New York Produce Show

NWPB returned as exhibitors to Eastern Produce Council's New York Produce Show & Conference held in December 2018

The three-day event included a retail “thought-leader” breakfast panel, trade show of more than 500 companies, networking opportunities, retail tours and educational sessions throughout the day. As an exhibitor, the NWPB interacted with many retailers, media, wholesalers and the foodservice industry about materials and information NWPB has available for them in promotion and retail education.
USDA AMS Meeting

In late November NWPB Executive Director Mark Arney attended a USDA-AMS meeting that included presentations by USDA Under-Secretary Ibach and AMS Administrator Bruce Summer. Presentations included guidelines for commodity groups under USDA-AMS oversight, including briefings by USDA attorneys from the Office of General Counsel and the Department of Justice. Following this meeting, a smaller assembly of commodity group CEOs including Arney met to discuss issues germane to all groups and the earlier meeting.

The National Watermelon Promotion Board is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

2018 Canadian Media Campaign Year in Review

267 stories across print and digital outlets, 36 million media impressions
10 TV segments, 3.5 million media impressions
16% increase in Canadian community on Twitter
5% increase in Canadian community on Facebook
3 Ontario Live Events and 1 Alberta-based Live Event

Individuals with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations and or alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, LEP, etc.) should contact: Juliemar Rosado at jrosado@watermelon.org or 407-657-0261 X208 within three days of event.

2018 Suwannee Valley Watermelon Institute

On November 29, the Suwannee Valley Watermelon Institute took place in Gainesville, Florida. The meeting is well attended by industry members and a number of watermelon growers with an impressive agenda that includes professional development sessions, workshops and networking opportunities. As part of the program, NWPB Executive Director Mark Arney is consistently invited to participate, review NWPB activities and greet attendees. The Institute continues to grow each year - in fact exhibitors had to be capped this year as more wanted to participate than space available!
Consumer Research

Each year, the NWPB conducts consumer research to better understand consumer’s attitudes and usage of watermelon. New in 2018, the Board partnered with Aimpoint Research. Watermelon scores very high relative to other fruits for taste, safety, value, healthiness and freshness.

Watermelon has seen modest increases in value, healthiness, safety, and freshness over the past three years; one of the only fruits to see consistent gains. Most consumers are eating their fruit raw, with very few incorporating fruit in recipes. Consumers want fruit that provides them with value and minimal waste. To date much of the NWPB messaging to all audiences focuses on watermelon’s health, value and versatility, year-round.

Availability and perceived value are the main drivers as to why consumers are not purchasing watermelon. Conversely, these are top reasons that a consumer could be encouraged to buy more watermelon. Knowing how to pick a good watermelon is important for consumers and data suggests that consumers are becoming more knowledgeable year over year. Respondents reported most fruits to be mostly the same in terms of safety, but fruits with an outer casing were considered the safest including watermelon at 89%. A majority of respondents are washing the outside of a watermelon before cutting. Regarding health, top benefits are hydration, low in calories, and low in fat. Additionally, 69% of respondents indicated they would purchase watermelon if they were informed it was “good for hydration”. Respondents reported liking the taste of Watermelon (67%). Watermelon is mostly consumed as a snack. When asked to describe watermelon in one word, submissions included delicious, juicy, hydrating, sweet, tasty, refreshing, quenching, mouth-watering, flavorful. These insights and more rich data from the research will be used to plan future programs and shape NWPB messaging. To request a more detailed and robust report, please contact Senior Director of Communications Stephanie Barlow at sbarlow@watermelon.org or 407-657-0261 X202.
Promotions with operators across the country not only help to move more watermelon through the supply chain, but also provide an opportunity to educate and influence consumers. This year the Board worked with commercial operator Another Broken Egg to promote their Toasted Coconut Quinoa Power Skillet, featuring fresh watermelon. Their 64 locations featured watermelon as a part of their fruit side as well. Consumer communications included a table tent in restaurants, webpage, e-blasts and social media tagging the Board or using the watermelon.org logo. “Fun fact, fruit sales were up for our system 126% and fruit substitutes up 305%! Certainly, watermelon had a lot to do with it,” said Jason Knolls, vice president of culinary at Another Broken Egg.

