



Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



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Watermelon Queen & Ambassador Media Training

On April 20th in Orlando, FL, the NWPB hosted a media training day tailored specifically for State and National Watermelon Queens. This initiative aimed to empower ambassadors of the watermelon industry with essential skills in media engagement and communication.



Queen Training Continued

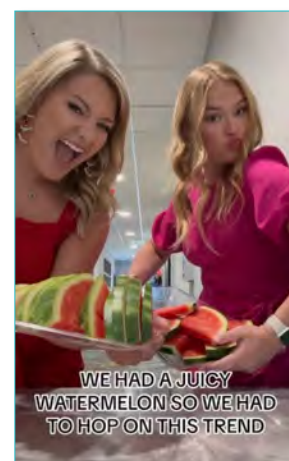
Watermelon Queens and Promotional Ambassadors hold a **pivotal role within the watermelon industry, serving as advocates and educators who bridge the gap between producers, retailers and consumers**. Their influence extends far beyond the crown, as they play a vital role in disseminating accurate information about watermelon's nutritional benefits, value and versatility in kitchen and home applications for families of all sizes.

As ambassadors, these women are in the unique position to connect with consumers and effectively communicate the value of watermelon and consequently are instrumental in driving consumer engagement and boosting consumption. By leveraging their charisma, knowledge and passion, Watermelon Queens and Promotional Ambassadors can help to amplify promotional efforts at retail and drive consumer interest at events, ultimately benefiting both retailers and growers.

The media training initiative **brought together industry experts to provide comprehensive guidance on key messaging, content creation, public speaking, and digital and social media skills**. Participants received hands-on training in crafting compelling narratives, leveraging social media platforms, and effectively engaging with traditional media outlets to maximize reach and impact.

Through initiatives like this media training, the NWPB aims to **elevate communication capabilities both digitally and in-person, empowering Watermelon Queens and Promotional Ambassadors to effectively engage with diverse audiences and drive positive perceptions of watermelon**.

Stay tuned for more updates as our Watermelon Queens and Promotional Ambassadors continue to spread the sweetness of the watermelon industry



Assessment Increase Update

Each month we will update the industry on the progress of the Assessment Increase. The Rulemaking work plan has been approved and the **official rule is being drafted. More to come on the timing of the comment period, when industry members are encouraged to share their opinions on the potential assessment increase.** More to come in June!

Industry Member Spotlight: Get to Know Jill Barton

Jill Barton, our newly appointed Secretary/Treasurer, brings extensive experience in the watermelon industry to the Board.

Company: Jim Rash Inc.

Years in the industry: 13 years full time, 24 as a watermelon wife

Time on the Board: 4 months

What's your favorite thing about the Watermelon Industry? The people. I'm grateful for the friendships I have and the new ones that will be made. There is a different connection you have with people who are experiencing similar things, especially the watermelon crazies.

What's your favorite piece of technology? Libby, Audible, Podcasts – I love to read but don't have time to sit in the summer. Nothing replaces reading a real book but, for me, these apps are the next best thing.



Viva Fresh

NWPB was on-hand for the 9th year as exhibitors at Viva Fresh expo in Houston, Texas from April 12th – 13th hosted by the Texas International Produce Association (TIPA). NWPB's Director of Retail and International Marketing Juliemar Rosado and Retail Account Manager Katie Manetti (pictured top, with former NWPB President Jesse Wiggins) attended the expo that included networking events and educational seminars. At the expo, NWPB staff was able to continue to **build awareness and promote NWPB's unique resources to a record-breaking 2,700 attendees**, including current NWPB Vice President Chris Dyer (pictured, bottom with Manetti) and i425 retail and foodservice buyers, up from the previous year. The merchandising contest announcement and Watermelon Learning Lab were 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 return to Houston in 2025.

