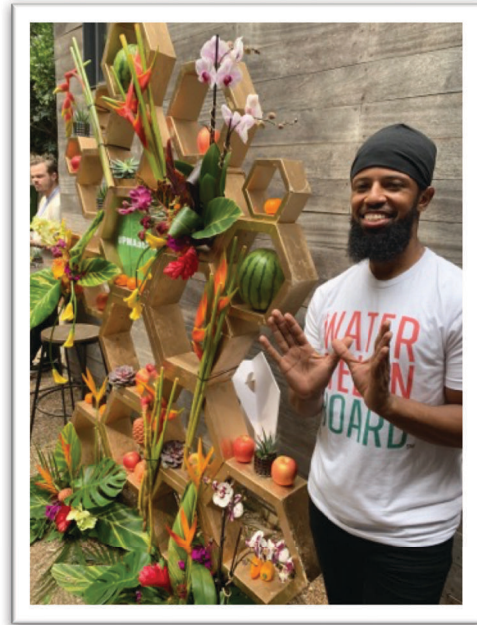




APRIL 2019

# Watermelon UPDATE

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



## South By Southwest SXSW

### Watermelon Activation Educates and Inspires Attendees

South by Southwest is a multi-genre, multi-medium showcasing festival and conference series in Austin, Texas in March that draws half a million people and features 25 conference education tracks and experiential components. It celebrates the convergence of the interactive, film and music industries and fosters creative and professional growth by being the premier destination for discovery.

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## SXSW continued..

One that the produce industry will find especially delightful is PMA's Global Street Farm, which returned in 2019 to serve as a home-base for the produce and floral industry while offering consumers fresh experiences. L'Estelle House on Rainey Street featured watermelon as the produce star on Day 1 with the following experiences:

- Fresh watermelon ice pops “paletas” distributed in a NWPB-wrapped mobile tricycle
- Watermelon margaritas in the VIP backstage area
- Roaming watermelon photo booth by team members in Watermelon Board t-shirts
- Global Street Farm’s dinner feature with Watermelon Sashimi
- Hydrate and Detox with Watermelon recipes wellness demonstration
- Watermelon blueberry mint spear sampling



The Global Street Farm also offered free fresh floral crowns and bouquets in addition to grab-and-go fruit like clementines and apples. This was a tremendous opportunity for Watermelon to star at a major consumer event, while showcasing watermelon’s year-round health, value and versatility benefits.



### PMA 2019 STATISTICS



## *Congratulations to the New National Watermelon Queen!*

All of us here at the National Watermelon Promotion Board would like to say a big ‘Congratulations!’ to the new National Watermelon Queen, Katie Honeycutt from North Carolina! We are excited to help you leap into a very big year ahead promoting #watermeloneveryday!

## Watermelon on the Menu

To help tell the story of watermelon on the menu, the NWPB tracks watermelon menu items to be pitched to media or used as inspiration with foodservice operators. In March, staff visited Avocado Grill in southeast Florida. The Grilled Avocado appetizer includes a Spiced Mango and Watermelon Salad. The second and most intriguing menu usage is the Poke section of the menu. They offer three versions of Poke (the AG pictured below with seaweed salad, cucumber, avocado and crispy lotus root) and a “protein” choice including tuna, salmon and watermelon. This is a great example of watermelon being used at the center of the plate and as a protein replacement.



## Southeast Produce Council's Southern Exposure



NWPB once again participated in the Southeast Produce Council's annual “Southern Exposure” expo March 8th and 9th in Orlando, FL. This year, along with retail and foodservice workshops, NWPB's Stephanie Barlow, Megan McKenna, Juliemar Rosado and retail account manager Sheila Carden provided retail and foodservice attendees with information on how to keep watermelon top of mind on menus and in grocery stores. With the theme of “Party Like It's 1999” at the expo, NWPB staff went back in time, donning costumes from the 90's cult classic Movie *Clueless*, reminding attendees to not be “Clueless” about watermelon. This resulted in tying in 3rd place for “best booth.” Every year, the expo attracts more than 2,400 attendees,

continually setting records for overall attendance as well as for participation by the retail and foodservice sectors of the fresh produce industry.

