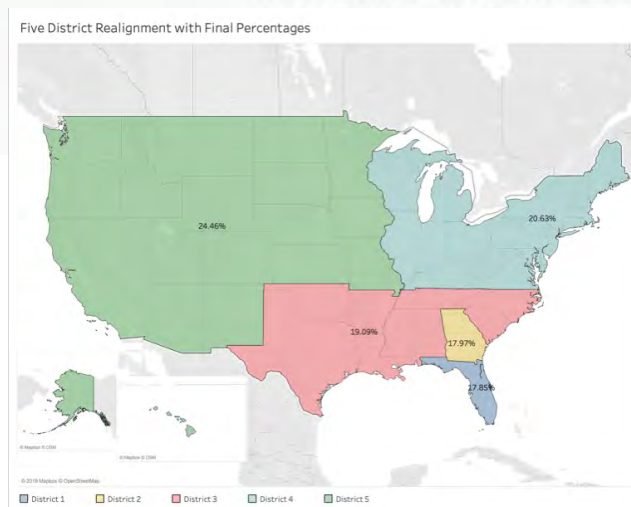






Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



Watermelon Research and Promotion Plan Realignment Proposed Rule

All Comments Must be Submitted by May 27, 2020

Published in the Federal Register on April 27, 2020, this [proposal](#)  invites comments on realigning the representation on the National Watermelon Promotion Board prescribed in the Watermelon Research and Promotion Plan by reducing the number of production districts and reducing the number importers on the Board, accordingly. This action would contribute to effective administration of the program. Interested persons are invited to submit written comments concerning this proposed rule. All comments must be submitted by May 27, 2020 through the Federal e-rulemaking [portal](#) . For further information please contact Stacy Jones King, Agricultural Marketing Specialist, Promotion and Economics Division, Specialty Crops Program, AMS, USDA, 1400 Independence Avenue SW, Room 1406– S, Stop 0244, Washington, DC 20250– 0244; telephone: (202) 731–2117; facsimile: (202) 205–2800; or electronic mail: Stacy.JonesKing@usda.gov.

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YouTube Early Ad Statistics

The April through June flight of our YouTube television commercial highlighting watermelon's health benefits and showing watermelon served in many forms is live. The ad is national in scope, targeting families, health and fitness-minded individuals and primary household shoppers. View the ad: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sfFdoaq6v5s> 

Early results for the date range of April 1 - April 23 show that key takeaways are:

1. Campaign continues to show a low CPV (\$0.01).
2. Incredible **average view rate at 58%**.
3. Foodies audience holds the highest view rate at 63% while Family-Focused holds the lowest at 53%. Nonetheless, we're still seeing over **50% across all audiences**.
4. On average, the 'parents of' audiences are more inclined to click on the ad than they are to watch the video to completion.
5. Device behavior has changed quite a bit from a couple months prior. TV screens hold the largest share of impressions while computers hold the lowest.
6. Aside from 'other,' it appears New York is holding the largest share of impressions. Combined with TV screen devices being in the lead, we can conclude that COVID-19 has impacted how people view/interact with this TrueView ad.

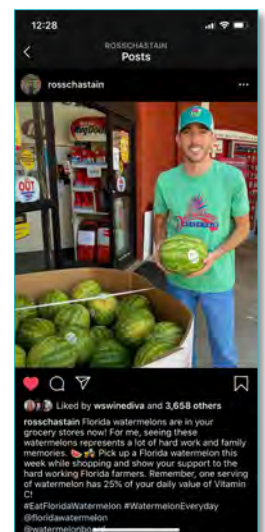
Pre-Roll Video Metrics	
Total Cost	Impressions
\$11,250 ↑ 4,402.8%	2,414,182 ↑ 5,403.2%
Video Views	Clicks
1,395,703 ↑ 5,923.8%	2K ↑ 7,041.38%
View Rate	Cost per View
57.8% ↑ 9.46%	\$0.01 ↓ -25.2%



Ross Chastain iRacing and Farming

iRacing has moved from week one on FOX Sports broadcasting to mainstream FOX, and the number of viewers continues to hold at-home audiences captive with 1.2 million viewers weekly. At the same time, Melon Man Ross Chastain returned to his Florida watermelon roots to help with the onset of the season, harvesting and packing watermelons while taking his fans for a different kind of ride, watching along as watermelons go from the field to the store.

