



**FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025
ANNUAL REPORT**



INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Partners

W. Ed Moss, Jr.
Joe M. Krusick
Ric Perez
Cori G. Novinich
Renee C. Varga

Winter Park, FL 32789
501 S. New York Ave.
Phone: 407-644-5811
www.mosskrusick.com

Clearwater, FL 33761
29605 US Hwy 19 North
Phone: 727-785-7460

N. Palm Beach, FL 33408
631 US Highway One
Phone: 561-848-9300

Miami Lakes, FL 33016
7900 NW 155th Street
Phone: 305-445-7956

Miramar, FL 33025
11450 Interchange Circle
Phone: 954-435-4222

To the Board of Directors
National Watermelon Promotion Board

Report on the Audits of the Financial Statements

Opinion

We have audited the accompanying financial statements of National Watermelon Promotion Board (the "Board"), which comprise the statements of financial position as of March 31, 2025 and 2024, and the related statements of activities, cash flows and functional expenses for the years then ended, and the related notes to the financial statements.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the Board as of March 31, 2025 and 2024, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended, in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards*, issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements section of our report. We are required to be independent of the Board and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audits. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinion.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, and for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the Board's ability to continue as a going concern for twelve months beyond the financial statement date, including any currently known information that may raise substantial doubt shortly thereafter.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and *Government Auditing Standards* will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the financial statements.

In performing an audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards and *Government Auditing Standards*, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Board's internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statements.
- Conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the Board's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control-related matters that we identified during the audit.

Other Reporting Required by Government Auditing Standards

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we have also issued our report dated July 21, 2025 on our consideration of the Board's internal control over financial reporting and on our tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements and other matters. The purpose of that report is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over financial reporting and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of the Board's internal control over financial reporting or on compliance. That report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* in considering the Board's internal control over financial reporting and compliance.

Moss, Krusick & Associates, LLC

Winter Park, Florida
July 21, 2025

National Watermelon Promotion Board

STATEMENTS OF FINANCIAL POSITION

March 31, 2025 and 2024

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 361,049	\$ 338,191
Assessments receivable	194,401	96,066
MAP receivable	1,545	4,092
Prepaid expenses and other assets	86,731	83,449
Restricted investments	<u>704,000</u>	<u>704,000</u>
Total current assets	1,347,726	1,225,798
Operating lease right-of-use-assets	94,964	150,727
Property and equipment, net	37,200	42,433
Deposits	<u>5,007</u>	<u>5,007</u>
Total assets	<u>\$ 1,484,897</u>	<u>\$ 1,423,965</u>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 36,670	\$ 33,711
Accrued payroll and related expenses	141,592	138,834
Other current liabilities	2,113	6,660
Operating lease liabilities	<u>60,354</u>	<u>56,160</u>
Total current liabilities	240,729	235,365
Other long-term liabilities	-	2,113
Non-current operating lease liabilities	<u>37,121</u>	<u>97,475</u>
Total liabilities	<u>277,850</u>	<u>334,953</u>
NET ASSETS WITHOUT DONOR RESTRICTIONS		
Undesignated	503,047	385,012
Board-designated for frozen reserve	<u>704,000</u>	<u>704,000</u>
Total net assets without donor restrictions	<u>1,207,047</u>	<u>1,089,012</u>
Total liabilities and net assets	<u>\$ 1,484,897</u>	<u>\$ 1,423,965</u>

National Watermelon Promotion Board

STATEMENTS OF ACTIVITIES

Years Ended March 31, 2025 and 2024

	<u>2025</u>	<u>2024</u>
REVENUES		
Assessments - domestic	\$ 2,123,995	\$ 2,173,556
Assessments - import	1,417,618	1,168,928
MAP revenue	326,312	277,086
Interest and other income	<u>69,159</u>	<u>38,763</u>
Total revenues	<u>3,937,084</u>	<u>3,658,333</u>
EXPENSES		
Program expenses	3,187,799	3,236,737
General and administrative expenses	<u>631,250</u>	<u>655,848</u>
Total expenses	<u>3,819,049</u>	<u>3,892,585</u>
Change in net assets without donor restrictions	118,035	(234,252)
Net assets without donor restrictions, beginning of year	<u>1,089,012</u>	<u>1,323,264</u>
Net assets without donor restrictions, end of year	<u>\$ 1,207,047</u>	<u>\$ 1,089,012</u>

National Watermelon Promotion Board

STATEMENTS OF CASH FLOWS

Years Ended March 31, 2025 and 2024

	2025	2024
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Change in net assets without donor restrictions	\$ 118,035	\$ (234,252)
Adjustments to reconcile change in net assets without donor restrictions to net cash provided by (used in) activities:		
Amortization of operating lease right-of-use-assets	55,763	53,003
Depreciation and amortization	5,233	3,121
Cash provided by (used for):		
Assessments receivable	(98,335)	40,501
MAP receivable	2,547	1,910
Prepaid expenses and other assets	(3,282)	1,439
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	2,959	7,155
Operating lease liabilities	(56,160)	(52,414)
Accrued payroll and related expenses	2,758	3,013
Net cash provided by (used in) operating activities	<u>29,518</u>	<u>(176,524)</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Purchase of restricted investments	(913,000)	(1,122,000)
Proceeds from maturity of certificates of deposit	<u>913,000</u>	<u>1,122,000</u>
Net cash used in investing activities	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Payments on finance lease	<u>(6,660)</u>	<u>(6,639)</u>
Net cash used in financing activities	<u>(6,660)</u>	<u>(6,639)</u>
Increase (decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	22,858	(183,163)
Cash and equivalents, beginning of year	<u>338,191</u>	<u>521,354</u>
Cash and equivalents, end of year	<u><u>\$ 361,049</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 338,191</u></u>
SUPPLEMENTAL DISCLOSURE CASH FLOW INFORMATION		
Cash paid for interest	<u><u>\$ 185</u></u>	<u><u>\$ 337</u></u>
SIGNIFICANT NON-CASH TRANSACTIONS		
Other current liabilities	\$ -	\$ 2,390
Other long-term liabilities	<u>-</u>	<u>(2,390)</u>
	<u><u>\$ -</u></u>	<u><u>\$ -</u></u>



**PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS &
SUCSESSES
FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025**

**THE FOLLOWING HIGHLIGHTS ARE NOT INCLUSIVE OF ALL
PROGRAM ELEMENTS**

Retail

Promotional opportunities at retail include in-store, digital, and social media marketing components, providing customer reach for product and nutrition education as an extension to the brick and mortar element that has come back into focus.

NWPB will continued supporting retailers by contracting with merchandising representatives that manage various retail accounts across the US and Canada. Throughout the year, this team aimed to keep watermelon top of mind every day of the year while also establishing new connections. They have also been a direct line to retailers' needs as it pertains to watermelon information, promotional opportunities and education.

The retail merchandising contest encouraged retailers to incorporate social and digital media marketing efforts in addition to in-store experiences. The contest started in June and ran throughout the month of August in an effort to capture peak summer season, honor National Watermelon Month in July as well as National Watermelon Day on August 3rd. In its 16th year, the contest continues encourage and identify retailers who are showcasing watermelon's benefits including health, value and versatility.

NWPB continued working with mobile media company Genesis to provide immersive storytelling and guaranteed engagement at retail. These opportunities track with current and future shopper habits that continue to shift heading into 2025 and 2026. These campaigns can also be used as a tool NWPB can offer to retailers to provide in-store.

