



# Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



## “Better Together” Holiday Digital Campaign

Our holiday and winter-themed microcampaign is underway, spanning November-December. **Better Together** focuses on pairing partners with watermelon through recipes over the holiday months of November and December to engage and amplify watermelon as a holiday-friendly dish ingredient. Our partners include mushrooms, pies, cranberries, pomegranate, citrus, pulses and more. The campaign creative illustrates watermelon as a giphy-like character, with friends animated in the same fun fashion.

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## Better Together Continued

To position watermelon for the winter holiday entertaining season, the Watermelon Board filmed in-office an Instagram TV and Facebook Premiere video where Stephanie Barlow and Summer Walker demonstrated pairing flavors with watermelon from the Back to Basics flavor pairings guide. The flavors were paired and shared on different cuts of watermelon, from Christmas tree shapes to melon balls and include: Arugula + Balsamic + Parmesan, Honey + Pistachios, Avocado + Salmon + Cilantro, Onion + Lime + Chile, Salt + Agave and finally the classic Feta + Mint + Cucumber.

All video production, from cameras, to directing to editing is done in-house by Andrea Smith, (pictured, right) and it will be posted to the @WatermelonBoard Facebook and Instagram accounts in early December. If you comment on the video you can be entered for a chance to win a watermelon prize pack of an NWPB apron, cutting board and a watermelon ornament.



## NWPB's Own Honored with IFEC Award

Congratulations to our Senior Director of Marketing and Foodservice Megan McKenna for receiving **International Foodservice Editorial Conference's (IFEC) 2021 Betty Bastion Outstanding Service Award** 🏆! The "Betty" is presented annually to an IFEC member who has made significant contributions to the well-being of IFEC and the field of foodservice communications through outstanding leadership, service and professionalism. Currently on the IFEC Board, she was also elected to serve as Treasurer for the coming year.



## Virtual Meeting with USDA Under Secretary Jenny Lester Moffitt

Mark Arney was invited to a meeting with USDA Under Secretary Jenny Lester Moffitt on October 29. She serves as the Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs. USDA AMS Administrator Bruce Summers also participated in the meeting where Arney shared an overview of NWPB promotional activities and board structure.

Lester Moffitt had served for the past seven years as under secretary and deputy secretary in the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). She left the CDFA after accepting a presidential nomination following U.S. Senate confirmation. One of the duties of the under secretary is to review industry board nominees and deliver the package to USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack.



## Earning Foodservice Media Coverage at the International Foodservice Editorial Council



Each year the Board attends and sponsors the International Foodservice Editorial Council's (IFEC) Annual Conference to reach foodservice editors with watermelon education and inspiration. This year the conference took place at the end of October in Annapolis, Maryland. During Chef Showcase the Board featured a compressed watermelon dish with mint, blueberries, toasted marcona almond crumble, feta, and honey presented by Matt Herron, Director & Melissa Hawkins, Instructor Specialist of the Hotel, Culinary Arts and Tourism Institute. During lunch on the second day, watermelon was featured in a rind slaw and watermelon slushie – both regionally significant recipes for Maryland cuisine. Editor meetings pitched watermelon for editorial calendars in 2022 with all of the Board's media targets. Finally, the NWPB cosponsored an editor reception with California Avocados Commission, National Mango Board, Idaho Potato Commission and Barilla. As always, IFEC 2021 was a successful event!



## 2021 Foodservice Menu Research Summary

The National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB) conducts menu trend research to understand the opportunity watermelon has in foodservice and to benchmark watermelon's presence year-over-year. In 2021, the NWPB invested in Datassential MenuTrends Research. This database includes menus from more than 4,800 restaurants including independents, regional chains, and national chains in all restaurant segments collected from September 2020-July 2021. This research includes all mentions of watermelon, not just fresh usage.

Note: Prior to COVID, the number of menu offerings/items increased in recent years. Menus shrank by 10.2% during COVID. All of the top fruit varieties have declined on appetizers, entrées, and sides in the past year as well. All trends were impacted to varying degrees, but all signs point to trends bouncing back as the industry recovers.

