



APRIL 2023

# Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



## NWPB Cultivates Connections at Viva Fresh

NWPB was on-hand for the 8th year as exhibitors at Viva Fresh expo in Grapevine, Texas from March 31st – April 1st hosted by the Texas International Produce Association (TIPA). NWPB's Director of Retail and International Marketing Juliemar Rosado and Communications and Marketing Manager Summer Walker attended the expo that included networking events, educational seminars and the "In-Bloom" women in produce event.

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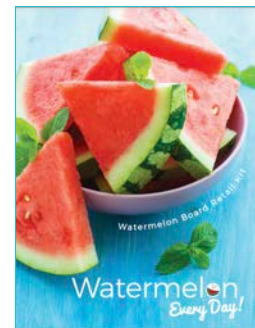
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## Viva Fresh Continued

At the expo, NWPB staff was able to continue to build awareness and promote NWPB's unique resources to a **record-breaking 2,600 attendees, including 400 retail and foodservice buyers**. The **retail kit was particularly well-received** as an important tool to provide "Watermelon 101," assist with merchandising and inform of consumer research, handling and cutting best practices, to name a few. Additionally, attendees were able to communicate their needs and share insight through exclusive conversations throughout the show. The show was a success for exhibitors and attendees and will go to Houston in 2024.



## NWPB is the First Commodity Board at the Hospitality Executive Exchange

**"You are my most intriguing meeting"** and **"You had the best cocktail during the showcase"** were just a couple of the comments the Board received at the Hospitality Executive Exchange (HEE) in Braselton, GA the first few days of April. HEE is a small, dynamic program made up of 40-50 select supplier partners with a focus on beverage and 40-50 food and beverage professionals with **purchasing power from regional and national brands and hotels**. The Board served a Watermelon Mezcal Paloma, highlighting trend-forward Mezcal with approachable watermelon, during the opening Showcase. HEE's foundation are the 12, one-on-one, meetings throughout the three-day program. The meetings started with fresh watermelon juice, then the low-abv Spicy Watermelon Fizz and lastly a Watermelon Negroni. This combination helps to highlight **watermelon's versatility with different flavors** but also the opportunities across the menu, from breakfast to brunch and poolside to dinner. The Board learned more about each operators' watermelon usage and upcoming opportunities. Many are looking for **more information on how to handle the product, like cutting and yield, shelf life and more on the different types**. For example, a mini watermelon may work better as a garnish to keep it fresh for each service. The Watermelon Flavor Dynamics and other beverage recipes inspired great conversation around the variety of uses of watermelon on foodservice beverage and food menus. Connections included Texas Roadhouse, Uno's, Ford's Garage, HEI Hotels & Resorts, Smokey Bones, Marriott and many more.



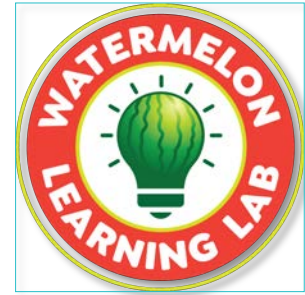


## 2023-2024 Department Overviews

### Retail

Promotional opportunities at retail include in-store, digital, and social media marketing components, providing customer reach for product and nutrition education as an extension to the brick and mortar element that is coming back into focus.

In the retail education space, NWPB plans to **promote the newly developed Watermelon Learning Lab**. The Watermelon Learning Lab is an online tool with lesson plans and videos for retailers seeking to educate employees that work with watermelon.



NWPB will continue **working with national and regional chains** through our retail account management team and at regional tradeshow. Throughout the year, the aim is to keep watermelon top of mind every day of the year.

NWPB continues prospecting digital avenues to reach the consumer within their path to purchase. NWPB plans to continue working with mobile media company Genesis to provide “App>Less” immersive storytelling and guaranteed engagement. These opportunities track with current and future shopper habits that continue to shift heading into 2023 and 2024. This campaign can also be used as a tool NWPB can **offer to retailers to provide in-store**. New this year, NWPB plans to work with **independent retailers through technology company Grocery Shopii** to amplify existing recipe content to reach new audiences.



The **retail merchandising contest** turns 15 this year and encourages retailers to **incorporate social and digital media and marketing efforts in addition to in-store experiences**. The contest started in July to honor National Watermelon Month and runs throughout the month of August to encourage and identify retailers who are showcasing watermelon’s benefits including health, value and versatility.

### Foodservice

With 14% menu penetration in 2022 (up from 8% in 2012), there is plenty of room to continue to grow the presence of America’s favorite melon on US menus! The program’s ultimate goal is to increase **watermelon on menus**. Foodservice key messages focus on **educating and inspiring foodservice decision makers**. Topics include cultivation, cutting and yield, health



messages, value (volume with accessible price point year-round), versatility (flavor pairings, inspiring recipes, think outside the peel, beverage recipes) and year-round availability.

