



Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD

Dear Industry Members,

First and foremost, I hope this message finds you and your loved ones well. I am fortunate to report that at NWPB we are all healthy and are diligently working on realignment of Board resources.

It is always our goal at NWPB to not only serve the watermelon industry by promoting watermelon's amazing benefits, but also keep you well informed about how we are doing so. We at the NWPB have pivoted from planned marketing activities to those more conducive to the current landscape. In this special edition of the Watermelon Update, you'll find a detailed overview of those activities, outlined by department as follows:



Communications

- Special flight of YouTube television commercial - April through June flight of our National YouTube television commercial highlighting watermelon's health benefits and showing watermelon value and versatility
- Amplify hydration and vitamin C health benefits and at-home usage in social media post calendar
- Partner promos on Instagram Live with #WatermelonWednesday Home Workout and Watermelon "Quarantini" Beverage Recipes
- "Fun in the Kitchen with Kids" national paid feature syndication
- Jump with Jill "digital" live tour reaching virtual students and teachers with lessons, video content, PE classes and more
- MasterClass media event for press and editors goes virtual in July

Foodservice

- Staying up to date with changes to Foodservice for the industry
- Digital outreach and in-office deliveries inspire Foodservice media with watermelon
- Foodservice refocus to support takeout and delivery opportunities
- Reaching culinarians and culinary educators with digital Watermelon Culinary Curriculum

Retail & International Marketing

- Actively distributing Retail Kit and advertorial released April 8
- Ibotta redemption offer planned for early summer
- Shoppable recipe activation with Fexy Media in development
- Independent grocer outreach via *Live. Balanced* activation kit
- Retail and international account management teams at the ready

As we rigorously work through this unprecedented time, we will continue to adjust marketing and promotional efforts per market outlook to positively position watermelon. Find out more information and specifics about each program below. You can also always find out the latest news with NWPB on our newly launched website – a great tool for all audiences.

As always, do not hesitate to reach out to myself or any Board staff with questions or concerns.

Mark Arney,
Executive Director, National Watermelon Promotion Board

Communications

- **Social Media Posting**

While we pivoted to post more at-home resources and USDA-approved health benefits, and why watermelon is a smart value and savvy choice for families, we further implemented a 2x weekly post addition of Vitamin C and Hydration health benefits. That is for our big three: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Watermelon is a happy fruit, a sweet treat, a great value and even a teaching tool. We want consumers to really understand the most basic health benefits built in: hydration (92% water) and Vitamin C (25%, an excellent source).

- **Partner Promo on Instagram Live: Watermelon Wednesday Home Workout and Watermelon “Quarantini” Beverage Recipes**

A longtime fitness partner of NWPB is The Fit Fork, and on Wednesday April 8th hosted an at-home kettlebell circuit workout using watermelon as the weights (1pm eastern @WatermelonBoard Instagram). The following Wednesday, April 15, she hosted a recipe demonstration using that watermelon to make a “quarantini” and other beverages, stressing the versatility, flavor pairing and health of watermelon in beverages.

- **Paid Feature Syndication**

We budgeted to do two Family Features this fiscal year, and the outlet reached out proactively to ask for at-home content for their subscribers (thousands of weekly community papers, magazines, etc.). We drafted a feature showcasing two watermelon recipes to be created for and with kids: the Watermelon Sandwich Cookies made from watermelon, frosting and blueberry pancakes, and also the Frosted Watermelon Cookie Cutouts. Both recipes showcase versatility, stretching that watermelon’s value and usage, and show parents what to do with that whole watermelon that is a fun activity to do together.

- **Jump with Jill Digital Live Tour**

The in-school JWW program has pivoted to create an online version of their live tour, offering parents at home enriching video content that educates children about healthy eating and physical fitness. Since they cannot give away the Action Packs in schools right now, they’re putting together a social giveaway for PE Teachers, many of whom are making their own video PE classes for virtual learning.