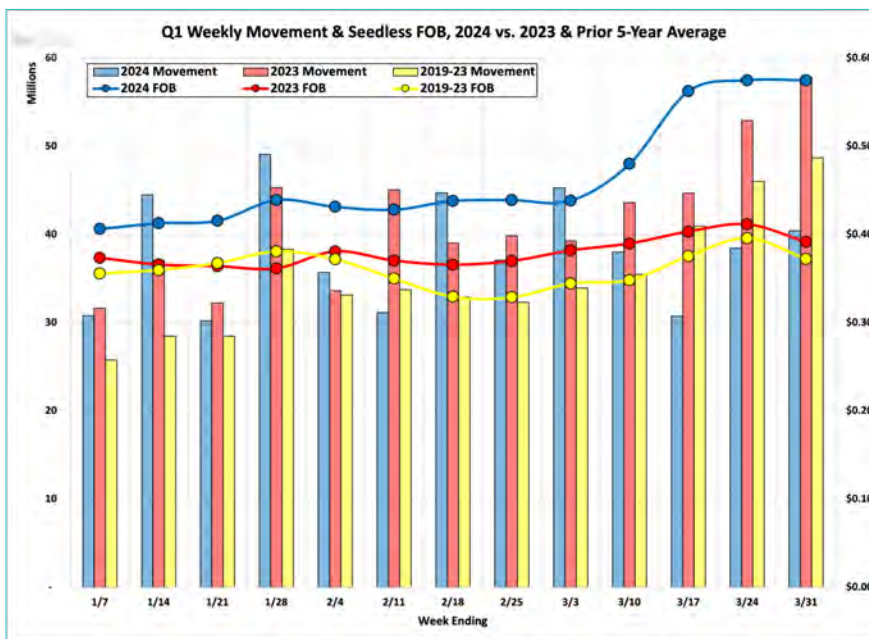
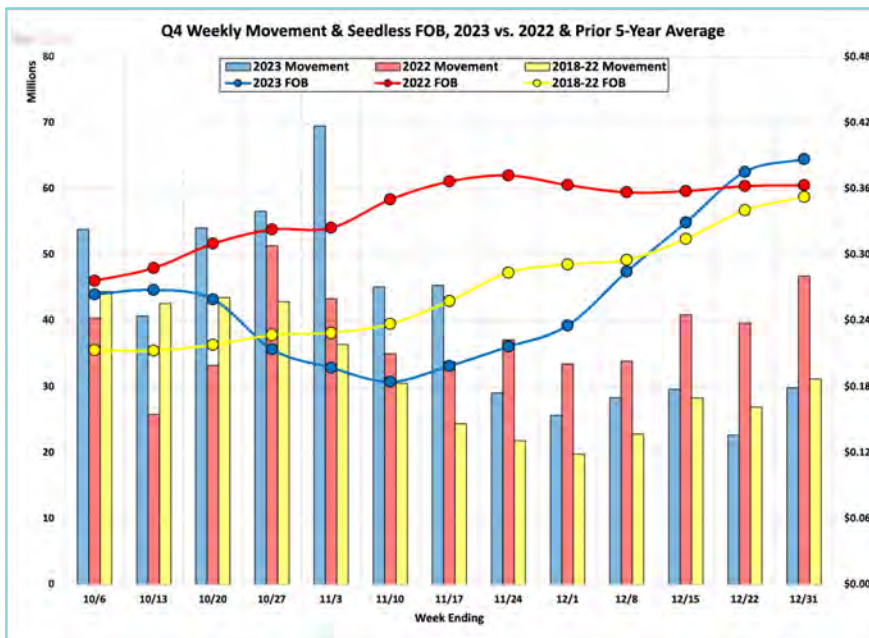


Q4 & Q1 Market Report

Data freely provided by the Market News Portal hosted by Agricultural Marketing Services (AMS) makes it easy to analyze how supply and pricing this year compares to past years. The following charts **compare the fourth quarter of 2023 and the first quarter of 2024 to the prior year and five-year average for each.**

The blue columns show weekly movement for 2023 and can be compared to the red or yellow columns showing 2022 and the five-year average, respectively. Color consistency carries over to seedless FOB pricing with the righthand axis showing dollar per pound pricing. We see above average prices the first few weeks, which dipped lower for several weeks, but finished the year above both 2022 and the average. Movement was very strong the first half of Q4 then gradually fell back to average.

