



Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



Opportunities for Watermelon on Foodservice Menus

In 2024 the National Watermelon Promotion Board conducted a comprehensive foodservice study involving 1,191 nationally representative consumers and interviews with menu development chefs from 15 multi-unit restaurant brands. The research aimed to understand shifting consumer attitudes and uncover potential for watermelon integration into foodservice menus.

Penetration and frequency of watermelon ordering away from home increased but there is still room for growth. More than 70% of consumers agree, “Fresh watermelon is under-appreciated, and restaurants should be offering or doing more to use fresh watermelon in new and interesting ways.” Additionally, 70% say foodservice menuing positively impacts their retail purchase.

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Foodservice Continued

Key insights include:

- Lunch is The Primary Opportunity: Fresh watermelon offers **significant potential during the lunch daypart**. While lunch stands out, the fruit's **versatility** makes it appealing across other meal occasions.
- Appetizers, Sides, and Desserts Shine: Watermelon shows promise as a component in craveable appetizers, sides, and desserts. Main entrees are a greater challenge but could succeed with **innovative flavor pairings** and a focus on lunch-centric offerings.
- Seasonality and Consumer Engagement: Leveraging **summer nostalgia and emotional connections** to watermelon can re-engage younger consumers. While year-round usage is the goal, capitalizing on the summer appeal may amplify marketing efforts.
- Chef and Operator Collaboration: Additional **collaboration with foodservice operators is essential** to refine marketing strategies and encourage innovative menu integration.

A few recommendations for foodservice operators:

- Menu Development: Focus on unique, trendy flavor pairings to enhance the appeal of watermelon-based dishes.
- Marketing Strategy: Highlight the freshness and summer nostalgia of watermelon to drive emotional engagement.
- Daypart Diversification: Develop targeted lunch options while exploring its adaptability across other meal periods.

This research underscores watermelon's **versatility and untapped potential in foodservice**, particularly through innovative menu applications and seasonal marketing strategies. More on this study and others can be found in the [Foodservice Research section of watermelon.org](https://www.watermelon.org/foodservice-research).



Allied Industry Presentations

From seed companies to research groups, in addition to the state and regional association conventions, the NWPB was asked to speak at the 2025 Syngenta Vegetable Seeds Americas Kick-Off Meeting, American Society for Horticultural Science 2025 Southern Region Watermelon Working Group and a Bayer Watermelon Grower Summit. **All of the presentations included retail scan data trends and more about Board initiatives to increase demand.**



Assessment Increase Approved

The NWPB assessment increase was **approved by USDA in December after a 20-month process. The new assessment rate for the NWPB is 9 cents per hundredweight versus the previous 6 cents per hundredweight.** This amount is split between producers and handlers and paid in total by importers. The final rule went into effect in January after a 30-day period and can be viewed here:

<https://www.federalregister.gov/public-inspection/2024-30268/increased-assessment-rate-watermelon-research-and-promotion-plan>².



The assessment increase was a critical first step in ensuring the continued growth and success of the industry. By investing in enhanced research, marketing, and promotion efforts, we can **drive greater demand for watermelon and strengthen our industry's position, creating more long-term opportunities for everyone involved.**

Moving forward, the Board will prioritize efforts to increase the demand of watermelon through research, promotion, and education. **Each part of the program will receive increased funding, with the retail space receiving the largest allocation.** On April 1, 2025, the committees and Board will launch a new program aligned with the new assessment level and fiscal year.

Visit www.watermelon.org/assessment for comprehensive information on the assessment increase including more on the Board, the history of the assessment rate, inflation's impact, justification of the increase including the growth of watermelon volume and FOB.



Industry Spotlight – Get to Know Kelly Colin Partch

Company: Five Crowns Marketing

Time in the Industry: 15 years full time plus 7 years part time

Time on the Board: 3 years

What's your favorite thing about the Watermelon Industry?
The relationships.

What's your favorite app/piece of technology? FaceTime because it allows me to see those who are far away more regularly.



