



Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



Watermelon Board Showcases Innovation at the National Restaurant Show

The Watermelon Board reached key foodservice media and operators during the National Restaurant (NRA) Show in Chicago last month. This show is one of the largest gatherings of foodservice professionals in the country.

To connect with attendees on the show floor, the Board partnered with Libbey, a leading name in glassware and tabletop solutions, to sponsor menu items at Libbey's booth.

Continued Next Page

Inside this issue:

- Watermelon Board Showcases Innovation at the National Restaurant Show
- Spring CRCEO Meeting
- Industry Spotlight – Get to Know Tony Moore
- Ross Chastain Smashes Competition – and a Watermelon – at the Coca-Cola 600
- Boost Watermelon Sales: Encourage Your Retailers to Enter the Merchandising Contest!
- Mind Your Melon Foundation Benefit
- End of Year Curious Plot Report
- Protective Power of Food Convening
- Watermelon Board Connects with Foodservice Buyers
- West Coast Produce Expo
- NWA Nook: NWA at IFPA's The Washington Conference – Advocating for Watermelons and Building Industry Connections
- Family Features – Simple Summer Snacks
- Summer's Here – Help Shoppers Pick the Perfect Watermelon!
- Today's Dietitian Spring Symposium
- Gain Key Insights into the Watermelon Industry with the Watermelon Market Report
- Watermelon on the Menu
- NWPB Connections



Restaurant Show Continued

The **Board's creative watermelon dishes were served in Libbey's signature glassware**, allowing attendees to experience watermelon in innovative ways while highlighting Libbey's product line. These dishes included:

- Za'atar-braised watermelon short rib with herb-roasted potatoes and a citrus watermelon labneh cream sauce
- Watermelon Margarita
- Thai-compressed watermelon cube on toasted crostini with whipped feta, honey, and caviar
- Sweet and spicy watermelon Chinese meatballs with pickled watermelon rind salad
- Sparkling Watermelon Spritz



To further engage with a curated group of operators, the Board **sponsored the NRA Brunch**, an exclusive, invitation-only satellite event. Watermelon was featured in a standout dish: a watermelon and strawberry salad with burnt chili vinaigrette, smoked yogurt, and fried black lentils. With nearly 100 decision-makers from regional and national chains as well as noncommercial foodservice sectors in attendance, the event offered a valuable opportunity to build direct relationships and elevate watermelon's profile in professional kitchens.

Additionally, the Board co-sponsored a **foodservice media dinner** with the Idaho Potato Commission. The dinner featured a watermelon margarita and a watermelon salad, but more importantly, it provided the chance to engage directly with eight influential foodservice writers. These media professionals cover a range of audiences—from regional and national chains to distributors and school foodservice programs—helping to amplify watermelon's role across multiple sectors.

These activations support the Board's ongoing mission to position **watermelon as a versatile ingredient** for foodservice menus. By inspiring operators and media, the Board is helping watermelon earn a permanent place in innovative dishes and drinks nationwide.



Spring CRCEO Meeting

In May, NWPB Executive Director Mark Arney attended the Spring Commodity Roundtable CEO meeting in Raleigh, NC. The group's two day meeting covered a number of topics and issues common to all groups, including the recognition of outgoing USDA-AMS Administrator Bruce Summers. Summers' successor, Erin Morris, also participated via Zoom. Additionally, the group **discussed best practices in the areas of finance, administration, marketing and research**. On the second day, the group toured the Cotton Inc. world headquarters. The Fall meeting will take place September 9 in Washington, D.C.



Ryan Lepicier, CEO of National Peanut Promotion Board (left), Mark Arney, Executive Director of National Watermelon Promotion Board (middle) and Manuel Michel, Managing Director of Columbia Avocado Board (right).

Industry Spotlight – Get to Know Tony Moore

Company: Tony Moore Farming Company

Time in the Industry: 33 years

Time on the Board: First year of my third term

What's your favorite thing about Watermelon or the Watermelon Industry? The watermelon is a great vegetable or fruit that is a pleasure to work with. It has great health benefits. The industry is like a big family, with various dynamics happening at the same time. Sometimes families have squabbles but we learn to deal with them and overcome. Remember at the end of the day, we are working with a wonderful commodity that brings pleasure and a livelihood for many of us. I enjoy working with people from across the country for this great product.