In the recently closed first quarter we observed seedless FOB prices above both the prior year, 2023, and the five-year average. Both prior comparisons were relatively close throughout, while current year saw the gap widen significantly in the final weeks of the quarter. Movement was fairly normal through January and February with a couple of surge weeks pushing totals higher before falling off noticeably over the last several weeks heading into April.



For more information visit the Supply Chain Research page at watermelon.org or reach out to Jason Hanselman at jasonh116@gmail.com to request custom reports.

Juicy News: Early Kickoff for the Annual Watermelon Retail Merchandising Contest!

As the scorching summer heat begins to blanket the land, the anticipation for the sweet, refreshing taste of watermelon surges. And what better way to celebrate this beloved summer fruit than with a retail merchandising contest that not only engages stores but also delights customers?

Traditionally held from July to August, this year's contest is moving the date up to June through August, extending the excitement and maximizing the season's potential. The decision to expand the contest period comes from a desire to capture the early summer market when watermelon demand begins to soar, ensuring that participating stores can capitalize on the peak of the season.

The contest invites retailers of all sizes, from small local markets to large supermarket chains, to participate and showcase their best watermelon merchandising. Whether it's an eye-catching pyramid of perfectly ripe watermelons, a colorful arrangement of fruit baskets, or an inventive watermelon-themed aisle, creativity knows no bounds in this competition.

Stores are also encouraged to use their imagination to craft mixed media tactics online as well as in-store that not only highlight the health, value and versatility of watermelon but also engage customers and ignite their enthusiasm for summer. From vibrant social media posts and videos to interactive elements like tasting stations or recipe cards featuring delicious watermelon treats, the goal is to create an immersive shopping experience that leaves a lasting impression.

All varieties of watermelon are eligible for inclusion in the promotion, ranging from whole fruits to fresh-cut options, mini watermelons, and a spectrum of colors including yellow and red, or any combination thereof. Judging criteria will encompass a wide array of marketing endeavors, including category visibility, point-of-sale materials, effective visual merchandising, communication of nutritional benefits, provision of recipes and/or selection guidance, as well as utilization of print, online, and/or digital platforms.

In addition to the opportunity to showcase their merchandising prowess, participating stores also stand to win exciting prizes, motivating retailers to put their best foot forward and go above and beyond to capture the hearts and palates of shoppers.

But perhaps the greatest prize of all is the boost in sales and foot traffic that comes from simply participating. By creating visually stunning marketing and displays, stores can draw in customers eager to indulge in the quintessential taste of summer.



ENTER TO WIN!

More than \$10,000 in Cash & Prizes!

It's the National Watermelon Merchandising Contest!

Create a retail campaign anytime June - August!

Grand Prize \$5,000
2nd Place \$2,500
3rd Place \$1,000
3 Honorable Mentions \$500 each




 watermelon.org

NWA Nook: Join Us at IFPA's The Washington Conference

NWA will be **back at the International Fresh Produce Association's The Washington Conference** and be part of influencing the legislation and regulations that will affect the future of the watermelon industry! Join the watermelon delegation, alongside staff and members of the National Watermelon Association (NWA), along with the National Watermelon Queen and State Chapter Queens. Our presence at the event will include:

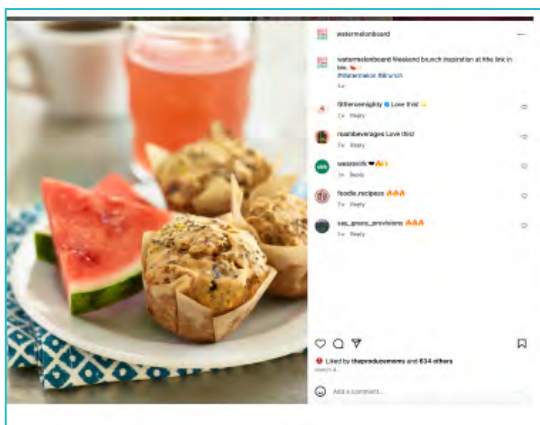
- ****Policy Updates:**** Stay informed on crucial policy objectives through IFPA's expert programming, speakers, and staff.
- ****Advocacy Opportunities:**** March on the Hill with us to represent our industry's interests directly to lawmakers.
- ****Networking at Joy of Fresh:**** Join the Queens at the Joy of Fresh event, where we'll distribute watermelons to Members of Congress and their staff, making a lasting impression while reinforcing our policy objectives.
- ****Policy Briefing:**** Gain insights into how watermelon aligns with these policy priorities in an engaging and informative briefing alongside your peers.