The live rock & roll nutrition show *Jump with Jill* makes watermelon rock for kids and families with integrations across platforms. While essential for everyone’s safety, #staysafestayhome has had a tremendous impact on the live tour. It’s the main way they connect with their audiences. So they are taking this time at home to make a digital version of the show they are calling #JumpWithJillDigitalTour filled with brand new content made while they are off stage - unplugged songs, dances, workouts, activities, and tutorials. They will also repost previous content that teachers can utilize to create their online coursework for students. With everyone at home, the Jump with Jill metrics are higher than ever.

- **MasterClass Press Event in NYC**

We were faced with a decision: delay until the fall (or later), or pivot to a virtual summertime event. We’ll be hosting the Watermelon Master Classes for invited media online in July. Our FLMH agency partner is working out how to pitch and invite media contacts with a special mailing themed to the Master Class, and finding the right “hosts” who are experienced with online hosting.

- **Queens and Associations' Digital Promos**

We hosted our first Zoom (video conferencing) meeting for the queen coordinators to see who is doing what online and how we can share, help, amplify, and extend that reach. MarDel hosted a 'Quarantine with the Queen' Facebook video series, and Illiana posted a 'Watermelon Craft' activity for Easter. We'll share these on our own social media pages, along with some of the growing stories that are being posted with the onset of the domestic season. If you are doing any of these types of posts, please share with us by tagging @WatermelonBoard so we can also amplify! Our own Grower Stories series is still in the works.

- **Podcast Advertising**

As people adjust to shelter in place orders around the world due to the coronavirus pandemic, new behaviors are impacting almost every industry and that includes podcasts. While at first, you might think podcast listener numbers would be up with the extra time many people have on hand, it's actually the opposite, here's why.

In the US, podcast audiences are down 10% to as much as 20% over the last two weeks of March according to data from Podtrac. While that might sound strange considering that many people have a lot more free time with shelter in place orders, what is likely happening here is that normal routines like listening to podcasts on the commute to work isn't happening as day-to-day routines have been disrupted.

Watermelon will be advertised on podcasts this fiscal year, but until routines resume and listenership is up, NWPB is delaying entering this advertising space to maintain the best value for our dollars later in the season.

- **Media Monitoring**

Listening is as important now as it ever was, in how people are communicating, what is resonating, and how people feel about our product and about the larger discussions of food, safety, family, health and more. NWPB investment in media monitoring spans all 12 months of the year, and as we approach domestic season with higher visibility and frequent mentions, we receive monthly (turning to weekly) media monitoring reports from FLM Harvest linking to the top watermelon mentions on the topics of health, recipes, lifestyle, beauty, use the whole watermelon and foodservice. Watermelon is mentioned with health and with recipes in Yahoo Lifestyle, MSN Food and Drink, Healthline, Forbes, USA Today, BuzzFeed and hundreds of others.

- **Ross Chastain Racing**

NASCAR Truck Series and Xfinity Series driver Ross Chastain, also known as the Melon Man, may not be driving live in races at the moment, but he has been participating in eNASCAR's iRacing airing on Fox. Ross's impressive statistics from 2019 have earned him a passionate and dedicated social media following, whether he's on track or at the farm. The watermelon partnership continues in 2020, with key messages for watermelon being shared by Ross in his own voice but promoting the health, value and versatility of watermelon. He was back home in South Florida on the farm and NBC followed him. "To help my sponsors and help my partners, promote watermelons and sell more to promote the racing side and my family. You take racing out of it for a little bit, now's my chance to be down here for a little bit."

iRacing is a virtual racing platform that NASCAR has tapped into for drivers and teams to bring to the public while a return to the tracks is for the moment anticipated for May 9 at Martinsville Speedway in Virginia. The popularity of iRacing with FOX Sports broadcasting a simulcast on national television brought 910,000 viewers in its first week and 1.3 million the next.

