



Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



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Fall 2023 Board Meeting

The Board met in Orlando, FL September 21 and 22, 2023. Each year the Fall Board meeting provides updates to the current year's programs. The meeting kicked off hearing from the Executive Committee, NWA and USDA. In addition to Communications, Marketing, Foodservice and Research updates from the Directors, the Board also saw reports on the new Consumer Research and Foodservice Operator Research.

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Board Meeting Continued

Be sure to check out next month's Watermelon Update for more on those reports!

As a new way to showcase the programs, the evening event was a Watermelon Showcase. The Showcase was an opportunity for each department (listed above) to have a table to share key messages and program initiatives. Each station, plus the bar and dessert, had recipes highlighting the current year's initiatives. No one left hungry!





The Meeting also included more future-focused topics such as Strategic Planning. Strategic Planning only happens once every three years. This is the **opportunity for each board member to contribute ideas, trends, insights, and other priorities that help form the Board's programs**. Through an anonymous web based platform the moderator presents questions, feedback and commentary and prioritizes the Board's input throughout the session in a timely fashion. As always, great direction was shared by the Board for the staff to use to build future programs.



Use the Whole Watermelon Consumer Campaign Wins Produce Business Marketing Excellence Award

2022's Use the Whole Watermelon campaign was submitted and selected from many other worthy programs. Its **eye-catching visuals, vast reach and huge engagement metrics provided direct-to-consumer impact**. We couldn't have done it without the committed team on staff and our agency partner, Curious Plot. The landing page and striking visuals branded the campaign and watermelon in fresh, fun vibrancy — and it continues to live on the site [here](#), as UTWW continues to be the main sustainability messaging point for watermelon.

 Read about the Awards here: <https://www.producebusiness.com/loud-and-clear-35th-annual-marketing-excellence-awards/> 

 Direct link to the Watermelon Board winning entry post: <https://www.producebusiness.com/35th-annual-marketing-excellence-award-winner-national-watermelon-promotion-board/> 

Previous Produce Business Marketing Excellence Award winners:

- 2021: Chef's Roll Working with Watermelon (2020)
- 2020: Fit Foodie Runs (2019) and Plant-Forward Menu Solutions (2019)





