



# Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



## Watermelon Queens Shine at Retail

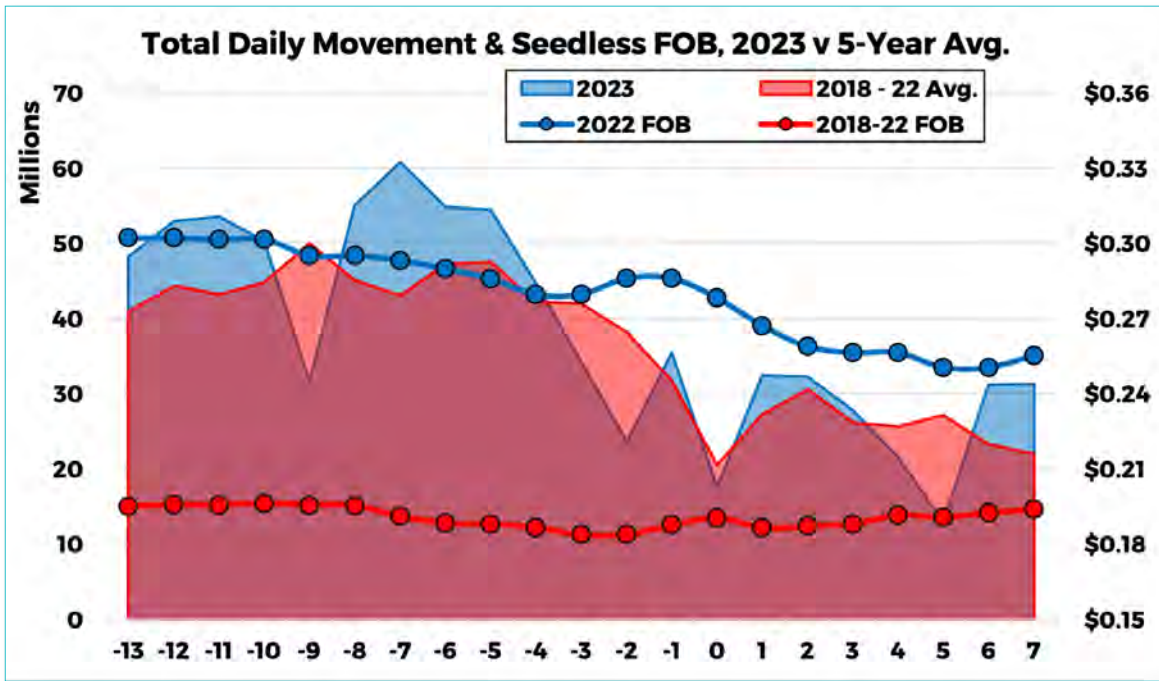
Every year, NWPB allocated budget to each of the national, state and regional associations' watermelon queen programs with a goal of invigorating their reach and impact, particularly at retail. This year, the response to watermelon queen promotions was overwhelmingly positive! Between educating consumers on the health benefits of watermelon to helping them select a watermelon to take home, watermelon queens enthusiastically marketed watermelon in-store at HEB, Sprouts, Kroger, Publix and DECA commissaries just to name a few!

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# Fourth of July 2023 Market Recap



**Fourth of July remains the most voluminous time of year for watermelon movement.** Data from the AMS Market News Portal shows from 2018 to 2022, the two weeks leading into the holiday and the week following averaged roughly 762 million pounds shipped. In 2023, movement was nearly 6% higher at 806 million pounds. Seedless FOB prices have averaged 18.7 cents per pound during the prior five years with 2023 coming in almost a dime higher at 28.0. This year’s pricing was 46.1% above last year and 49.4% above average.

Ad-tracking data from USDA shows retail ad activity in 2023 was lower than recent years. Inflationary pressure the past two years is readily evident as prices for individual larger watermelon increased 16% moving from 2021 to 2022 with another 9% increase from last year to this year. Mini prices have demonstrated a somewhat similar path displaying an increase of 15% compared to the five-year average, but slotting in a nickel lower than last year.