In the retail education space, NWPB's Watermelon Learning Lab tool continues to be promoted to retailers via our retail account management team and at conferences, events and regional produce shows.

The articles below are program highlights and not all-inclusive of budget-spend.

Winners of 2024 Retail Merchandising Contest Highlight Creativity and Consumer Engagement

NWPB has named the winners of its annual Retail Merchandising Contest, which drew over 140 entries from retail chains, independent retailers, and commissaries across the U.S. and Canada. Now in its 16th year, the contest encouraged retailers to spotlight watermelon's health benefits, value, and versatility through creative displays and marketing. New this year, the contest ran from June through August, aiming to capture the excitement of early summer watermelon demand.



Judging criteria included category visibility, point-of-sale materials, visual merchandising, messaging nutritional benefits, recipes, selection education, and the use of print, online, and digital platforms. Contestants demonstrated a wide range of tactics, from engaging in-store displays and take-home materials to social media posts sharing watermelon recipes, nutrition tips, and fun facts.

This year's Grand Prize winner, **Gelson's Market #23 in La Canada, CA**, made a triumphant return to the winner's circle after previously earning an Honorable Mention in last year's contest. Gelson's elevated their efforts this year, impressing judges with their creative displays and consumer education initiatives including in-store sampling events, social media recipe videos and selection and nutrition education, earning them the top prize.

"This year's entries were exceptionally innovative, showing watermelon's health benefits and versatility through various media," said Juliemar Rosado, Director of Retail and International Marketing at NWPB. "The winners stood out for their consumer education focus, with displays highlighting watermelon selection, recipe ideas and happiness. Whole, mini and fresh-cut watermelons were also featured to appeal to a wider range of shoppers."

In addition to the Grand Prize, **Wegmans Food Markets in Rochester, NY** took second place, and **Schnuck Markets in St. Louis, MO** secured third. Due to the remarkable quality of submissions this year, the NWPB awarded an additional Honorable Mention, recognizing a total of four retailers for their outstanding efforts:

- **Harps – Heber Springs, AR**
- **Riverside Market #1135 – Montrose, MI**
- **Tops Friendly Markets – Dunkirk, NY**
- **United Grocery Outlet – Knoxville, TN**

"The team at Gelson's #23 would like to express our gratitude for the opportunity to showcase the talent we have at Gelson's Market," said Thot Phommasaysy, Produce Manager at Gelson's Market #23. "We take great pride in creating impactful displays that excite our customers. Gelson's La Canada is proud to have won the Grand Prize this year in [NWPB's] Retail Merchandising Contest. A special thank you goes out to Catrice Taylor, Produce Clerk for her dedication, hard work, and merchandising skills. Thank you Catrice, for helping La Canada Gelson's become this year's winner!"

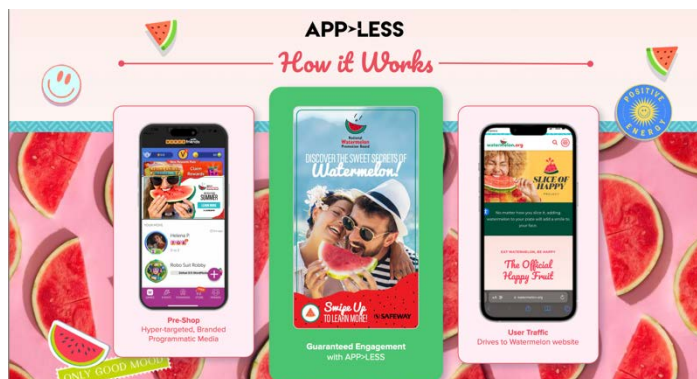
More than \$10,000 in cash and prizes will be awarded to the winners. Gelson's Market #23 will receive \$5,000 as the Grand Prize winner, Wegmans will take home \$2,500 for second place, and Schnuck Markets will receive \$1,000 for third. Each of the Honorable Mention winners will be awarded \$500 for their exceptional displays.

On average, entrants report a 20% increase in sales when participating in the merchandising contest.

Genesis Summer Digital Retail Experience

From July 25 to August 22 2024, NWPB engaged a new digital retail experience with partner Genesis. The APP>LESS IMPULSE delivers guaranteed engagement with an immersive “app-like” experience without the need for download and install. APP>LESS is a pay-for-performance that ensures our content connects with relevant consumers.

New this year, the IMPULSE program targeted shoppers in and around Safeway, Food Lion, Lowes Foods, Raley’s and Albertson’s stores. Once a consumer engages with the hyper-targeted, branded programmatic media, they are taken to a custom watermelon web experience, richly designed to deliver immersive and engaging information about recipes and usage ideas. This year, the digital retail experience focused on selection, cutting tips and tricks and recipes.



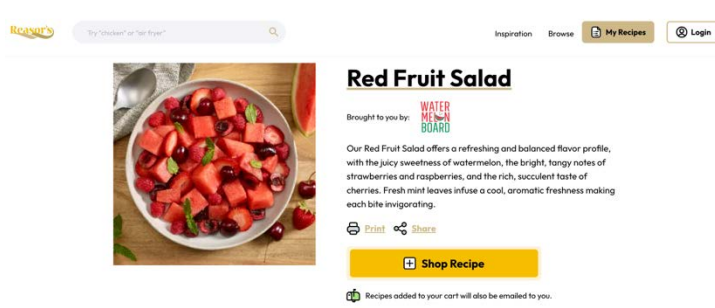
The program reached a total of 23,747 delivered activations with a 42% click-through rate. The hyper-targeting geo-based strategy allowed for direct engagement at retail with shoppers in/around the selected retail stores and had a total of over 914,175 impressions. A top key learning is these campaigns continue to show a strong interest in watermelon from younger GenZ/Millennial consumer base (18-34). This has continued to expand as NWPB has sharpened targeting and overall creative strategy. The campaign exceeded guaranteed campaign activations by 8.5%, indicating strong performance.

Retail Review Corner – Spotlight on a Few Retail Promotions

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.



Tajin Demo Events

NWPB once again partnered with Tajín for a demo program, creating a great cross-promotion opportunity to highlight the perfect flavor pairing of watermelon and Tajín. 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.



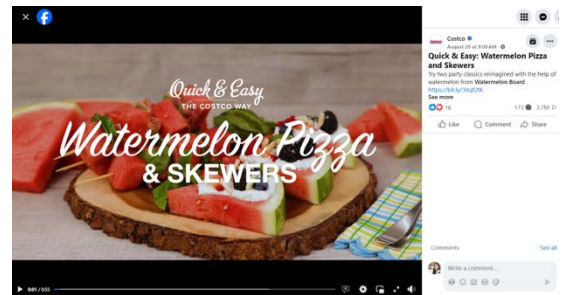
DECA Display Promotion

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!



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%!



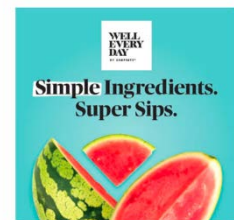
Weis Markets Healthy Bites Magazine

NWPB participated in the September/October issue of Weis Healthy Bites magazine. The magazine had a theme of snacking, fitting in nicely with the watermelon prosciutto skewers and including an article featuring a watermelon pizza recipe titled “Why Watermelon is Your Snack Soulmate.” The feature included the recipes, website and a QR code that linked to NWPB’s website. 80,000 magazines were distributed in stores for free to Weis shoppers. It is also available on the store’s website, receiving an average of 1,500 visits for each issue of their Healthy Bites magazine release. It is then archived and remains available online.