Watermelon perceptions from Datassential's Flavor database (collected July-September 2021):

- 98% of consumers know it
- 94% of consumers have tried it
- 82% like or love it
- 23% of consumers have had it many times
- More loved by women, Gen Z, and Hispanics

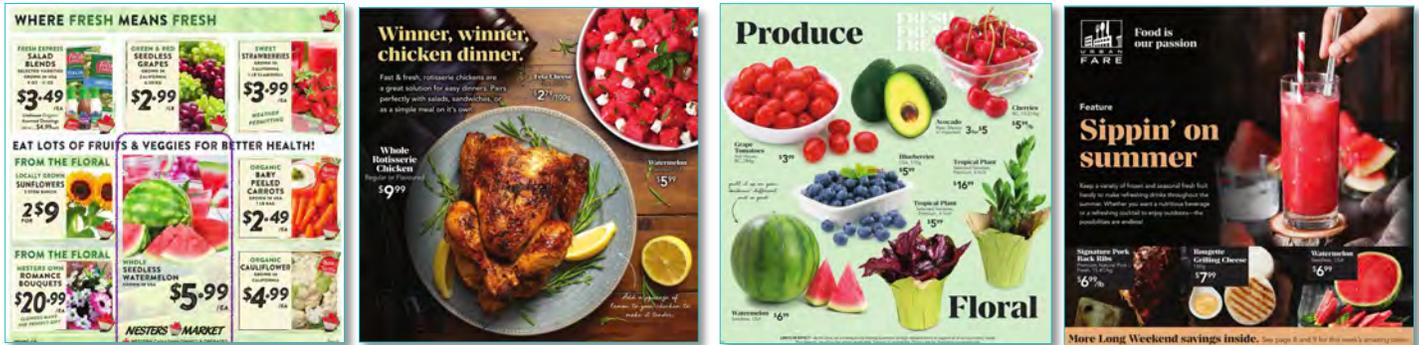
### Watermelon Overview

- Watermelon is found on just over 12% of all restaurant menus, and while it has declined by 6% in the last year, it has grown by 8% in the past 4 years.
- In the Fruit Menu Adoption Cycle, watermelon is in the ubiquity phase – it's found just about anywhere.
- Watermelon has grown in all segments, most notably in fast casual, in the last 10 years.
- Nearly 17% of casual dining menus feature watermelon, making it the leading segment.
- Watermelon appears most often on beverage menus, especially within cocktails.
- Watermelon has grown the fastest within non-alcoholic beverages over the past 4 years.
- Watermelon on appetizer, entrée, and dessert menus has declined the past 4 years.
- Restaurants in the South are more likely to offer watermelon than other regions. It has grown on menus in the South by 14% in the last 4 years.
- All day menus have shown the strongest growth of usage in the past 4 years at 66%.
- Lunch and dinner menus have also experienced growth (29% and 7%).
- Chain operators are more likely to serve watermelon than other restaurant types.
- While independents are less likely to offer watermelon, it is growing the fastest at these operators (62% in 4 years).
- New watermelon items and LTOs shine in the summer but there have been menu launches in each month of the year in the last decade, highlighting watermelon's transition to a year-round product.



To see more highlights from the study visit the [Foodservice Research](#) page at [watermelon.org](http://watermelon.org) or reach out to Megan McKenna at [mmckenna@watermelon.org](mailto:mmckenna@watermelon.org).

## Canada Retail Program Recap



The NWPB's trade – retail program remains the program's *most important activity* to build and grow trade listings, in-store and on-menu promotions and ultimately export sales. In 2021, COVID-19 again accelerated the trade's pace towards more digital and social media as well as direct-to-consumer promotional strategies and engagements with their patrons. The NWPB's trade – retail program remains 'poised, nimble, immediately responsive and entirely flexible' to both address challenges and seize upon unique sales and marketing opportunities, and further leverage Canadian's trust in and for U.S. watermelon all season long!



## USADEC Annual Conference

NWPB's Juliemar Rosado virtually attended the United States Agricultural Export Development Council (USAEDC)'s annual conference on November 16-18. The meeting consisted of a robust program agenda around global agricultural topics for 3 hours each day. Roundtable discussions occurred on the last day to provide a more interactive experience.

Individuals with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations and or alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, LEP, etc.) should contact: Juliemar Rosado at [jrosado@watermelon.org](mailto:jrosado@watermelon.org) within three days of event. The National Watermelon Promotion Board is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



## Watermelon Board Presentation at Texas Watermelon Association Convention

The Texas Watermelon Association Convention was held November 11th-13th in McAllen, Texas. Board consultant, Jason Hanselman was invited to present on Texas' production, retail movement and ads during the 2021 season. He also presented an update on the Board's communications, marketing, foodservice and research programs, highlighting the Watermelon Update and Supplier Database as essential resources for the industry.

