



Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD

Dear Industry Members,

There is no doubt that the last few years have been unprecedented times, with this past year presenting its own challenges. The watermelon industry endures, and will prosper with persistence, quality and commitment. Commitment from you, the industry, of growing, packing, shipping and importing the fruit that lifts people up while providing a powerhouse of health benefits, a value-leader in these tight times helping people feed their families top-tier watermelon all throughout the year.



Your NWPB staff not only takes inspiration from you, the industry, in this resiliency, but we are passionately and proactively building you a promotional program to keep driving the demand higher.

Looking back on 2022, we saw volume return to pre-pandemic levels after bumping higher in 2021 and 2022. *Data from USDA-AMS shows that watermelon movement totaled roughly 5.4 billion pounds, which is similar to levels experienced from 2016 through 2019.

Program highlights of 2022 included a return to in-person board meetings in both February and Fall; an industry-wide presentation titled *Affecting Watermelon Demand through Promotion: NWPB Research and Results*; and, in partnership with consumer research organization Aimpoint Research, hosted a webinar to review 2022 Consumer Research Findings.

In the Fall, I personally had the pleasure of seeing many of you in Arizona, Mexico, and the Florida Watermelon Association Annual Convention just to name a few. I had the opportunity to attend the Commodity Roundtable meeting in Washington D.C., met with Fresh Produce Association of Americas, networked at IFPA’s first Global Floral & Produce Show and presented at Cucurbitaceae 2022 and Texas A&M AgriLife Institute for Advancing Health Through Agriculture (IHA). I will see many of you in the next few months in South Carolina, Georgia and North Carolina at their respective state meetings. It is always my goal to speak with as many of you as possible to hear your own unique challenges, ideas and insight.

An exciting development this month is the unveiling of NWPB’s new Retail Ad Report sourced from USDA-AMS National Retail Report. Updated weekly, it can be found on the [Retail Research](#) webpage. Please take the time to check it out and let us know what you think!

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Looking forward to 2023, our February budget meeting will be held in conjunction with the NWA Annual Meeting & Convention in Asheville, North Carolina. Like last year, the NWPB will conduct a one hour session during the convention on Thursday, February 23 open to all industry members and stakeholders, discussing key findings from its Econometric study highlighted by return-on-investment for the dollars you invest in the NWPB programs. We are also looking forward to working closely with George Szczepanski, the new NWA Executive Director!

I am grateful to you, as a watermelon community, for your continued support. We are very fortunate that our Board members represent the most passionate and committed individuals in agriculture. Additionally, your NWPB staff is one of the most tenured and experienced group of professionals in the business of the very specialized R&P commodity promotional groups. As a team we are fully committed to educating and influencing watermelon purchases to the best of our ability. Should you ever have any questions or concerns, please reach out to myself or any member of the staff.

All the Best,
Mark Arney, Executive Director, National Watermelon Promotion Board


**Please note, revenues are based on extrapolating USDA-AMS data and overall averages may not be reflective of individual watermelon farming operations.*



The Economic Impact of the National Watermelon Promotion Board


Join the National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB) and research partner, Armada Corporate Intelligence, Inc., on **February 23rd at 8 a.m.**, during the National Watermelon Convention, to explore the 2017-2021 Econometric Evaluation.

The Econometric Evaluation determines the **impact of the NWPB's activities** on the demand for watermelon and the return on investment (ROI) for the industry. The main findings of this study show the watermelon industry continues to receive a high return from the promotion efforts of the NWPB, and these promotion programs have a significant impact on the general economy. Learn more about how advanced modeling techniques look at the supply of watermelon, FOB and retail prices, NWPB budget, and other factors to determine the value the NWPB provides its stakeholders. Additionally, Armada will share current economic conditions and how it will affect the industry moving forward.

Can't make the live presentation? Please mark your calendars to join the virtual presentation on March 29nd at 1 p.m. eastern. You can register for the virtual event here: https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_fFdpme8hSp2u16W-wQrsEA  or scan the QR code.