Wakefern July Hydration Event

This year, NWPB partnered with Wakefern as one of the participating items for their July Hydration events. Included, watermelon ran in the front page of the circular with a special call out for the “Well Everyday” Items. There was also a landing page, social media carousel, in-store signage with nutrition facts, demos and learning sessions for kids and customers for the participating items.



Additionally, Wakefern supported the event with oversized and secondary displays, ads and social media call outs for the entire month. There were also several satellite programs for employees and kids that took place during the promotional time period. Stickers and posters were sent out and several of NWPB’s recipes were demonstrated at these events. In total, the event resulted in a 1.3% click-thru rate and over 760,000 impressions!

Expanding Retail Impact Through Watermelon Queen/Promotional Ambassador Programs

NWPB’s regional promotional fund continues to energize and expand the reach of national, state, and regional watermelon queen programs across the country. These promotions play a vital role in increasing consumer engagement and driving watermelon sales at the store level.

Through this support, more than 45 events were conducted in 2024, with the majority taking place in retail settings. These lively in-store promotions often featured a combination of watermelon sampling, engaging watermelon eating contests, and the distribution of branded point-of-sale materials to educate and excite consumers. The presence of Watermelon Queens and promotional ambassadors at these events continues to be a crowd favorite, drawing attention and adding a personal, enthusiastic touch to each promotion.

By providing funding and resources, NWPB ensures that these promotional efforts remain strong and effective, helping to boost the visibility of watermelon during peak season and beyond.



New Retail Tools and Resources – Animated Explainer Videos and Selection Infographic

The Watermelon Learning Lab continues evolving to help retail employees enhance their knowledge of watermelon covering topics such as cultivation, consumer insights, nutritional benefits, merchandising tips, and more. These lessons now feature new animated explainer videos for better engagement and are free of charge and accessible through the Retailers' section on watermelon.org.

In addition to the new videos, NWPB also released a new, visually appealing infographic to help consumers and retailers select the best watermelon using simple “look, lift and turn” guidelines. Part of a broader educational campaign, the downloadable resource aims to boost consumer confidence, promote watermelon consumption, and support retail staff in guiding shoppers. Designed for use in stores and on social media, the infographic enhances the shopping experience and encourages informed, enjoyable watermelon selection nationwide.



International Marketing

The Foreign Agriculture Services division of USDA (FAS) awarded Market Access Program (MAP) funding to conduct international marketing activities that support and grow export markets of U.S. watermelon. These activities fall on the calendar year (January-December).

Additionally, through their Emerging Markets Program (EMP), NWPB was approved for a grant to do a market assessment for U.S. watermelon in the Mexican market.

The articles below are program highlights and not all-inclusive of budget-spend.

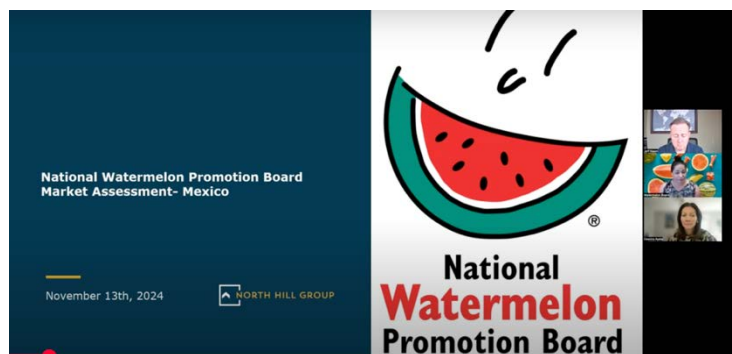
U.S. Watermelons in Japan: 2024 Promotion Results

U.S. watermelons experienced a highly successful season in Japan, with strong sales growth and increased consumer demand. Retail promotions at FarmDo generated increased sales, with cut watermelon sales rising by approximately 20%. Foodservice collaborations drove impressive results, with 2,682 servings sold and total sales increasing by 30% from last season. The extended warm weather boosted demand into September, while media coverage and strategic in-store promotions further heightened awareness. Although sales of large whole watermelons at Costco faced challenges, opportunities for growth remain by introducing more cut options. All in all, watermelon is seeing a rising consumer interest and a shifting demand for watermelon beyond the traditional summer months, a potential opportunity for growth in the future!



Mexico EMP Webinar

The National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB) is dedicated to fostering the growth of U.S. watermelon exports by leveraging strategic opportunities in international markets. With a focus on promoting the freshness, quality, and health benefits of U.S. watermelons, the NWPB collaborates with trade partners to strengthen its global presence. Key markets with high demand for premium produce represent significant potential for expanding market share. By addressing seasonal opportunities, building consumer awareness, and supporting trade relationships, the NWPB aims to ensure U.S. watermelons remain a sought-after choice worldwide.



NWPB held a virtual webinar highlighting the results of an in-depth market assessment designed to expand U.S. watermelon exports to Mexico. This valuable report provides actionable insights for

producers, shippers, and traders, addressing challenges, regulatory requirements, and market preferences.

The National Watermelon Promotion Board does not endorse any companies listed across any research study results; it is provided for your information. The Board is not responsible for any transaction between parties. NWPB is an equal opportunity employer.

Freson Bros' Watermelon Fest: A Juicy Celebration with the National Watermelon Queen and Fun-Filled Family Activities!

Canadian retailer Freson Bros requested a combination of different program elements made available by NWPB's Retail division. Their exciting U.S. watermelon promotion included the National Watermelon Queen who visited select stores on July 20th and 21st. Each event was packed with family-friendly activities, including watermelon bowling, relay races, coloring contests, seed spitting competitions, and more. The highlight of each visit was customers competing in each store's watermelon eating contest! The promotion created in-store excitement, drove traffic to participating stores and increased direct and impulse watermelon sales. The Watermelon Fest event saw a significant increase in sales year-over-year, a 36.8% increase in reach and a 17.8% rise in engagement on the retailer's social media with the National Watermelon Queen's appearance.



Another Successful Foodservice Event in Canada

On May 28th the National Watermelon Promotion Board hosted a watermelon lunch in partnership with the Pacific Institute of Culinary Arts. The lunch included a fully customized menu that featured watermelon in every course, including cocktails and mocktails. Chefs and restaurant industry contacts across Vancouver were invited to the lunch with the goal of educating attendees on watermelon's versatility, inspired the use of watermelon on menus and fostered networking amongst the tables.

Executing the chef lunch was a valuable opportunity to reach and connect with a foodservice audience in Canada. It was also a valuable extension of the Toronto dinner hosted last year, allowing us to connect, inspire, and grow contacts in another province. The lunch was a successful step in strengthening and growing NWPB's presence in the Canadian foodservice industry in Western Canada.



With 18 chefs and foodservice industry contacts in attendance, who received takeaway bags that included NWPB branded materials and information, the lunch was of great value and contributed to our KPI of engaging with 63 industry contacts this year.

Amplifying Success Through Strategic Influencer Partnerships in Canada

In 2024, the consumer program relied heavily on influencer partnerships to engage Canadians and inspire them to incorporate watermelon into their daily lives. By working with influencers who have highly engaged communities, the program aimed to showcase innovative and exciting ways to use watermelon, encouraging increased consumption of U.S. watermelon. These partnerships focused on creating authentic, relatable content that emphasized watermelon’s value, versatility, availability, and nutrition.