Retail Review Corner

Grocery Shopii

NWPB worked with Grocery Shopii, a tech company that integrated shoppable recipes into independent retailers, for a second year in 2024. Their technology was implemented in 240 IGA stores nationwide, as well as in Reasor’s and Sendik’s. A key feature was the automated email sent after purchase, providing the recipe for the ingredients just bought, creating a seamless customer experience. Sadly, Grocery Shopii shut its doors in late 2024, but they successfully completed our program before closing. We had 25 live recipes across retailers, with Reasor’s even featuring a banner ad in their circular. From April to August, the program generated 47,723 on-site impressions and 2,844 recipe page views across the independent stores they had previously been integrated in.



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Tajin Demo Events

NWPB once again partnered with Tajin for a demo program, creating a great cross-promotion opportunity to highlight the perfect flavor pairing of watermelon and Tajin. The campaign took place in approximately 30 stores across the Northeast, including PriceRite, ShopRite, and ACME locations. During the demos, over 1,600 samples were given to in-store customers, allowing them to experience the refreshing and flavorful combination firsthand. To enhance visibility, NWPB point-of-sale materials were displayed, reinforcing the promotion and encouraging purchases.



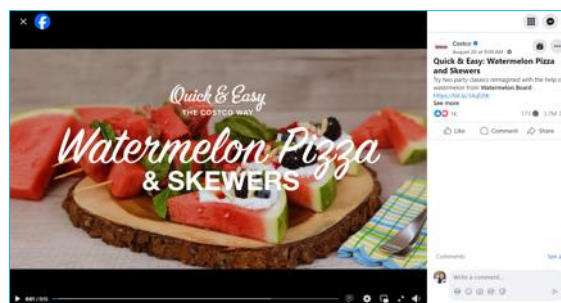
DECA Display Promotion

NWPB supported the DECA Display Promotion with the “Simply One in a Melon” theme from July 1-7, 2024. The campaign featured sampling and point-of-sale materials across 105 commissaries, driving strong engagement. As a result, over 67,000 units of whole, mini, and fresh-cut watermelons were sold, making the promotion a success.



Costco “Quick & Easy”

NWPB had the opportunity to participate in another Quick & Easy video by retailer Costco Wholesale. The 90 second video – titled “Watermelon Pizza & Skewers” – educated Costco members and viewers on how to cut and prepare two watermelon recipes using Costco products. The video – which featured the sweet watermelon pizza and the watermelon prosciutto skewers – was posted to a variety of social media platforms including Costco.com and Costco’s Facebook and Pinterest channels in August 2024. To date, the video has over 3.7 million views, 1,000 loves/likes and 173 interactions!



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Jewel Osco

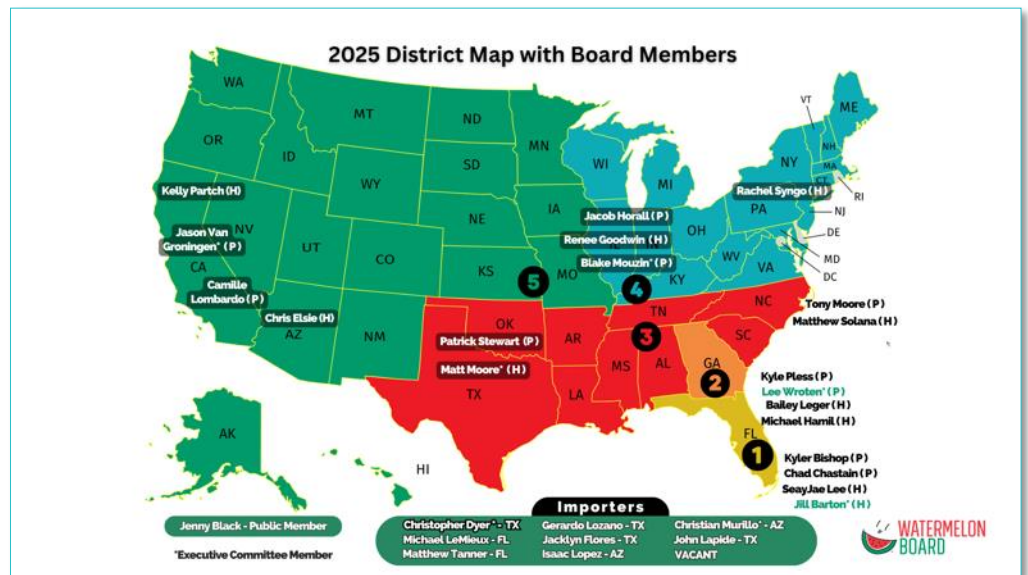
Jewel-Osco held a Fresh-Cut Watermelon Sales Contest last year from August 7 to August 27, challenging stores to achieve the highest fresh-cut watermelon sales. To drive engagement, participating locations created eye-catching fresh-cut displays, enhancing the overall shopping experience. The contest was further supported by promotions on whole and mini watermelons, along with increased secondary placements in the produce department and at store entrances. NWPB also provided cutting and yield posters to assist store teams. As a result, overall movement increased by 54.7%!