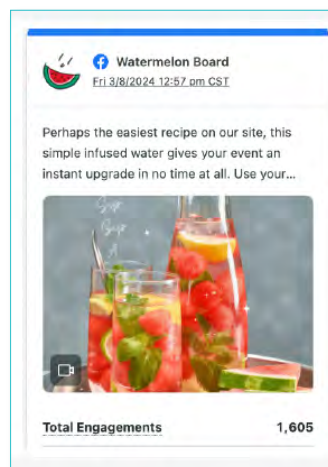
Don't miss this chance to engage, advocate, and network at one of the most important industry events of the year. Join NWA at IFPA's The Washington Conference and make your voice heard! Connect with NWA Staff to let us know you'll be joining by emailing George Szczepanski at George@nwawatermelon.com. Go directly to IFPA's site to get registered at <https://www.freshproduce.com/events/the-washington-conference/>. 



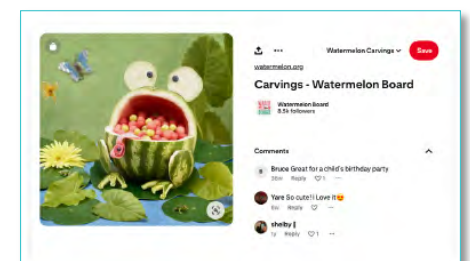
Top Social Posts



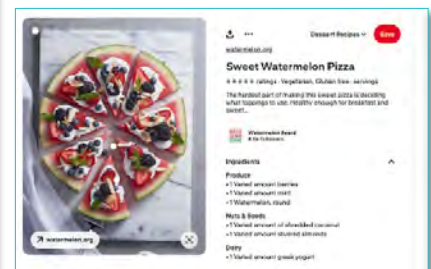
Instagram



Facebook

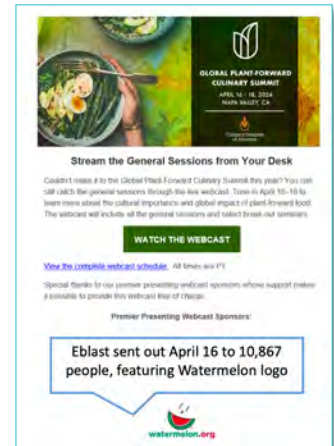


Pinterest



Watermelon Board Webcast Sponsor of Global Plant-Forward Culinary Summit

Watermelon lends itself to many foodservice trends and one consistently highlighted is plant-forward or the rise of plant-based menu items. Watermelon's flavor, texture, and color make it a great alternative for tuna in poke or beef in carpaccio, to name a few. To help with that association, the Board was a webcast sponsor for the Culinary Institute of America's Global Plant-Forward Culinary Summit, April 16-18, 2024. The newly produced videos from 2024 (highlighted in the [March Watermelon Update](#)) were broadcast during selected breaks each day of the live conference webcast. The Board's logo or name was shown before the videos aired, onsite at the conference, on the conference and webcast webpage, in an eblast, and on social media. The webcast had nearly 12,000 live views, most from LinkedIn, but the content is posted for further viewing. The CIA content is both inspirational and drool-worthy!



CPMA Convention & Tradeshow

NWPB's Juliemar Rosado, with the assistance of Argyle representatives Michelle Gibson and Laura Pixley (pictured), was present at the Canadian Produce Marketing Association's annual convention April 23rd – 25th in Vancouver, Canada. The event provides a **unique forum for industry leaders to enhance their business opportunities in Canada** through an exceptional combination of education and networking opportunities. CPMA's Annual Convention and Trade Show regularly attracts key decision-makers and customers from all segments of the fresh produce supply chain. Participants include industry executives, category managers, government representatives, and countless other notable staff who are involved in the Canadian fresh fruit and vegetable sector. Adding excitement in the booth, NWPB had a plinko game at the ready for booth visitors to come by and play for a chance to win prizes. As a result, NWPB was visited by Canadian retail merchandisers, foodservice professionals and watermelon category managers who played the game, engaged with the informational materials available as well as fielded opportunities to promote U.S. watermelon in Canada throughout the year. Exhibiting at the CPMA gives NWPB the opportunity to connect with retailers from all over Canada. This not only encourages watermelon consumption as a whole, but also supports our Market Access Programs in place to support U.S. watermelon exports.



