



Week of July 6, 2009

Market News, See What's Cropped Up!

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Welcome to another wacky week in the produce world. Ah, the joys of summer!

Asparagus this week is steady. However, **Jumbo Asparagus** is still in short supply and shippers are demanding ridiculous prices. We've been having to sub ex-large and large product to help fill the gap. **Berries** are steady, **Lemons** and **Oranges** are steady (which is not normal for this time of year). **Cucumbers** and **Squashes** are finally beginning to recover from all the rain they've had recently. The roller coaster weather patterns this season in California are continuing.

Temperatures (60s along the coast to mid 80s inland) are once again forecast for the Salinas Valley following the recent spike in temperatures. A weak system in the Pacific Ocean has slowly

worked its way east bringing heavy fog inland. This means wet humid nights with cooler daytime temps which equal ideal conditions for mold and mildew growth in **Head and Leaf Lettuce**. We are also likely to see increases in fringe, tip, and internal burn in the fields. As we continue into the summer insects are becoming more problematic in many fields at the moment. Yields, shelf life, and overall quality will once again suffer as a result of our six legged friends. **Romaine** and **Romaine Heart** supplies seem to have been impacted the most as of late. Normally around this time of year we tend to see very green romaine and less bleached "white" hearts. Remember I said "normally". Shippers are reporting internal burn. The hearts are having serious issues with cupping and

not having the true romaine heart shape. These conditions are causing growers to use more acreage to meet the demand of processors and customers. Iceberg lettuce yields and quality have improved recently in the past week. However current weather pattern this week and next look to reduce yields and quality.

Idaho Potatoes, it's that time of year kids - 40 and 50 count Russets are very limited and are even harder to find. Shippers continue to stress keeping the cold chain in tact with all items. Any temperature abuse will cause a serious drop in shelf life.



Summer Spectaculars!

8ct Petite Mixed Heirloom Tomatoes

Passion Fruit

Cipollini Onions

Carnival Cauliflower

In the Spotlight

Donut Peaches

Tender and juicy, the Donut™ peach is excellent simply eaten out of hand. Enjoy sprinkled with superfine sugar, topped with white wine or sherry, poached in syrup or cut in half and topped with ice cream, raspberry puree and finely chopped nuts. Make a succulent fruit topping for pancakes and waffles. Perfect peach for grilling. To grill, remove skin. A chef's specialty, grilled or sautéed Donut™ peaches especially complement Foie Gras. Sweet peaches pair well with duck entrees. To store, ripen at room temperature. Refrigerate ripe fruit for longer storage.



Do you have the ripe stuff?

As you've probably noticed in the marketplace, bananas are picked and shipped green. They are the only fruit that actually develop better color, texture, aroma, and sweetness when ripened after harvest. They ripen quickly after being harvested and will also hasten ripening of other fruits in their vicinity. Ripe bananas show no trace of green skin. *Fullest flavor is derived from bananas that begin to develop tiny dark specks.* If you are unable to easily break the stem to peel the banana, it is not yet ripe. If the skin is difficult to separate from the fruit, it is most likely too starchy and bitter to eat without cooking and could cause digestive distress and/or constipation if eaten raw.





Fresh-cut produce purveyors seek fast-food restaurants to battle recession

Don Schrack - The Packer: The slowdown in the economy has brought reports of falling revenues – many in the double-digit range – from foodservice operations across the country. Not all restaurants are willing to give up without a fight.

“Especially fast-food restaurants are responding,” said Ed Odron of Ed Odron Produce Marketing and Consulting, Stockton, Calif. “It’s the rare day when a direct mail piece or two are not in my mailbox.”

Casual-dining operations are also campaigning, Odron said, pointing to a free breakfast offering at Denny’s and all-you-can-eat pancakes at International House of Pancakes stores.

Sales of value-added fresh-cut products to foodservice will be as strong as the chains that are buying them, said Michael Spinazzola, president, DRS Inc., San Diego. Among his clients: Subway.

“Sales are up at Subway, so we are going to be buying more,” he said.

Where grower-shippers can better serve foodservice, Spinazzola said, is in developing different packages that lead to longer shelf life.