2025 Call for Nominations!

The NWPB will hold teleconferences on February 12th to nominate producers and handlers to serve as district 4 and 5 directors.

Board members are nominated by their peers, and nominations are submitted to the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, who makes final appointments to the Board. To be eligible for nomination, producers must grow 10 or more acres of watermelon, and handlers must be the first handler of watermelon.



At 11 a.m. (EST) all watermelon producers and handlers in District 4 are encouraged to attend and vote to nominate their representatives to the NWPB. At 1 p.m. (EST) all watermelon producers and handlers in District 5 are encouraged to attend and vote to nominate their representatives to the NWPB. NWPB will allow proxy voting for Board nominees. More information can be found in the [District 4](#) and [District 5](#) press releases.

Additional information regarding the elections and nomination procedures may be obtained by contacting NWPB Director of Operations & Industry Affairs Rebekah Dossett (rdossett@watermelon.org) or Industry Affairs Manager Andrea Smith (asmith@watermelon.org).

New York Produce Show

NWPB returned as exhibitors for the 15th annual New York Produce Show hosted by the Eastern Produce Council and PRODUCE BUSINESS magazine from December 10-12 in New York City. The three-day event includes networking opportunities, a one-day trade show, retail thought-leader breakfast panel, educational micro-sessions and more, organized around the theme of “When Passion Becomes Action.”



Juliemar Rosado, Megan McKenna and Stephanie Barlow from staff and retail account manager, Katie Manetti, were all in attendance to work the booth and see retail and foodservice decision-makers. Along with sharing resources and tools for **year-round watermelon promotion** at the booth, NWPB also

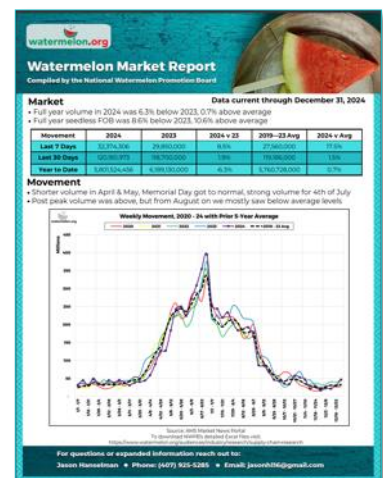
introduced a watermelon consumer attitudes and usage guide—a new marketing tool designed to help retailers better understand the watermelon buyer. The show was a flurry of activity with 5,000 in attendance, with buyers making up approximately 40% of the attendees.

In addition to the booth activities, **Megan McKenna spoke to university students** who attended the show, looking for more insights on career paths the produce industry has to offer and took part in the Foodservice Forum that took place the following day.



Watermelon Market Report Tool for Industry Use

Discover the latest insights driving the watermelon industry with the Watermelon Market Report and accompanying excel files, powered by AMS Market News data. Dive into FOB prices, movement trends, origins, and beyond. [Access these essential tools for analysis on our Supply Chain Research page](#) by downloading them today. **NEW** is the [Final 2024 Watermelon Market Report](#) highlighting 2024 trends. For inquiries, custom reports, or to receive weekly updates directly to your inbox, connect with Jason Hanselman at jasonh116@gmail.com. Stay ahead in the watermelon market – reach out now!



