



Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD

Dear Industry Members,

COVID-19 has impacted our country and changed life as we know it around the world. We feel for all of those that have been most affected, especially those that have lost loved ones or those that have become sick as a result of contracting the virus. We know each of you are realizing the economic impacts and are having to navigate these unprecedented times with strength, resolution and faith. Optimism and hope need to prevail that we will all get through this together sooner rather than later.

For the NWPB, we were fortunate to successfully hold our annual budget meeting as planned on February 22, before the crisis and all the resulting closures and travel restrictions occurred.



With limited travel and industry meeting cancellations resulting from COVID-19, budget parts have been impacted. We have adjusted and taken a proactive approach to our messaging and outreach programs as the market has required. We continue to emphasize the benefits of including watermelon as part of a healthy and enjoyable diet, continuing to showcase the health, value and versatility of watermelon every day.

We are proud of our industry and the product we represent in the overall effort by the food sector to deliver to consumers a food supply that has been identified by our government as essential in this time of crisis.

Sincerely,
Mark Arney

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Program Overviews

Note: We understand that the implications of the COVID-19 virus have yet to be seen and will potentially impact planned promotional objectives, strategies and tactics for the 2020/2021 fiscal year. The program overviews below are the Board-approved activities. Should the need arise to alter planned events, we will pivot to those more conducive to the current climate such as virtual events, resources for at-home use and value messaging, to name a few.

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 2019 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. NWPB's new retail kit and retailers' section of the website will provide information on all things watermelon.

Now in its 12th year, the Retail Display Contest will continue in July and August. This, along with the resources available to retailers will be distributed through our continued participation at regional tradeshows as well as via the trade media.

In addition to continuing the partnership with shopping app Ibotta, NWPB has added another digital component to the program to reach the consumer earlier in the path to purchase with a shoppable recipe program via Fexy Media. NWPB has also added outreach to independent grocers via the *Live.Balanced* retail activation kit that focuses on how these independents can become their customers' most trusted source in healthy food choices with the programming the kit provides.

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



Communications

The Communications program educates, influences and advertises watermelon’s health, value and versatility to consumers in order to encourage sales and increase demand. Stemming from the media landscape demanding the story of *who* is behind our food, we needed to create a consumer package of the grower story; pair that need with our research insight that people have a personal, emotional connection to our product, and the *Watermelon 101: Back to Basics* campaign was created in 2019.

The approach is simple. Our research shows that *taste* is the main purchase motivator, which presents itself as a given, or a *basic*, but what about pairing that taste? What about the experience of watermelon? How does watermelon make us feel? We visit the watermelon story from field to fork, and also capitalize on happiness and healthiness in every bite.

The watermelon 101 story is appealing and simple, just as the happiness story is appealing and simple. Sharing health benefits of watermelon and selection tips, or flavor pairings and eating occasions can also be basically ... simple.

In 2020, we still have far to go to help people *master* their watermelon knowledge. Because of this continued opportunity to educate and grow consumers’ knowledge of watermelon, the focus of 2020 will be *Mastering the Basics*.

Elements of the *Mastering the Basics* year include:

- A reimagined recipe contest to make content creators out of watermelon fans
- A media day of Watermelon Master Classes which will educate and entertain
- Expanding the collection of Grower Spotlight Stories to put faces to our product
- Advertising the Watermelon 101 story through podcasts to reach new audiences
- Recruiting influencer partners who master the art of watermelon in the kitchen and beyond
- Amplify educator resources using watermelon as a teaching tool, in the classroom and on the smartphone

NWPB continually engages with watermelon consumers, media and educators to build a community of watermelon that brings happiness and healthiness in every bite.



Foodservice

The Foodservice Committee is responsible for developing and implementing an effective [Foodservice](#) campaign. The NWPB reaches purchasing, culinary, marketing and nutrition decision-makers at distributors and operators including commercial and noncommercial, to try to influence menus. Although the focus is on regional and national chains due to volume, K-12 education, College & University, and Healthcare are some other targets.



[Research](#) tells us watermelon is growing in Foodservice! Foodservice doesn't have to use watermelon but they are starting to feel the pressure from consumers and discover the potential. Menu mentions have increased 54%, 2014-2018 and it's now the 22nd most popular fruit and third in greatest 4-year growth. There is growth across all segments, day parts and regions. Watermelon is in the 98th percentile for future growth. At Foodservice consumers believe watermelon is healthy and a good pair with sweet or savory. Lack of availability on menus is the primary inhibitor to watermelon orders – more than 75% of consumers wish there were more items with watermelon on menus.