Circana (formerly IRI) retail scan data provides insight on sales at retail. Breaking it down by category, wholes were down 27 million pounds from average, which represents a 5.5% decline. This shortfall was somewhat offset by customers purchasing an additional four million pounds of minis, while the fresh cut category was down slightly. Slower sales in major markets, such as, New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago and Boston obscure that many markets were at or above their own individual volume averages.

View the full report [here](#) to find regional breakdowns for each of the primary shipping regions, as well as market-level comparisons for ads and sales at retail.

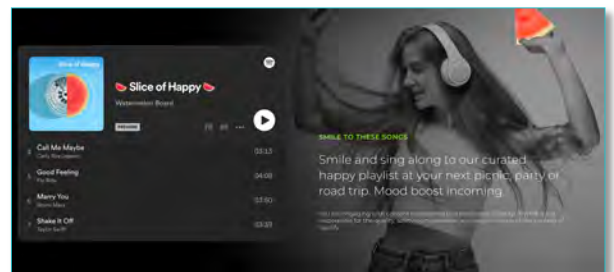
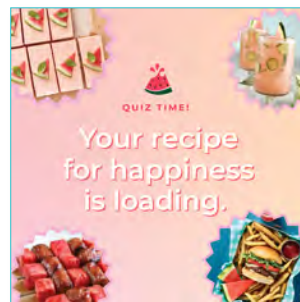
# Slice of Happy Project – Summer Promotion Peak Transitions to Fall Watermelon Wellness

The Slice of Happy Project’s summertime focus will soon be transitioning into the fall season, and the campaign will be **updating graphics and influencer partnerships** moving away from sunny smiles at pool & beach scenes of summer. It will **showcase and celebrate watermelon and its year round availability** while still laddering up to Slice of Happy throughout the year. The landing page will always be up at [watermelon.org/happy](http://watermelon.org/happy) and visitors will continue their happiness journey with research and education about the mood boost of watermelon, recipe for happiness quiz, Slice of Happy Spotify playlist and a happy corner flip card of fun, sharable inspirational content.

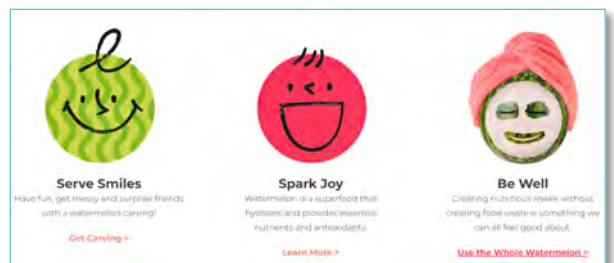


From June to August, the Slice of Happy landing page visits averaged **almost 3,000 monthly and the average time on page was 2:30**. Where are people clicking to most on this landing page?

- Home (18%)
- Recipes (9%)
- UTWW (8%)
- Cucumber Mojito Spritz (6%)
- Sweet Pizza (6%)



Who is signing up for the Happiness Kit email delivery? 67 consumers from June to July with a 75% open rate and a 50% click thru rate. The most opened items of those Happiness Kit are the Happiness Checklist and the Spotify Playlist.



The **recipe quiz happiness engagement area has a popularity ranking as well**. The Cucumber Mojito Spritz mocktail from Q1 with the “Refreshing bevy” answer is the most popular overall! In second place is the Q3 happy state of mind question to reveal the Watermelon Ice Cream Bars.

For September and October, in our fall shoulder season, the campaign will focus on **ways watermelon can help support mental and physical health as we prepare for the winter months**.

- Share freeze-able recipes (UTWW) during fall canning season... it’s not just for tree fruit anymore! Also show how versatile watermelon can be fresh or even frozen (Value)
- Marine Corps Marathon and the marathon training guide by Chrissy Carroll featuring health and wellness events and how watermelon refreshes and rehydrates
- Share tips and tricks on how food can help boost mood and overall health (Nutrition)
- Promote the digital lunchbox for kids going back to school (Recipes)

## Flavor Experience Highlights Watermelon's Versatility with Foodservice Operators



This year's Flavor Experience, in partnership with Flavor & the Menu Magazine, was on course to be the best attended yet, with nearly 250 operator attendees, but Hurricane Hillary had other plans! The Flavor Team encouraged earlier arrival due to this rare California weather event and added extra menu opportunities later in the conference. Board President Christian Murillo was in attendance to tell the watermelon story accompanied by Megan McKenna, the Board Foodservice lead and consulting chef, Rebecca Peizer. The Watermelon Board had three menu items **highlighting trends and pushing watermelon's versatility**:

- **Spice Smoked Watermelon Bao:** Dim sum style handheld sandwich with spice smoked watermelon, miso watermelon rind slaw, pickled mustard seeds and watermelon hoisin sauce
- **Char Sui Watermelon and Lamb Egg Roll Bowl:** Sliced BBQ char sui style watermelon over charred cabbage, wok fried lamb, shredded watermelon rind and aromatic vegetables drizzled with soy Dijon dressing
- **Watermelon Jelly Doughnut:** Craveable sweet and salty fried dough with watermelon jelly filling, maple glaze and smokey bacon sprinkles served with watermelon juice

All three dishes were well received and the doughnut was highlighted by keynote speaker, Chef Richard Blais. Watermelon was included in other sponsors' menu items continuing to highlight **how watermelon speaks to trends and adds flavor, texture and color to foodservice menus**. The Flavor Experience allows the NWPB to be thought of in foodservice on the same level as Beam Suntory, Kikkoman, Smithfield and Tyson, all kitchen staples in the Foodservice world. With more than 200 operator attendees from nearly 100 operators, representing more than 100,000 foodservice locations across the country, Flavor Experience filled the Board's pipeline with operator contacts. Some chains include Applebee's, Panera, and Broken Yolk Cafe.

## Grower Stories

As part of strategic planning direction, Board members requested that the Communications program **share stories with consumers about where watermelon comes from**. As a result, NWPB tasked watermelon queens - who frequently visit growers and farms - with interviewing their hosts and asking questions such as “What do you love most about being a watermelon grower?” and “Why does watermelon make people happy?” These insightful interactions are condensed into short-format videos with graphics and posted on our social channels – not only highlighting our industry members but also reminding consumers of all of your hard work and dedication. Thank you to those of you who have already participated and have been featured on the Board’s channels including Instagram, TikTok and LinkedIn. These posts **consistently have high engagement including likes and shares**. We will continue to highlight industry members throughout the year – make sure to be on the lookout! **If you’re interested in being featured on our social channel**, please reach out to Stephanie Barlow at sbarlow@watermelon.org.



## National Watermelon Day Consumer Outreach

Consumers love to celebrate National Watermelon Day on social media and this year was no different! Recognizing that the Board could leverage the already high-level of engagement on this day, the Board celebrated August 3<sup>rd</sup> with a giveaway of limited edition Watermelon-inspired Stanley cups (pictured, left). The Instagram post promoting the contest helped us gain 582 new followers with more than 1,000 comments. Out of 7 posts that day, this was our best performing post. The sticker reel with a spinning graphic of “I love watermelon” (also seen on LinkedIn) performed well (pictured, right), as did our “recipe for happiness” post. Overall, the NWD posts received **97,533 impressions, 13,528 engagements and 1,136 comments** on Instagram and Facebook.

An important and impressive statistic for the posts on National Watermelon Day is the number of *shares*, arguably the most impactful metric because not only did people stop to engage with our content but they found it worthy of their own share to their family and friends audience. The IG Reel of our NWD spinning graphic had 50 shares, the Avocado Board recipe collab had 10 shares, the recipe for happiness post had 17 and Stanley giveaway had 281 shares.

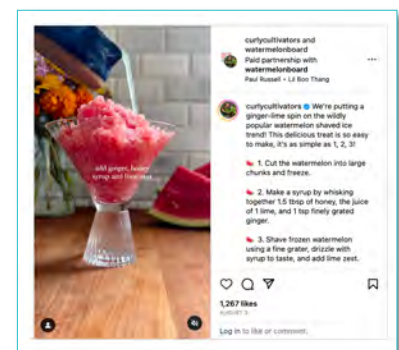


## Influencer Roundup

The Slice of Happy Project campaign was always engineered to be amplified on our *owned* Watermelon Board channels but very much also through the extended voices of our influencer partners. This summer we saw the most amount of influencer content (focusing on a summer campaign) utilizing and extending the Slice of Happy research. **This content influx on shared, paid and earned partner channels was unprecedented.**