## National Grocers Association Show

NWPB was on-hand at the National Grocers Association Conference & Expo in San Diego, California February 25th and 26th. Under PMA's Produce Pavilion, NWPB staff was able to continue to build awareness and promote NWPB's unique resources to a record-breaking 3,400 attendees including supermarket operators, wholesalers, food industry service suppliers and manufacturers. Additionally, attendees were able to communicate their needs and share insight through exclusive conversations throughout the show.



# 2019/2020 Program Overviews

## Retail & International Marketing

The National Watermelon Promotion Board's mission is to increase consumer demand for watermelon through promotion, research and education programs. The Marketing Committee is responsible for developing and implementing an effective retail and international marketing campaign. This includes retail, trade and consumer promotions.

The purpose of this plan is to energize domestic and international retail markets to create continued, year-round awareness. Getting watermelon into the hands of consumers of all ages, including millennial and Gen-Z shoppers, requires NWPB to build and maintain relationships with retailers across the US and in international markets.

NWPB will continue supporting retailers by contracting with merchandising representatives that manage various retail accounts across the US and Canada. Throughout the year, this team aims to keep watermelon top of mind and continue to establish new connections with retailers. They are also a direct line to retailers' needs as it pertains to marketing tools and materials.

Nearly all consumers surveyed in 2018 stated that they eat watermelon as-is. NWPB plans on conducting partnered promotions and in-store activations as an opportunity to educate the consumer on flavor pairings and use of the whole watermelon.

NWPB will also continue allocating budget for the watermelon associations to either meet or match on watermelon queen retail promotional activities.

Resources and tools for the in-store employees at retail is just as important as what is provided to a customer. With the high turnover rate of employees at food retailers, handling and selection information is vital. Providing accurate and knowledgeable product information is a path to purchase opportunity. Later this year, NWPB will unveil a new retail kit to provide information on all things watermelon.

Continuing the year-round watermelon story and in conjunction with the foodservice program, NWPB will produce an anthem video highlighting the year of the watermelon.

Now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year, the Retail Display Contest will run in July and August. NWPB will also continue working with the newly revamped shopping app Ibotta again this year and exhibiting at the regional tradeshow.

Finally, NWPB will continue promotional activities in the export markets of Canada and Japan.



# Foodservice

With strategic direction from the Board, the Foodservice Committee is responsible for developing and implementing an effective foodservice campaign. In 2017, a Board Member said, “Culinary and restaurant trends drive consumer choices and purchasing at grocery/retail. It's great to work on being in front in this area.” The Board invests in Foodservice to move more watermelon and get more watermelon messages in front of consumers. The program reaches distributors but more so operators, both commercial and noncommercial, as they have consumer-facing establishments. Within these audiences outreach focuses on key decision makers in menu development including culinary, marketing, purchasing and dietary.



The program uses research and trends to educate and inspire.

Year-round foodservice media outreach will continue, including ongoing public relations, advertising (particularly to K-12 education), partnerships with the International Foodservice Editorial Council and the Culinary Institute of America, photo shoots to provide great photography and continue to build the year-round story of the watermelon industry. Additionally in 2019/2020, beverage menu research and recipes will be completed, in order to be the resource for operators in that space.

Foodservice Industry Events reach decision makers with education and inspiration. Events are geared to all audiences in Foodservice. Audiences and events include:

- College & University Outreach – This audience starts and sets trends in the Foodservice industry because they are feeding the next group of consumers. They will be reached through FoodOvation (see below).
- Registered Dietitian Outreach – Foodservice Dietitians are influencing menus and consumers’ perceptions of health and wellness. Event TBD.
- Distributor/Operator Outreach:
  - PMA Foodservice – Largest produce-focused event for Foodservice in North America with audience including distributors, operators, retail, and more.
  - PRO\*ACT Digital Partnership – Pro\*Act is the leading fresh distribution network in North America with more than 100,000 customers from convenience stores to purchasing co-ops, K-12 to Universities, and QSR to Fine Dining.
  - The Flavor Experience –The Flavor Experience is one of the most exciting, flavor focused events for marketing and culinary professionals.
  - CIA Global Plant-Forward Culinary Summit - Special edition event inspired by Worlds of Flavor and Menus of Change initiatives to bring together leaders in culinary to explore the mega-trend of plant-forward menus.
- Hotel/Entertainment Outreach through the Mise Conference–Foodservice in the lodging category had \$51.1 billion in Foodservice sales in 2018 and is projected to be more than 55,400 locations and \$14.9 billion in operator purchases in 2019.