What's your favorite item on your bucket list? One of the most important things on my bucket list is to live life to the fullest and honor God in the process. My desire is to make a positive impact on as many people as possible before the time comes that I am no more.



Ross Chastain Smashes the Competition – and a Watermelon – at the Coca-Cola 600!

In a thrilling Memorial Day weekend finish, Ross Chastain claimed victory at the Charlotte NASCAR Coca-Cola 600, **making history by charging from last place to first**—the first time that's happened since 1969! True to tradition, Ross celebrated in signature style by smashing a watermelon in Victory Lane, a heartfelt nod to his agricultural roots.

The watermelon industry couldn't be prouder of Ross's incredible achievement. His continued celebration of his background—both in interviews and across media coverage—puts a spotlight on the hardworking growers behind every sweet, juicy melon.

Congratulations, Ross!



Boost Watermelon Sales: Encourage Your Retailers to Enter the Merchandising Contest!

NWPB is thrilled to bring back its National Watermelon Merchandising Contest, **running June through August 2025**— again this year, we're offering over \$10,000 in cash and prizes! Here's how retailers can enter:

- Build an eye-catching watermelon display in your store
- Share recipes, health tips, and selection advice
- Promote across print, in-store, and digital platforms
- Submit your entry and let your creativity shine!

Top Prizes Include: Grand Prize: \$5,000

Second Place: \$2,500

Third Place: \$1,000

Honorable Mentions (3): \$500 each

Whether you're a produce pro or marketing guru, this is a retailer's chance to stand out—and cash in. [Click here to get full contest details and enter!](#)

Let's make this summer all about bold displays and big wins. Good luck!



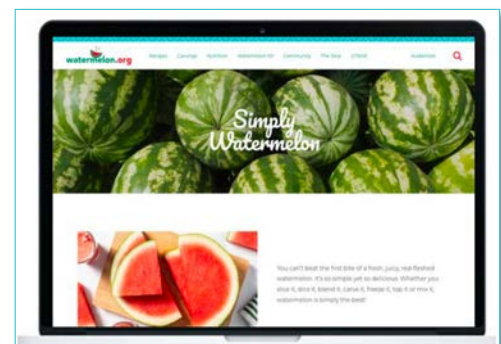
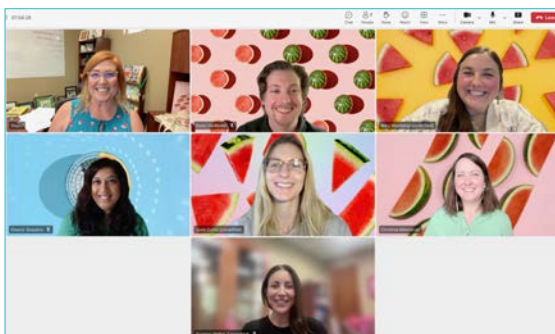
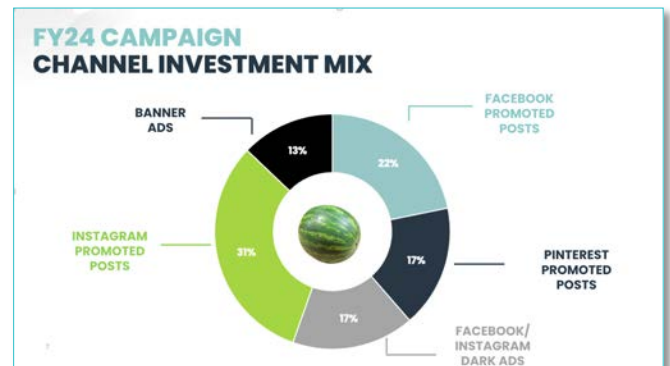
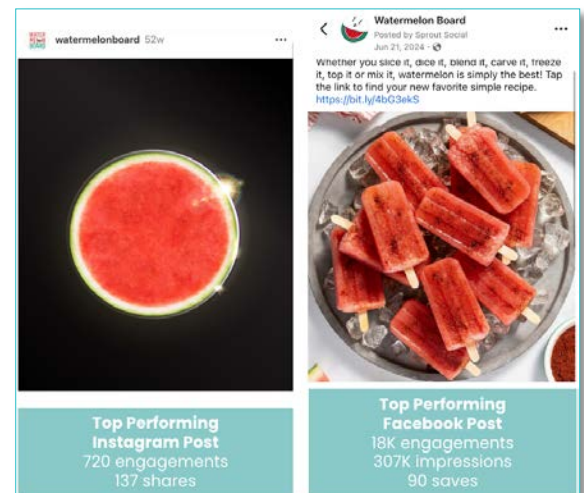
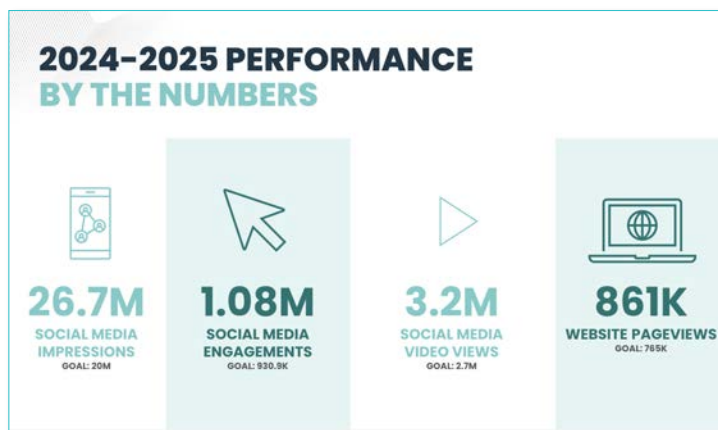
Mind Your Melon Foundation Benefit

