



Week of March 30, 2009

Market News, See What's Sprouted!

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Produce prices are still unstable next week. We are seeing some very high markets and this spring is not looking too good for supply. Most Growers are transitioning next week and the week after, which means supply gaps might be longer than anticipated. Prices for **Eggplant** have doubled in price since last week. All **Tomato** products have gone way up as well – Roma Tomatoes have doubled since last week. Cherry Tomatoes and Grape Tomatoes are also up next week. Customers have been asking what's good in fruit right now. My best answer is not too much. We are between seasons on good hand fruit. California will be starting in a month or so, but offshore is winding down. There are very good **Pears**, **Apples**, and a couple of Citrus items like **Tangelos**. There are also some **Cara Cara Oranges**, **Blood Oranges**, **Kumquats**, **Baby Apples**. More spring veggies are available – **Spring Garlic**, **Morel Mushrooms**, **Fiddlehead Ferns** (just starting), **Minor's Lettuce**, **Stinging Nettles**, and **Dandelion Greens**. Most are in good supply but it may take a day to get, so don't order at 8pm for next day. **Broccoli** and **Cauliflower** will both be higher next week, the **Cucumber** market is ridiculous. **Asparagus** is reasonable for now, but that will change very soon. **Broccolini is extremely tight, there is a huge supply gap and it will take at least 2 weeks to solve. One thing you should know that Broccolini issue has been going on for 43 days – it is only in the last week that it affected us because we have a great relationship with our Vendor who has kept us supplied,**

but now is just out of product. If you follow the news stories on the TV, you will get the idea of no planting is going on in certain parts of California because of water shortages. This is going to cause a problem later. How much of a problem, we don't know until later also. **Celery** is going back up, **Carrots** are steady. **Fennel** is steady, Green **Onions** are steady. Red & Spanish Onions are steady also. Green **Peppers** are lower prices are back into the teens. Red Peppers went up a touch last week, Yellow stayed the same. The Sweet Veggie Mix is still a great deal. The **Potato** Market is steady. **Zucchini** is going down quickly, and **Yellow Squash** is also down, but not as much. Head **Lettuce** and Romaine is stable for now, but with all the transitioning out in California, it would not surprise me to hear they were going up by the end of the week. The **Strawberry** Market is steady for now. **Raspberries** are very tight and very high priced. **Blueberries** are reasonable and good quality for next week; **Blackberries** are your best deal and very good quality. A few Golden Raspberries are around, but quality is fair at best. **Grapes** are down for next week on all colors. **Lemons** have certainly turned around from last year, prices have come crashing down.



GO TEXAN.

Top Crops!

Texas
Heirloom Tomatoes

Blackberries

Morel Mushrooms

English Peas

In the Spotlight

Texas
Heirloom Tomatoes

Our small independent grower produces over 60 different varieties of heirloom tomatoes. You will receive a mixed case of whatever varieties are available at the time of harvesting. No two cases will be the same. This way each case will be a whole new taste experience! An heirloom is generally considered to be a variety that has been passed down, through several generations of a family because of its valued characteristics. All in all these are your Grandmother's tomatoes, they come straight from the garden to you.





By Bob Luder - The Packer

Three words can sum up the increasing popularity of sweet potatoes in the foodservice industry: sweet potato fries.

They're stars on restaurant menus across the country, and some fine dining establishments are pursuing different fresh-cut angles and could lead the public toward other fresh-cut yams.

"More and more restaurants are serving sweet potato fries as either an appetizer or side dish," said Sue Johnson-Langdon, executive director of the North Carolina Sweet Potato Council, Smithfield. "Also, people are doing sweet potato chunks as part of their food prep. Some are fresh-cut, but not a lot."

Foodservice business is down during the economic recession the U.S. has endured the last year, especially in the more upscale sectors, but many sources said sweet potatoes haven't been hit as hard as other sectors in the industry.

"Foodservice have dropped a little bit, but not with sweet potatoes," said Benny Graves, executive secretary of the Mississippi Sweet Potato Council, Starkville. "Fries had a lot to do with that."

"The fresh market is as good as ever. It's a comfort food, and shoppers are going back to the basics. Sweet potato fries and the whole superfoods thing have really helped the industry. Sweet potato baked is so good for you."

"I think foodservice, the restaurant industry, is down, so sweet potatoes could be down in foodservice. But I think, because of the message of health, we are seeing more people eating sweet potatoes as opposed to white potatoes. The health message is picking up. It's being recognized more as a complex carbohydrate, not a simple carbohydrate, so it helps, for instance, diabetics in controlling sugar intake," said George Wooten, owner of Wayne E. Bailey Produce Co., Chadbourn, N.C.

Because of the slumping economy, those in the sweet potato and foodservice industries have had to be more creative with their fresh-cut presentations and promotions, Wooten said.

"We've talked about how convenient fresh-cut is, in putting them into casseroles and things like that," he said. "I think products that have been good for us are cubes and sticks. We recently started with a medallion cut that's shaped like a coin. It's good for spring, summer and fall."

"And then, we have a slab cut, which is a horizontal cut. It's 5/8 inches thick and just wonderful for grilling – 7-8 minutes on a George Foreman grill, or about 15-20 minutes on a regular grill. On the regular grill, the grilling caramelizes the sugars and really brings out the flavors."