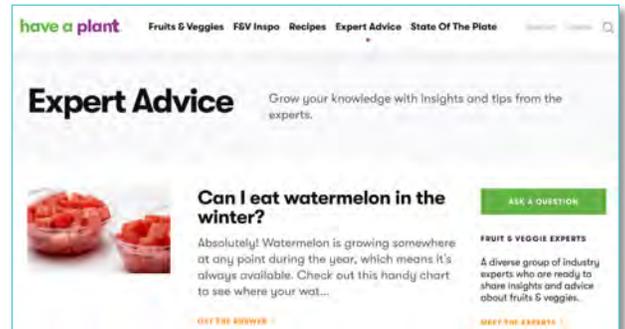


## Produce for Better Health Activations

A winter 2021 partnership with the Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH) is helping to raise awareness and amplification to the watermelon year-round availability key message. The PBH digital ecosystem continues to elevate fruit and vegetable messaging for Millennial and Gen Z consumers, with these impressive digital stats:

- 365K monthly website visitors
- 1.1M social media fans and followers
- 57K consumer and influencer e-newsletter subscribers

In early December, the PBH channels will host and post an Expert Advice column on year-round watermelon messaging, a festive holiday watermelon recipe suggestion in the Blackberry Martini, and an enewsletter ad. We hope you follow and interact with @fruitsandveggies on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook to engage with the winter watermelon content.



## Watermelon Inspires Culinary Professionals at Culinary Institute of America

Now in its 24th year, the annual [Worlds of Flavor International Conference and Festival](#)  took place in Napa, California, November 3rd-5th. The theme was *Cities of the Americas: Landscapes of Flavor, Culinary Disruption and Renewal from the United States and Canada to Latin America*. The conference had more than 175 operators in attendance representing commercial and noncommercial targets. Most were culinary decisionmakers. Since watermelon is popular across the Americas, it was mentioned multiple times during the presentations. The Board served a Watermelon Salad with Poblanos and Pickled Rind and a Watermelon Agua Fresca. Many said they were some of their favorite items during the conference! In addition to notable noncommercial foodservice operators in K-12, College & University, Business & Industry and Healthcare, commercial attendees included brands such as Del Taco.



## Retail Foodservice Innovation Summit



On October 27th, NWPB was a sponsor of the Retail Foodservice Innovation Summit hosted by Progressive Grocer (PG). The sponsorship included inclusion in the Top Women in Grocery Gift Box that is sent to the homes of the 437 winners and two placements in PG's monthly retail foodservice newsletter that reaches over 45,000. The NWPB was represented on a 30-minute panel on innovations in fresh and practical strategies for foodservice sales growth featuring Chef Jason Hernandez of Blade and Tine Culinary Consulting representing the Board. Lastly, a 30-second promotion video ran once during the content sessions. The virtual event attracted audiences from companies like Target, Wakefern, Stop & Shop, H-E-B and BJ's Wholesale.



## Weis Markets

NWPB participated in the September/October issue of Weis Healthy Bites magazine. The magazine had a theme of "Game Day Eats," fitting in nicely with the watermelon and chocolate dessert board. 100,000 magazines were distributed in stores and also available online. NWPB was also featured in a minimum of 15 in-store sales floor tastings or virtual workshops and one media appearance with a Weis Dietitian.



## Watermelon on the Menu

Taken from their website, "The Pinery is an upscale dining experience located on beautiful Lake Ivanhoe in the heart of Orlando. Inhabiting land that once cultivated Florida's former top export crop, pineapples, The Pinery celebrates Florida's forgotten history while offering guests a welcoming atmosphere, illuminated views of the city skyline, and a seasonal menu inspired by the tenets of Southern hospitality." The Pinery serves not one but two watermelon dishes, a Grilled Watermelon side as well as their Watermelon Heirloom Salad with tomatoes mint, red onion, crumbled goat cheese, arugula and balsamic glaze.



## Watermelon on Display

In addition to the stores that participated in the retail merchandising contest, retailers took full advantage of merchandising tactics, including primary and secondary in-store watermelon displays this year.



## NWPB Connections

New York Produce Show – New York, NY – December 14 –17

South Carolina Watermelon Association Convention – January 14 – 16