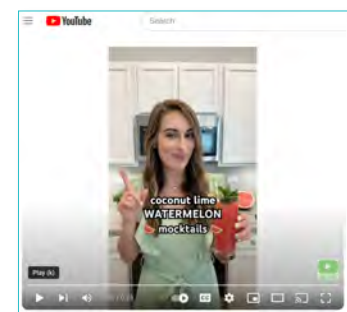
**Curly Cultivators** is a 2nd year watermelon friend who we first partnered with during last year's focus on Use the Whole Watermelon. Reaching out to Mikayla and Leota again they were happy to get on board with the happy campaign! They focus on Instagram Reels, creating original recipes and also recreating popular recipes on a Reel. Another is coming at the end of August, but so far we've seen Watermelon Shaved Ice and Watermelon Margarita Popsicles!

- 33,405 impressions
- 2,508 engagements



**Cheerful Choices** is a new Slice of Happy Project year partner, and Mackenzie has shared her content through Instagram and Instagram Stories, YouTube, Pinterest, Tiktok and her own enewsletter. Cheerful Choices has so far created a Watermelon Mocktail post and a Watermelon Ice Cube Hack.

- 14,650 impressions
- 787 engagements
- YouTube - more than 43 hours of watch time for watermelon ice cube hack video alone



**Kim Rose, RD** is an ongoing watermelon friend who we first partnered with in 2020, and her Instagram is @the.bloodsugar.nutritionist. Kim created a watermelon infographic to speak directly to her nutrition-minded audience as well as an educational Reel posted on National Watermelon Day that highlighted Slice of Happy mood boost survey stats.

- 23,358 impressions
- 24,082 views
- 1,424 engagements

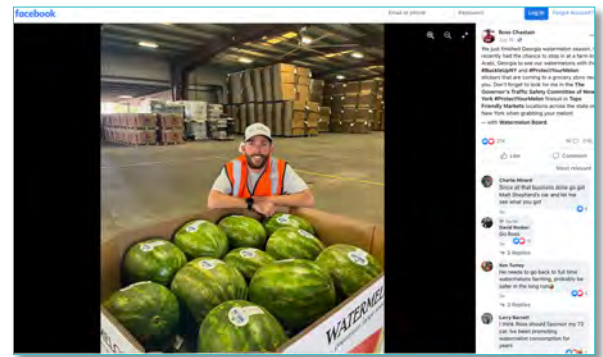


**Bianca Dottin** is another long term watermelon friend who we partner with to share inspirational family friendly watermelon content with the busy homeschool mom and lifestyle blogger audience. Her take on amplifying the Slice of Happy Project included the survey research and a mood boost picnic with a tasty snack board and backyard picnic. “No matter how you slice it, adding watermelon to your plate will add a smile to your face.” Bianca posted her Instagram Reel but also included a blog post, Facebook, Tiktok, Pinterest and YouTube – far above the contracted amount!

- 6,365 impressions
- 509 engagements
- 1,600 views YouTube



**Ross Chastain** is certainly much more than a Slice of Happy Project partner, but a forerunner in our watermelon partnerships reaching the NASCAR and family audience from his watermelon farmer roots flying in the fast lane! The Watermelon Board partnership specifically centers on watermelon facts and



education posts that share messaging to inspire more watermelon purchasing by consumers of all ages, all fans of racing. Ross Chastain posts across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, but for just two of those three platforms the #MelonPartner posts have earned an enormous result:

- 2.3M impressions – Facebook and Twitter
- 122,595 engagements
- Instagram has 110k followers



## New England Produce Council

NWPB returned as exhibitors to the New England Produce Council’s Produce Show and Conference held August 22-22 in Everett, 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, including the new Watermelon Learning Lab. As an exhibitor, the NWPB interacted with many retailers such as Market Basket, Tops Market, Roche Brothers and Whole Foods, to name a few.



## Podcast Advertising – a Study in Branding

An impressive **48% of listeners have purchased at least one product advertised in a podcast in the past year**. And 76% can recall at least one advertised product, according to The Power of Podcasts, a study from Voices, conducted by Momentive.