For the second year in a row the Board partnered with Restaurant Associates to promote watermelon on their menus. Restaurant Associates is a noncommercial operator providing foodservice solutions in 140 locations including museums, corporate dining and more. Examples include foodservice for the US Senate, Princeton University, Disney ABC and the Smithsonian. This year the promotion took place in September and focused on using the whole watermelon and zero food waste. Recipe and usage ideas included Watermelon Crudo, Grilled Watermelon Ribs with Summer Blueberry BBQ Sauce, Spicy Greens, Pickled Grapes & Rind Salad, Watermelon Spears in Grab n Go, Pickled Watermelon, Watermelon, Goat Cheese & Arugula Salad and Watermelon Poke Bowl. Social media in restaurant signage and more were used to reach consumers. They saw an 8.5% increase in watermelon movement versus the same time in 2017.

A university partner who continues to provide great watermelon to their students and amazing recipes for the NWPB to pitch to foodservice media is the University of Massachusetts. As in the past, UMass had a Watermelon Day featuring many watermelon recipes in addition to their award winning everyday menu. This year Watermelon Day lead to a 30% growth in volume over last year’s promotion.
Back to Basics – Press Kit Launch 2019

The beginning of the new year marks the launch of the newest NWPB communications and consumer/media marketing campaign, with this year being “Back to Basics,” a concept that shifts messaging down to watermelon’s most basic and best benefits: happiness and healthiness. What are the basics of watermelon? Where does it come from? How does it make me feel? These are the types of questions we answer, while still educating on the year-round health, value and versatility messaging. The theme of ‘Back to Basics’ is open to interpretation by media and our influencer partners, and we will be relying more on these brand ambassadors to tell the watermelon story in their own words throughout the year, but also we will promote through events, promotions and news releases in traditional and social media.

As you can see by the cover image, watermelon is perfect. People say the number one reason they purchase watermelon is for the taste. And so the cover is an inviting slice of watermelon, bright red and juicy. We have some fun shots with watermelon to relay emotion and happiness (quite literally) and we also shot new recipes, including:

Classic Watermelon:
- Feta and watermelon skewers
- Simple patriotic watermelon basket for fruit salad
- Watermelon “cake”
- Flavor pairings for watermelon and simple, basic taste partners
- Watermelon pie

Trendy Watermelon Recipes:
- Blended Burger
- Unicorn Milkshake
- Watermelon Bloody Mary with some wild garnishing options
- Spiralized Salad with Shrimp
- Grazing Board -- a dessert option as well as a patriotic option

The press kit is being mailed to over 1,700 food writers and editors as well as influencers, bloggers, radio and online outlets. Throughout the year, more tactics under the Back to Basics umbrella theme will be implemented to reiterate the love for watermelon and persuade people to eat watermelon every day. Interested in receiving a copy? Contact Stephanie Barlow at sbarlow@watermelon.org. We hope that each of you will also want to engage and share these wonderful watermelon inspirations throughout the year. #WatermelonEveryday
In early December, Senior Director of Communications Stephanie Barlow, along with Digital Account Director Adriane Rippberger of FLM Harvest, attended the Social Fresh Conference in Winter Park, FL. The conference was packed with the most up-to-date and actionable training for the modern social and digital marketer. To keep track of the latest social media trends—and where the industry is headed—networking and training opportunities like these are a must. Speakers and panelists included social media experts from Facebook, BET, Duke University, American Cancer Society, Starbucks, Twitter and Weather Channel, just to name a few. Expect to see a changing social media communications strategy this year as we implement learnings and seize opportunities maximizing our resources.

Here are some key takeaways:

- How to thrive in a story-first social media world? Show the people, not only the products. Collaboration begets innovation.
- Instagram story and Facebook story, how do you prove ROI? Begin with goals, consider completion rates.
- 45% of people watch more than an hour of FB or YT videos a week. 80% of global traffic is soon attributed by videos.
  - Quantity shift to quality
  - Calendar driven to story driven
  - Static to Video
  - No media investment to Targeting relevant content to the right audience
- **Mixed User Generated Content** UGC (Shared Journeys)
- Use typography overlays on video to reach the ‘sound off’ environment
- Engagement calendar – shift from quantity to quality. Spend internal efforts differently, spend media dollars differently. Can take beginning content post, but then “reflight” the boosts.

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**Where will NWPB be next?**

**National Grocers Association Expo** – San Diego, CA – February 25 & 26

**Southern Exposure Expo** – Orlando, FL – March 8 & 9

**Nutrition Executive Study Group of the National Restaurant Association** – Ft. Lauderdale, FL – March 13 & 14