The Board engages culinary professors and students as well as chefs looking for ongoing education opportunities. Partnerships with the American Culinary Federation and the Center for the Advancement of Foodservice Educators will drive traffic to the culinary curriculum.

Chain Support & Promotions engage chains who do not use watermelon or help those who do to expand watermelon menu items through education and ideation sessions. Promotions often support Limited Time Opportunities (LTO). A new event this year is FoodOvation. A quality over quantity event, FoodOvation offers 12-15, 35 minute meetings with operators. This allows enough time to be educated as well as inspired by delicious watermelon menu examples. Sponsors also control the invitation list so the attendees are hand selected. The event is offered separately for commercial and noncommercial operators.

All elements of the Foodservice program work together to get more watermelon on menus, year-round. Tools and resources developed by the Board are also available for industry use.

## Research

The Research Committee is **responsible for developing and implementing research to help the promotion and education programs, health and nutrition research, and other topics supporting the promotion of watermelon**. During the Fall 2017 Strategic Planning Session most of the Board input was health & nutrition research related and the rest focused on consumer and retail outreach.

Consumer research measures consumers' **attitudes and awareness toward watermelon, year-over-year**. The research delves into topics such as **purchase behavior, food safety, quality and health and nutrition**. The research helps to focus consumer outreach and findings are used to educate retail and foodservice contacts to understand consumers' attitudes toward watermelon. Surveys take place in late summer and late winter.

On the **retail** front, IRI Retail Scan Data (volume & price) is collected from approximately 80% of U.S. retail grocery sales. It develops a historical base for year-over-year reporting and includes regional data, in addition to types and formats of watermelon. This year we are **investing more into market level data**. Ad tracking delivers data and images for the ads reports. It includes regional information in addition to types and formats of watermelon.

In **foodservice**, Datassentials Menu Trend Research discovers **watermelon on chain and independent menus**. This research identifies new menu introductions and limited time opportunities along with consumer experience and affinity for watermelon, and compared to other fruits. Additionally, Datassentials Consumer Omnibus Survey is a custom survey to help us understand consumers' attitudes and purchases of watermelon at foodservice. Both studies will help measure foodservice initiatives and highlight opportunities and challenges for foodservice operators.



On the nutrition front, the **Board approved four new projects:**

- **Effects of Whole Blenderized Watermelon Consumption on Satiety and Digestive Health in Overweight/Obese Children – San Diego State University**
  - The goal of the proposed study is to determine the effects of watermelon (fruit and rind blenderized) on satiety, metabolic markers, bowel habits, microbiome and weight management in overweight/obese children.
  - It is hypothesized that watermelon consumption will promote weight loss and improve metabolic markers by enhancing satiety and favorable change of gut microbiome.
  - This is an 18-month human study and addresses the Board's focus on Cardiometabolic and Digestive Health.
- **Investigating Refreshing Effect of Watermelon Flesh-Rind Blend and Impact on Post Exercise Inflammatory and Immune Response – Texas Woman's University**
  - Objective 1: Develop watermelon flesh-rind blends and evaluate their physical-chemical properties and sensory attributes.
  - Objective 2: Investigate the effect of watermelon flesh-rind blends via clinical trials on refreshing perception and post exercise recovery for a four-week treatment duration.
  - Objective 3: To exploit molecules associated with refreshing perception of watermelon flesh-rind blends and their impacts on post exercise recovery.
  - This is a 12-month human study and addresses the Board's focus on cardiometabolic health and sensory.
- **Understanding the Healthy Components of Watermelon Flesh and Value-Added Products – Oregon State University**
  - We have designed a one-year project to investigate the impact of watermelon (flesh) consumption and our fiber-rich value-added products (rind and seeds), and compare their effect to citrulline and arginine, added to diet as single compounds.
  - This 1-year project will include a 10-week mouse feeding trial, the associated analyses of tissue, serum, and other bio-samples, followed by gene profiling analysis.
  - This study addresses the Board's focus on Bioactive Compounds and Cardiometabolic Health.
- **The Effects Watermelon Juice Supplementation on Postprandial Vascular Endothelial Function and Blood Flow During Hyperglycemia: A Pilot Study – Louisiana State University**
  - The objective of this pilot study is to determine the potential for watermelon juice to attenuate the reduction postprandial endothelial function and skeletal muscle microvascular blood flow (MVBF) experienced during hyperglycemia.
  - This is a 7-month human pilot study and addresses the Board's focus on Cardiometabolic Health.