Recently announced, NASCAR is attempting to host a closed door event (meaning no fans) on May 16 at Homestead Motor Speedway in an attempt to restart the season, but this is not a definite return to the track for drivers and teams.



Watermelon.org Website – Refreshed and Reformatted Rich Content for Consumers and Audiences

Consumer research shows that people don't know what to do with the whole watermelon; they're not buying it because it's too big. But in fact, it's 100% edible, and hundreds of recipes, carvings, crafts and activity sheets are available at watermelon.org for at-home use.

“Now, more than ever, consumers value at-home resources,” said Barlow. “Our recipes and carvings pages have historically made up about 50% of the site traffic, and now we have easier access to those resources stretching the value of the watermelon as more than a sweet treat but a healthy choice that offers diverse options to use that whole watermelon.”

Having soft launched in February 2020, the new [watermelon.org](https://www.watermelon.org) website is home to all things watermelon. Not since 2015 has the fresh front of watermelon had a facelift. Now in 2020, the new Watermelon.org is here. Benefits include:

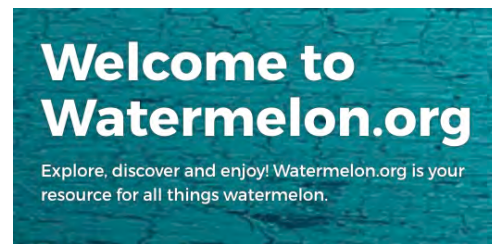
- Fully customizable pages built from an abundance library of rich components
- Fun and playful animations
- Recipes and carvings pages are coded for rich search result snippets
- Fully integrated, fluid responsive website that tethers to not one, but two fully customized databases and runs succinctly
- Site is built to be more efficient from an SEO and organic search perspective aiding in driving traffic to our site
- Ubiquitous wayfinding and navigation that allows desired content to be bubbled up to the surface and promotes quicker, more digestible bits of engagement for users



The new site design promotes return visitation with automated content buckets and the ability to make real-time optimizations around many topics and pieces of content.

Stephanie Barlow, senior director of communications, states “Generally speaking, we uplifted the design aesthetic to be much more vivid and to align more with people’s lifestyles and behaviors. We bridged many diverse audience groups and defined smart sections that tailor messaging and content to exactly their specific wants and needs, reducing the friction. Although consumer-focused, the website speaks to Retailers, Foodservice and more.

Ultimately, the new website creates an easier gateway for shareable content, backlinks and referral traffic from our owned platforms to unique partners.



Winter 2020 Watermelon Consumer Research

Each year the NWPB measures consumers' attitudes and awareness toward watermelon and compares it year-over-year. The research delves into topics such as purchase behavior, food safety, quality, and health and nutrition. [Consumer research](#) helps to focus consumer outreach and findings are used to educate retail and foodservice contacts to understand consumers' attitudes toward watermelon. The surveys traditionally take place in late summer and late winter.

The winter 2020 survey was completed by 1,249 primary food shoppers at the end of March through the beginning of April. After the results were analyzed it was determined that COVID-19 did not have an impact on perceptions of watermelon and other fruit. Additionally, the pandemic did not alter the results of the survey in comparison to previous surveys. Key finds include:

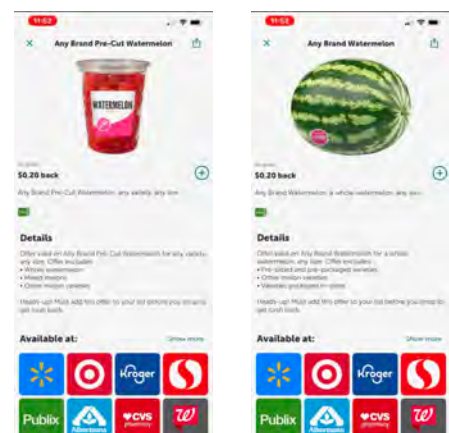
- Watermelon scores very high relative to other fruits in terms of taste, safety, value, healthiness, and freshness.
- Taste and watermelon's refreshing qualities are the main reasons watermelon is purchased.
- Availability and perceived value are the two main reasons consumers may not purchase watermelon.
- Knowing how to pick a good watermelon is important for consumers. Data suggests that consumers are better able to select a watermelon each year.
- Growers saw a decrease in blame when food quality issues arise.
- Watermelon quality issues remained steady from Summer to Winter.
- How to select and health benefits are the key points consumers would like to see displayed with watermelon at retail.
- Consumers want fruit that provides them with value. They are looking for fruit where they can use all of it and use it in multiple ways.
- Most consumers are not eating fruit daily nor are they eating more than one or two servings. However half of the consumers indicate they intend to eat more fruit in the next year.

The full report, as well as previous surveys can be found on the website under [Industry Research](#).



Ibotta Shopping App March Results

The Ibotta redemption program completed over 3 weeks from March 6 to March 25 resulted in approximately 38,000 redemptions, which equates to actual product sold nationally that was incentivized by the offers. The offer was split between new redeemers and past redeemers. Of the 38,000 redemptions, 35,362 were new redeemers. The offer resulted in a reach of over 32 million impressions.





Watermelon Culinary Curriculum Continues to be an Important Asset



Less than three years after its launch the [Watermelon Culinary Curriculum](#) has been submitted for American Culinary Federation credit by current chefs more than 600 times! These numbers do not account for the numerous times the curriculum has been used by culinary educators in their classrooms across the country. Fifty nine percent of respondents said they use watermelon on their menus or in their classroom and 99% said the curriculum met or exceeded their expectations. This tool is even more valuable since most schools have moved to virtual learning. Looking at web traffic to these materials, March 1-April 22, traffic **more than doubled** and time on page **increased by a full minute** versus the same time last year. The NWPB is working with the Center for the Advancement of Foodservice Educators and the American Culinary Federation to continue promoting the curriculum in addition to updating the current content and adding new lessons.



NWPB Invests in Watermelon Beverage Research to Propel Menu Growth

According to [2019 Datassentials MenuTrend Research](#), watermelon is featured on 3.4% of non-alcoholic beverage menus and has experienced triple digit growth over the last ten years (2008 to 2018). Watermelon, with 5.4% penetration, is among the fastest growing fruits offered in smoothies. One in ten restaurants serving alcoholic beverages feature a drink with watermelon, more than doubling in the last ten years (2008 to 2018). Watermelon is among the fastest growing fruits in alcoholic beverages, up 54% over the last four years (2014 to 2018). As watermelon beverages continue to grow on menus, the NWPB conducted beverage research and ideation exploring beverage opportunities with innovations in non-alcoholic and alcoholic cocktails. A strong focus was placed on freshness, creativity, health and wellness, and new and current trends. The project included product analysis creating a variety of watermelon applications using the whole fruit including juices, tinctures, syrups, infusions, mixers, garnishes, bitters, and more. Finally, recipes were developed for no-abv, low-abv and classic cocktails. The final report has been posted on the website and will be used when pitching beverage usage on foodservice menus as well as for use at NWPB sponsored events. To learn more see the report: [Beverage Innovation for the National Watermelon Promotion Board 2020.](#)



March Y/Y Social Media Impressions and Engagements Climb

March 2020 Social Overview (vs. March 2019)

Facebook:

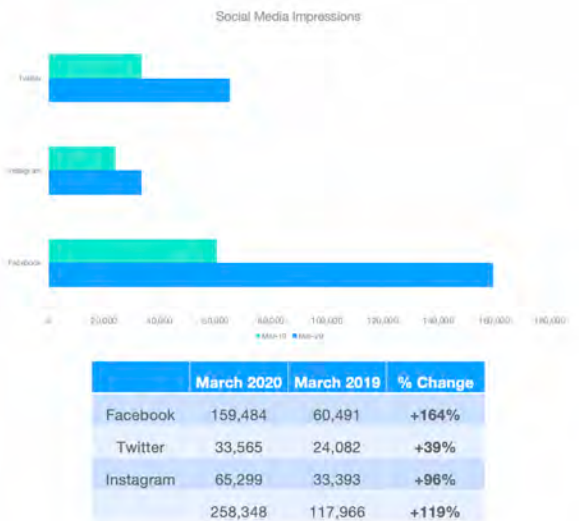
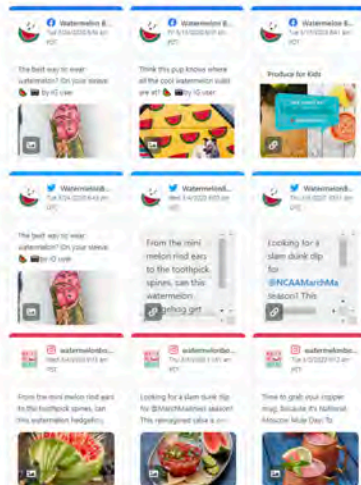
- 10 posts (vs. 31 posts)
- 599 comments (vs. 46 comments)

Twitter:

- 11 posts (vs. 29 posts)
- 7 replies/comments (vs. 7 replies)

Instagram

- 12 posts (vs. 23 posts)
- 39 comments (vs. 82 comments)

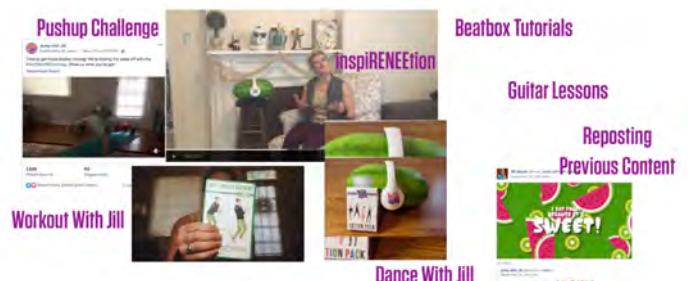


As our country began sheltering in place in March, and shopping habits were changing, certainly consumers were taking to social media to look for resources: recipe inspiration, budget-friendly shopping ideas, and also to connect with each other and feel together while at home. The Communications team took a look at March 2020 social media analytics and compared against the same month in 2019, and we are shown a very uplifting result -- consumers are engaging with our strategic content much more year over year. Additionally, while looking at these two graphs, notice that impressions are way up, and engagements are up even though the actual *number* of posts are fewer. We are responding to, and engaging with watermelon consumers carefully and thoughtfully yet messaging in a way that is heard about watermelon's benefits, increasing demand and hopefully inspiring them to go to the store to purchase.



Jump with Jill Virtual Tour

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 Jump with Jill connects with kids -- in schools. The Jump with Jill team transitioned 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 are also reposting 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.

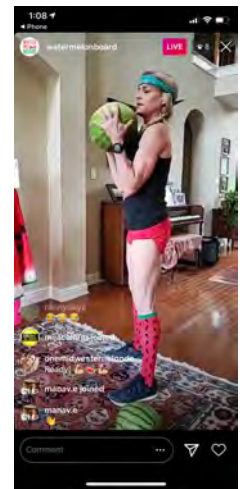


Instagram Lives with The Fit Fork



On April 8th and on April 15th, a longtime watermelon partner, Jennifer Fisher of The Fit Fork took over the Watermelon Board Instagram to broadcast Instagram Lives with the #WatermelonWednesday hashtag. The first one was a Watermelon Workout utilizing a watermelon like a kettlebell weight for some blood pumping at-home circuit training. Jennifer delivered on fitness and fun, while also inspiring those who wanted to participate along to go out and purchase some watermelon. After the workout, she cut into a big juicy slice to refresh and replenish. Then on April 15th, Jennifer demonstrated two watermelon beverage recipes at home, a coconut smoothie that was sweet and decadent and also a watermelon margarita, made directly inside the watermelon using an immersion blender!

