



Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



Board of Directors Approve the 2023/2024 Budget in Asheville

The Board met on February 22nd in Asheville, North Carolina, to kick off the National Watermelon Association (NWA) Convention. The day started with New Board Member Orientation and the Board Meeting started by swearing in this group. George Szczepanski, the Association's new Executive Director, addressed the Board and highlighted some initiatives as he steps into his position at NWA.

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Directors Approve Budget Continued

Armada Corporate Intelligence, the firm who executed the Board's econometric evaluation, provided the results of the study to the Board, previewing the presentation slated for the next day during the convention. The next three hours focused on 2023/2024 proposed program presentations for Research, Foodservice, Communications and Marketing. During lunch a watermelon carver and ice sculpturer, The Fruit Carving Ninja, who the Board uses for foodservice initiatives, was there live-carving. Although the ice sculpture was used only for the Board Meeting, his watermelon carvings were used throughout the convention.



After budget approval, the **Executive Committee was elected to represent each district including Chad Chastain, Lee Wroten, Cody Buckley, Renee Goodwin, Kelly Partch, Christian Murillo and past president, Jordan Carter. Christian Murillo was voted to continue as President and Lee Wroten will continue as Vice President.** Although the Executive Committee meets monthly, the full Board will meet again on September 21st and 22nd in Orlando, Florida.




The ROI Associated with NWPB Activities is Approximately 19:1

On Thursday, February 23rd, as a part of the NWA Convention, the Board's econometric evaluation research partner, Armada Corporate Intelligence, addressed a full room to report the findings of the 2022 study. The Economic Impact of the National Watermelon Promotion Board presentation shared 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 the study **showed 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. The audience learned more about how advanced modeling techniques analyzed how the supply of watermelon, FOB and retail prices, NWPB budget, and other factors determined the value the NWPB provides its stakeholders. Additionally, Armada shared more on current economic conditions and how it will affect the industry moving forward. To learn more, attend the webinar on March 29th (more below) or [see the full report](#).



The Economic Impact of the NWPB Webinar

For those who could not attend the presentation at the NWA Convention, the Board will offer the same presentation via webinar on **March 29th at 1 p.m.** eastern. The presentation will highlight how the industry continues to receive a high ROI from the efforts of the NWPB and the Board's impact on the general economy. Research partner, Armada will share current economic conditions and how it could affect the industry moving forward. Register for the [webinar at this link](#)  or by scanning the QR code.



NWPB at the Gulf Coast and National Watermelon Association Conventions

Stephanie Barlow attended the Gulf Coast Watermelon Association Convention in February. In addition to presenting an update on the NWPB activities, she was the **female seed spit champion!**

In addition to the Board Meeting and the Econometric Impact of the NWPB, the directors attended the NWA Convention to spend time with watermelon industry members, our Watermelon Family. **Mark Arney attended the business meetings of the NWA and the staff enjoyed the industry speakers and queen speeches on Friday morning.** The convention also offered an opportunity to say "see you later" to the two influential leaders leaving the NWA. The reception Friday evening for Bob Morrissey was a heartfelt event and Saturday night's celebration of Eleanor Bullock was bittersweet with so many of the past queens in attendance. The staff wish them both the best as they move into retirement! Although no NWPB staff claimed a trophy for the seed spit, all feel lucky to be a part of such a great industry!



Southeast Produce Council’s Southern Exposure Show

NWPB once again participated in the Southeast Produce Council’s annual “Southern Exposure” expo March 3rd and 4th in Orlando, FL. This year, along with retail and foodservice workshops and networking events, **NWPB’s Juliemar Rosado, Megan McKenna and retail account managers Sheila Carden and Katie Manetti provided retail and foodservice attendees with information on**



how to keep watermelon top of mind on menus and in grocery stores. Megan attended the SEPC Foodservice and Arnold Palmer Children’s Hospital (APCH) Committee meetings, of which she is a member. Juliemar was also invited to be a live guest on The Produce Industry Podcast to talk watermelon selection and promotion with host Patrick Kelly. Every year, the expo attracts more than 2,500 attendees, continually setting records for overall attendance as well as for participation by the retail and foodservice sectors of the fresh produce industry.



NWPB’s Research Program Bears Fruit

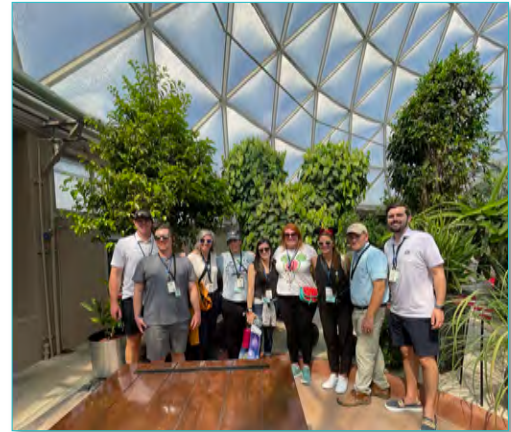
In 2022, the Board partnered with Nutrition Impact LLC on a research project to “determine intake of watermelon and assess association with diet quality, energy and nutrient intake, and physiological parameters in children and adults.” A National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) Analysis, the study was **recently published in Nutrients** ^[1] and found that total diet quality was higher in watermelon consumers as compared to non-consumers^[1]. A February produce trade release highlighted this project and the NWPB nutrition research program as a whole. It received very strong pickup in many produce publications including The Packer and AndNowUKnow. More consumer-facing outreach is planned for the study later this spring. As a part of the Board’s strategic plan, there will be continued focus on watermelon’s nutrient research, health trends and Board impact.

