Watermelon Queens Begin Promoting U.S. Watermelons in Canada

Stops Include Longos, Freson Bros., July 4th Reception & CHCH TV

With the combined efforts of produce managers, promotions coordinators and our watermelon retail account managers, NWPB was able to make some Canadian retailers very happy in these summer months. It first kicked off with 2016 National Watermelon Queen Carla Penney’s visit to four Alberta Freson Bros. stores over a two-day period during Father’s Day weekend. In addition to the four stores personally visited by the National Watermelon Queen, nine other Freson Bros. stores equally undertook their own watermelon events throughout Saturday and Sunday, providing U.S. watermelon with enhanced in-store and outdoor merchandising, display and marketing support. During her visits, Carla Penney participated in scheduled watermelon eating and seed spitting contests,
interacted with shoppers, shared versatility, nutritional and health benefits messages, as well as steps to selecting a great tasting watermelon.

The following weekend, NWPB supported Longos for their 16th annual watermelon eating contest held at all locations on June 25th. The day prior to the event, Carla Penney, Katy Mae Harrison, and Andi Dickerson (The National, Florida and Georgia watermelon queens respectively) conducted in-store sampling and appeared at two Longos stores. The National Queen was also featured on CHCH TV’s morning show. The queens visited a total of nine stores where eating contests were held throughout the entire day. Winners received a medal and a watermelon to take home.

**Ultimately, the queen appearances helped these Canadian retailers sell MORE fresh U.S. watermelon.**

Carla Penney was also invited to and actively participated in the U.S. Ambassador to Canada’s July 4th “America Road Trip” where approximately 4,000 key influencers, dignitaries and media attended. Fresh U.S. watermelon was prominently showcased and sampled (free) to attendees. Executive Chef Leier and his team also created many different watermelon appetizers for guests to enjoy. Over 700 pounds of fresh, U.S. watermelon was sampled! The day of the event, Carla Penney was featured on two CTV Ottawa segments to showcase watermelon’s health and versatility.

Stay tuned to the Vineline and the Watermelon Update industry newsletters for updates on these programs and more throughout the year. Please contact Stephanie Barlow, Senior Director of Communications, at sbarlow@watermelon.org for more information.
2016 Watermelon Carving Contest

Every July in celebration of National Watermelon Month, the NWPB hosts the “National Watermelon Carving Contest.” Watermelon fans carve and hollow out watermelons in five different categories including Pop Culture, Basket, Event/Occasion, Elegant and Etched. All entries are divided into “Beginner” and “Experienced” groups, with prizes awarded for each.

This year’s entry period has just ended, and now our panel of judges will determine the first, second and third place winners in each category for both beginner and experienced entry levels. You can view all the watermelon carving entries online at www.watermelon.org/theslice. While you’re there, make sure to vote for your favorite carving for the People’s Choice award. Voting will close on August 15 and winners will be announced at the end of August.

Watermelon Materials

Each year, NWPB gives out tons of watermelon-themed collateral in an effort to get consumers to think watermelon. In 2015, for example, the Watermelon Board gave out more than 60,000 coloring books, 49,000 activity sheets and 264,000 stickers! These free materials help to facilitate consumer messaging by explaining the many benefits of watermelon in a fun, easy-to-understand way. They also encourage kids to eat healthy while eating more watermelon! Newberry Watermelon Festival Queen Shelby Blackwell recently visited three elementary schools to promote watermelon, and as you can see, the activity sheets and coloring books were definitely put to good use! Newberry Watermelon Festival President Kathryn Thomas said that the school’s personnel loved the watermelon posters so much they already had them displayed in the lunchroom! If you’re interested in ordering stickers, activity sheets, coloring books, or other materials like recipe cards and brochures, check out our “Freebies” page at watermelon.org/freebies.
NWPB Connects with Foodservice Educators

In an effort to reach future chefs and foodservice operators the NWPB has partnered with the Center for the Advancement of Foodservice Educators (CAFÉ).

The organization includes educators in high school culinary programs, colleges and universities, including Johnson & Wales and other culinary-focused institutions. The partnership kicked off with a survey to their membership asking questions about how watermelon is used in their classrooms, what tools and resources they need for watermelon and if they had ever heard of or used tools from the NWPB in the past. Only 11% of respondents had heard of the NWPB and less than that had been to watermelon.org but 80% are including watermelon in their classrooms and more than 75% are looking for watermelon lesson plans, handling information, usage ideas and recipes.

The partnership continued with a Garde Manger (Carving) Master Class at the CAFE Leadership Conference in June. Chef Stephan Baily of Graffiti Carving taught the hands-on three-hour class. All the attendees raved about the instruction - and remember Chef Stephan was teaching teachers! The beautiful carvings were displayed at the opening reception that evening. Watermelon was also a part of the menu throughout the three-day conference. The NWPB conducted more surveys and distributed information during the Info Fair and the Board’s foodservice consultant, Susan Hughes, was on a panel and highlighted watermelon.org as a great place to find watermelon information.

Next steps include encouraging the participants in the Master Class to submit an entry in the Carving Contest, follow-up with conference attendees and begin work on the Watermelon Culinary Curriculum, we plan to launch in January 2017. This is a new audience for the foodservice program but one that will make an impact as new chefs get into their careers.
In July, NWPB attended the IDEA World Fitness & Nutrition Conference to educate and engage more than 14,000 attendees - including personal trainers, group fitness instructors, gym owners and wellness bloggers, among others - about the health benefits of watermelon. Fitness professionals reach and influence an average of 70 direct consumers each week, and 83% of them recommend healthy products during the course of a normal work week. In addition to Watermelon Board staff, blogger Jennifer Fisher from The Fit Fork was on-hand to demonstrate watermelon exercises (see photo, right) and promote the new Watermelon For Health microsite and lifestyle guide on watermelon.org.

Watermelon in the News

It’s been a huge summer for watermelon news coverage! Everywhere you look there are watermelon health messages and recipes. In case you missed them, below are a few photos of some of our favorite watermelon coverage from print and online publications like The New York Times, Food Network, Parents, Dr. Oz and bon appétit (shown in order below, from left to right).

Where will NWPB be next?

The FLAVOR Experience – Newport Beach, CA – August 8 - 11

HEB Expo – San Antonio, TX – August 16 - 18