

NEWS RELEASE

National Watermelon Promotion Board FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Watermelon Master Classes for Media Educate, Inform and Inspire

Virtual Cooking and Cocktail Classes Create Content for Months to Come

Winter Springs, FL – September 8, 2020 -- The first of its kind, the Watermelon Virtual Master Classes were arguably one of the largest pivots of the Spring-Summer season for the communications program of the National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB). The challenge was to move an NYC-based freelance summertime media event to online: a virtual version for the at-home world of media and influencers to educate, inform and inspire watermelon content and coverage.

The reinvention of the media event turned into three separate virtual events with three different topics, three different presenters with three sets of recipe ideas, sending out three different curated boxes of watermelon goodies for the media to enjoy and utilize for their Watermelon Master Classes. The strategies were tri-fold:

- Lean on “Back to Basics” materials to educate at-home cooks on easy ways to get creative with watermelon
- Leverage “Use the Whole Watermelon” messaging to encourage use of the rind and juice
- Develop strong relationships with members of the media and influence their watermelon content for months to come

NWPB spent weeks pitching media contacts from major publications, in a time when much of the country was in a “shelter in place” order, to offer an at-home, free event to create content and excitement about the sweet summer staple. Additionally NWPB provided education focused on a year-round message to extend the seasonal reach and amplify watermelon’s appeal.

“We confirmed attendees across the country, rather than have to only host those based in the NYC-area. We sent out custom curated watermelon boxes with a mix of items related to each class and related to our brand: a logoed chef’s apron and a new kitchen knife, a cocktail shaker and food pun spatula, etc. The boxes generated excitement and enthusiasm for the classes, and each one was well attended... with the cameras turned ON!” said Stephanie Barlow, senior director of communications.

Further, the timing of the classes gave many attendees the opportunity to create their own watermelon content this summer, in time for National Watermelon Day and beyond.

Several attendees posted on their personal social pages, where media turn into influencers and endorse watermelon recipes, usage ideas and health benefits. In total, NWPB hosted **60 food editors, writers and media dietitians**. Their enthusiasm and delight over the events ensures earned media attention for watermelon to come for months.

“To date, we have nearly 40 social media posts and 15 articles covering these events, which wasn’t even one of the main strategies but it is additional earned content on their personal influencer networks. We look forward to building long lasting partnerships with writers and their publications in the coming year,” said Barlow.

These were the Watermelon Master Classes:

- *Watermelon Wellness* with Pam Smith, RDN featuring Salted Watermelon Woju, Watermelon Overnight Oats, Watermelon Poke Salad and a Watermelon Yogurt Smoothie
- *The Ultimate Watermelon Workshop* with cookbook authors Mark Scarbrough and Bruce Weinstein, creating Thai-inspired Watermelon Rind Salad, Curried Wheatberry Watermelon Salad and Watermelon, and Prosciutto and Mozzarella Skewers
- *Summer Sips Watermelon Cocktails* with Jordan Catapano from This Girls Walks into a Bar, mixing a Watermelon Rose Sangria, Watermelon Gimlet and a Summer into Fall Cocktail

Each of the classes incorporated watermelon key messages of health, value, versatility and year-round availability, but also gave attendees the opportunities to ask questions to the hosts or the watermelon experts from NWPB.

“The engaging questions were rampant throughout all the classes, asking everything from watermelon storage techniques to flavor pairings, or alternative ingredients when you couldn’t find elderflower liqueur or red wheat berries, which effectively made these events much richer than a plain recipe demonstration,” Barlow continued.

For more information and to explore the watermelon resources available to media and influencers including recipes, nutrition information and usage ideas, visit Watermelon.org.

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About National Watermelon Promotion Board

The National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB), based in Winter Springs, Florida, was established in 1989 as an agricultural promotion group to promote watermelon in the United States and in various markets abroad. Funded through a self-mandated industry assessment paid by more than 800 watermelon producers, handlers and importers, NWPB mission is to increase consumer demand for watermelon through promotion, research and education programs.

Watermelon packs a nutritious punch, with each serving providing an excellent source of Vitamin C (25%), a source of Vitamins A(8%) and B6 (8%), and a delicious way to stay hydrated (92% water), with only 80 calories. For additional information, visit www.watermelon.org.