[1] Fulgoni, K.; Fulgoni, V.L., III Watermelon Intake Is Associated with Increased Nutrient Intake and Higher Diet Quality in Adults and Children, *NHANES 2003–2018*. *Nutrients* 2022, 14, 4883



IFPA Leadership Class 27 Experiences Consumer Events Marketing

First working with Walt Disney World’s event in 2012, Epcot’s Food and Wine Festival, the Watermelon Board had partnered with Mr. Food’s Test Kitchen to bring a “Watermelon Patch” story to thousands of park goers that looked like a mini garden with signs around it educating on watermelon fun facts and growing information. The next year in Spring 2013, Epcot’s annual International Flower & Garden Festival first launched food kiosks for attendees to try different samples of food and beverages, and the Watermelon Salad with Feta, Arugula and Pickled Red Onion debuted with an educational storyboard near it; a piece depicting health, value and versatility, including the 100% edible zero food waste messages. Lastly in 2017, the new wintertime Festival of the Arts offered the Watermelon Board the opportunity to showcase *the art of watermelon* with carving demonstrations at Epcot. Over all of the years of successful watermelon activations in one of the most popular parks in the country, watermelon tastes, samples, storyboards and more were **educated and advertised to hundreds of thousands of consumers on important watermelon purchase drivers.**



On Friday, March 3, the Watermelon Board hosted the IFPA Leadership Class for Epcot’s Behind the Seeds tour at The Land, and to share a lesson in consumer events marketing and partnering with Disney. Not only did the USDA ARS-aligned facility tour showcase innovative vertical growing of everything from tomatoes to peppers on pulleys, but they also showed us their Mickey molds for cucumbers and even their watermelon/pumpkin mold!

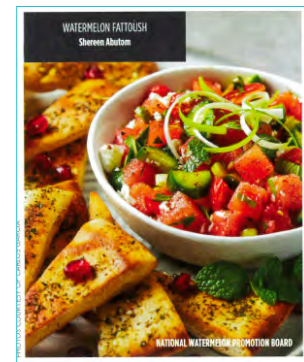
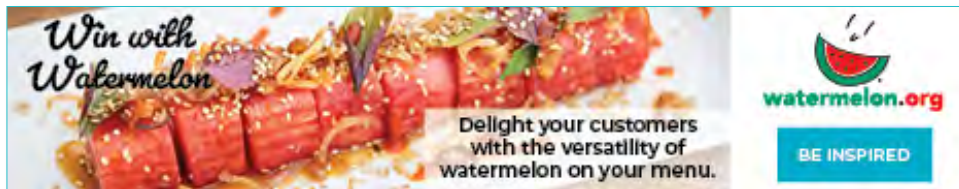


Extraordinarily, a benefit the Watermelon Board has experienced even past our paid partnerships with Epcot events has happened by **influencing the Disney culinary team** on watermelon’s zero food waste sustainability story. Even the recent Festival of the Arts boasted **three watermelon recipe samples for attendees: one flesh (Watermelon Fruit Pizza), one juice (Watermelon Mary) and one rind (Watermelon Tataki with Watermelon Foam and Pickled Watermelon Rind)!**

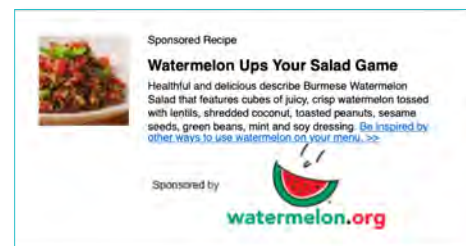


The class fellows were given an introductory lesson on how one of the smallest commodity boards representing one of the largest produce items was able to impact, influence and inspire watermelon usage for consumers for many years!

Foodservice Paid Media Keeps Watermelon Top-of-Mind



Foodservice paid media in the fall and winter complement earned media in the spring and summer when there is more watermelon on the menu. The investment **keeps watermelon top-of-mind, year-round with foodservice chefs, buyers and other decision-makers.** Campaign messaging includes versatility including using the whole watermelon and global flavors, health and wellness, and beverage applications. Running from October through March in multiple foodservice publications, the campaign is projected to reach NWPB targets with watermelon messages more than three million times through print, digital and social media placements.