2023 Labor Day Market Recap

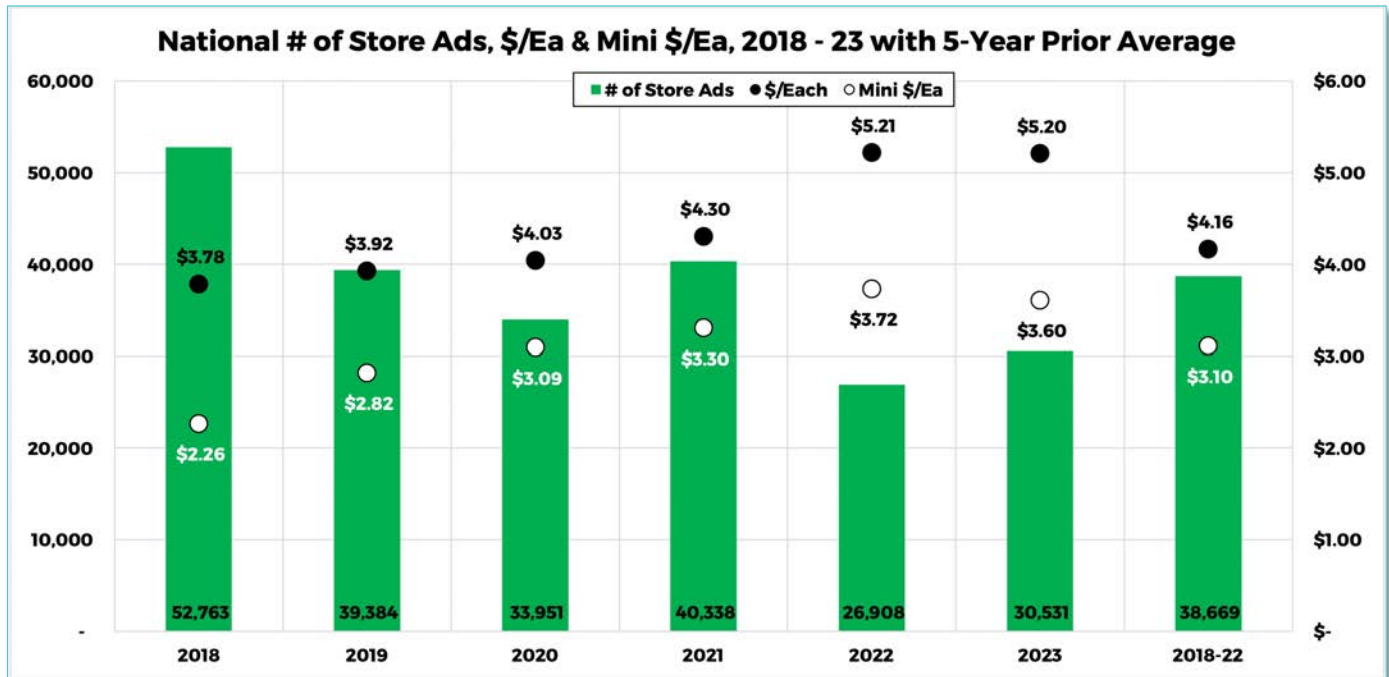
Labor Day weekend continues to be a strong driver of watermelon demand. From 2018 through 2022 the two weeks preceding the holiday and the week that followed averaged roughly 415 million pounds. In 2023, movement was 15% higher than average at a series-high 477 million pounds. AMS Market News shows that seedless FOB pricing was 20% above average at \$0.24 per pound. Combining volume and value leads to revenue estimates that were nearly 38% higher than average and represent a continuation of the leap seen last year.

Movement	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2018-22	v 22	v Avg
California	124,850,000	88,610,000	94,570,000	48,590,000	106,190,000	143,020,000	92,562,000	35%	55%
Delaware	24,780,000	26,680,000	33,820,000	39,580,000	36,960,000	50,960,000	32,364,000	38%	57%
Indiana	98,780,000	115,460,000	133,380,000	120,420,000	77,770,000	94,390,000	109,162,000	21%	-14%
Maryland	16,540,000	12,840,000	24,320,000	23,480,000	26,900,000	29,760,000	20,816,000	11%	43%
Mexico	20,970,000	27,890,000	33,440,000	28,300,000	13,710,000	27,830,000	24,862,000	103%	12%
Michigan	48,600,000	40,480,000	48,870,000	45,080,000	42,440,000	49,080,000	45,094,000	16%	9%
N. Carolina	21,560,000	44,680,000	21,840,000	27,080,000	44,120,000	53,480,000	31,856,000	21%	68%
Oklahoma	2,300,000	5,200,000	5,130,000	9,880,000	1,320,000	2,000,000	4,766,000	52%	-58%
Texas	53,760,000	59,210,000	47,590,000	43,020,000	32,000,000	16,760,000	47,116,000	-48%	-64%
Virginia	5,840,000	7,200,000	4,480,000	10,040,000	5,020,000	9,840,000	6,516,000	96%	51%
Total	417,980,000	428,250,000	447,440,000	395,470,000	386,430,000	477,120,000	415,114,000	23%	15%