- **YouTube Campaign**

We were able to activate a April-June flight of our YouTube television commercial highlighting watermelon's health benefits and showing watermelon served in many forms. The ad is national in scope, targeting families, health and fitness-minded individuals and primary household shoppers. Historically, this particular ad has performed incredibly well, surpassing industry average with a view rate over 50% and at a cost of \$0.01 to \$0.03 cents per view. In fact, we've pulled together a year's worth of YouTube budget for this realignment of resources for highest visibility of the ad possible on the national level. View the ad: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfFdoaq6v5s>

Foodservice

- **Staying up to date with changes to Foodservice for the industry**

The Foodservice industry is being devastated by COVID-19 and the business has changed forever. According to [new research from the National Restaurant Association](#), the long term effects are yet to be seen but with millions of lost jobs, billions of dollars in lost sales and potentially upwards of 10% of restaurants never reopening, this will forever change the Foodservice landscape.

Commercial Foodservice is approaching the COVID-19 pandemic in different ways depending on segment, restaurant type, etc. Some are closing temporarily, such as buffets and steakhouses where business models cannot be transformed to successfully move forward with takeout and delivery. Many restaurants have special offers such as BOGO meals and free delivery, whether on their own or through third-parties. Some are offering pantry essentials for purchase, while others are offering meal kits. Restaurants are also offering family meals to offer consumers a break from cooking and cleaning and flavors usually saved for Foodservice experiences. Lastly, some chains are offering community support such as free meals for first responders, food bank partnerships, etc. All of the new initiatives are being offered as contactless as possible.

From a marketing perspective, operators have been quick to update messaging. Websites speak to support and community. Even images have been updated to show takeout, delivery, etc., instead of dining rooms and plate ware. Some even show gloves and masks on employees. Menu items and promotions have been adjusted to meet consumer desires (comfort food is back!) and to ensure quality shines through takeout and delivery.

Noncommercial Foodservice is adjusting in different ways depending on the format. Business and Industry (B&I) is shut down in most cases due to many working from home. K-12 Foodservice is pivoting to packaged solutions for to-go meals, with some students picking up multiple meals at a time. College and University (C&U) is a mix with some still open with takeout only and others completely closed. Healthcare is the only Foodservice segment not devastated due to increased demand to feed patients and staff. Other segments of the industry such as independent restaurants and C&U are setting up to help this segment in need.

Distributors are trying to find ways to work with suppliers and move product by partnering with retail, selling direct to consumers, and turning operators into grocers. The innovation and creativity throughout the Foodservice supply chain has already shown the Foodservice industry is resilient and committed to feeding consumers, regardless of the obstacles.

- **Digital outreach and in-office deliveries inspire Foodservice media with watermelon**

Foodservice media help the NWPB reach operators with education and inspiration. With the cancellation of the National Restaurant Show and International Foodservice Editorial Council's Bubble Party, the Board is exploring opportunities to reach Foodservice media in their offices. The Board is exploring a partnered food delivery with other sponsors of the Bubble Party, to bring the party to them. The menu would highlight watermelon and support local caterers or independent Foodservice operators when they need it most.

The Board is continuing work with the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) on recipe development with an operator spokesperson. Working with an operator gives the recipes even more credibility to other operators because they know it will work in the kitchen. Understanding new content will not be filmed as scheduled this spring, the CIA is promoting existing watermelon content through their channels and the Board is pitching those recipes to Foodservice media outlets.

Although K-12 Foodservice is operating much differently with virtual school being the norm, the Board has continued outreach to K-12 Foodservice through Healthyschoolrecipes.com. Adding to watermelon recipes, the Board has expanded messaging with a cutting and yield resource. This piece can be printed for in-kitchen use or shared digitally. The Board is working on blog and social promotions of this educational information in addition to the recipes.