Think Outside the Barn, a Mind Your Melon Foundation Benefit, took place on May 20th and was sponsored and attended by Watermelon Board staff Stephanie Barlow and Juliemar Rosado (pictured). With Mind Your Melon becoming an official nonprofit organization, they hosted an event to share the structure and **vision of mental wellness in agriculture**, as well as shared survey data and analytics to inform and validate communications moving forward growing awareness. National Watermelon Association was also a sponsor, as well as The Produce Moms, among others, who support the work of Mind Your Melon. Networking hour brought watermelon industry members together, including Jenny Hickox and Florida Watermelon Queen Ashlee Thomas (runner up).



End of Year Curious Plot Report

April welcomes the beginning of NWPB's new fiscal year, and the tallying and analyzing work to start on the 2024-2025 End of Year Report by our communications partner agency, Curious Plot. This agency manages and maintains several aspects of the consumer communications outreach, including website and social media, consumer e-newsletter and blog posts, shared influencer marketing programming, content creation and campaign execution, including ad spends across a variety of channels. **Highlights from the EOY report are below**, and are exclusive of other Communications program work, such as the TikTok campaign through partner Argyle in summer 2024. For a detailed walk through of the EOY report, contact Stephanie Barlow, Senior Director of Communications.



Protective Power of Food Convening

NWPB's Executive Director, Mark Arney recently participated in a **landmark convening hosted by the Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research (FFAR) in partnership with the Rockefeller Foundation, to explore how food can play a greater role in promoting health**. Held May 28th and 29th at the Rockefeller Foundation's conference facility in Washington, D.C., the event brought together a multidisciplinary group of leaders to identify scientific research priorities that will help unlock the health-promoting potential of food.

The event, titled "The Protective Power of Food: Catalyzing Research to Leverage Food for Health," focused on overcoming barriers that limit the generation of robust evidence connecting food components to disease prevention, especially in areas where medical treatments remain limited, such as neurodegenerative diseases.

Arney was one of only a few commodity group representatives invited to participate, joining counterparts from the dairy, blueberry, cranberry and sweet potato sectors. His inclusion reflects growing recognition of watermelon's value as a functional food.

The two-day event featured presentations and working sessions among leading scientists, public health experts, and food industry stakeholders. Discussions centered on aligning agricultural and nutritional research to address chronic disease and improve public health outcomes through science-based food strategies.

The convening was hosted at the invitation of the Rockefeller Foundation, whose leadership expressed a strong and continued interest in advancing this initiative. Their support underscored the Foundation's commitment to driving innovative, science-backed solutions that harness the power of food to improve health and equity at a national scale.