FOB	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2018-22	v 22	v Avg
California	\$ 0.172	\$ 0.193	\$ 0.219	\$ 0.161	\$ 0.305	\$ 0.264	\$ 0.215	-13%	23%
Delaware	\$ 0.190	\$ 0.220	\$ 0.188	\$ 0.176	\$ 0.310	\$ 0.257	\$ 0.218	-17%	18%
Indiana	\$ 0.182	\$ 0.191	\$ 0.175	\$ 0.147	\$ 0.240	\$ 0.223	\$ 0.183	-7%	22%
Maryland	\$ 0.193	\$ 0.203	\$ 0.184	\$ 0.159	\$ 0.251	\$ 0.213	\$ 0.199	-15%	7%
Mexico	\$ 0.185	\$ 0.197	\$ 0.191	\$ 0.160	\$ 0.275	\$ 0.235	\$ 0.193	-14%	22%
Michigan	\$ 0.194	\$ 0.217	\$ 0.188	\$ 0.175	\$ 0.306	\$ 0.253	\$ 0.214	-17%	18%
N. Carolina	\$ 0.179	\$ 0.193	\$ 0.181	\$ 0.150	\$ 0.245	\$ 0.200	\$ 0.197	-18%	2%
Oklahoma	\$ 0.174	\$ 0.187	\$ 0.187	\$ 0.156	\$ 0.289	\$ 0.232	\$ 0.178	-20%	30%
Texas	\$ 0.174	\$ 0.185	\$ 0.187	\$ 0.155	\$ 0.295	\$ 0.232	\$ 0.192	-22%	20%
Virginia	\$ 0.201	\$ 0.199	\$ 0.180	\$ 0.162	\$ 0.251	\$ 0.216	\$ 0.193	-14%	12%
Total	\$ 0.180	\$ 0.196	\$ 0.190	\$ 0.158	\$ 0.279	\$ 0.240	\$ 0.200	-14.1%	20.0%

Revenue	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2018-22	v 22	v Avg
California	\$ 21,457,300	\$ 17,068,733	\$ 20,743,400	\$ 7,843,814	\$ 32,429,917	\$ 37,826,600	\$ 19,908,633	17%	90%
Delaware	\$ 4,718,333	\$ 5,874,517	\$ 6,351,202	\$ 6,955,900	\$ 11,449,181	\$ 13,093,895	\$ 7,069,827	14%	85%
Indiana	\$ 17,949,858	\$ 22,071,233	\$ 23,311,533	\$ 17,694,926	\$ 18,651,192	\$ 21,055,967	\$ 19,935,749	13%	6%
Maryland	\$ 3,185,800	\$ 2,609,733	\$ 4,463,933	\$ 3,735,762	\$ 6,744,619	\$ 6,341,067	\$ 4,147,970	-6%	53%
Mexico	\$ 3,871,554	\$ 5,488,968	\$ 6,386,134	\$ 4,519,780	\$ 3,773,071	\$ 6,551,097	\$ 4,807,901	74%	36%
Michigan	\$ 9,441,333	\$ 8,771,133	\$ 9,166,826	\$ 7,888,000	\$ 12,981,105	\$ 12,396,505	\$ 9,649,680	-5%	28%
N. Carolina	\$ 3,849,733	\$ 8,644,667	\$ 3,958,470	\$ 4,073,443	\$ 10,822,533	\$ 10,704,943	\$ 6,269,769	-1%	71%
Oklahoma	\$ 399,800	\$ 969,800	\$ 960,817	\$ 1,537,267	\$ 381,895	\$ 463,981	\$ 849,916	21%	-45%
Texas	\$ 9,349,717	\$ 10,940,450	\$ 8,904,600	\$ 6,686,767	\$ 9,440,133	\$ 3,880,476	\$ 9,064,333	-59%	-57%
Virginia	\$ 1,172,267	\$ 1,432,000	\$ 805,267	\$ 1,626,590	\$ 1,259,548	\$ 2,120,933	\$ 1,259,134	68%	68%
Total	\$ 75,395,696	\$ 83,871,235	\$ 85,052,183	\$ 62,562,250	\$ 107,933,193	\$ 114,435,464	\$ 82,962,911	6.0%	37.9%

Retail ad data from USDA-AMS shows that the number of store ads were up a bit from last year, though still down from previous. Advertised prices, meanwhile, showed a 12-cent decrease to \$3.60 for minis compared to 2022, and larger watermelons were virtually unchanged at \$5.20.