- **Foodservice refocus to support takeout and delivery opportunities**

The NWPB's Foodservice connections are deep and have grown exponentially over the last five years. Understanding operator partners are revamping their operations or maybe just riding out the storm, the Board is working to maintain contacts as appropriate being respectful of operator priorities.

To reach operators with education and inspiration in the absence of in-person opportunities, the Board will update or create new resources highlighting watermelon shelf-life and approachable watermelon menu items good for takeout and delivery menus. This timely information will be shared with contacts as appropriate.

As of now, existing promotions will move forward as planned just delayed due to locations being closed or the lack of dining room service. The Board will re-evaluate promotion requirements and compensation as the circumstances evolve. From a menu perspective, support might include grocery items when watermelon is sold and from a communication perspective, digital and social elements will become even more relevant.

- **Reaching culinarians and culinary educators with digital Watermelon Culinary Curriculum**

The existing Watermelon Culinary Curriculum is seeing an uptick in use. Culinarians who have more time for ongoing education are looking for free opportunities to earn ongoing education credits through the American Culinary Federation (ACF). The Board's curriculum provides five credits upon completion. Additionally, culinary educators are using the curriculum as their classes are now completely online. The Center for the Advancement of Foodservice Educators (CAFE) conference has been cancelled but the Board will work with CAFE to further promote this valuable digital asset. Other sponsorships are being reviewed including a contest or award program. Finally, already in the works, the Curriculum is going through a revamp to update outdated information and add new lessons on Pickling and Fermentation and Watermelon on Beverage Menus.

Retail & International Marketing

- Actively distributing Retail Kit and advertorial released April 8
- Ibotta redemption offer planned for early summer
- Shoppable recipe activation with Fexy Media in development
- Independent grocer outreach via *Live. Balanced* activation kit
- Retail and international account management teams at the ready

International Marketing

- In constant communication with points of contact and updating strategies to incorporate more digital outreach in both retail and consumer-facing landscapes

Retail Account Management

- NWPB is providing continuous communication to the retail account management team in the form of crop updates and promotional tips that include 100% usage, value, and health that have been relayed to their retail contacts
- Team is reporting that most of their contacts have been responsive, are working remote and are optimistic and excited about watermelon promotion
- NWPB is working with the retail team on alternate promotional strategies, shifting to more digital and Supermarket RD outreach opportunities where applicable and available

New retail kit available in physical and digital formats – Retailers section of watermelon.org

- Designed so retailers may more effectively market watermelon
 - Components include peak production, value, selection and nutrition education, consumer research, marketing tips and more
- Retail Kit advertorial released the morning of April 8
- Several kit requests have been received and mailed out
- Very positive feedback and response
 - “I really enjoyed the digital edition of the watermelon retail kit. Between the chart offering fruit costs per serving and the surveys suggesting what consumers do and do not know regarding watermelon handling and prep, I was sold.”
 - “This is a beautiful and well-thought out kit!”

Other digital programs in development

- Ibotta Redemption Offer
 - Known as the “shopping app that pays you back,” the Ibotta retail app has 35 million downloads, a third of them active and engaged on the app. How it works: Users unlock the offer on the app, purchase the item, scan the receipt and earn cashback
 - Last campaign activation results from March 2020): Reach of over 32 million impressions and almost 38,000 redemptions. Of the 38,000 redemptions, 35,362 were new redeemers (had never unlocked a watermelon offer and purchased it).
- Fexy Media partnership
 - A collection of millennial focused food media and recipe websites that act as a top of the funnel for the path-to-purchase technology. Relish is a path to purchase technology platform for food purchases, and other related products by connecting customer inspired media content related to purchasable products to fast and convenient purchasing channels, driving transactions.
- *Live.Balanced* Partnership
 - Wellness programming to independent grocers designed to drive sales across the total store and engage shoppers with multi-channel educational touch points to help them plan and prepare healthier meals at home. Turn-key activation kits will be created to provide retailers with compelling wellness messaging to address consumer needs throughout the year.