



Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD

Dear Industry Members,

With the new year comes a renewed sense of optimism about the future of the watermelon industry. While 2020 brought with it many difficulties, as an industry, we adjusted, adapted and persevered. In refocusing our efforts and resources, we were able to succeed in meeting our mission.

Additionally, as an industry, I believe that we have been both resourceful and resilient. Last year, according to data pulled from USDA AMS Market News Portal, volume was up 4.2% over the prior five-year average. Revenue was up 24.0% to nearly \$1.3B over a \$200M increase over 2019.



While this year is sure to present new challenges, it will also bring new opportunities. Here at NWPB, we are well-equipped to successfully navigate what the future brings with inspired tenacity. We have much to look forward to this year strengthening watermelon’s position as a budget-friendly, nutritional powerhouse through consumers, retail and foodservice.

Lastly, the recent realignment of [Board districts](#) will allow us to efficiently collaborate with district representatives moving forward. On that note, I’d like to personally welcome our [new board members](#), who have agreed to serve their industry peers.

Should you ever have any questions or concerns, please reach out to myself or any Board staff.

Mark Arney, Executive Director, National Watermelon Promotion Board

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New Watermelon Commercial

Building on the successful airing and distribution of the watermelon television commercial through 2020, using reallocated budget, the communications program funded new video commercials through Eyekiss Films. The current television commercial shows a diverse group of people doing different physical activities, and reaching for watermelon after to snack on for replenishment. Called ‘Watermelon Simplicity,’ it had long lasting legs (five years!) reaching millions of consumers and inspiring them to enjoy watermelon for hydration and refueling.

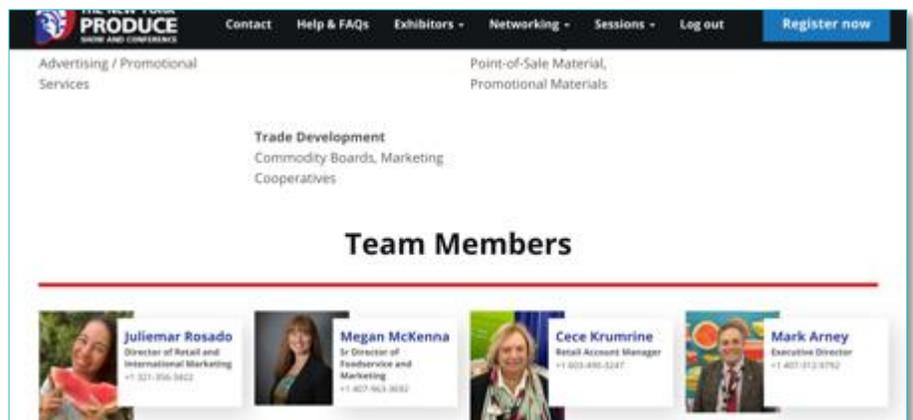


The new 2021 commercial follows up to the first series in a sense, but focuses on ‘Watermelon Wellness,’ an overall general well-being and healthy attitude promoting life’s simple pleasures throughout the different seasons. The full 30-second video and four 15-second seasonal cuts are available on [our YouTube channel](https://www.youtube.com/watermelonboard)  (www.youtube.com/watermelonboard). There is an additional whimsical ‘Watermelon Warrior’ spot that is more cinematic in feeling and specifically aimed at parents and caregivers, the demographic that our pre-roll commercials performed best with. Casting and costuming is ongoing, and will be completed by the end of the fiscal year. All of this video content will be worked into Watermelon Board social media and website editorial calendars for the next year and beyond. Additionally, we will explore streaming broadcast opportunities to air our commercials in the future.



New York Produce Show Goes Virtual

NWPB exhibited at The New York Produce Show and Conference December 9-11. Normally in-person, the tradeshow went virtual and included a packed schedule of educational and networking sessions. The platform continues to remain open outside of the show dates as a resource for continued networking and access to the recorded sessions.