Why is watermelon experiencing such growth? Watermelon fits beautifully with so many current trends. For example, [Flavor & The Menu Magazine](#) [↗](#) – one of the most well respected foodservice publications – predicts Top 10 Trends each year. Watermelon fits into all of the trends especially Bowl'd Intentions and Getting Cultured, but most importantly Forward with Fruit, where watermelon is used as the example of fruit moving to the center of the plate.



Last but not least, every three years a Strategic Planning session collects input from the Board to build the programs. For example, regarding Foodservice, "This is a fast growing area we need to keep our foot in the door." Each project is selected based on research, trends and strategic direction.

For Foodservice media NWPB will continue ongoing media pitching using operator menu examples and photography. The Board will continue to work with the International Foodservice Editorial Council and the Culinary Institute of America. Also included in media, is a partnership with digital K-12 foodservice resource, [Healthy School Recipes](#). [↗](#) Due to buying channels, the cost, and the timing of the domestic crop, getting watermelon on school menus is difficult so we make sure to have tools and resources available for when they can use watermelon. Healthy School Recipes adapted three of our existing recipes to scale and within the nutrition profile. This year we will add cutting and other handling information to this platform.

For Foodservice events, the NWPB will continue sponsorships at staple events such as the Flavor Experience and PMA Foodservice as well as FoodOvation. Additionally, the Board will sponsor:

- [ProAct Culinary Summit](#) [↗](#) to reach their distributor network as well as their operator customers. Sponsorship also includes year-round digital opportunities on Colorful plates.
- [Marketing and Innovation Leadership Exchange](#) [↗](#) (MILE) to reach marketing decision-makers with watermelon education, research and trends.
- [Very Important Beverage Executives](#) [↗](#) (VIBE) to reach beverage professionals – another growth opportunity for watermelon on menus.



The NWPB will continue its work reaching [culinary educators](#) to influence future chefs and offer ongoing education opportunities to current chefs. The Board will also provide custom onsite culinary and operations support as well as support menu promotions to move more watermelon and increase consumer messages in foodservice. The whole Foodservice program works together to get more watermelon on menus, year-round.

Research

The NWPB mission is to increase consumer demand for watermelon through promotion, **research** and education. The Research Committee is responsible for developing and implementing research to help the promotion and education programs. During the last Strategic Planning Session in Fall 2017 the Board presented many health and nutrition research related projects and many other comments focused on consumer and retail outreach.

Bi-annual consumer research measures consumers' attitudes and awareness toward watermelon, year-over-year, on 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.

For the retail audience, the NWPB will invest in scan data and ad tracking. IRI Retail Scan Data tracks volume and price from approximately 80% of US retail grocery sales. It includes national, regional, and market level data in addition to types and formats of watermelon. Numerator Ad Tracking includes data and images for the ads and includes regional information in addition to types and formats of watermelon.

Foodservice research includes an operator omnibus to provide a comprehensive view from 400 operators representing all foodservice verticals about how they use watermelon including understanding purchase dynamics, identify critical purchase drivers, explore positioning, find new menu opportunities, and build selling stores. Additionally, SCORES concept testing is the foodservice gold standard for concept testing, preferred by many national account chain operators. The NWPB will use SCORES to test concepts being pitched to chains to give them more menu placement credibility.

The Board approved four nutrition research projects:

Evaluating Health Benefits of Watermelon Flesh and a Value-Added Watermelon Product in Human Subjects – Oregon State University (building on past research)

- Demonstrating significant improvements in blood glucose regulation
- Remediating symptoms of diabetes
- Demonstrating reductions in the level of pro-inflammatory compounds in the liver
- This is a one-year project to investigate the impact of watermelon (WF) consumption and our fiber-rich value-added product (WR), in human subjects at risk for development of chronic inflammation and/or metabolic syndrome

Effect of watermelon extract supplementation on skeletal muscle oxygenation and exercise performance – Hofstra University

- The primary objective of this study is to determine the potential for 7 days of watermelon extract supplementation to enhance skeletal muscle oxygenation and exercise performance in recreationally trained men.

