



Week of January 25, 2010

Market News, See What's Sprouting!

Volume 8, Issue 4

Seasonal Sensations

Texas Navel Oranges

Texas Ruby Red Grapefruit

Texas Cabbage

Texas Wheatgrass

In the Spotlight

Firestix

Presentation plus and offering a mild corn flavor, standing up or laying down, add a lovely sophisticated look to dress up desserts, cocktails, tropical beverages and specialty salads. Main entrées appreciate this mix's fire-dazzle and extraordinary beauty. Decorate birthday and wedding cakes with extraordinary pizzazz and dramatic glamour. Gala event creations especially love the eye-catching good looks of this lovely flower blossom. Truly a diner's delight. Excellent keepers!

El Niño is wrecking havoc on the west coast. What does this mean for us, Strawberries are taking a beating and row crops aren't far behind. Oh, and we can also expect to see citrus take a bad turn. So, with that being said let's get the really ugly stuff out of the way first.

Strawberries - California's Strawberry growing regions where hit hard last week with rain. The forecast is for more rain midweek and then again on the weekend. Growers are only getting about 20% of their harvest packed for the produce shippers at the start of this week. Quality will remain problematic with white shoulder, bruise, pin rot, mold, and water damage likely to be prevalent as fields recover.



What this means is quality and shelf life are decent at best, only order what you need. It will take some time for fields to recover and produce quality fruit, and with the upcoming weather patterns we'll have to wait and see how bad the damage really is. The Valentine's Day pull which starts in a week has set itself up to be a very challenging one. All packs of Strawberries including **Long stems** for Valentine's Day will be very hard to come by to say the least. **Raspberries** are holding steady this week. However, we are still waiting for them to take a nosedive in price. Both **Head** and **Leaf lettuce** are fair at best and price is steady.

We are still seeing some epidermal peel, but overall it's doing pretty well. **Bell Peppers** out of Florida are still light putting more pressure on Mexico, prices are steady this week, but that could change as more rain hits Mexico. Now on to row some crops - **Broccoli, Cauliflower, Celery**, are all steady for now but we expect that to quickly change as more rain hits the west coast and supplies on the east coast are almost nonexistent. Also noteworthy due to all the rain the fields are really muddy. Crews are having to harvest in these extremely muddy conditions. We are already seeing some muddy cases arrive and we are trying to clean them up as best as possible. **Asparagus** is steady, **Avocados** are steady and with the upcoming Superbowl weekend supplies are looking great! **Squash** is fair at best and supplies are very tight, again weather will play a big role as to what we can expect to see over the next couple of weeks. **Stone fruit** supplies are beginning to increase but supplies are still limited. **Cantaloupes** and **Honeydews** are very limited on small sizes; however quality is good on what is out there. With Valentine's coming up we will have **roses, carnations, and baby's breath** available, all on a preorder basis of course. Long stem strawberries, order early please! Please try and have your orders placed no later than February 8th to ensure delivery. Edible orchids and mixed flowers are also available. If you're looking for something different check out using the **Firestix**, these are beautiful flowers and will dress up any plate. Don't forget Chinese New Year is also fast approaching. We have **Pummelos, Oro Blancos, Asian Pears, Satsumas** and **Tangelos** available!





Rain wrecks havoc on California Strawberries

Tom Burfield - The Packer Southern California strawberry growers shippers suffered a series of storms barreled through the state that could keep them from harvest until late in the week of Jan. 25 - placing Valentine's Day promotions into jeopardy.

The rain started with a few showers Jan. 17, bringing some torrential downpours by the time the wet weather went away Jan. 22. An estimated 6 inches of rain to parts of Ventura County, where Oxnard growers didn't expect to be picking again until late in the week of Jan. 25.

The state's growers produced about 377,000 trays of strawberries during the week of Jan. 23, down significantly from the 976,000 trays produced the week of Jan. 16 and the 1.14 million trays produced during the same week last year, according to the Watsonville-based California Strawberry Commission.

Year-to-date figures show 2.14 million trays produced this year compared with 2.7 million trays in 2009.

Unless good weather returns quickly, shippers said they may not be able to accommodate Valentine's Day promotions. Good weather might not be likely, with another storm forecast for Jan. 26, and the potential for more rain looming for the coming weekend and again during the week of Feb. 1.

"It's a wet mess now," David Cook, sales manager at Deardorff Family Farms in Oxnard said Jan. 25. "This morning, there was really nothing left."

Last week, workers stripped the field of red berries, he said.

"They wanted to pick today, but there was nothing left," he said. "We'll try it again this weekend."

Even then, he was not anticipating heavy volume of luscious berries.

"It's not going to be spectacular," he said.

The company last picked Jan. 19.

Cook said a week's worth of good weather would be required to get the deal back on track, and he was not optimistic about his plans to ship trays of stems for Valentine's Day Feb. 14.

"If it would stop right now, we might have a chance, but it doesn't look like it's going to stop raining," he said.

Nearby, Boskovich Farms in Oxnard had stripped its berry plants then sprayed for mildew, said sales manager Russ Widerburg.

"Now we'll wait for the plants to recycle," he said.

"Production will be very, very light this week and lighter-than-normal next week," he said Jan. 25.

He was not optimistic about Valentine's Day.

"I don't think there's going to be a whole lot of supplies for any kind of promos," he said. "The rain definitely took its toll on production."

He estimated that the rain set back production at the company two or three weeks.

On Jan. 25, the U.S. Department of Agriculture reported wide range in quality in strawberries from Oxnard, with flats of 8 1-pound and flats of 4 2-pound containers of medium-large berries at \$16-20, compared with a high market of \$10.90 at the same time in 2009. Central Florida strawberries on Jan. 25 were \$14.90-18.90 for flats of 8 1-pound and 4 2-pound containers of medium-large berries and imports through south Texas were \$14-18 for flats of 8 1-pound and 4 2-pound containers of medium berries.

In Orange County, Matt Kawamura, partner in Orange County Produce LLC, Irvine, Calif., said that although the company might be picking some varieties by the end of the week, others could take two to three weeks to come back.

At least 8 inches of rain fell in the area, he said. The rain was accompanied by wind and scattered hail.

"It was pretty bad," he said. "We definitely haven't seen that much rain in over 10 years."

It appeared that only the colored fruit got hurt, he said, and there was no flooding, despite the heavy rain.

"We hope the bloom didn't get dinged up too much," he said, but he expected that some berries would be misshapen.

Picking may start up again by the end of the week.

"We'll have something, but we'll be way off from where we hoped we would be," he said.

