Epcot Festival of the Arts

NWPB Returned for Third Year to Educate & Inspire Consumers

The event celebrates visual, culinary and performing arts inspired from all around the world set against the incomparable backdrop of Epcot at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida. Taking place daily from January 18-February 25, the festival featured gallery exhibits, foodie experiences with art-inspired menus, live Broadway-style entertainment and of course, “The Art of Watermelon Carving” demos with Stephanie Barlow, Senior Director of Communications.
The Disney park visitor is 75% out of market, so events here reach a national and international visitor audience. The January and February promotion of watermelon usage ideas, health benefits, carving tips and more educate and inspire park guests to go home and create with watermelon. The Cactus bowl was carved live, and on display was a completed Cactus with Fire and Ice Salsa surrounded by tortilla chips. Also on display was a Watermelon Fish made with a melon baller and filled with a mixed melon fruit salad, as well as the Americana Star Basket made with star-shaped cookie cutters. Thanks to our friends at Wilton Cakes, all the event attendees went home with their own nesting cookie cutter sets and some carving instructions.

This winter, NWBP partnered with Produce for Better Health on a “Mini Changes” campaign with Facebook Live, Twitter party and recipe contest activations. Aimed at helping participants learn ways they can make “mini changes” towards a more healthy lifestyle, the NWBP was positioned as a resource and included tips for meal planning and recipe ideas - all using watermelon. Cumulatively, this promotion educated nearly 800,000 consumers!
The R before the P – Research Leads to Promotion

The Research Committee is responsible for developing and implementing the research program for the NWPB. In an effort to help provide new messaging for promotion and education programs, the Board invests in health and nutrition research each year. The nutrition research program underwent some structure and process changes a couple years ago. The Board conducted a Nutrition & Health Insights & Analysis to gain a deeper understanding of how health and nutrition attributes of watermelon align with current consumer trends and to provide strategic guidance to inform the NWPB’s nutrition research program.

Below is an update on current projects:

- A Watermelon Focused Dietary Inflammatory Index Counseling System to Reduce Systemic Inflammation – manuscript for publication is in development for 2019
- Watermelon and the Bioactive Compounds Promote the Digestive Health in Diabetes – no cost extension for 2019
- Bioavailability and Pharmacokinetic Parameters of Watermelon (rind, flesh and seeds) Polyphenols in Human Plasma: A Pilot study to Investigate Relationship to Endothelial Function – analyzing data
- Efficacy of Watermelon Consumption on Range of Motion, Pain and Cartilage/Inflammatory Biomarkers in Older Adults with Symptomatic Knee Osteoarthritis – research in progress
- Effects of Fresh Watermelon Consumption on Satiety and Cardiometabolic Health – two abstracts presented in 2018, an abstract and manuscript for publication are in development for 2019
- Investigating the Differential Effects on Metabolism with Consumption of Watermelon and By-Products during Intake of an Unhealthy Western-Style Diet – one abstract presented in 2018, one manuscript is under review for 2019

Once these projects are published in peer reviewed journals the NWPB will work with USDA to share results with nutrition media, trade media and others, in an effort to reach consumers with new watermelon health and nutrition messages.
The Board reaches foodservice media year-round (all these placements are from November to February!) to educate about and inspire with watermelon. Sometimes the stories feature NWPB recipes, sometimes a foodservice operator’s creative recipe and sometimes it is something more obscure, like our consulting chef talking about how much fun it is to be a commodity board chef! No matter the coverage, images and mentions of watermelon help keep it top of mind with operators across the country.

To help make watermelon coverage turnkey, the NWPB invests in a foodservice photoshoot to photograph chef and operator’s recipes for inclusion in foodservice media. Although we have beautiful photography, many magazines want to highlight operator recipes that have been successful on menus. In January we shot multiple recipes from the University of Massachusetts, a beverage from an operator in the northwest and a trail mix created by our consulting chef. The trail mix has already been picked up and we hope to see that coverage in the spring.
On February 13th, Watermelon Board broadcasted a Facebook Live event, but for the first time on our channel, a creator and influencer hosted. Abbie Gellman is an RD and chef, and her daughter Olivia is a HUGE fan of all things watermelon. Together, the Gellman Girls talked all things watermelon and showed some fun ways to LOVE watermelon this valentine’s day.

Abbie and Olivia played with the L-O-V-E cookie cutters to create watermelon cookie cutouts, decorating and topping with their favorite fun flair, including sprinkles, coconut and chocolate chips. To try and win their own set of L-O-V-E cookie cutters, the audience was asked to tell us their favorite way to eat watermelon and to tag their Valentine, creating engagements and fun discussion points in the comments.

Key messages educated on during the Facebook Live include:

- Where to find watermelon in February? Local grocery store! Think minis and fresh cuts!
- Health benefits especially important during National Heart Health Month like 92% water for hydration, the antioxidant lycopene giving it red color, Vitamin A for healthy eyes and Vitamin C for helping with immunity and keeping us from getting sick

Expect to see more Facebook Lives at Watermelon Board’s channel with Culinary Nutrition Cuisine and other influencer partners throughout the year. This fantastic broadcast earned a reach of more than 10,000 with nearly 800 engagements!

Where will NWPB be next?

- **Southeast Produce Council Southern Exposure** – Orlando, FL – March 8 & 9
- **SXSW** – Austin, TX – March 11 – 13
- **National Restaurant Association Nutrition Executive Study Group** – Ft. Lauderdale, FL – March 12 – 14
- **FoodOvation** – Savannah, GA – March 17 – 20
- **Social Media Marketing World Conference** – San Diego, CA – March 20 – 22
- **Canadian Produce Marketing Association** – Montreal, Canada – April 2 – 4