New Executive Director at NWA

Congratulations to George Szczepanski as the new Executive Director at National Watermelon Association! We're looking forward to working with you! [Click here to read the story in The Produce News.](#) 



Suwannee Valley Watermelon Institute Meeting



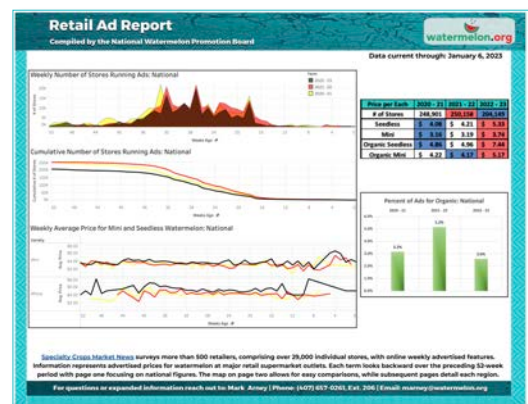
Executive Director Mark Arney in front of the NWPB exhibitor table

Last month, NWPB Executive Director Mark Arney presented at the 2022 Suwannee Valley Watermelon Institute meeting. There were **over 180 attendees** with a huge representation of growers and support industry in the area, as well as industry members from South Florida and Georgia. In addition to his **presentation reviewing the latest NWPB news**, Arney passed out *Use the Whole Watermelon* tote bags containing department program resources and tools, including the Retail kit, flavor pairing guide and "Watermelon Everyday" brochure.




NEW Retail Ad Report

New in 2023, the NWPB will utilize the USDA-AMS National Retail Report to track advertised promotions at retail. The **free database** is a great tool that allows the Board to go deeper into the retail space using survey data from **more than 500 retailers who comprise more than 29,000 individual stores**. The data goes into a database that can run reports and queries at national and regional levels. The report will reflect the 52 weeks up to the report date versus the same period for the two prior terms. In addition to time-series data of the total number of stores advertising, seedless and mini watermelon pricing is available for both conventional and organic designations. You can find the new report on the [Retail Research webpage](#) or [directly here](#). If you have any questions, please reach out to Mark Arney at marney@watermelon.org.



Watermelon Results in the USDA Pesticide Data Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Pesticide Data Program (PDP) just released the [2021 report](#)  with the **addition of watermelon** and butter sampled in the fourth quarter of 2021. This is part of the routine rotation of the food analyzed by the program with an emphasis on those commodities highly consumed by infants and children. Over half (50.9%) the watermelon sampled had no detectable residues which was the highest percent of all fruit and vegetables tested. Watermelon had no detections that exceeded tolerances. Watermelon was one of only three of the total commodities tested that had no samples of detected pesticides for which no tolerances were established. Of the watermelon sampled, 60% were imports and 40% were domestic. The 2022 PDP sampling and testing is being analyzed and watermelon will be included. The 2022 PDP results will be published in 2023.



Leveraging Existing Watermelon Research & Evaluation

In 2022, the Board invested in a research project to leverage current research across consumer, retail and foodservice. The product was a summary report based on the analysis of the research as well as relevant secondary sources to understand on a cohesive basis, the broad opportunities, hurdles and trends that will drive increased watermelon use in 2023 and beyond. Findings were broken into Consumer Awareness, Trial and Purchasing, Purchase Dynamics, Use and Application, Health and Wellness Issues and Macro Food Industry Trends. Some key findings included:



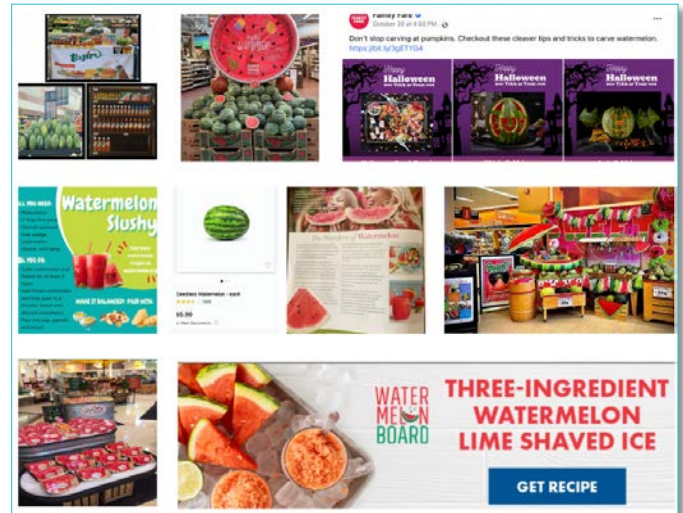
- Watermelon appeal is extremely high – addressing appeal is not a priority.
- Watermelon's **greatest opportunity and focus should be on usage** conversion – consumers know it and have tried, but the drive should be to increase the number of consumers who have had it many times.
- Increasing availability and innovation at foodservice is not strictly a foodservice opportunity with 68% of consumers more likely to purchase watermelon at retail if seen/experienced at foodservice.
- Savory applications offer an opportunity and will support the most significant growth across foodservice and retail.
- Hydration is a key functional benefit for watermelon to leverage.