StarChefs Recipe Contest Highlights Foodservice's Passion for Watermelon

StarChefs serves as a community, resource and platform for restaurant professionals who have a passion for food, beverage, and industry trends. They are a trusted brand for trend-spotting and recognizing emerging culinary & beverage talent and create original, industry-focused content driven by hundreds of tastings and interviews each year. The Board partnered with StarChefs to execute a Curated Sampling Campaign (a recipe contest) to reach foodservice with watermelon education and inspiration in place of an in-person event. The contest was broken into three categories; savory, pastry and bar.



To be accepted as a contestant, 252 operators answered a short survey about watermelon. The audience included independent, multi-unit, hotel, education and catering companies and most were executive chefs, corporate chefs, pastry chefs and bartenders. The survey found 99% of respondents said they would use watermelon on their menu while 48% said they use it on their menu year-round. Barriers for year-round use included seasonality, availability and quality. Margaritas, compressed watermelon, and salads were the most popular menu items by those utilizing the product and in alignment with these applications, cocktails, desserts and salads were the top usage ideas for menus.

Of the 252, 44 semifinalists were asked to submit recipes. There were 38 recipes received and the competition was fierce. The creativity and passion of the submissions really did shine with explanations of the chef/bartender's inspiration. The winners and runners-up per category were:



Smoke & Water by Trudy Thomas

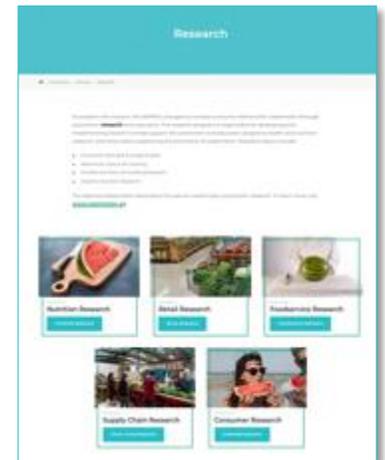
- Savory
 - Drew Ward of Artisanal Brewing Ventures with Charred Watermelon Soup, Chile-Lime Shrimp, Pickled Watermelon Rind, Jalapeno Crema
 - Christopher Williams of University of North Texas with Smoked Watermelon Sandwich with Hatch Chili Spread, Crispy Onions and Fresh Greens
- Pastry
 - Rochelle Cooper of Think Food Group with Rosewater Pavlova, Watermelon Rosé Sorbet, Sweet Cured Cucumber, Kiwi, Watermelon Chia, Lime, Mint
 - Rose Wilde of Red Bread with Whipped Cheesecake with Pistachio Shortbread, Watermelon Pudding and Cocoa Nibs
- Bar
 - Trudy Thomas of Gaylord Opryland with Smoke & Water: Ole Smoky Moonshine, Orange, Watermelon, Lemon, American Malt, Pink Sea Salt (pictured above)
 - Arianne Fielder of The Whiskey Project with The Rushmeyer: Vodka, Thai Chile Agave, Lime, Watermelon, Elderflower

In February the winners will be shared through StarChefs' digital and social channels, reaching more than 50,000 foodservice professionals across the country, foodservice sectors, and job titles. This audience is vetted to ensure they are foodservice professionals, making StarChefs a great partner for the foodservice program. These recipes will be used in outreach moving forward including on the website, pitched to media and potentially served during events.

Research Resources Available 24/7

Each year the Watermelon Board conducts research to support the communications and marketing programs but the research can also be useful to the watermelon industry. Many of the resources are available on the website in the Industry section at watermelon.org/industry and Board staff are happy to answer any questions and in some cases, offer custom reports. The [research](#) is broken into subcategories:

- [Consumer Research](#) measures attitudes and awareness toward watermelon, year-over-year. The research delves into topics such as purchase behavior, food safety, quality and nutrition. The website currently offers multiple years of summer and winter watermelon consumer research.
- [Retail Research](#) includes the ongoing work of Scan Data and Ad Tracking. IRI Retail Scan Data tracks volume & price collected from approximately 80% of US retail grocery sales and develops a historical base for year-over-year reporting. Numerator Ad Tracking provides data for retail ads and includes regional information in addition to types and formats of watermelon. Both reports are updated throughout the year. The Budget Friendly Produce Study and Watermelon Price Responsiveness Study can be found here as well.
- [Foodservice Research](#) includes the Watermelon MenuTrends Report which is updated every two to three years and tracks watermelon's growth and opportunities on foodservice menus. Additionally, a foodservice operator and consumer omnibus measure sentiment for watermelon in foodservice, both front and back of house.
- [Nutrition Research](#) features scientific research papers providing more details on the role that watermelon may play in promoting good health. Categories include Lycopene, Cardiovascular, Satiety and more.
- [Supply Chain Research](#) offers analytical tools for the watermelon industry using AMS Market News data to track FOB, movement, origin and other factors. The Watermelon Market Report and supporting Excel files are updated weekly, and can be downloaded for analysis.