The last section of the recap utilizes Circana Retail Scan data to compare 2023 watermelon sales with the prior five-year period, 2018-2022. The three weeks around Labor Day featured all three segments with above average volume. Whole watermelon was 22 million pounds above average, while mini and cut sales were up two million pounds each. Both mini and cut were in line with last year, though wholes were up 46 million pounds. Please [see the full report here](#) for more information.



iHeart Podcast Campaign Results

This summer, Communications worked with iHeart Media to deploy a purpose created commercial within their network of podcasts. Two :30 second podcast commercials were created and recorded - the first focused on using the whole watermelon, recipes and versatility. The second highlighted this year’s overarching Communications theme - the Slice of Happy Project. Rather than advertise on one podcast, the most economical way to reach a diverse, national audience was to target iHeart’s psychographic profiles – which adds users to different groups based on their personal interest. **The three month campaign – which began June 1 and ended August 31 – over-delivered on audience listens with more than 2.5 million impressions!**

Psychographic Profile	Impressions	Leads
Cultivator	496,797	728
Nest	296,048	462
Thriver	295,880	567
Conquerer	295,818	623
Shopper	295,700	632
Viewer	295,687	636
Decider	247,552	398
Advocate	237,022	305
Intrepid	98,314	284
	2,558,818	4,635

First Foodservice Roundtable Meeting with Kinetic12 Emergence

The Emergence Operator Group is a 12-month subscription program that offers research insights and **introductions/meetings with more than 140 relevant emerging and growth chains with 20-500 restaurants across the country**. Quarterly these operators are surveyed and a Quarterly Insights Report is assembled for the operators and suppliers. The Board attended the first of two 1-on-1 roundtable meetings with 17 operators in attendance. The meeting includes updates from these timely reports which help with talking points when meeting with the operators. The Board wants watermelon to be a solution to their current challenges. The meetings include additional networking time when the 12-minute meeting isn't quite long enough and rapid fire operator panels to dive deeper into what the research findings mean to individual brands. Meetings in September included PDQ Chicken, Sharky's, Roti, and The Great Greek. With all of the moving parts this annual program has already led to dynamic deep connections with multiple chains all with the goal of getting more watermelon on menus.




Wellness with Watermelon E-News Results

Our second e-newsletter of the year written with nutrition professionals in mind deployed late summer and saw open rates and click rates sky high! **All measured analytics were significantly higher than any other digest sent as well as industry standard:**

- Open Rate: 58.1%
- Clicks per Unique Opens: 27%
- Click Rate: 15.8%
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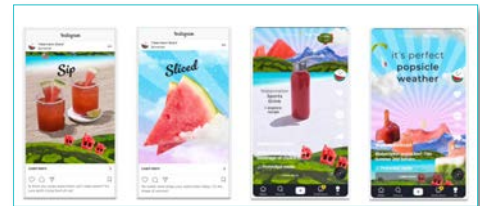
[Let's Get Happy with Watermelon](#)  highlighted our happiness consumer research, dove into watermelon's excellent source of vitamin C standing (25% DV!) and a meal prep guide with watermelon as the star ingredient.

International Marketing Update - Canada

The ultimate goal of the Market Access Program (MAP) is to increase U.S. watermelon consumption among new and existing Canadian consumers and in turn increase U.S. watermelon exports to Canada. While a mature market, the promotions implemented in Canada continue to find success in creating availability awareness to U.S. watermelon to Canadian consumers through retail and communication marketing programs. Here are some mid-year updates on the international marketing program.

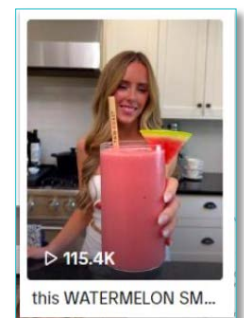
Communications

Some of the strategies within the communications program include inspiring new and existing watermelon consumers during the planning/trigger stage of the customer journey to purchase U.S.–grown watermelon through meal inspiration that showcases product versatility and by demonstrating ease of preparing and storing the fruit. Additionally, providing new consumers with a reason to purchase watermelons on multiple occasions ideally will motivate them to regularly add watermelon to their cart. The program is divided into Spring/Summer into two main promotional periods – spring/summer and fall/winter. This year, NWPB promoted these strategies to **relevant Canadian audiences via social media advertising featuring a “World of Watermelon” theme, Canadian influencer partnerships and owned TikTok programs where a recipe freelancer developed and published organic content directly on NWPB’s TikTok channel.**



