



# Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



## NWPB Board Meets In-Person; Keynote by Former Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue

On September 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> the Watermelon Board of Directors met for the first time in-person since February 2020. The evening of September 23<sup>rd</sup> was spent meeting new colleagues and catching up with old friends over a dinner filled with watermelon menu items from the communications and marketing programs.

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## Board Meeting Continued



September 24<sup>th</sup> was a full day of informative presentations with NWPB President Jordan Carter presiding over the meeting (pictured, middle above) and more networking. The meeting featured keynote speaker former Secretary of Agriculture, Sonny Perdue (pictured, left above). He shared his love of watermelon, insights into his time as Secretary and more. The rest of the morning included highlights from the Communications, Retail and International Marketing and Foodservice Programs and research reports including:

- 2021 Summer Consumer Research (learn more on page 3 of this Watermelon Update)
- Watermelon Retail Pricing & Trade Analytics
- Watermelon Menu Trends
- Nutrition Research for Watermelon and Its Impact on Human Health and Disease Issues of Public Concern

The day rounded out with Communications Training (NWPB Vice President Christian Murillo pictured, right above). **The next Board Meeting is scheduled for March 2nd in Orlando, Florida.**



## Watermelon in the News – Sizzle Reel Highlights

The Watermelon Board works with communications agency Curious Plot all year on watermelon media monitoring, capturing all mentions of Watermelon and organizing links and clips and magazine articles into categories like Recipes, Health, Lifestyle, Use the Whole Watermelon (UTWW) and Trends. At the end of summer, a sizzle reel is compiled to **highlight the best of the best** to show our Board Members and our industry. [View the sizzle reel here](#)  or for questions contact Stephanie Barlow, [sbarlow@watermelon.org](mailto:sbarlow@watermelon.org).



# Summer 2021 Consumer Research Survey Results

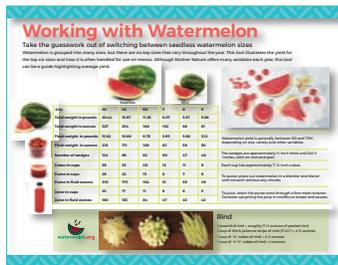
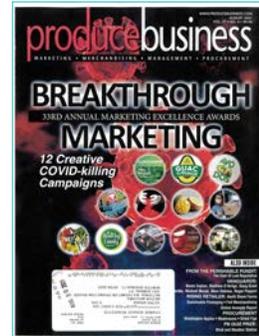
Each year the NWPB measures consumers' attitudes and usage of watermelon and compares it to year-over-year results. The research delves into topics such as purchase behavior, quality, and health and nutrition. Consumer research helps to focus consumer outreach and findings are used to educate retail and foodservice contacts to understand consumers' awareness of watermelon. This summer there were some new questions added to the survey to expand upon existing questions and takeaways. The survey was executed in August 2021 and completed by 1,127 consumers. [The full report is posted on watermelon.org, under Consumer Research in the Industry section.](https://www.watermelon.org)

## Survey key findings from the survey are as follows:

- Watermelon **outperforms other melons (cantaloupe and honeydew) on purchase, taste, value, and healthiness**. However, consumers like the taste more and purchase apples, bananas, grapes, and strawberries more frequently than watermelon.
- Liking the **taste is always a key driver of foods purchased** and taste ratings for watermelon are trending down.
  - Taste is the most common reason why consumers purchase watermelon.
  - Not liking the taste is also one of the most common reasons why consumers do not purchase watermelon.
  - Taste is the most commonly reported quality issue with watermelon.
- Most respondents believe that **watermelon is priced where it should be** with only 17% saying that watermelon is overpriced or too expensive compared to other fruits.
  - When compared to other fruits on value, watermelon is tied for 5<sup>th</sup> behind, oranges, bananas, strawberries, and blueberries.
- Watermelon consumption is being driven down by being too big/inconvenient, messy and the perceived waste.
- 61% of consumers primarily purchase their watermelon in a grocery store.
  - **Consumers desire additional information displayed with watermelon in retail stores.**
  - While most consumers who purchase say that they know how to pick a good watermelon, most consumers would still like information on how to pick a good one on a display in stores.
  - Consumers are also interested in health benefits, but there has also been a slight uptick in consumers' interest in recipe ideas, a possible trend to follow in the future.
- We see a **clear age segmentation in several areas**.
  - Younger age groups are less likely to like the taste of watermelon (and fruit in general).
  - Younger ages are more likely to consume watermelon in a recipe while older ages are more likely to consume watermelon plain.
  - Among those aged 18-44 there is a disconnect between what they perceive about watermelon health benefits, specifically hydration, and what would encourage a future purchase.
  - Ages 18-44 have a higher propensity for healthy and organic watermelon.
  - Younger respondents are more likely to experience external quality issues while older respondents are more likely to encounter internal appearance issues.