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.

Simply Watermelon – Photo & Video Shoot with Dishworks



In April, NWPB partnered with food content studio Dish Works to create new recipe images and videos. Some images were recreated of popular watermelon.org recipes and some recipes are new to the site, **incorporating watermelon into trend-forward ingredients** such as matcha and whipped feta. Additionally, we photographed a few new watermelon “beauty shots” (beautiful watermelon by itself) and watermelon with minimal flavor pairings such as salt, honey and lime juice.

- Watermelon with whipped feta
- **Watermelon Grazing Board** (pictured, right)
- Watermelon Prosciutto Skewers
- Watermelon Carpaccio
- Chocolate Covered Watermelon
- Watermelon Mint Granita
- Chili-lime Watermelon Popsicle
- **Watermelon Fruitcake** (pictured, center left)
- Kid-Friendly Watermelon Cut-Outs
- **Watermelon Fries** (pictured, left)
- Watermelon Poke Bowl
- Watermelon Salad with Feta and Mint
- Fish Tacos with Watermelon Rind Slaw
- Watermelon-Strawberry Smoothie Bowl
- Watermelon Turmeric and Orange Wellness Juice
- Watermelon Margarita Mocktail
- Watermelon Agua Fresca
- Non-Alc Watermelon Daiquiri
- Watermelon Cucumber Coolers
- **Watermelon Matcha** (pictured, center right)

Kinetic12 Emergence Research Drives Foodservice Messaging

For the second year in a row the Board is partnering with Kinetic12 to sponsor their Emergence group. The partnership **offers emerging and growth chain reports, operator connections, and live regional roundtables**. The Emergence Operator Group consists of more than 150 chains with 20-500 units. Emerging and growth chains are essential to the foodservice industry because they have created something special consumers want. The quarterly reports provide insights on how to communicate with these operators and what they are looking for in partners. The quarter one report is based on a survey of 134 operators in January-February 2024. Additionally, there were more than 15 one-on-one interviews conducted with senior managers of emerging chains.

Kinetic12 believes 2024 is “The Next Normal” defined as an environment where operators, and suppliers, return to holistically managing the business, with a balanced focus on both growth and profitability. A balanced approach to growth and profitability is the goal with six areas of focus:

- Driving Traffic
- Creating Differentiation
- Leveraging Suppliers
- Margin Accretive Menu & Innovation
- Effective Workplace Model
- Mindset of Efficiency & Cost Control



Building and maintaining customer traffic are the two top business issues facing operators today. Consistent menu execution is a key part of driving traffic. Increasing social presence is another solution operators are leaning into. The Watermelon Board offers both back- and front-of-house support for foodservice operators. Knowing how to handle watermelon will lead to lucrative limited time offers. Leveraging social media with watermelon’s popularity is another driver for menu additions. In the next month the Board will participate in live regional roundtables where these and other data points will be used to entice Emergence brands to grow watermelon’s presence on their menus through custom partnerships with the Watermelon Board. Stay tuned for more!



Watermelon on the Menu

Iron Rose, a bar & restaurant in Charleston, SC is currently serving a **Watermelon Salad with baby arugula, basil, mint and chicken cracklings**.





NWPB Connections



Kinetic 12 - Charlotte, NC - April 30 & May 1

Fitpalooza - Orlando, FL - May 18

Commodity Roundtable Meeting - May 15 - 16

National Restaurant Show - Chicago, IL - May 18 - 21

Kinetic 12 - Charlotte, NC - May 29 & 30

West Coast Produce Expo - Palm Desert, CA - May 31 - June 1