Watermelon's unique profile, as both a widely consumed fruit and a source of beneficial-nutrients such as vitamin C, positioned it well in conversations around diet-based interventions. **Arney's presence ensured that watermelon remained part of the broader conversation on how food can serve as a frontline tool in preventative health.**

FFAR's convening is expected to inform future funding priorities and collaborative initiatives that bridge the gap between agriculture and food as medicine, with an emphasis on evidence-based solutions that benefit both producers and consumers.



Executive Director Mark Arney at the Rockefeller Foundation, Washington D.C.



With Arney, Protective Power of Food steering committee member Dr. Mary Ann Lila: David H. Murdock Distinguished Professor in Food Bioprocessing and Nutrition Science; North Carolina State University. Dr. Lila is a colleague of Dr. Penelope Perkins-Veazie, Scientific Advisor on the NWPB Research Committee.

Watermelon Board Connects with Foodservice Buyers

In late April, the National Watermelon Promotion Board participated in the Kinetic 12 Emergence Meeting in Chicago, engaging with nearly 20 foodservice operators from national and regional chains. These fast-paced, 10-minute meetings **introduced buyers to watermelon's versatility and menu potential**. The Board highlighted innovative ways to feature watermelon across menu categories, from beverages and salads to brand specific limited time opportunities. Several chains expressed strong interest, and follow-up conversations are underway to explore menu ideation and promotions. This outreach is part of the Board's broader strategy to grow watermelon's presence in foodservice and increased usage across the country. The Board's next Emergence Meeting will be Dallas in December.



West Coast Produce Expo

NWPB once again exhibited at the 12th annual West Coast Produce Expo, held in Palm Desert, CA from May 29th - May 30th. Representing the board were Juliemar Rosado and retail account manager Katie Manetti. The two-day event featured a robust lineup of networking opportunities, educational sessions, and a bustling expo floor.

Adding extra sweetness to the event, National Watermelon Queen Elanie Mason (pictured, with Rosado, Manetti and National Queen Coordinator Kerri Wiggins) was also in attendance, **offering fresh watermelon samples and exciting flavor pairings that highlighted the fruit's versatility**. Her presence helped draw attention to the NWPB booth and supported the board's ongoing mission to educate and inspire industry professionals and consumers alike.

Hosted by The Packer, the show successfully connected the produce industry with key members of the West Coast buying community. It served as an excellent platform for the NWPB to showcase its latest retail and foodservice programs and resources.





NWA Nook: NWA at IFPA's The Washington Conference – Advocating for Watermelons and Building Industry Connections

The National Watermelon Association is excited to **take part in IFPA's *The Washington Conference*** on June 9-11, a pivotal event where industry leaders come together to advocate for fresh produce and strengthen relationships with policymakers. NWA is leveraging this platform to amplify the voice of the watermelon industry, raise awareness about critical issues, and foster meaningful connections on Capitol Hill.

◆ The Joy of Fresh on Capitol Hill

A key highlight of our participation will be the *Joy of Fresh* event, where the NWA team and the Watermelon Queens will share fresh watermelon with members of Congress and their staff. Tasting is believing, and this event allows us to engage directly with decision-makers and remind them that behind this sweet treat is a dedicated \$1 billion US industry. It's a fun and impactful way to build connections and raise the profile of our industry in Washington, D.C.



The Washington Conference

INTERNATIONAL
FRESH PRODUCE ASSOCIATION

◆ Grassroots Advocacy on Capitol Hill

In addition to the *Joy of Fresh* event, NWA members will have the chance to head to Capitol Hill to advocate for policies that support the watermelon industry, alongside our peers from the broader produce industry. We'll meet with legislators to discuss crucial issues like agricultural labor reform, trade policies, and federal funding for research. This is a unique opportunity for grassroots advocacy, where NWA members can make their voices heard, build relationships, and drive change on the issues that matter most to our industry.

◆ Supporting the Fresh Produce Industry Together

The Washington Conference is an opportunity to stand united with the broader produce community. NWA will gather with other fresh produce organizations, showing our support for the collective goals of the industry. We'll also come together as a watermelon delegation for a special briefing on how the priorities of the industry relate specifically to our community, reinforcing our role within the wider movement for fresh produce.

◆ Call to Action: Join Us at The Washington Conference

We encourage all NWA members to attend *The Washington Conference* and participate in these exciting activities. If you're planning to join us, please email George directly at george@watermelon.ag so we can keep you informed about the watermelon-specific gatherings. This is a great opportunity to connect with fellow growers, advocate for the industry, and be part of something bigger.

