper dollars directly into the palm of your hand with the addition of Solara Mini Melons to your fresh fruit set. 🍉





THAT'S
PEELZ.

California
MANDARINS



STRAWBERRIES

FRAISES • FRESAS

SNAPSHOT

By Lilian Diep

Red, juicy, and oh, so delicious, the strawberry holds great power year-round. As the fruit is versatile in both savory and sweet applications, its influence holds no bounds on social media or in recipes. Trends show the red fruit used in every way possible, and these statistics are just a springboard to meeting your sales goal...

Strawberry farms produce the

4TH

most valuable crop in California

About

50%

of the California strawberry crop is harvested after July 1

Strawberry farms use less than

1%

of California's farmland

California grows more organic strawberries than all other

49

states combined



Strawberries grow along the California coast on about **35,000 acres**. During peak season, strawberries are harvested in the state's Salinas, Watsonville, Santa Maria, Oxnard, and Orange County regions

During the cooler months, strawberries continue to be harvested in Santa Maria and Oxnard, making California strawberries **available year-round**



STRAWBERRIES are the year-round anchor of the berry category in U.S. supermarkets

Purchase intent for strawberries is at an all-time high, with

9 OUT OF 10

consumers indicating they definitely/probably would buy fresh strawberries



Strawberries account for 59.5% of berry pound sales

\$3.7 billion of annual berry category sales are from strawberries

Strawberry household penetration reached 70.9% in 2021

Fresh strawberries build bigger market baskets; **basket value doubles with strawberries**

\$48.20

Total market basket **without** strawberries

\$96.60+

Total market basket **with** strawberries



Source: California Strawberry Commission data as of March 2022 and Fusion / IRI 52-Weeks Ending October 3, 2021

Libations

FOR ALL OCCASIONS:

SMOOTH OPERATOR

By Jordan Okumura

There are many different types of edible heat, and even more ways to utilize their pleasure—and their pain. Some are so hot they are cool, some are flavor-packed and earn their intensity with tastes to rival, and others simply escalate that discomfort from your tongue to your belly. Still others simply make you sweat and shiver, yet, for some reason, you cannot stop shoveling the flame from plate to palate.

And so, I introduce the Smooth Operator.

This libation cools as much as it heats with a subtle warmth that cascades from your lips to your stomach, making it both a chilly and warm weather drink. I, for one, like ice cubes with my heat. Pairing

ginger and cayenne is a favorite pastime of mine, so I thought, why not put them together in a glass and draw their intensity to a head (or a fill line) with the subtle but intriguing bitterness and tang of grapefruit? The most challenging but rewarding part of the process is waiting for the ginger-cayenne-thyme ice cubes to freeze. But, oh, the flavor combo is worth the wait.

I prefer my libation for a more booze-free occasion, but the concoction pairs well with any number of intoxicating additions from vodka to tequila. Let the foundation of the drink inspire you.

If you don't like the sophisticated heat you find in this glass...Well, you can go suck on an ice cube. ☺

INGREDIENTS

12 oz ginger beer; preferably Cock n' Bull or Goslings

.25-.5 oz freshly squeezed grapefruit juice

1-3 slices grapefruit, for garnish

2-3 sprigs thyme, for ice cubes and drink

16 tsp puréed ginger

1 tbsp cayenne pepper

Time: 3 min (overnight for the ice cubes)

Servings: 1 libation (cubes for multiple drinks)

DIRECTIONS

1. Let's start by making the ice cubes. In a traditional tray with 16 cube compartments (or a tray of your choosing), add 1 tsp of puréed ginger, a ½" cutting of thyme, and a pinch—or more—of cayenne pepper to each compartment. Then, fill each compartment with water and mix slightly. Upon freezing, the ginger and cayenne will layer on the top of each cube. This is intentional.
2. Once cubes are frozen and ready, move on to the drink! In a highball or, if you want a libation with a little bit more flair, a hurricane glass, drop in 3-5 ginger-cayenne-thyme ice cubes and add .25-.5 oz of freshly squeezed grapefruit juice.
3. Pour in ginger beer, slide in a sprig of thyme, and garnish with a grapefruit slice.

Tip: Use diet ginger beer to have the punch without the calories

Photography by Craig Wheeler



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

Nine Tips to Having a Better 2022:

1 In the market for good people, demand exceeds supply.

We don't see this changing in produce for quite some time, and we're seeing this across the board in terms of departments. Defense is your best offense, so to speak. Keep your people happy. I know it is easier said than done, but it's an absolute necessity.

2 The world has been, and is, changing. We have to also.

Working remotely, for example, either full-time or part-time, is a big deal nowadays. Some believe that working remotely and/or at least flex time is here to stay, and perhaps so. Long term, I see employers treating it like a driver's license—a privilege and not a right. So, if people want to keep it, then they have to perform and show that it's a worthwhile offering by the employer post-COVID. Work-life balance is a real priority for many people these days, and the past two years have helped cement that mindset.

Fresh produce is 100 percent a people business—and people can be challenging and surprising. I was reminded of this recently while working with a client through Joe Produce SearchSM. We were talking through a situation with a candidate because, in the executive search business, there are many “situations” to work through.

In dealing with this circumstance, he says, “I used to say ‘sh** happens,’ but now I say ‘life happens.’”