Jennifer incentivized participants to comment and like during the Lives to win some watermelon prizes, like a watermelon yoga mat and some watermelon tumbler glasses. Both broadcasts were great “Live” editions to the social media editorial calendar that we’ve pumped up at the beginning of this domestic season, and showcase watermelon usage in unique and creative ways, stressing the importance of fun, fitness, family and food -- with watermelon!



New Retail Kit Available!

With the domestic watermelon season set to kick off, NWPB is offering a brand new [Retail Kit](#) so retailers may more effectively promote and market watermelon. The retail kit is a resource in both digital and printed formats designed to give general knowledge about the category as well as information about merchandising tips, health benefits and consumer purchasing habits. It is appropriate for retailers of all sizes as well as to the watermelon industry for your customers. NWPB announced the available of the kit via The Produce News in early April and so far, the reception to the kit has been extremely positive:

- “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!”
- “The team did a beautiful job on this – great presentation!”

If you’d like a physical copy of the retail kit mailed to you, please contact us at retail@watermelon.org.



Family Features: Kid-Friendly Creativity in the Kitchen

The first print and online syndicated Family Feature article was launched in April, offering watermelon at-home content for thousands of weekly community papers, magazines, and online outlets. The article showcases 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. Titled **Kid-Friendly Creativity in the Kitchen** and launched on 4/15, the feature has been placed in 1,026 print and online publications. These placements have total impressions of 169,553,409 and a total ad equivalency of \$646,373 (on a \$5,995 investment).



Queen Coordinator Meetings



While we have yet to determine the date for a watermelon queen media training session, the NWPB has been keeping in touch with all of the Associations by holding zoom chats, giving everyone a chance to share their promotional activities and pivots during these unprecedented times. We are helping to foster a sense of community among everyone with a digital footprint, and offering a place to share learnings and opportunities of what the queens are able to do online on social media.



Watermelon on the Menu

In April, mission-based restaurant chain Tacos 4 Life, based in Jackson, Mississippi, brought back their Watermelon Strawberry Punch. They blend watermelon, strawberry, fresh-squeezed lemon juice and more to make this refreshing drink.



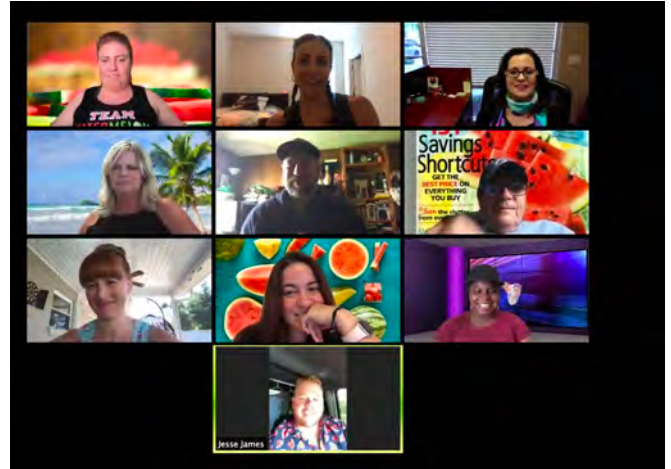
NWPB Connections

All Staff Meetings – April 1st, 8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th

Queen Coordinator Zoom Meetings – April 2nd, 9th and 23rd

Retail/International Team Conference Calls – April 13th, 14th, 15th, 20th, 24th, 27th

IFEC Raise Your Spirits Happy Hour – April 23rd



Watermelon in the Wild



Check out recently spotted merchandising and promotion flavor pairing for our favorite fruit!