Social Animations Help to Stop the Scroll

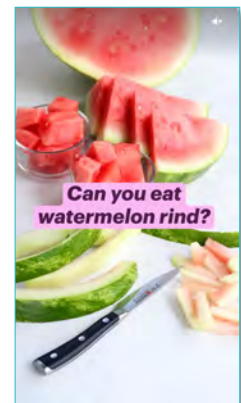
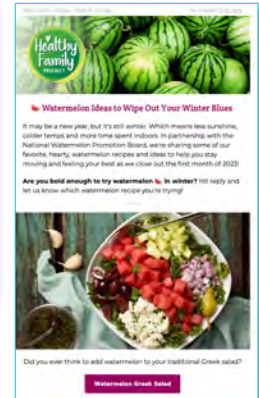
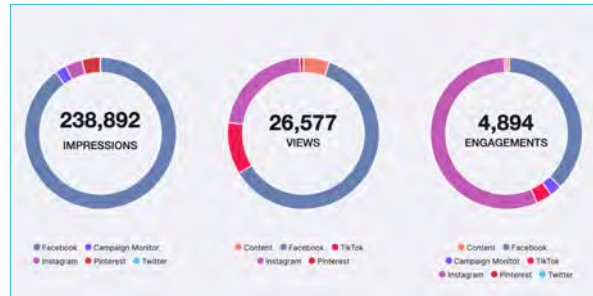
Through our communications, digital and social media agency partner Curious Plot, Watermelon Board account channels feature **monthly animated graphics that support monthly editorial themes, holidays and other calls to action throughout the year.** The excitement and movement that animation incorporates not only **guarantees more engagements, but helps “stop the scroll” as us social media users approximately scroll the height of the Eiffel Tower daily.** Making gifs and animations on existing still photography of recipes, carvings or other beauty shots can be used to point out ingredients, health benefits or just add some movement for razzle dazzle! ✨



Healthy Family Project: Partnership Wrap Up

The NWPB has long partnered with Healthy Family Project, previously known as Produce for Kids, and the 2022-2023 program year report saw diverse posts and activities across all social media and digital platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, TikTok, YouTube, Twitter, eblast newsletters and blog posts.

Ranging from ‘Use the Whole Watermelon’ rind posts, how-to’s and recipes with Facebook Lives and TikToks on how to use the rind in the spring and summer all the way to Valentine’s Day heart pops to Holiday grazing boards featuring watermelon and a winter watermelon newsletter in January, in total HFP **delivered 25 pieces of inspired, educational and delicious watermelon content throughout the program year!**



Healthy Family Project has developed a trust and relationship with their **consumer-facing audience of over 275,000 followers**, providing them with solutions to meal time dilemmas and serving as a resource when they are searching for inspiration. As a Watermelon Board partner program, their continued reach and amplification of watermelon inspiration, information and education is highly valued.



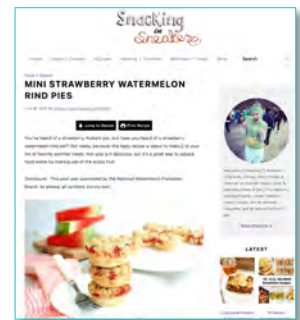
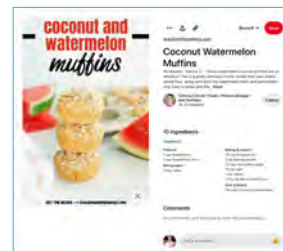
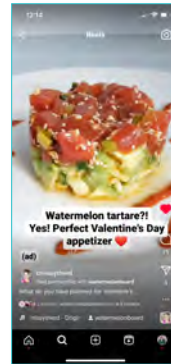
Watermelon on the Menu

Hudson on the River in Stuart, Florida’s Raw Bar menu currently includes Watermelon and Tuna Tartare with yellowfin tuna, **compressed watermelon**, ponzu, sesame, crispy wonton and micro wasabi.



Influencer Partner Program Spotlight: Chrissy Carroll (Snacking in Sneakers)

Longtime Watermelon Board partner, Registered Dietitian and influencer Chrissy Carroll from Snacking in Sneakers (the blog) and ChrissytheRD (on social) has created much watermelon excitement over the length of our partnership and the 2022-2023 program year especially! In 2022, to support our Use the Whole Watermelon campaign theme, Chrissy created **two rind-focused recipes including Mini Strawberry and Watermelon Rind Pies and Coconut and Watermelon Rind Muffins** in the summer. In January, Chrissy posted a Vegan Watermelon Tartare recipe as well. Chrissy's recipes were all posted on her **blog, social accounts including TikTok, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, IG Stories and Pinterest**. As an added bonus, Chrissy also posted an Instagram Reel and recap from the fall's FNCE "Axe Me About Watermelon" dietitian networking event that she coordinated on behalf of Watermelon!



NWPB Connections

International Foodservice Editorial Council Leadership Planning – Salt Lake City, UT – March 8-10

North Carolina Watermelon Association Convention – Wrightsville Beach, NC – March 10-12

The Economic Impact of the National Watermelon Promotion Board Webinar – March 29

Viva Fresh Expo Dallas – TX – March 31 & April 1

Hospitality Executive Exchange – Atlanta, GA – April 2-5