The influencer partnership strategy aimed to engage Canadian consumers by leveraging trusted voices in the food, wellness, and lifestyle spaces. The goal was to position U.S. watermelon as a versatile, healthy ingredient for various meals and occasions. By partnering with influencers with diverse backgrounds and highly engaged communities, the program inspired a broad audience across Canada. Messaging emphasized U.S. watermelon's nutritional benefits, versatility in recipes, and ease of use, delivering content that was both engaging and educational.

The campaign maintained an always-on approach, running consistently throughout peak watermelon season (excluding August to avoid competing with ‘buy local’ promotions). This sustained presence ensured continuous consumer engagement, keeping U.S. watermelon top of mind during key months for consumption.

In 2024, the program partnered with six Canadian influencers to create 14 pieces of watermelon-forward recipes. Their engaging content helped reach a wide audience and inspire increased consumption of U.S. watermelon across Canada. Below is a list of influencers and some of their key results:

	Impressions / Views	Likes	Comments	Shares	Saves
TOTAL	2,138,226	41,908	625	6,135	10,811

Influencer partnerships were a key driver of success for the National Watermelon Promotion Board's Canada Initiative in 2024. These collaborations delivered impressive results, generating significant engagement across platforms while raising awareness about the versatility and appeal of U.S.

watermelon. Influencers effectively highlighted innovative recipes, inspiring Canadians to incorporate watermelon into their meals and daily routines.

The program fostered strong community interactions and received overwhelmingly positive feedback. These efforts not only amplified the reach of our messaging but also contributed meaningfully to the overarching goal of increasing U.S. watermelon consumption in Canada, supporting the sustainability and growth of exports.

Communications

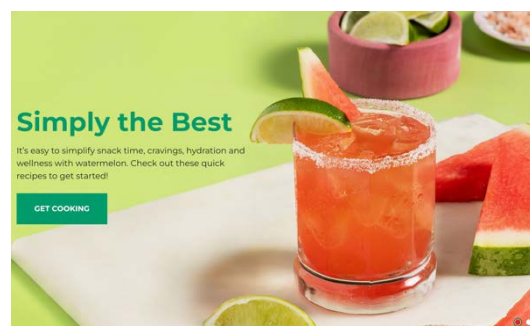
This year, the Communications Program advanced its mission through three core objectives: increasing awareness, interest, and consideration of watermelon to drive consumer demand; educating audiences on key purchase motivators while addressing negative perceptions and purchase barriers; and collaborating with social influencers to amplify messages, engage audiences, and foster authentic connections. Through paid, earned, owned, and shared media, the program showcased watermelon's benefits of happiness and health, value and convenience, versatility, and sustainability, positioning it as a year-round kitchen staple for Millennial and Gen Z consumers.

The "Simply Watermelon" campaign anchored these efforts with a focus on simplicity, visual appeal, and timely content delivery. No-recipe snacking ideas, eye-catching photography, and engaging video content, paired with creator partnerships, helped drive education around selection, cutting, nutrition, and sustainability. Targeted digital ads, seasonal website updates, eNewsletters, and coordinated social content supported these messages across multiple platforms. High-visibility activations, including the Marine Corps Marathon, a TikTok summer video campaign, grower story features, a national podcast ad buy, and ongoing NASCAR visibility with Ross Chastain, amplified watermelon's presence and reinforced its relevance with consumers nationwide.

The articles below are program highlights and not all-inclusive of budget-spend.

Simply Watermelon Campaign

In 2024, NWPB focused on positioning watermelon to consumers as a simple and essential kitchen staple under the theme "Simply Watermelon." The aim was to ensure watermelon becomes a regular item on weekly grocery lists by promoting easy-to-make snacks and recipes with watermelon as the star ingredient, as well as watermelon basics education on selection, storage and cutting.



Key Messaging

- Watermelon is delicious and versatile: slice, dice, blend, carve, freeze, top, or mix it.
- Fresh, juicy watermelon is craveable and easy to incorporate into daily routines, like morning smoothies or on-the-go snacks.
- Watermelon is a year-round kitchen staple that simplifies snacking, hydration, and wellness.

Brand messaging, or the watermelon benefits that are emphasized when educating consumers across channels under the Simply Watermelon theme are aligned with overall consumer communications message priorities.

- **Flavor:** We emphasize the craveable taste of watermelon with simple, delicious recipes.
- **Watermelon 101:** Educate consumers on selecting, storing, and cutting watermelon.

- **Value:** Highlight the number of servings and cost-effectiveness of using the whole watermelon.
- **Happiness:** Connect watermelon with emotional benefits like happiness, nostalgia, and comfort.
- **Sustainability:** Promote zero food waste by using the entire watermelon, each part offering unique flavors.
- **Nutrition:** Share key nutritional benefits, focusing on hydration and vitamins.

Activation and Amplification

- **Content Creation:** We've developed 20 new simple recipes and vibrant vertical videos featuring 5 or fewer ingredients. Sharing these on web and social media, including blogs, Reels, and TikTok the visibility and amplification especially during peak season are paramount.
- **Podcast Ads and Sweepstakes:** Ads promoting Simply Watermelon and a sweepstakes through iHeart podcasts are running from June to August, directing listeners to WatermelonSweeps.com which redirects to watermelon.org/simply, for more than just a form to enter but also suggested pathways to explore more Simple watermelon benefits.
- **Social Media Partnerships:** Collaborating with partners on Instagram and TikTok to create engaging content, 5 new watermelon friends are going to be posting Simply Watermelon content in their own voice on their own channels throughout June, July and August. Stay tuned for InfluenceKit reporting highlights later this summer.

By emphasizing simplicity, craveability, and sustainability, the Simply Watermelon campaign aimed to make watermelon a go-to fruit for consumers year-round. Any company interested in receiving assets developed for the campaign, recipes, images, or videos, for their own company's marketing purposes could also request and use them.

Spring & Fall Programmatic Ad Results

Spring

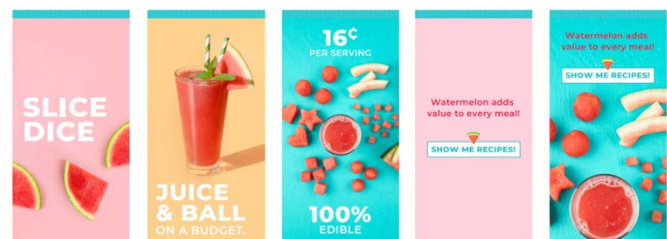
In April and May 2024, the Board repurposed creative content from 2023 for our Spring banner ad campaign. The results were exceptional, demonstrating the effectiveness of our strategic approach.

Prospecting

- **Total Impressions:** 264,343
- **Total Clicks:** 1,582
- **Click Through Rate (CTR):** 0.60%

Remarketing

- **Total Impressions:** 166,914
- **Total Clicks:** 990
- **Click Through Rate (CTR):** 0.59%



Performance Analysis Both CTRs significantly outperformed industry benchmarks. While the general benchmark for display ads ranges from 0.07% to 0.10%, and the benchmark for the Food &

Grocery industry ranges from 0.35% to 0.45%, our campaign achieved CTRs of 0.60% and 0.59% for prospecting and remarketing, respectively.

Geographical Insights Texas, California, and Florida garnered the highest number of impressions and clicks, indicating strong engagement in these key regions.