**Earned and paid media** keep watermelon top-of-mind with operators throughout the year. Earned media is prevalent in the spring, summer and early fall when watermelon is on more menus. The International Foodservice Editorial Council helps to connect the dots between foodservice editors and watermelon menu items. Paid media in the fall and winter continue to inspire operators. An extension of the Board's digital partnership with the Culinary Institute of America at [ciaprochef.com/watermelon](http://ciaprochef.com/watermelon), will add more **chef-created menu items to the existing library**.



**Sponsored events** are geared to all audiences in foodservice to spread watermelon messages. The Board will again sponsor the Flavor Experience and host a **sampling station** during the IFPA Foodservice Show but will **expand watermelon's presence by sponsoring the K-12 Foodservice Forum**. Also new this year, the Board will sponsor MenuDirections to reach noncommercial foodservice and Kenetic 12 Emergence, Emerge (an event during the Restaurant Show) and the CIA's Latin American Cuisine Summit to reach commercial foodservice operators. Messaging will continue to utilize the 2023 **Watermelon Flavor Dynamics highlighting watermelon's versatility** and ability to fit into many global cuisines. To reach foodservice educators and up and coming chefs, the Board works with the American Culinary Federation and the Center for the Advancement of Foodservice Educators to promote the **Watermelon Culinary Curriculum**.



Lastly, the Board **offers ideation and promotional support to both commercial and noncommercial operators**. The Board engages with operators who do not use watermelon or help those who do to expand watermelon menu items through education and ideation sessions, on and off-site. Promotions often support LTOs with funds to move more of the menu item and place watermelon messages in front of consumers.



## Research

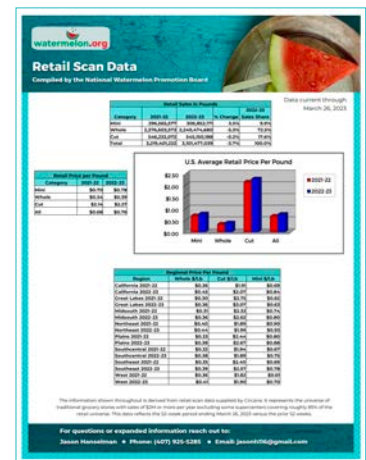
The Research Committee is responsible for **developing and implementing research to help the promotion and education programs**, health and nutrition research, and other topics supporting the promotion of watermelon.

New in 2023, the Board will work with **Fusion Marketing to execute consumer research**. This research will provide key insights into the watermelon consumer, which will aid in building consumer demand. The research will identify and measure the importance of attitudes,



usage and purchase behaviors of watermelon shoppers. Additionally, the findings can be used to further develop the established benchmark of consumer trends to measure the progress of marketing goals and objectives.

The Board will continue to work with IRI to provide a **snapshot of the retail scene using retail scanner data**. The report produced from the research includes national, regional and market-level data for whole, mini and cut watermelon. This report, coupled with the Retail Ad Report sourced from Specialty Crops Market News, provides a thorough overview of watermelon at retail.



Also new, the Board will work with **Menu Matters to establish a new benchmark to measure operator use of watermelon**. This benchmarking work will build off of past research. Key issues to benchmark include usage and perceptions of watermelon, watermelon formats used, applications for watermelon, key hurdles and drivers.



On the health and nutrition research front, the Board will invest in **Watermelon Rind Nutrition Analysis to analyze the nutrition qualities of watermelon rind with the goal of getting watermelon rind in the USDA Foundational Foods Database** as a part of Food DataCentral and create a nutrition facts panel for use across all marketing and communications programs. Additionally, the Board will fund *Evaluating the Microbiome, Energy Balance, Lipids, Oxidative Stress, and Neurocognition (MELON) in Adolescents and Young Adults* with Florida Gulf Coast University. Lastly, Wild Hive has been the Board's partner on the Nutrition Research program since 2017 and continues to support the team from the Nutrition Research RFP to leveraging the results of published research studies through targeted media relations.



## Communications

Consumers are in for a dose of happy with the Watermelon Board's **new campaign soon to launch called the Slice of Happy Project**. Using new findings from consumer surveys that indicate 100% of people responding that watermelon makes them feel happy, the Slice of Happy Project will position and promote watermelon throughout the year in elevated, joyful ways while delivering key messaging on value, sustainability, wellness, versatility and health.

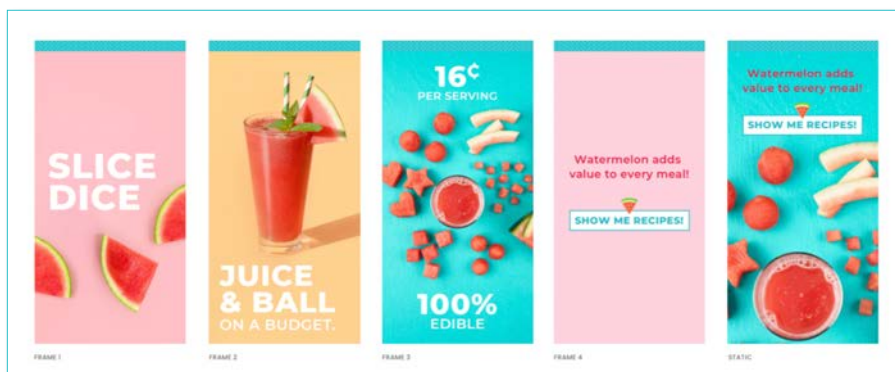




To amplify the campaign and to educate further about watermelon key messages to consumers, NWPB will work with **targeted influencers and partnerships across digital and social media, including TikToks, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, YouTube, blogs and enewsletters**. The earned audience reach embedded with each influencer lends validity and credibility to watermelon benefit messaging beyond the Watermelon Board brand, and continually influencer engagements are effectively strong.