To learn more [view the full presentation here](#).

Retail Roundup

NWPB continues supporting retailers by contracting with merchandising representatives that manage various retail accounts. Throughout the year, this team aims to keep watermelon top of mind year-round. Here are the latest retail activations conducted so far.

- **Tajin Demos** – NWPB partnered with Tajin at 8 Safeway Stores in April for sampling of the two products as well as provided nutrition information and fun facts.
- **Lowes** – Ran a summer sales contest during the periods of Memorial Day, 4th of July and Labor Day.
- **Southeastern Grocers** – Participated in a two-week sales contest throughout 420 of their stores from June 22nd through July 5th.
- **Harris Teeter** – This retailer promoted a two-week in-store cut watermelon sales contest throughout their 260 stores from June 22nd through July 5th. The items included were their signature watermelon 16 and 24 ounce watermelon chunks as well as slices and quarters of watermelon.
- **DECA** – The defense commissaries promoted watermelon by creating “Fun in the Sun with Watermelon” themed displays from July 11th through July 17th in conjunction with National Watermelon Month with additional promotions on National Watermelon Day.
- **Weis Markets** – NWPB was given 2.5 pages in their Healthy Bites July / August 2022 issue. The spread included a full page on “The Wonders of Watermelon,” another full page with two watermelon recipes and a half page ad promoting use of the whole watermelon. The magazine was featured on their social media channels and shared to their 145,000 Facebook fans as well as their website. 115,000 copies were also available in print in-store and free to shoppers.
- **Four Seasons** – Promoted watermelon by running an internal melon merchandising sales and display contest from July 4th through September 18th that included whole and cut watermelon.
- **Food Lion** – Ran a four week promotion in September that included an eCom banner with collection, keyword search, produce boost, an email banner with URL, Flip app Tile and a Pinterest Post driving to their Three Ingredient Watermelon Shaved Ice.
- **HyVee** – NWPB participated with Hy-Vee’s dietitian program as a Health Screening Sponsor that included 1,000 Health Screenings for customers, brand Recognition in custom media throughout the store locations, dietitian endorsement for product, branded in-store signage and social media callouts.
- **Target** – NWPB ran an ad campaign via Criteo for Target stores from August 17th through September 30th that resulted in 4.3 million impressions and an over 1,500% return on ad spend.
- **SpartanNash** – NWPB ran an Halloween themed campaign at 147 stores during the month October that included in-store point-of-sale, email newsletter, social media and social media that resulted in a reach of over 66,000 and over 123,000 impressions.



State of Watermelon in Foodservice: Findings from 2022 Foodservice Operator Omnibus and Consumer Survey

In 2022, the Watermelon Board invested in updating the foodservice operator and consumer at foodservice research to better understand the shifting opportunities and challenges to growing watermelon use and consumption in foodservice in the future. This research built upon past efforts to track shifts in both consumer and foodservice operator use and perceptions, as well as identify new issues that may have arisen as a result of the COVID pandemic and economic issues in the behavior and needs of both audiences.

To best utilize the findings, the results were overlapped to look for consumer and operator insights that support each other. Here are some **key findings**:

- The pandemic temporarily impacted years of consistent penetration gains.
- Current use of fresh watermelon has increased significantly since the last study in 2020.
- Most operators will continue using watermelon in their operations.
- Growth in menuing is likely driven and supported by consumer interest.
- Summer is peak watermelon season, but opportunities exist to extend the season.
- While main menu features are up, foodservice is still leveraging watermelon as a seasonal LTO ingredient.
- Of consumers surveyed 72% agree, “Fresh watermelon is under-appreciated, and restaurants should be doing more to use fresh watermelon in new and interesting ways.”
- Foodservice, and retail innovation around watermelon is shifting perceptions away from strictly nostalgia/old-fashioned.
- Most consumers believe watermelon can be an on-trend ingredient, and operators agree.
- Watermelon can occupy every trend stage, depending on application.
- Grilled watermelon is an untapped prep opportunity, as well as a potential prepared product innovation area.
- Whole ingredient meat alternative options, including fresh watermelon, are on-trend.
- Of consumers surveyed 60% believe watermelon is a healthy fruit option.
- Hydration is very important to consumers, with room to grow watermelon’s functional association with this health benefit.
- In foodservice, watermelon rind has potential, but consumer acceptance will likely be pushed by foodservice use.
- Consumers are interested in prepared options with watermelon at retail, particularly – as with restaurants – desserts and salads.
- Away from home innovation and access will impact retail purchase behavior.
- NWPB can help raise awareness on options available that address several of these key issues for foodservice.
- NMPB can educate foodservice on how best to leverage fresh watermelon on the menu in the most impactful ways.