In addition, **73% have listened to a podcast in the past 12 months**. They listen for entertainment (62%), to stay up to date (54%) and to pass the time (48%). Listeners devote the following number of hours per week to podcasts:

- 1-3 hours—47.80%
- 4-6 hours—23/65%
- 7-9 hours—13%
- 13-15 hours—3.21%
- 16+ hours—3.63%



Of those surveyed, 51.44% listen to one to three different podcasts per month, 29.65% take in four to six, 12.57% seven to nine and 6.25% 10+. The content they prefer varies by gender and age.

The study found that 72% of sports/fitness listeners are male and that 66% of true crime fans are female. And 44% of those over age 60 like news and political podcasts. However, comedy is the most popular podcast form, with 42% saying they are listeners.

Listeners also like engaging personalities—37% will return if they enjoy the host. In addition, 62% of listeners follow their favorite host or shows on social media. Another 31% say they have discovered podcasts via social media.

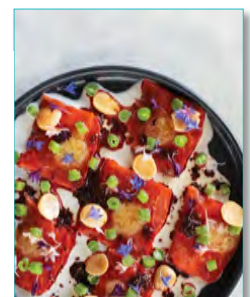
Podcast fans also have advertising preferences: 34.63% prefer ads read by the podcast host and 21.37% those that are advertiser-produced ads. And 44% have no preference. Momentive surveyed 1,183 U.S. consumers from July 12-14, 2023.

This research is being shared in advance of the wrap up of the iHeart Podcast advertising flight that will be ending its contract August 31st.



## Watermelon on the Menu

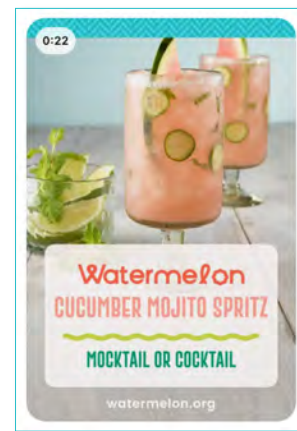
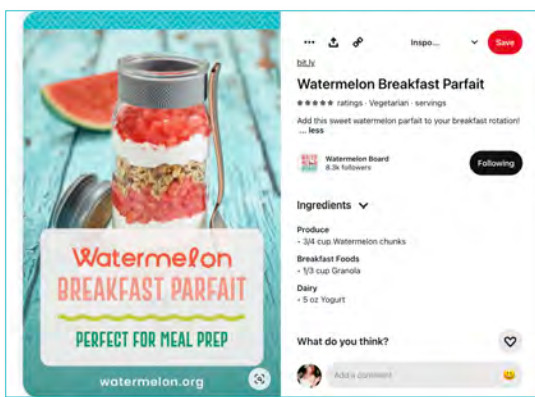
Columbus-based and plant-forward restaurant Comune serves a **Watermelon Carpaccio on their year-round menu**. The dish is made of watermelon, harissa, English peas, toasted marcona almonds, and house made almond milk and was recently named as “the best dish we ate all year” by *Columbus Monthly* in their “10 Best Restaurants” article. In addition to the Carpaccio, Comune is **also offering a Yogurt Mousse made with poppy seed, watermelon 3 ways: granita, molasses and candied rind**.





## Pinterest Templates for Recipes – Testing New Design Look

Playing with creative on **existing assets and imagery refreshes the look and feel of our watermelon content**. We are executing on a highly stylized design template, focusing on Pinterest but able to post on Instagram and Facebook, a colorful border that nods to the website design elements to create eye catching graphic layouts. The idea is to also include recipe ingredients and possibly instructions in post copy and encourage ‘saving’ the post to make in future. Check out the recipes in design that are in test this summer!



## NWPB Connections

**Kinetic 12** – Chicago, IL – September 5 & 6

**Culinary Institute of America Latin American Cuisines Summit** – San Antonio, TX – September 12 & 13

**Commodity Roundtable CEO Fall Meeting** – Washington, DC – September 19 & 20

**NWPB Fall Board Meeting & Strategic Planning Session** – Orlando, FL – September 21 & 22