Evaluation of bioavailability and effect of watermelon bioactive compounds on intestinal carbohydrate-hydrolyzing enzymes – NCATSU

- The overall objective of the proposed project is to investigate the effect of bioactive compounds of watermelon flesh, rind and skin on intestinal carbohydrate-hydrolyzing enzymes and bioavailability of watermelon bioactive compounds
 - *Objective 1* is to investigate the inhibition of intestinal carbohydrate- hydrolyzing enzymes by the extract of bioactive compounds in watermelon, rind, and skin *in vitro* and identify and quantify bioactive compounds
 - *Objective 2* is to determine bioavailability of major bioactive compounds in WFE, WRE, and WSE

Target Media Relations to Promote Results of Studies – Wild Hive

- Leveraging the results of 1-2 published research studies through targeted media relations to promote the results of these studies. Including:
 - Preparation and distribution of a press release through newswire services which reach a broad range of consumer media as well as health and science journalists (such as PR Newswire and EurekAlert!)
 - Targeted pitching to health and science journalists and nutrition influencers to drive awareness of the research study(ies)



Social Media Marketing World

In early March, NWPB's Stephanie Barlow and Juliemar Rosado attended the Social Media Marketing World Conference in San Diego, CA. 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.

Here are some key takeaways:

- How to thrive in a story-first social media world? Storytelling – Know the story behind the product.
- Embrace Video – Get your feet wet with stories then move to short-form videos and work your way up.
- Consumers – Real stories are more important – engagement and personalization are key!



Telling the Year-Round Story of Watermelon



One of the Board’s key messages in the year-round availability of watermelon. To better tell this story and have beautiful photos and videos to do so, the Board embarked on the Year-Round Story project a couple years ago. Some of the images but most especially the videos, can be found on the new watermelon.org at <https://www.watermelon.org/watermelon-101/year-round-story/>. The marketing and communications programs use these to teach audiences about watermelon’s availability. The images and video components have continued to be used for other projects as well.



Supplier Database

Sign up to be a part of the NEW National Watermelon Promotion Board’s Supplier Database! Each year the NWPB participates in multiple trade shows to reach buyers and the new opt-in only Supplier Database will be THE resource for retail and foodservice buyers looking for watermelon. Look for the Supplier Database on the new [watermelon.org/industry](https://www.watermelon.org/industry).

Interested in opting in to the new Supplier Database? Visit the Database [entry form](https://www.watermelon.org/supplier-form/) (on the website at <https://www.watermelon.org/supplier-form/>), email supplierdatabase@watermelon.org or call 407-657-0261.

Supplier Form

If you play a role in the Watermelon industry and would like to be listed in the [Watermelon Supplier Database](#), please fill out the following form. After we review your information, you will be added to the public search page.

Business Name: *

Contact First Name: * **Contact Last Name:** *

Phone: * **Fax:** *

Email: *

Address: * **Website:** *

Role in Industry (check all that apply):*

<input type="checkbox"/> Wholesaler	<input type="checkbox"/> Packer	<input type="checkbox"/> Shipper	<input type="checkbox"/> Processor
<input type="checkbox"/> U.S. Grower	<input type="checkbox"/> Importer (into U.S.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Customs Broker	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Foreign Grower	<input type="checkbox"/> Exporter (into U.S.)	<input type="checkbox"/> Broker	<input type="checkbox"/> Seed
<input type="checkbox"/> Bin/Carton			

Area of Origin (check all that apply):*

<input type="checkbox"/> Southeast U.S.	<input type="checkbox"/> Southwest U.S.	<input type="checkbox"/> Panama	<input type="checkbox"/> Honduras
<input type="checkbox"/> Northeast U.S.	<input type="checkbox"/> West U.S.	<input type="checkbox"/> Nicaragua	<input type="checkbox"/> Guatemala
<input type="checkbox"/> Midwest U.S.	<input type="checkbox"/> Mexico	<input type="checkbox"/> Costa Rica	<input type="checkbox"/> El Salvador
<input type="checkbox"/> Other			

Volume:*

<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1M lbs. (Roughly up to 25 acres)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1M to 4 M lbs. (Roughly 25-100 acres)	<input type="checkbox"/> Greater than 4M lbs. (Over 100 acres)
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