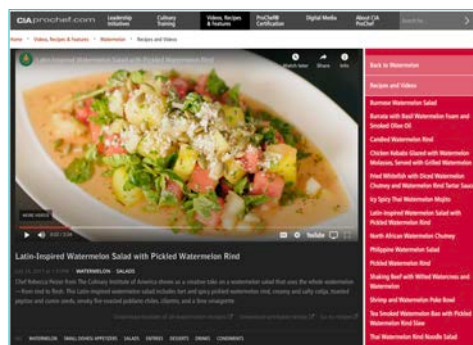
To learn more, view the full reports on the [Foodservice Research page](#) of watermelon.org.

NWPB Receives Regional NAMA Award for Use the Whole Watermelon 2.0 Campaign

In partnership with Curious Plot, NWPB's Use the Whole Watermelon 2.0 campaign, which launched in 2022, has been **awarded 1st Place in the Company or Producer-Funded PR Campaign Directed to Consumers category by Region 5** (Florida) National Agri-Marketing Association chapter. Steps are currently underway to advance the entry to the National NAMA Awards, which will be announced later this year.



CIA Partnership Keeps Watermelon Top-of-Mind Year Round



The Board has ongoing partnerships with **influential foodservice organizations** to help keep watermelon top-of-mind in any season. The Board's partnership with the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) is **available 24/7 to chef looking for watermelon education and inspiration**. The watermelon page at ciaprochef.com/watermelon offers handling, availability and nutrition information plus a library of nearly 30 watermelon recipes with photos and how-to videos. The CIA shares the content through social media as well as the CIA SmartBrief newsletters. **Video views since the launch in 2017 exceed 400,000!**

Family Features: Warm Up Winter with Watermelon Fun!



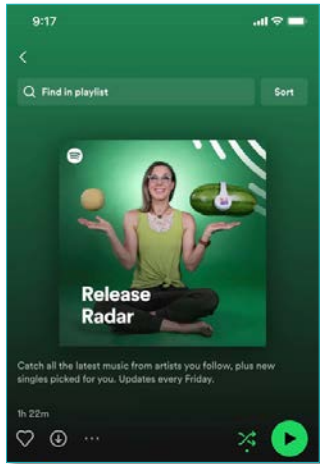
This winter, in partnership with Family Features, NWPB launched a release to support watermelon in the winter months. The feature included carving instructions for a watermelon snowman and a watermelon glazed meatballs recipe and had **1,426 total program placements including Alaska and Hawaii** (ROI of 185:1)!



Partnership with The Fit Fork

Influencer partner Jennifer Fisher from The Fit Fork recently shared her **2023 Exercise and Wellness with Watermelon** post that included tips to include watermelon in every season as well as how to incorporate watermelon into your fitness routine. Ideas included a recipe for hot watermelon lemonade and using watermelon as weight during your Ruck (walking/running/hiking) with a weight in your rucksack. Jennifer shared these on IG, TikTok and Pinterest.





Jump with Jill Launches New Album

Longtime watermelon partner Jill Jayne recently dropped a new album called Jump with Jill: The Movie! The Soundtrack! The album artwork features watermelon (shown left). The album is available now on Spotify, Apple Music and Amazon Music streaming platforms.



Watermelon on the Menu

Heights & Co. - an independent patio and cocktail Bar based in Houston, TX - offers a Salted Watermelon cocktail with rum, salted watermelon, coconut and lime. It is also served with fresh watermelon wedge/spear.



NWPB Connections



South Carolina Watermelon Association Convention, Hilton Head, SC - January 13-15

Illiana Watermelon Association Convention, French Link, IN - January 19-22

Georgia Watermelon Association Convention, St. Simon's Island - January 27-29

Western Watermelon Association Convention, Las Vegas, NV - January 28

Mar-Del Watermelon Association Convention, Cambridge, MD - February 3-4