That really struck a chord with me—it's so true! If there is anything we have all learned over the past few years, it is that life brings change and unpredictability. And just when you think you've settled into the “new normal,” it changes again.

I wish I had the silver bullet to make your lives easier. Mine too, for that matter. No such luck. What I can share with you here are a few observations we've made as recruiters over the past couple of years. Recruiters have the unique perspective of listening to both sides of the equation—the employer and the employee—every day.

3 Creativity and open-mindedness are key.

The past couple of years have really changed the employer/employee/candidate landscape, and it's still evolving. What is temporary, and what is here to stay? What will prove to be rights versus privileges? How will technology change our world?

No one knows for sure, but what I do see is that progressive companies are thinking outside their “old and customary” boxes. They realize that attracting and retaining good people is different from way back in 2019. One of the more frustrating challenges is filling jobs and keeping people in seasonally transitioned roles, such as human resources, operations, and food safety positions between Salinas, California, and Yuma, Arizona. We suggest going into these searches being prepared to find a solution(s) that works for both parties. Be prepared to be creative.

4 There is no “silver bullet.”

It is an important mindset, so I will say it again. Employers, you are not going to find an accomplished salesperson who is willing to work for a near-nothing base pay or mostly variable- or performance-based compensation. While salespeople have great relationships and understanding of their retail and foodservice accounts, this does not mean their customers' businesses are going to follow them to a new employer in the short term and/or the long term. At least not in the way some employers might imagine. Generally speaking, a salesperson's relationships provide them better access to the customers and credibility, which is valuable. That said, the company still has to deliver on its own promises, and the employer needs to understand that developing a new salesperson and their business, even with experience and a great reputation, is a process that takes time.

5 Job seekers: Don't over promise and under deliver.

Be truthful with your capabilities throughout the interview process. When you get the job, perform. No company is perfect, and no manager is perfect. Ease your way in, build credibility, and look for ways to help your manager, team, and company improve. Remember, this is a marathon and not a sprint.

6 Help us help you.

Whether you're an employer or job seeker/candidate, a professional recruiter is here to help you and manage the process. There are so many nuances and steps throughout, and it's way more dynamic than what meets the eye. Communication, cooperation, and coordination make it easier for us to help you succeed in reaching your goals.

7 Treat people well, whether you hire them or not.

Your hiring process is a reflection of your company's values and culture. Be as forthright as possible when turning a candidate down. Don't leave them hanging. Always be respectful of people's time. This is important at every level. Treat the intern candidate as you would the contender for Chief Executive Officer. We never know what will change in the future, and in many cases, these folks are still your industry colleagues.

8 Be decisive!

Employers: Professionals want to hire decision-makers. That doesn't mean you need to act quickly without all of the facts, but once you have them all, be ready to act. Your ability to make decisions is also a reflection of you and the company you represent.

Job Seekers: This goes for you too! Be timely and decisive. Don't wait until the last minute with your decision.

9 Allow room to be surprised.

Don't immediately close your mind to someone you have turned down in the past. People do, in fact, change. Haven't we all over the last few years?

The good news is, we're all living this crazy life together, learning to adapt, readapt, and then readapt again. Perhaps the new normal is no normalcy, or, as we have experienced, a constant state of change. Personally, I hope not, but let's take it one day at a time.

Life happens! Embrace it and enjoy the journey. 🍏



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Rex Lawrence,
Founder and President,
Joe Produce SearchSM

WTF DO I DO WITH

{ what the fork }

Prime Time Bell Peppers ?



BELL PEPPER STEAK FAJITA ROLL-UPS

Recipe credited to Diethood.com

INGREDIENTS

3 Prime Time Bell Peppers, tri-colored, cut into thin strips
1 lb sirloin tip steak
1 large yellow onion, sliced
1 lime, cut in wedges
1 bunch of green onion
Olive oil
Chopped fresh parsley or cilantro
Guacamole for serving, optional
Salt and pepper, to taste

FAJITAS SEASONING MIX

1 tsp chili powder
1 tsp paprika
1 tsp garlic powder
1 tsp cumin
½ tsp dried oregano
1 tsp sea salt
¼ tsp fresh ground pepper

Prep Time: 30 min
Cook Time: 10 min
Servings: 16

DIRECTIONS

- 1 Prepare the fajitas seasoning mix by combining ingredients and set aside.
- 2 Cut the steak into 2" wide by 6" long strips. Rub the steak strips with some of the prepared seasoning mix and set aside.
- 3 Heat olive oil in a grill pan over medium-high heat and add Prime Time pepper strips and sliced onions to the grill pan. Season with salt, pepper, and a sprinkle of the fajitas seasoning mix. Cook for about 4–5 minutes, or until tender. Remove from heat and let cool for 1 minute.
- 4 Roll each steak around a few slices of Prime Time peppers and onions and secure with a toothpick.
- 5 Add remaining olive oil to the grill pan. Heat oil and add roll-ups to the pan. Cook until browned, about 2–3 minutes per side.
- 6 Remove from heat, remove toothpicks, and tie with green onion “ribbons.” Transfer to a serving plate. Garnish with lime juice, chopped parsley or cilantro, and guacamole. Enjoy!

To learn more about Prime Time Produce, visit www.primetimeproduce.com



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