“That will increase more opportunity for us to put the products into the system,” he said.

Pre-harvest food safety and cold chain management are critical for foodservice, Spinazzola said, particularly the cold chain.

“It’s one of the biggest challenges out there in all of the fresh produce segments,” he said. “It’s our goal to keep tightening the supply chain for quality purposes.”

There are products that create a sound marriage between foodservice and value-added fresh-cut items. Carrots are an example.

“There’s a tremendous savings from a labor standpoint with foodservice,” said Phil Gruszka, vice president of marketing for Grimmway Farms, Bakersfield, Calif. “They’re quick to embrace our products.”

Grimmway’s yellow carrot varieties have started to catch on with foodservice, he said.

“The shreds, for instance, are a very economical, easy way to make things visually interesting,” Gruszka said.

There has been no slowdown in sales to customers of Fresh Origins, San Marcos, Calif., said owner David Sasuga. The company’s conventionally grown, but sometimes nontraditional, products sell to high-end restaurants across the country, he said.

Younger chefs have a big influence on foodservice and on Fresh Origins, Sasuga said.

“The younger generation is more willing to experiment,” he said, “and the kitchen seems to be a young man’s game. It’s hard, dangerous work and long hours.”

Fast-food restaurants continue to increase their value-added offerings. Burger King has launched a salad in a bistro bowl, said Ed Byrne, co-owner and general manager of Peninsula Packaging Co., Exeter, Calif. The bistro bowl features a mixed salad with the dressing in a separate container on top.

Peninsula Packing manufactures the bistro bowl for Burger King, Byrne said.

Foodservice will be in the crosshairs of Dulcinea Farms LLC, Ladera Heights, Calif., for the rest of the year, said John McGuigan, vice president of sales and marketing.

“As the company is starting to mature, it’s time to take a look at some of the channels of distribution we

haven’t sought in the past,” he said. “In fact, we’re already talking with some foodservice distributors and operators.”

The 2-pound resealable bags of sliced apples from Stemilt Growers Inc., Wenatchee, Wash., aim at retail customers, but foodservice has welcomed the package, said Roger Pepperl, marketing director.

“They work very well for some smaller shops, but we also offer a three-pound bag for foodservice,” he said.

The Artisan Lettuces from Salinas, Calif.-based Tanimura & Antle Inc. are available to foodservice in bulk.

“The foodservice Artisans are packed in an 8-pound carton with a plastic liner. Each carton contains 16-20 heads,” said Rick Antle, president. “The carton even contains preparation instructions for the chef.”

Colorful Harvest, another Salinas-based grower-shipper-packer, offers several of its colorful produce products in bulk.

The company’s Rainbow Crunch whole peeled and cut carrots are available in a 100-count package, while diced carrots and carrot chips, sticks and shreds are offered in 5-pound bags, said Doug Ranno, chief operating officer.

Colorful Harvest’s foodservice inventory includes an 8-pound bulk pack of strawberries, he said, and it is exploring a 50-count cobbette package of the company’s red corn for foodservice.

Distance is a hurdle for some fresh-cut/value-added products, Spinazzola said.

“Salads, for example, in those nice big bowls, are almost cost-prohibitive when they have to be taken across the country,” he said.

Summer’s Market Musings

BABY FUJI APPLES

BABY GALA APPLES

BABY GRANNY SMITH APPLES

PINATA APPLES

GOLD KIWI

FRESH LYCHEE NUTS

PASSION FRUIT

POMEGRANATE SEEDS

TEXAS PEACHES

ENGLISH PEAS

BROCCOLI SPROUTS

BLACK MISSION FIGS

KIWANO MELONS

MAITAKE MUSHROOMS

TEXAS SWEET 100 TOMATOES

CARNIVAL CAULIFLOWER

BLACK GARLIC

8/1# PETITE MIXED HEIRLOOM TOMATOES

SHISITO PEPPERS

KUMQUATS

CALALOU LEAVES

SATURN PEACHES

WHITE PEACHES

PURPLE WAX BEANS

DRAGON TOUNGE BEANS

SQUASH BLOSSOMS

APRICOTS

Some of these items are limited so first come, first served.
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