Device Insights A notable 78% of impressions came from mobile devices. This aligns with our target audience's behavior, as individuals interested in recipes and healthy living often interact with such content on their phones.

Overall, the Spring programmatic ad campaign demonstrated the value of repurposing creative content and targeting the right audience, resulting in exceptional performance metrics and valuable insights for future campaigns.

Fall

The target audience for the Fall programmatic ad campaign included **Health and Fitness – Nutrition** and **Food and Beverage**. The results were exceptional for this time of year, and way above industry standard (note the Click Through Rate vs. the industry benchmark)

Prospecting

- 159,375 impressions
- 675 clicks
- 0.42% Click Through Rate (0.10% benchmark)

Remarketing

- 51,008 impressions
- 256 clicks
- 0.50% Click Through Rate (0.10% benchmark)

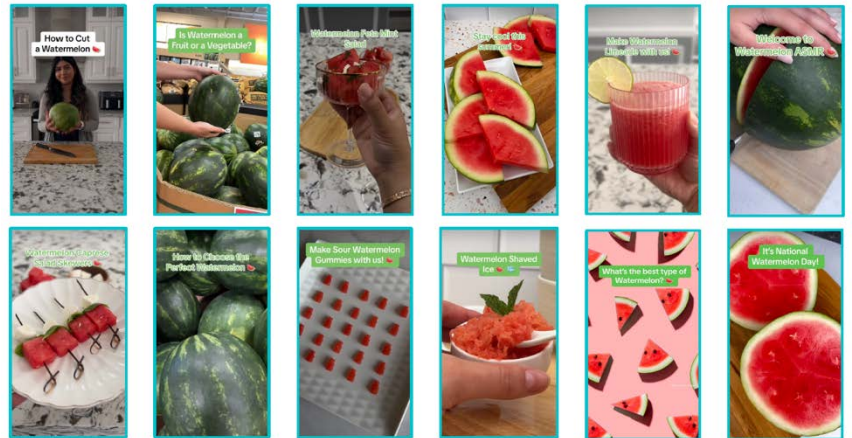
Given the success of these banner ad campaigns, the Board recommends continuing in 2025, with new creative that highlights watermelon’s simplicity and value.

	Impressions	Cost	Clicks	CTR	CPM
Spring - Prospecting	264,343	\$2,000.35	1,582	0.60%	\$7.57
Spring - Remarketing	166,914	\$500.01	990	0.59%	\$3.00
Fall - Prospecting	331,449	\$2,000.23	1,187	0.36%	\$6.03
Fall Remarketing	108,782	\$500.01	491	0.45%	\$4.60

Summer 2024 TikTok Campaign Results

This summer 2024 TikTok campaign, which ran May through August, successfully boosted consumer engagement and watermelon awareness across the U.S. With nearly 2 million engagements and 7.5 million impressions, the campaign exceeded its engagement goal by 142%, thanks to a mix of educational content, trending TikTok formats, and targeted audience strategies.

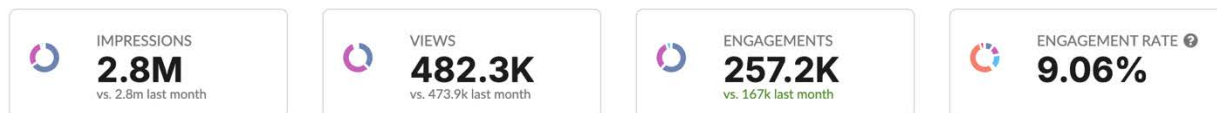
Program goals included increasing awareness, combating misinformation, and encouraging watermelon consideration by promoting its simplicity, nutritional benefits, and versatility. A combination of in-house and freelance content creation ensured the campaign stayed relevant and visually dynamic, tapping into TikTok trends such as ASMR and recipe inspiration.



The campaign resonated especially well with Gen Z, accounting for the largest number of engagements (825,455) and impressions (3.6 million). Additionally, Millennial and Gen X audiences had the longest average viewing time per video at 6.5 seconds.

Overall, the strong performance of this campaign established a strong foundation for future growth on this platform.

A Record-Breaking Year for Influencer Partnerships!



For 2024/2025 fiscal year, NWPB collaborated with an impressive 19 influencer partners—our highest number to-date. These content creators spanned a variety of niches, including registered dietitians, nutrition, lifestyle, fitness, and, of course, racing. Each brought their unique style and voice to platforms like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and more.

One of our biggest wins was an outstanding engagement rate of just over 9%. To put that into perspective, industry benchmarks suggest that engagement rates between 1% and 3.5% are considered average, 3-6% is good, and anything above 6% is excellent.

On top of that, our content views saw a significant year-over-year increase, jumping from 350,000 in 2023/2024 to an impressive 483,000 in 2024/2025. Such strong engagement and reach, reinforcing the impact of our influencer partnerships.

Communications End of Year Report Highlights

Communications partner agency, Curious Plot, provided a end-of-year report with activity highlights and KPI measurements for the activities under the consumer communications outreach including social, digital and traditional media as well as influencer partnerships. Some key highlights include:

Social Media Overview

- Approach: Drive an always-on presence of watermelon among U.S. consumers through a higher quality cadence of Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest and TikTok content, ads and community engagement with focuses on the Simply Watermelon campaign messaging during peak season; Test engagement drivers during peak season, such as Watermelon Wednesdays story shares, summer giveaways and more
- Results: Although social media post cadence decreased in FY24, a focus on posting quality content, timing and tailored promotion budgets improved results year-over-year. Impressions: 27M, +35% YoY, Paid site traffic: 192,978 site visits, +322% YoY, Story frames shared: 44

Social Media Highlights

- Top performing posts across channels: Tapped into a timely trend – _from current events like the solar eclipse to flavor trends like sweet x spicy; Highlighted simplicity, with recipes or how-tos being easy to replicate.
- The top three TikTok videos based on engagement were all about how to cut a watermelon.
 - The audience pays close attention to details — _from texture to seed visibility to recipe ingredients. Their questions show they're deeply engaged and looking to be educated and reassured

Performance Summary

	FY23	2024-25 Goal	FY24 Achieved	% of Goal
Social Media Impressions	21,445,440	20,000,000	26,784,958	140%
Social Media Engagements	799,043	930,919	1,081,812	116%
Social Media Video Views	N/A	2,736,777	3,246,193	119%
Website Pageviews	1,031,038	765,545	861,480	113%
Watermelon Community	320,612	334,562	322,157	96%

Media Monitoring

- Approach: Always On monitoring will track organic coverage, watermelon buzz as well as the results of our outreach efforts; Monthly media monitoring reports will highlight consumer watermelon mentions related to recipes, health and fitness, sustainability and lifestyle.
- Results: 41,979,373,197 total tracked impressions; Coverage focused on culinary themes, especially easy and unexpected recipes with watermelon; Health coverage celebrated the hydrating attributes of watermelon.

E-Newsletter Overview

- Approach: Deploy consistent monthly emails during peak watermelon season, and quarterly emails off-peak to keep audience engaged; Focus content on topics we know resonate with our audience, in keeping with the Simply Watermelon campaign theme.