# Watermelon Board Wins Marketing Excellence Award

Foodservice program Working with Watermelon, was **recognized by Produce Business for a Marketing Excellence Award!** Last year the Board spent the budget originally approved for events on alternative programs. This program was two-fold; first a home economist worked to better define watermelon yield for different formats (cubes, wedge, juice, etc.) and this information was turned into an easy to use **guide**. Next, we worked with Chef's Roll to create a **video series** on how to process watermelon to obtain those formats and innovative recipes highlighting the different formats. We continue to use these resources in the program today! Check out the full recognition at <https://www.producebusiness.com/breakthrough-marketing-12-creative-covid-killing-campaigns/>.



# Produce for Better Health Foundation Beef Up Your Burger with Fruits & Vegetables for National Fruits & Veggies Month

On September 1st, Wendy Reinhart-Kapsak presented a satellite media tour (SMT) that **co-partnered the Beef Board and the Watermelon Board, focusing on adding produce to beef burgers but served with a bright sunny side of a watermelon salad.** The SMT had 20 national and regional TV show bookings on the day, which in turn were syndicated and shared across other TV and online news media stations, earning nearly **30 million impressions.** [View a sample segment through this link:](#)  National market shows included Daily Flash (audience 5.9M) and Jet Set (audience 12.2M) and top 20 market local news shows included Chicago, Philadelphia, Atlanta, Houston, Sacramento and Washington, DC, all airing throughout the month of September.

REPORT AS OF: 9/30/21	
<b>TOTAL IMPRESSIONS</b>	
29,460,536	
<b>TV PLACEMENTS</b>	<b>WEB/RADIO PLACEMENTS</b>
1,656	94
<b>TV IMPRESSIONS</b>	<b>RADIO IMPRESSIONS</b>
21,660,536	7,800,000

## DotDash Wrap-Up Report

DotDash is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest food publisher behind Food Network and AllRecipes. 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. NWPB partnered with DotDash for five weeks featuring **shoppable watermelon recipes on the Spruce Eats website**.

By utilizing a mix of both custom and editorial content, NWPB received heightened exposure throughout the two-month campaign duration:

- There were nearly 42k pageviews across both the custom and editorial content that featured NWPB banners
- The top recipe (from clicks within the story and overall pageviews) was the Watermelon Smoothie editorial recipe

The performance of both the promotion of the custom story and engagement with the Relish technology shows that readers were both interested and inspired by the content.

- The on and off-site promotion drove over 5,400 readers to the story
- There was an above bar rate of readers adding the recipes to their shopping lists, along with a high level of intent to purchase the recipe ingredients

Readers wanted more watermelon inspiration!

- There were over 930 clicks to the National Watermelon Board's website



## Nutrition News Update



The nutrition media experts at Appetite for Health hosted a *Fall 2021 Nutrition News Update* event September 26-28 in Scottsdale, Arizona. A warm and welcome small group of in-person attendees included **freelancers, health writers and editors from top publications** including Prevention, Eat This, Not That, Livestrong.com, Men's Health, BuzzFeed, SELF, Food Network, PEOPLE Magazine and Eating Well, to name a few. Senior Director of Communications, Stephanie Barlow, met with all the writers at the event who showed piqued interest in watermelon's health, value and versatility, with a keen question about using the rind. Dr. Britt Burton-Freeman presented to the hybrid virtual and in-person audience a preview of the upcoming research review about watermelon health benefits research studies.

## New Event to Reach Foodservice Marketers



The Marketing & Innovation Leadership Exchange, a new event for the Foodservice program, highlighted watermelon as a part of the content and the menu during the conference. **As one of the only food sponsors, watermelon was a breath of fresh air** following presentations on labor issues, mobile payments, etc. The Board's senior director of marketing and foodservice, Megan McKenna shared new consumer and foodservice research to help the audience understand why to use watermelon as well as interesting product information for use on menus to **reach consumers through foodservice**. Watermelon menu items highlighted how to use watermelon across the menu, highlighting multiple trends:

- Spicy Watermelon Fizz: **fresh watermelon beverages are growing on menus** and this one highlighted global flavors with some heat
- Watermelon Bruschetta: a **tried and true watermelon menu item operators can add their own spin on**
- Watermelon Poke: an opportunity to use more watermelon; this poke is half watermelon and half tuna
- Burmese Watermelon Salad: a great global savory menu opportunity
- Fall Watermelon Harvest Salad: **highlighted watermelon's availability year-round and adaptability to fall flavors**

Follow-up is next. Examples of attendees include Cracker Barrel, Snooze Café, Wing Zone and True Connections Communities.