Returning to **in-person fun, family and fitness events** will include several Color Runs which go by the moniker 'the Happiest 5K in the World!' Targeted to key watermelon consumption per capita markets, NWPB will give away fresh cut watermelon slices and offer interactive watermelon experiences which consumers run through blasts of watermelon pinks and greens and enjoy a fresh slice of hydration with watermelon samples.

Other communications **tactics for the upcoming season** will include iHeart Media podcast advertising, streaming ads on CTV channels, dietitian and educator resource development, watermelon grower stories on social media including TikTok, and partnering with NASCAR Melon Man, Ross Chastain.



## Communications Program Wins AdFed Award

Last year's consumer Communications campaign - Use the Whole Watermelon - was recently honored with a **Silver Award from the Advertising Federation of Minnesota**, which is a part of the American Advertising Federation. Looking through this list of winners, you can see how impressive a win is against other mega agencies and brands like Subaru, Arby's and Skippy Peanutbutter. The campaign, in partnership with longtime marketing agency Curious Plot, was **also honored with a NAMA regional award** and will move on as a National Award entry in National Agri-Marketing Association.



## North Carolina Watermelon Association Convention

NWPB Executive Director Mark Arney and Industry Analyst Jason Hanselman attended the NCWA convention in Wrightsville Beach, NC in March. **Both Arney and Hanselman presented**, highlighting NWPB activities and relevant industry data. Congratulations to new North Carolina Queen Gracy Peterson!



## Partner Results: The Fit Fork's Jennifer Fisher

Longtime "Fit Over 50" blogger, athlete, and Austin-based influencer Jennifer Fisher is a watermelon lover first and paid partner second; she creates, amplifies and shares watermelon recipes, workouts, cutting tips and videos to her fitness community of followers across Instagram, TikTok, Pinterest, Facebook, and her blog TheFitFork.com. Wrapping up the partnership year of content, which included a whopping **78 pieces of content**, Jennifer curated and created watermelon excellence with posts about:

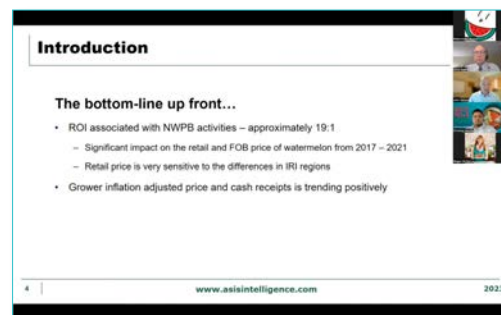
- Cinnamon Churro Watermelon Rind Fries (July)
- Watermelon Juice 101 - How to make, store and serve with a boost! (August)
- Watermelon Cutting Timelapse Video Made Easy for Any Season (October)
- Watermelon Fit for Every Season (January)

She also has included lot of watermelon posts that were not #sponsored throughout the year, such as a Watermelon Feta Salad recipe, a Gazpacho recipe using up the watermelon scraps, and even shown watermelon while poking fun at the life of a content creator. Be sure to check out her Workout with Watermelon series using watermelons as training equipment to get the blood pumping. This is a perfect example of how truly **authentic partnerships create long living content that doesn't expire, but rather inspires every year and can be promoted, amplified and educated about beyond the contract year.**



## The Economic Impact of the NWPB Webinar

On March 29th the Board offered the The Economic Impact of the NWPB via webinar for those who could not attend the presentation at the NWA Convention. The presentation **highlighted how the industry continues to receive a high ROI (19:1) from the efforts of the NWPB and the Board's 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. Research partner Armada Corporate Intelligence shared current economic conditions and how it could affect the industry moving forward. To learn more, view the [recording of the webinar](#) or [see the full report](#).



## Watermelon on the Menu

Blue Ribbon Sushi Bar & Grill in the South Beach area of Miami, FL is currently offering a Shishito and Watermelon Sunomono appetizer that includes roasted shishito peppers, fresh cut watermelon, amasu, sesame seeds, maldon sea salt



## NWPB Connections

SEPC Foodservice Tour - Lakeland, FL - April 12

CucCAP Meeting - Lansing, MI - April 13-14

IFPA Women's Fresh Perspectives - Orlando, FL - April 16-18

Queen Training - Orlando, FL - April 21-23

Canadian Produce Marketing Association - Toronto - April 25-27