- Results: Email newsletters drove 2.3K visits, 1.3K new users and 41% engagement rate on the website; Open rate: 24.4%, above industry benchmark of 20%; Click rate: 1.95%, low range of industry benchmark 2-10%; CTOR: 8.07%, high end of industry benchmark 2-10%; Subscriber growth: 13%

Foodservice

While more than half of consumers believe watermelon is underrepresented on menus and two-thirds are highly interested in trying fresh watermelon in innovative dishes, there is plenty of room to continue to grow **watermelon on menus** across the country! Foodservice key messages focus on educating and inspiring foodservice decision makers. Topics include cultivation, cutting and yield, nutrition messages, value (volume with accessible price point year-round) and year-round availability. Ultimately, versatility (flavor pairings, inspiring recipes, think outside the peel, beverage recipes) is the differentiator the Board uses with all foodservice segments.

Earned and paid media keep watermelon top-of-mind with operators throughout the year. Earned media is prevalent in the spring, summer and early fall when watermelon is on more menus. The International Foodservice Editorial Council helps to connect the dots between foodservice editors and watermelon menu items. Paid media in the fall and winter continue to inspire operators. The Board's digital partnership with the Culinary Institute of America at ciaprochef.com/watermelon, extends watermelon's reach and recipe library with more chef-created menu items reaching culinarians across the country.

Sponsored events are geared to all audiences in foodservice to spread watermelon messages. To reach noncommercial foodservice, the Board sponsored the K-12 Foodservice Forum at the International Fresh Produce Association Foodservice Show, Southeast Produce Council's Southern Innovations and an American Culinary Federation monthly webinar focused on BBQ. To reach commercial foodservice, the Board again sponsored The Flavor Experience, Kinetic 12 Emergence, the NRA Brunch (an event during the Restaurant Show) and MISE - a conference reaching the resurging hotel and lodging segment. Messaging continued to utilize the 2023 **Watermelon Flavor Dynamics** asset highlighting watermelon's versatility and ability to fit into many global cuisines. To reach foodservice educators and up and coming chefs, the Board works with the American Culinary Federation and the Center for the Advancement of Foodservice Educators to promote the **Watermelon Culinary Curriculum**.

Lastly, the Board offers ideation and promotional support to both commercial and noncommercial operators. The Board engages with operators who do not use watermelon or help those who do to expand watermelon menu items through education and ideation sessions, on and off-site. Promotions often support limited time opportunities with funds to move more of the menu item and place watermelon messages in front of consumers.

The articles below are program highlights and not all-inclusive of budget-spend.

Watermelon Makes a Splash at the National Restaurant Show

The National Restaurant Show, hosted by the National Restaurant Association each May, is a large international show inclusive of everything needed to run a successful restaurant. Foodservice media and operators attend the show to explore new trends and new technology but also get to the nitty gritty with many options for tin foil or the perfect white plate for their operation. Just like the IFPA Global Show, more intimate affiliated events target different audiences and offer the opportunity for watermelon to make its mark.



For the first time, the Watermelon Board had a strategic presence on the show floor. Libbey, a drink-, serve-, dinner- and flatware company in partnership with the Board's beverage consultant, curated watermelon food and beverage items served on their ware each day of the show. From their website, "Since 1818, Libbey has been the vanguard of artistry and innovation in glassmaking..." and that dedication was apparent in the impressive booth, complete with servers, and the glass and service-ware used for the watermelon menu items. Throughout the four-day show watermelon was served in exciting applications:

- Fresh Watermelon and Apple Agua Fresca
- Watermelon Negroni Sbagliato
- Watermelon-Ginger Smash
- Watermelon Sashimi
- Watermelon Brisket Roll; BBQ and Greek
- Fried Chicken Bites topped with Watermelon KFC Sauce
- Watermelon Caprese

The Watermelon Board also co-sponsored the NRA Brunch at Avec River North on Sunday morning during the show. The Board was able to invite key operator contacts and of course, watermelon was on the menu. Multiple attendees commented on the watermelon and tomato salad with burnt chili vinaigrette, fried shallot and stracciatella cheese. It was a great balance of savory and sweet with a touch of spice. Although not all of the 150+ registrants showed up, there were great connections made and follow up will focus on the full list.

The Monday evening of the show, the International Foodservice Editorial Council (IFEC) hosted the rebranded Bubble Party, Bubble 'n Biz Reception. As always the event attracted the majority of foodservice publications. Watermelon Sushi was a trend forward bite and packaged Chocolate Dipped Candied Watermelon Rind was a great take-away. Megan McKenna, Senior Director of Marketing and Foodservice for the Board, is IFEC' Ex-Officio. This reception was a great midyear touch base with foodservice editors.

Foodservice Media Keeps Watermelon Top of Mind Year-Round

Foodservice media highlights inspiring watermelon menu items throughout the spring and summer but those menu placements dwindle in the fall and winter. The Watermelon Board worked with media to keep watermelon in publications and in front of chefs and operators in the fall and winter through paid media opportunities. Messaging included the year-round availability of watermelon, ways to use the whole watermelon, and showcased its versatility by featuring innovative watermelon recipes from outside chefs. The campaign reached more than a million foodservice decision makers.



IFPA Foodservice Show: K-12 Foodservice Forum, Media Coverage and More

The International Fresh Produce Association's (IFPA) Foodservice Conference, in its 43rd year, brought together more than 2,200 attendees with more than 1,000 buyers. The receptions, speakers and exhibition featured so many trend-forward fresh produce items for foodservice. New IFPA Technomic data was shared that dives into fresh produce's opportunity on menus with limited service, full service, travel and leisure, and education (K-12 and college and university) bubbling to the top. The NWPB sponsored the K-12 Foodservice Forum hosting more than 100 K-12 foodservice decision makers, from county and state level directors to the new deputy undersecretary. Newly appointed USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Food and Nutrition Service Cindy Long, reminded attendees K-12 foodservice is the "largest restaurant in any town." More than 30 million children participate in the National School Lunch Program daily.



The first night, the Board focused on Using the Whole Watermelon serving Watermelon and Corn Salad and **Roasted Watermelon Rind**. The closing breakfast offered Watermelon and Yogurt Two Ways, with **Watermelon Dippers** and the **Red, White and Blue Parfait**. The directors were delighted by the recipes but inspired to think differently about watermelon by the roasted watermelon rind. They are excited about the rind nutrition study in the works, but the next step is to see what kids think of eating watermelon rind! Many K-12 attendees said it was their favorite bite and included it in an expo debrief highlighting what caught the attendees' attention during the show – not to mention it being teased on the Foodservice Show's Exhibitor Blog. Sourcing and handling watermelon were the main questions received. With the school year opposite the domestic season and some districts not even having knives back of house, there are some distinct barriers for watermelon in K-12 Foodservice. With that said, not only can this group move more watermelon, but they are feeding the next generation of consumers.

In addition to the sponsored elements, Megan McKenna, senior director of marketing and foodservice, served on the Foodservice Committee who met to kick off the conference. Megan also volunteered to be a mentor for a Career Pathways Student. *Produce Business* highlighted watermelon in the July cover story, coinciding with the Foodservice Show, *The Art of Produce*, quoting Megan and the Board's consulting chef, Rebecca Peizer. Receptions and networking opportunities connected the Board with others from different foodservice segments such as Sodexo, ProAct, Jason's Deli, University of Massachusetts, Cava, and Denny's.