**The mission of the Board is to increase consumer demand for watermelon through promotion, research and education. This strong research program should fully support the needs of the promotion and education parts of the program.**



# Communications

The Communications program educates, influences and advertises watermelon's health, value, convenience and versatility messages to consumers in order to encourage sales and increase demand. This includes consumer education via media and events: traditional media as in newspapers, magazines and television; digital media spanning the Watermelon.org website and social media platforms to YouTube and influencer partnerships; and national-scope events. Stemming from the media landscape demanding the story of *who* is behind our food (what is the journey from field to fork), plus the strategic plan insight that people have a personal, emotional connection to our product, the Back to Basics campaign was developed. The approach is simple: research shows that Taste is a main purchase motivator, which presents itself as a given, or a *basic*, but what about pairing that taste? What about the experience of watermelon? What does watermelon make us feel?

The opportunity exists to educate consumers on the basics of watermelon to increase purchase and demand. We visit watermelon's "roots" and focus on sharing the watermelon story from field to fork and also capitalize on happiness and healthiness in every bite. The watermelon 101 and happiness story is appealing and simple. The health benefits of watermelon and selection tips, the flavor pairings and eating occasions can be simple. And so the Back to Basics campaign is launched, and expect various supporting activities and events this year, including:

- Today's Dietitian -- influence the influencers of health and nutrition recommendations with a new resource, the Wide World of Watermelon RD Toolkit
- Fit Foodie Runs -- influence fitness focused foodies and their families with refreshing watermelon and recipe sampling (as they run to earn their watermelon finisher medals)
- Brand Media Experience -- influencing nutrition writers with a watermelon 101 education story while highlighting health benefits their readers need to know
- Show us your slice of joy! -- a summertime Instagram contest inviting watermelon fans and followers to share their favorite happy photos with watermelon, which will create an ocean of user generated content and a shared journey
- Interactive Watermelon 101 Story -- living online at Watermelon.org, visitors can experience the ins and outs of growing watermelon with highlights, video clips of production, and inspiration for the kitchen



Stay tuned to @WatermelonBoard across our social channels all year long for influencer partnership highlights, and feel free to share your favorite watermelon experiences with us! Remember to always hashtag #WatermelonEveryDay to join the conversation.



## No-Cost Family Features Recipe Roundup Placement “Go Big on Brunch”

The new watermelon bloody mary recipe got a special free highlight included in a March distribution by Family Features Syndicate ... at no cost! A recipe roundup is a shared full-page food feature layout, guaranteed up to 200+ million online impressions and 4+ million print impressions. It included at no cost the bloody mary recipe, a high resolution image and URL and the feature highlighted 2 other non-competitive food recipes around the brunch theme.



## Retail Promotion Recap in Pictures

Every year, NWPB has a retail promotional grant fund to support each of the state/regional associations' watermelon queen programs. The goal of this grant is to help invigorate the program's reach and impact, particularly at retail!



Where  
will  
NWPB  
be  
next?

**Cooper River Bridge Run** – Charleston, SC – April 6

**CRCEO Meeting** – Orlando, FL – April 9 & 10

**Watermelon Queen Media Training** – Atlanta, GA – April 13 & 14

**Child Nutrition Conference** – Chicago, IL – April 22 – 25

**Viva Fresh** – San Antonio, TX – April 26 & 27

**CIA Plant Forward** – Napa, CA – May 1 – 3