NWA Nook: Must-See Speakers & Sessions at This Year's National Watermelon Association Convention

We're gearing up for an unforgettable event packed with education, networking, and exciting special guests. From expert insights to industry celebrations, here are the headline speakers and sessions you won't want to miss:

◆ **Thursday Morning Education Session** – Start your event experience with a half-day session provided and sponsored by **QIMA**, covering **Social Responsibility Audits**—one of the hottest topics in the industry this year.

◆ **Thursday Night Party with Ross Chastain** – Join us for a fun-filled evening sponsored by **Enza Zaden**, featuring special guest **Ross Chastain**—NASCAR star, 8th-generation watermelon farmer, and proud agriculture advocate. Don't miss your chance to meet Ross and grab an autograph!

◆ **Friday Education Sessions** – Kick off Friday with a keynote from **Shawn Packer**, Principal of JPH Law, covering the **H2-A program and ag labor best practices**. Then, Shawn will join a panel of industry experts to tackle **compliance issues**, including **FSMA 204**, **Social Responsibility Audits**, and **tax law**.

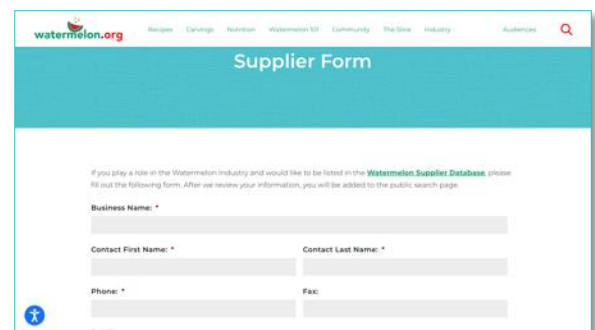
◆ **Women's Leadership Session** – Closing out Friday morning, this session will highlight **women leaders in Texas agriculture**, celebrating their impact and contributions to the industry.

Visit www.watermelon.ag to get registered now, and we'll see you in Austin- bring your boots!



Supplier Database – Help Buyers Find Watermelon

Be a part of nearly 140 companies present - opt in to the Supplier Database! Each year the Board reaches retail and foodservice buyers through marketing programs and the opt-in only Supplier Database is the **resource for retail and foodservice buyers looking for watermelon**. In addition to growers and shippers, the Supplier Database is an opportunity for transportation, seed, and bin/carton partners. Visit the Supplier Database at watermelon.org/supplierdatabase and submit the Database entry form, email supplierdatabase@watermelon.org or call 407-657-0261 for more information.

A screenshot of the 'Supplier Form' on the watermelon.org website. The form includes fields for Business Name, Contact First Name, Contact Last Name, Phone, and Fax. There is also a small blue icon in the bottom left corner of the form area.

State Conventions – Illiana, South Carolina, Georgia, Western, Gulf Coast & MarDel

NWPB staff were out and about for convention season! It's always a joy to **connect with industry members**, network, and share our passion for watermelon.



Western Watermelon Association



Gulf Coast Watermelon Association



MarDel Watermelon Association



Illiana Watermelon Association



Georgia Watermelon Association



South Carolina Watermelon Association

FNCE Follow-Up Captivates Dietitians

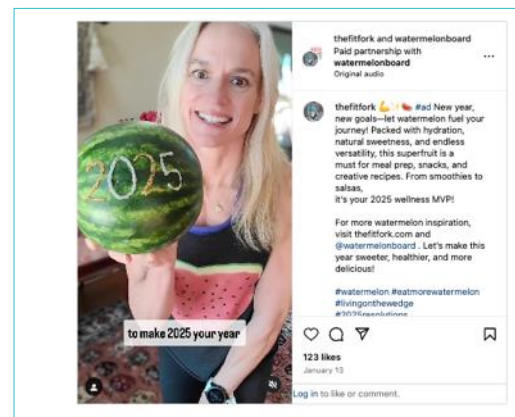
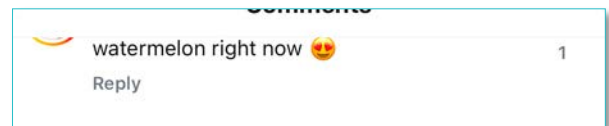
In late 2024, attendees of the watermelon-sponsored wellness workshop at FNCE received a special e-blast tailored just for them. This exclusive newsletter, featuring creative winter watermelon recipes and a fun watermelon snowman carving idea, was sent to an audience of registered dietitians and nutritionists. The response was phenomenal, with an impressive **79% open rate and nearly 11% click-through rate, showcasing the continued enthusiasm for incorporating watermelon into winter wellness.**