Queen Coordinator Call: December

To close out the end of a very different year, NWPB staffers got together with the national and state watermelon queen coordinators to review and recap the year's worth of promotions and to learn about how the various associations would be effectively handling the next year's conventions and queen program. Many of the 2020 watermelon queens have agreed to serve a second year as their association's spokesperson and promotional ambassador, including our National Watermelon Queen, Paige Huntington. NWPB will continue to offer promotional tools and ideas, recipes and usage ideas for potential video content and connect with all of the associations' queen coordinators to keep spirits high with the oncoming domestic season and hopeful promotions ahead.

Fruity Flavors Family Features Holiday Recap

The holiday paid feature officially has closed through the Family Features syndicate. Launched on October 5th for holiday time feature placements and closed on January 11th, it earned placements in top sites like Yahoo Finance, Marketwatch and dozens of local market newspapers and online stations. The impressive ROI is 114:1 with 1,085 placements.



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| <p>Add Fruity Flavor and Fun to Holiday Desserts</p> <p>Release Date: 10/05/2020 Close Date: 01/11/2021</p> | <p>Placement Totals</p> <p>Placements: 1,085 Placement Impressions: 188,398,902</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Everything <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Earned Print <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Earned Digital Networks <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partner Digital Networks <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newswire | <p>Content Download Totals</p> <p>Downloads (Print and Digital): 140 Download Circulation / Digital Audience: 1,920,092</p> |
|--|--|---|--|



Watermelon Queen Training: Communications Coaching Session January 2020

NWPB sponsored a virtual *Communications Coaching Session* for our Watermelon Queens hosted by Carmine and Vanessa Gallo of Gallo Communications. This interactive class was different than past 'Telling the Watermelon Story' sessions and focused on building connections, practicing communications techniques, and learning tools and tips as life skills the girls will take beyond their watermelon promotion years.



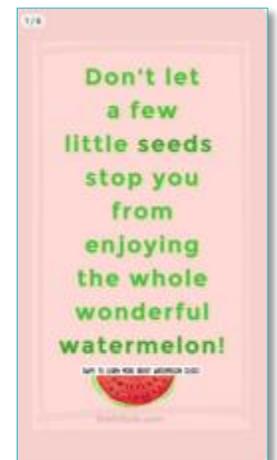
Foodservice Menu Ideation Support

In addition to supporting watermelon promotions with funds for point-of-sale materials, social media presence, and other menu promotion elements, the Board supports foodservice operators with menu ideation. Even during a time when foodservice is being stretched thin, operators recognize the importance of new and exciting menu items and watermelon’s consumer appeal. For interested operators, often inspired by trade show presence, the Board will review their menu and pantry list to develop menu concepts that fit their brand without adding many new SKUs. Sometimes this is where the partnership stops and they move forward with the concepts internally. For chains with small culinary teams, the Board will have them narrow down the concepts and demonstrate the selections in one of their restaurants or test kitchen to help them understand how to execute the recipes successfully but most importantly, how to use watermelon and make it shine. This is not limited to food menus but also includes beverage ideation. The Board is currently engaged in a few ideation projects and hopes to share the success soon.



The Fit Fork

Longtime fitness partner and influencer Jennifer Fisher from The Fit Fork recently wrote about healthy lifestyle in 2021 – including the importance of both mind and body positivity – and how watermelon can relate. Jennifer’s mantra for the new year “Don’t let seeds stop you from enjoying the whole watermelon” resonated with her blog, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter and Facebook followers. In addition to inspiring healthy happy living, Jennifer included some of her favorite watermelon recipes and information about eating watermelon seeds with “use the whole watermelon” messaging.