Quality Connections with Foodservice Operators

The Board partnered with Kinetic12 to sponsor the Emergence group for the second year in a row. The partnership offered 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 offering newer brands and smaller, more nimble teams. Two, 24-hour meetings with quality 1-on-1 operator meetings with more than 35 chains provided a platform to connect with each operator. The first meeting took place at the end of April in Charlotte, NC. Some larger operators present included Piada Italian Street Food, Eggs Up Grill, Pieology Pizza, Polla Compero and Chicken Salad Chick. The second meeting was at the end of May. Costa Vida out West, Grimaldi's in the East, and Salad Collective in the Central region, helped to highlight how these regional chains can help the Board reach across the country in more approachable menu applications. Both meetings found a lot of operators who are thinking about watermelon for summer 2025 and looking for culinary support. Some operators dove into watermelon this year, offering menu promotion opportunities.



Inspiring Foodservice with Watermelon's Versatility

"The Flavor Experience brings together the brightest in the foodservice industry to inspire with trend-forward ideas and experiences, all through the lens of flavor. With the high-volume food & beverage menu developer in mind, the 2024 Flavor Experience promises three days of flavor and menu innovations, trends, strategies and solutions." As a gold sponsor of the 20th Flavor Experience in August, the Watermelon Board benefitted from guaranteed and additional menu items and product awareness throughout the event and afterwards via LinkedIn and conference follow-up. For the guaranteed brunch station the Board served:

- Watermelon Kraut Reuben Croquettes with Watermelon Island Dressing: This menu item utilized the whole watermelon with flesh and juice in the Watermelon Island Dressing and a lacto-fermented watermelon rind kraut.
- Thai Watermelon PB&J: A very approachable bite, it helped attendees think differently about watermelon in Thai applications.



The Flavor Team wanted to add some wellness initiatives, which is a growing trend at conferences. For the price of presenting watermelon breakfast items and watermelon swag, the Board featured three breakfast items with stations both mornings:

- Watermelon Cinnamon and Rosewater Rice Pudding with Crushed Pistachios: At a breakfast full of yogurt and chia seeds, this "parfait" stood out with rice pudding as the base and the combination of watermelon and cinnamon took watermelon to a time of year not often considered by foodservice.

- Watermelon “Matcha” Mochi Cake: This cake used the rind and from the watermelon used in the parfait the day before in a delicious candied application. Additionally, the dehydrated powdered watermelon skin “matcha” took using the whole product to a new and trend-worthy level.
- Whole Watermelon Breakfast Boba: Exemplifying using the whole watermelon, compressed watermelon “boba” was delicious in a rind juice and coconut tea, scented with fresh herbs.

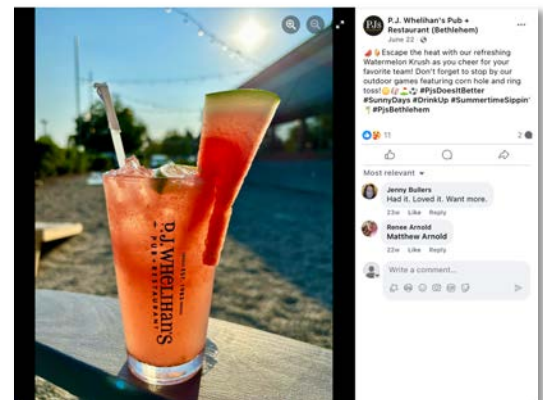
Not only did the Board serve these inspiring bites, the Board owns the recipes and rights to recipe images taken at the event. They will be used for other events and in media. Watermelon was also the official sponsor of the Zen Room featuring morning sound baths and a watermelon filled room (watermelon essential oil as diffused all day!) used for relaxation throughout the event. Messaging from The Slice of Happy Project was used in the room to drive home great reasons consumers love watermelon. Additionally, other companies used watermelon in a half a dozen great menu items helping to tell the strong story of watermelon on menus.

As a part of the “Best Bite” section of the operator survey after the event, the Board heard great feedback including, “Anything watermelon. That team did a great job!” and “Toss up between any of the [watermelon.org](https://www.watermelon.org) offerings and the Dole pineapple croutons. Two years running that I loved Watermelon’s offerings. Still thinking about that donut from last year.” Watermelon was loved even when the Board wasn’t the main reference, “Lots of watermelon, spicy seasoned cotton candy, hot honey caprese at Tribute Pizza.”

With more than 100 regional and national chains in attendance representing more than 100,000 foodservice locations, The Flavor Experience was a great event to educate and inspire a large part of the foodservice industry about watermelon. Many relationships, menu items and promotions have come from this event over the years.

Board Drives Awareness and Sales in Foodservice with P.J. Whelihan’s Partnership

The Board has been hard at work bringing more watermelon to menus across the foodservice industry, leveraging media, events, and collaborations with operators. One of the partnerships in the 2024-2025 year was with P.J. Whelihan’s, a chain with nearly 30 locations across the Mid-Atlantic. The collaboration was first sparked at the Kinetic 12 event in 2023, where the two teamed up to showcase watermelon-inspired menu items, including the refreshing *Watermelon Crush* cocktail and the vibrant *Spicy Watermelon Salad*.



NWPB’s foodservice goal is clear: to increase watermelon’s presence on foodservice menus, while also amplifying its appeal to consumers. P.J. Whelihan’s became a key partner in this initiative, promoting watermelon-focused dishes throughout the summer months, from June to September. The campaign included a mix of social media promotions, email blasts, in-store signage, and even a watermelon giveaway. This broad-reaching approach helped ensure that the message reached a wide audience both in-restaurant and online.

The results spoke for themselves: the *Spicy Watermelon Salad* became the restaurant's top-selling seasonal salad to date. This success shows the power of well-executed partnerships and creative marketing in driving consumer interest and boosting sales. As the NWPB continues to work with foodservice operators across the country, this partnership with P.J. Whelihan's offers a great example of how to bring more watermelon into the spotlight - and utilize it on two places on the menu. Through innovative promotions and targeted campaigns, watermelon is becoming a must-have ingredient in restaurants!

Teaching Watermelon in the Culinary Classroom

Teachers don't teach what they don't know so the Board made sure culinary educators know about watermelon! The Center for Advancement of Foodservice Educators annual conference took place mid-June in San Antonio, TX. The Watermelon Board served the Watermelon Sparkler, a low abv cocktail, and Watermelon Sushi at the opening reception. The Board had a tabletop

display during the trade show time, the InfoFair, and donated the bags for the gift bags so watermelon branding was everywhere. Lastly, Megan McKenna presented *Watermelon Brings the Wow*, an hour-long Trend Session on all things watermelon highlighting tools and resources available at watermelon.org, specifically the **Culinary Curriculum**. Candied Watermelon Rind drizzled with chocolate was shared at the end to compliment the juice and flesh recipes shared the night before. This is an important group to get in front of for the future of foodservice.



Research

The Research Committee is responsible for developing and implementing research to help the promotion and education programs, health and nutrition research, and other topics supporting the promotion of watermelon.

The Board continued to work with Fusion Marketing to execute consumer research in the form of a Segmentation Study. The project will establish a shopper segmentation of watermelon purchasing households. Study will answer the questions: Is there a group of buyers that purchases a disproportionate amount of watermelon? If so, what impact does that group have on category purchase trends and growth? The study will also develop key findings for use in sales and trade public relations.

The partnership with Circana provided a snapshot of the retail scene using retail scanner data. Circana receives produce scan data directly from 76% of retailers in food, mass and club channels then applies projection methodology to estimate 100% coverage. The report produced from the research includes national and regional data for whole, mini and cut watermelon. The focus of the report is on the past 52-week period and how it compares to the prior period of the same length. Custom reports can be created and are used internally and by the industry. Additionally, the Board utilized USDA resources to create the Watermelon Market Report and Ad Tracking Report.