January Influencer Partner Posts

Collaborating with social influencers is an ongoing, year-round aspect of consumer communications. In January, posts were made by fitness experts, registered dietitians, and lifestyle content creators, including:

- Fitness partner Jennifer Fisher from The Fit Fork posted about “10 Reasons to **Eat More Watermelon in 2025**” on her blog along with accompanying social amplification.
- Dietitian Kim Rose aka “The Blood Sugar Nutritionist” educated more than 66k Instagram followers about **watermelon value, sustainability and nutrition** with Minty Green Rind Mocktail and healthy and nutrition messaging.
- Sober living creator Alyssa Heim from Talk the Mock shared a “Winterized” Watermelon Mocktail with ginger, lemon juice and sparkling water. Alyssa’s posts have great engagements - **check out a few of the comments >>>**





Foodservice Culinary Education

Watermelon is an on-trend ingredient and more foodservice operators are embracing this versatile fruit. It also plays an important role in culinary education from garde manger to flavor versatility. The National Watermelon Promotion Board **created culinary curriculum for instructors, students and chefs, accredited by the American Culinary Federation (ACF) in 2017 to help increase watermelon’s presence with these audiences.** The curriculum has been used nearly **1,600 times** since it was launched in 2017. In 2025, the curriculum will receive a revamp with elevated promotion to continue to reach these valuable audiences.



2025 Assessment Due Dates

Please note the following **due dates for 2025**:


- Product handled in January, must be postmarked by March 2, and received by March 12, 2025
- Product handled in February, must be postmarked by March 30, and received by April 9, 2025
- Product handled in March, must be postmarked by April 30, and received by May 12, 2025



The full calendar can be found [here](#). At the same link handlers can file their online Handler’s Report. Never used the online Handler’s Report? Check out the step by step [Online Handler’s Report Users Guide](#).



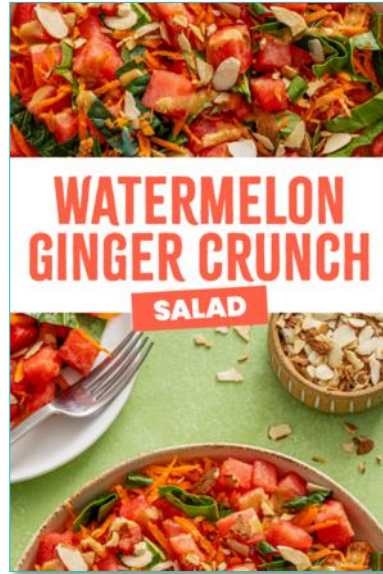
National Heart Health Month

Don’t forget **February is National Heart Health Month!** Watermelon is a wonderful addition to a heart-healthy diet and is proudly [American Heart Association Heart-Check Certified](#) . The Board has several fun heart and Valentine’s Day-themed recipes that can be used on your own social channels - remember anything the Board creates is always free for industry use.





Top Social Posts - January



Watermelon on the Menu



Josephine, an Italian family-style eatery in Jacksonville, FL, serves the **Speck & Melon on their year-round menu**. The dish includes compressed watermelon, stracciatella, hot honey, marcona almond brittle and olive oil.



NWPB Connections

NWA Convention – Austin, TX – February 19 – 23

NWPB Board Meeting – Austin, TX – February 22

South Florida Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics Symposium – Ft. Lauderdale, FL – March 1