Family Features – Simple Summer Snacks

Returning to paid media feature placements this summer, syndicate partner Family Features has launched the first of three mat releases (4-monthlong features) with *Simple Summer Snacks* opening on May 15th. The layout features two simple watermelon recipes (Watermelon Ice Pops and Watermelon Salad with Feta and Mint) and in **under 2 weeks has earned 125 media placements and over 1,000 paid placements digitally, and importantly, nationally.** This feature will earn placements in local community newspapers, online digital components and magazines, who will utilize the layout and photo assets – including a graphic on how to cut quick cubes directly in the rind – to fit their individual publication needs for the summer. Stay tuned for final reporting numbers and a tee up on the fall feature!



Summer's Here – Help Shoppers Pick the Perfect Watermelon!

Now's the perfect time to **remind your retailers how easy it is to guide shoppers** in selecting a great watermelon. It's as easy as 1, 2, 3: Look, Lift, Turn—look for a firm watermelon with no bruises or cuts, lift to find one that feels heavy for its size (a sign of juiciness!), and turn to check for a creamy yellow field spot where it sat on the ground to ripen.

To make it even easier, the NWPB offers a ready-to-use Watermelon Selection Infographic—perfect for print, signage, or digital use. Help your retailers share simple, effective tips that keep watermelon top of mind and in the cart!





Today's Dietitian Spring Symposium

The Watermelon Board brought flavor, fun, and valuable resources to this year's Today's Dietitian Spring Symposium 2025, delighting attendees with **vibrant menu tastings and offering a wealth of evidence-based tools for nutrition professionals.**

As a proud sponsor of the event, the Watermelon Board showcased the versatility and nutritional power of watermelon in the bustling expo hall. Day one featured a refreshing twist on a classic favorite — Salted Watermelon Juice, which proved to be a crowd-pleaser among dietitians looking for functional beverage inspiration. On day two, attendees enjoyed the bold and zesty Ginger Crunch Watermelon Salad, a flavorful blend of textures and flavor pairing that highlighted watermelon's culinary potential beyond sweet applications.

In addition to the tastings, the Watermelon Board engaged attendees with a suite of professional resources tailored for registered dietitians, available through the [Health Professionals section of the website](#). The offerings include:

- Informative handouts for client education
- A comprehensive Registered Dietitian Toolkit
- Access to cutting-edge watermelon nutrition research

These tools are **designed to support nutrition counseling, patient education, and community outreach efforts.**

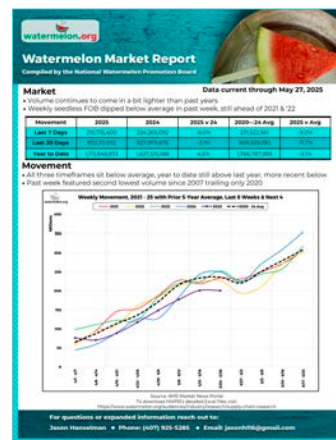
The Watermelon Board was thrilled to connect with the dietetics community and celebrate the powerful role watermelon can play in healthy, flavorful eating.



Gain Key Insights into the Watermelon Industry with the Watermelon Market Report

Explore the Watermelon Market Report and accompanying Excel files, built on trusted AMS Market News data. These tools offer a **comprehensive view of FOB prices, movement trends, shipping origins, and more, supporting smarter decisions across the supply chain.**

Download the latest report from the [Supply Chain Research page](#) and data files to stay informed. For custom data requests, weekly updates, or additional support, contact Industry Analyst Jason Hanselman at jasonh116@gmail.com.



Watermelon on the Menu

Lena Brava, a live-fire baja Mexican kitchen based in Chicago, IL, is currently offering **Fire Roasted Watermelon** on their Cold Bar/Mariscos menu. The dish includes pistachio crumble, whipped mint feta, chive oil, and fresh watermelon.



NWPB Connections

Australia Melon Conference – Brisbane, Queensland, Australia – June 4-6

The Washington Conference – Washington, D.C. – June 9-11

Center for the Advancement of Foodservice Educators Annual Conferences – Pittsburgh, PA – June 24-26