Watermelon on the Menu

Chef Eddie Ruiz at The Gardens of Avila Restaurant at Sycamore Springs in California offered an upscale Christmas menu to-go that includes a Roasted Watermelon entree with sweet potato mash, broccolini, and finished with vegan gravy.



2021/2022 Board of Directors Committee Assignments

| 2021/2022 Executive | District | Position | Term Ends |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Jordan Carter, Secretary/Treasurer, Cordele, GA | 3 | Handler | 2021 |
| Jesse Wiggins, Ex-Officio, Center, TX | | Ex-Officio | |
| Rob Gibson, Vero Beach, FL | 1 | Handler | 2023 |
| James Sharp, Kerly, NC | 2 | Producer | 2021 |
| John Lapide, Laurel, DE | 4 | Handler | 2022 |
| Kelly Partch, Brawley, CA | 5 | Handler | 2022 |
| Christian Murillo, Nogales, AZ | 6 | Importer | 2023 |

| 2021/2022 Marketing | District | Position | Term Ends |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Rich Chastain, Alva, FL (Chair) | 3 | Handler | 2021 |
| Matthew Solana, Autryville, NC | 2 | Handler | 2021 |
| Chris Elsie, Scottsdale, AZ | 5 | Handler | 2022 |
| Cody Smith, Decker, IN | 4 | Handler | 2022 |
| Steve Nichols, Lakeland, FL | 1 | Handler | 2023 |
| Kyler Bishop, Punta Gorda, FL | 1 | Producer | 2023 |

| 2021/2022 Communications | District | Position | Term Ends |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Luke Brown, Center, TX (Chair) | 2 | Producer | 2021 |
| Jeff Fawcett, Edinburg, TX | 6 | Importer | 2023 |
| Robert Greene, Ararbi, GA | 3 | Producer | 2021 |
| Dalton Borders, Edinburg, TX | 6 | Importer | 2021 |
| John Gee, Hemet, CA | 6 | Importer | 2021 |
| Blake Mouzin, Vincennes, IN | 4 | Producer | 2022 |

| 2021/2022 Foodservice | District | Position | Term Ends |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Christian Murillo, Nogales, AZ (Chair) | 6 | Importer | 2023 |
| Cody Buckley, San Antonio, TX | 2 | Handler | 2021 |
| Cassidy Carpenter, Clovis, NM | 5 | Producer | 2022 |
| Matthew Tanner, Pompano Beach, FL | 6 | Importer | 2023 |
| Chad Chastain, Punta Gorda, FL | 1 | Producer | 2023 |
| Craig Stokes, San Antonio, TX | | Public Member | 2023 |

| 2021/2022 Research Review | District | Position | Term Ends |
|--|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Jose Gomez, El Paso, TX, (Chair) | 6 | Importer | 2021 |
| Jacob Horrall, Oaktown, IN | 4 | Producer | 2022 |
| Chris Dyer, Mission, TX | 6 | Importer | 2023 |
| Lee Wroten, NWA | | Advisor | |
| Dr. Penny Perkins-Veazie, Human Health Institute | | Advisor | |

Watermelon Campaign Highlights So Far



The “How Do You Watermelon” campaign was launched in December and continues through the end of February. With a terrific industry response to an advertorial send from The Produce News, several watermelon brands and product suppliers are posting and amplifying the reach of the contest. Consumer posts so far have showed a range of creativity and watermelon usage in the winter, including snowflake cookie cutter cookies, an elegantly carved watermelon with holiday messages, and the year 2021 spelled out in watermelon “bricks” on a platter. Further outreach in the form of paid influencer partnerships who are posting in late January should further the reach of the promotion.



Upcoming NWPB Connections

NWPB Foodservice Committee Meeting - February 10th

NWPB Research Committee Meeting - February 10th

NWPB Marketing Committee Meeting - February 16th

NWPB Communications Committee Meeting - February 17th

NWA Meeting - February 18th

International Foodservice Editorial Council Winter Board Meeting - February 25th