Building on the work from the last two years, Menu Matters will conduct a thorough analysis of the retail and foodservice industries to identify key trends creating headwinds and tailwinds for watermelon. To do that there was an online survey across 1,000 nationally representative, qualified consumers to identify and understand sweet foodservice pain points, unmet needs, and solution appeal, one month of tracking and analyzing consumer behavior across all critical social media platforms to identify ethnographic trends in awareness, perception and engagement and in-depth, one-hour interviews with approximately 15 operators from a targeted list.

On the health and nutrition research front, the Board invested in Watermelon Rind Nutrition Analysis to analyze the nutrition qualities of watermelon rind with the goal of getting watermelon rind in the USDA Foundational Foods Database as a part of Food DataCentral and create a nutrition facts panel for use across all marketing and communications programs. Additionally, the Board will fund the *Effect of Daily Fresh Watermelon Consumption on Gut and Cardiometabolic Health in Young Adults with Overweight and Obesity* with Florida State University. Lastly, Wild Hive has been the Board's partner on the Nutrition Research program since 2017 and continues to support the team from the Nutrition Research RFP to leveraging the results of published research studies through targeted media relations.

The articles below are program highlights and not all-inclusive of budget-spend.

Key Shopper Behaviors Drive Growth of Watermelon Category

The U.S. watermelon category has experienced strong growth over the last year, with households across the country making an estimated \$2.7 billion in fresh watermelon purchases. According to a recent shopper segmentation study conducted by the National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB), an increase in annual watermelon purchases was driven by higher household penetration and spend within key shopper segments.



The shopper segmentation study, which examined shopper behaviors and purchase trends based on consumer panel data, showed that over 3 million new U.S. households purchased watermelon in 2024 boosting U.S. household penetration to 72%. On average, shoppers made five watermelon purchase trips during the year, spending \$5.83 per trip for an estimated annual household spend of \$28.94.

Based on their annual spend, watermelon buyers were divided into three segments: Light, Medium, and Heavy. The Heavy segment represented 25% of watermelon households, and accounted for 63% of total category purchase dollars in 2024. This segment contributed \$97 million of the incremental purchases, highlighting their role as the primary drivers of category growth.

The study identified several actionable opportunities for continued category growth:

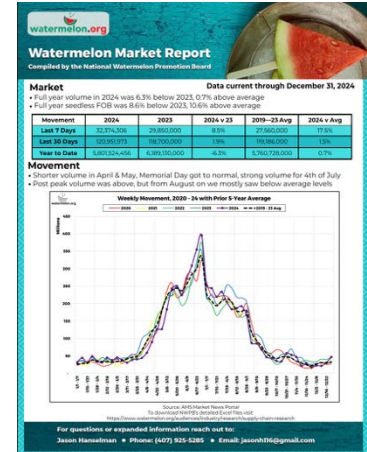
- **Increase Shopping Frequency:** Encouraging households to make one additional watermelon purchase trip per year could bring over \$550 million into the watermelon category.
- **Expand Household Penetration:** A 1% increase in household penetration, from 72% to 73%, could generate an additional \$38 million in incremental sales.
- **Target Heavy Shoppers:** Developing marketing strategies focused on engaging with the Heavy watermelon shopper segment could further boost spending and repeat purchases.

The findings from the shopper segmentation study provide a strategic roadmap for driving continued growth in the watermelon category. By leveraging these insights and targeting the heavy shopper segments, the industry can unlock opportunities for sustained category growth.

These findings, combined with earlier consumer research, offer a comprehensive understanding of watermelon buyer demographics, characteristics, and purchasing behaviors. This enables retailers and producers to effectively target key consumer groups and maximize sales opportunities. Access the full study and learn how the National Watermelon Promotion Board is working to drive sales of fresh watermelon at <https://www.watermelon.org/audiences/industry/research/retail-research/>.

Watermelon Market Report Tool for Industry Use

Industry members are able to discover the latest insights driving the watermelon industry with the Watermelon Market Report (WMR) and accompanying excel files, powered by AMS Market News data. The Board developed the WMR allowing members to dive into FOB prices, movement trends, origins, and beyond. **These essential tools for analysis are available at the Supply Chain Research page** of watermelon.org and available to download. The Board also developed the **Final 2024 Watermelon Market Report** highlighting 2024 trends. Additionally, industry members can utilize Industry Analyst and NWPB Consultant Jason Hanselman for inquiries and custom reports.



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.

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:

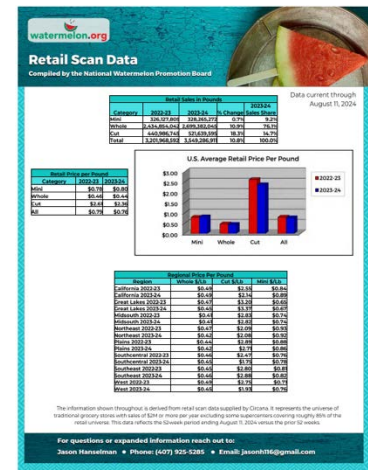
- **Menu Development:** Focus on unique, trendy flavor pairings to enhance the appeal of watermelon-based dishes.

- 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**.

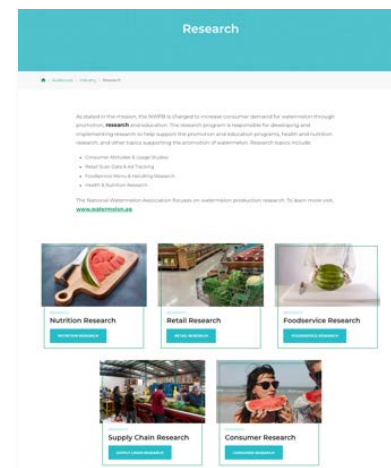
Retail Scan Data Report Highlights YOY Retail Shifts

For the past 15+ years NWPB worked with Circana (previously IRI) to provide a snapshot of the retail scene that heavily relied upon produce scan data. Utilizing a mix of data directly received from retail outlets, and sophisticated statistical techniques to cover the few remaining gaps, Circana's goal is to provide an accurate read on the totality of the retail environment. NWPB melded these perspectives at national, regional and market levels for mini, cut and whole categories into a report that is released roughly once a month. The Retail Scan Data Report allows the reader to get a grasp for changes within and across regions or markets, as well as how national data compares for the most recent 52-week period to that which came prior. The most recent **Retail Scan Data reports** are available in the Industry section of watermelon.org. Industry members are also able to reach out to Industry Analyst Jason Hanselman for archived reports or with questions.



Learn More About the Watermelon Consumer at watermelon.org/research

The Research section of **watermelon.org** offers insights on the watermelon consumer at retail and foodservice. The 2024 Watermelon Shopper Segmentation Study is available under **Retail Research**. The 2024 Foodservice Consumer Behavior & Operator Insights is available under **Foodservice Research**. Ongoing reports can also help better understand what is happening in the market. The monthly Retail Scan Data Report featuring Circana Data and weekly Ad Tracking Report featuring USDA Data are also available in the **Retail section**. The weekly Watermelon Market Report featuring USDA Data is available in the **Supply Chain section**. To learn more about custom reports available to the industry, email info@watermelon.org.



The Board has invested in other nutrition research studies. These studies can take multiple years to show results and some are too preliminary to use in communications but build the case for future studies.