# Flavor Experience Inspires Foodservice Chain Decision Makers

The Board often rotates Foodservice events due to budget and having many options for events, but the Flavor Experience continues to be a staple. This event is an extension of Flavor & the Menu Magazine. **Each year, Flavor fills the pipeline with great operator contacts.**

In 2021, Flavor almost did not happen due to fires in Lake Tahoe. This event was planned to take place at the Hyatt Lake Tahoe (same location as NWA in 2017!). Two weeks out conditions didn't look good so they moved the whole event to Monterey, CA. **Even with the location shuffle, it was well attended by foodservice chains.**

The Board showcased three trend-forward recipes and photography was shot onsite for future use:

- Watermelon Mezcal Spritz: low abv, smokey, globally inspired cocktail
- Watermelon & Chicken Roti Taco: global mashup handheld
- Watermelon Breakfast Bowl: highlighted watermelon's health halo

In addition to the guaranteed menu items, to kick-off the conference a panel of operators tasted the watermelon and mustard TikTok trend. The pairing intrigued chefs and provided a great networking topic for the rest of the conference. **Other sponsors used watermelon in their dishes for a total of eight menu items and it was highlighted in a breakout session.** Follow-up is ongoing but examples of attendees include Bloomin' Brands, Brinker, Earl Enterprises, Fogo de Chao, The Cheesecake Factory, and Twin Peaks.



## October Partner Highlight: Halloween Kids Grazing Board by Healthy Family Project



Watermelon influencers, bloggers, partners and content creators have been publishing beautiful content inspired by and incorporating watermelon, including this new Halloween favorite by the Healthy Kids Project. This spooky and sweet treat grazing board will make kids and friends alike delight in tasty makes of watermelon including cutout letters and ghosts, mummy frosted dippers, triangle slices, balled watermelon and even little tasting cups of a watermelon feta salad! [Click here for the Halloween Snack Board.](#)



## Reaching Fitness Professionals Virtually

IDEA Health & Fitness Association is the world's leading organization of fitness and wellness professionals including personal trainers, group fitness instructors, fitness directors and fitness business owners. These professionals coach, train and influence millions of health-minded individuals. The Watermelon Board completed a 2021 'Fit is Fresh' partnership with IDEA Fit that included:

- **Food & Nutrition Tips E-Newsletter Article** sent on 9/16 to 175,000 subscribers
- **Dedicated E-Blast** to 10,000 fitness pros
- **Social Media Posts** across @IdeaFit's Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages sharing watermelon recipes, videos and Fit is Fresh facts from 9/17-9/30
- **Fitness Journal Print Ad** in the September issue, a full page watermelon health message page featuring watermelon infused water

Supporting the microcampaign 'Fit is Fresh' with these September activations, this partnership package will hopefully be replaced in 2022 by an in-person IDEA World expo event. In any case -- virtual, advertising or in-person -- watermelon is positioned and promoted as the ideal fitness fuel, whether on its own, made into juice, or in Chrissy Carroll's recipes like the Watermelon [Protein Gummies](#) or the [Watermelon Sports Drink](#).



## New England Produce Show

NWPB returned as exhibitors to the New England Produce Council's Produce Show and Conference held September 29-30 in Boston, Massachusetts. The two-day event included educational sessions, networking opportunities, and tradeshow. The **show provided the perfect setting in which to once again engage with retailers, media, and the foodservice industry about materials and information NWPB has available for them in promotion and retail education.** As an exhibitor, the NWPB interacted with many retailers such as Big Y and Market Basket to name a few.



## Watermelon on the Menu

Alma Scottsdale menued a watermelon salad, simply called Watermelon. The salad included cojita cheese, mint, cucumbers, cherry tomatoes, pickled fresnos (chilis), tamarind paste and tajin. **Tajin is the fastest growing spice on foodservice menus – how lucky that it pairs beautifully with watermelon!**



## NWPB Connections

October 20-22: Florida Watermelon Association Convention – Orlando, FL

October 25-27 : International Foodservice Editorial Council – Annapolis, MD

October 27: Retail Foodservice Innovation Summit (virtual)

November 3-5: Culinary Institute of America Worlds of Flavor Conference & Festival – Napa, CA