Results:

- Social Media Advertising
 - 9.5M Impressions / 544K Engagements
- Influencers Partnerships
 - 97K Impressions / 101K Engagements / 933K Reach / 1.8M views
- Owned TikTok Program
 - 744K Impressions / 45K Engagements



Foodservice

Every year, NWPB continues to research different avenues in expanding U.S. watermelon exports. This year, NWPB began exploring the potential opportunities in the foodservice arena. The strategy is to motivate foodservice to incorporate watermelon in their menu through education and inspiration.

In an effort to introduce watermelon to Canadian foodservice, NWPB exhibited at the Restaurants Canada Show (RC Show), which is Canada’s leading foodservice and hospitality expo. Through lead generation, NWPB engaged with attendees, a majority of them being chefs, restaurant owners, importers/distributors, large and



small-scale buyers, nutrition professionals, technology and service salespeople, and representatives from other countries.

NWPB also **hosted a watermelon-themed dinner at The Chefs House in partnership with George Brown College on September 26th in Toronto**. Chefs were invited to dine and experience tantalizing menu items that **showcased watermelon’s versatility over four courses as well as canapes, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages and a flavor inspiration station** that paired watermelon with various international spices.



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 within three days of event. The National Watermelon Promotion Board is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Culinary Institute of America’s Latin Cuisine Summit

“Latin flavors – and the desire for them – is only growing stronger. In fact, 3 of the 10 flavors that Datassential predicts will be everywhere this year – birria, manganada and salsa macha – are Latin flavors,” said Megan Lynchburg of Datassentials. These **trends and the opportunity to highlight a major source region, Mexico**, motivated the Board to sponsor the Latin American Cuisine Summit in San Antonio, TX, September 12th & 13th. The Culinary Institute of America’s Latin American Cuisine Summit brought together a diverse audience of foodservice, culinary, and beverage professionals for two days of culinary demonstrations, insightful discussions, and business inspiration and strategy.

The sponsorship included **watermelon menu items** throughout the conference. The Board served **Watermelon Pibil, Latin Inspired Watermelon Salad, and a Watermelon Paloma**. The CIA staff also prepared a Watermelon Aqua Fresca during both lunches and other sponsors utilized watermelon as well. In addition to menu items, the Watermelon Board had an information table highlighting educational and inspirational tools, giveaways in gift bags and the website logo was included on the event website and eblasts before and after the event. This was a quality over quantity event but great connections were made with Wendy’s and Aramark.



RD Influencer Chrissy Carroll

In 2019, Longtime Board partner, registered dietitian and influencer Chrissy Carroll wrote a blog post titled “[Is Watermelon Fattening](#) ?” As you can see from the time chart below, the post growth continues year after year (spiking each summer) and has been viewed more than 12,000 times with an average time on site over 5 minutes - showing that users are visiting the post and reading the information Chrissy provides. This



illustrates the **benefits of working with partners long term because the investment deepens in value over time. It also highlights the value in long form blog content and partnering with credentialed and trusted health professionals/educators.**



Watermelon on the Menu

Colita, who specializes in flavors of Mexico with barbecue and smoking techniques from all over the world, is based in Minneapolis, Minnesota and is currently offering a **Cucumber Watermelon Salad** with sunflower sikil paak, tajin, serrano and basil.



NWPB Connections

- MenuDirections** – Columbus, OH – October 8 – 10
- IFPA Global Show** – Anaheim, CA – October 18 – 21
- Marine Corps Marathon** – Washington, DC – October 29
- International Foodservice Editorial Council** – Louisville, KY – November 1 – 3

