



# Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD

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## Watermelon Inspires with Global Flavors at CIA's Worlds of Flavor Conference

Earlier this month, the National Watermelon Promotion Board participated as a sponsor of the Culinary Institute of America's Worlds of Flavor Conference, one of the industry's leading gatherings for chefs, menu developers, and innovation leaders across foodservice. The annual event attracts a diverse mix of segments, with a strong presence from noncommercial foodservice, including colleges and universities, corporate dining, healthcare and K-12.

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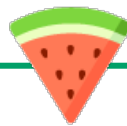
## Worlds of Flavor Continued


As part of the **Discovery Break activations**, NWPB served two dishes designed to showcase watermelon's versatility across global cuisines and modern techniques. Attendees sampled **Watermelon Dippin Stix**, featuring fresh watermelon paired with **three internationally inspired salts**: Rosemary Fennel, Sesame Sumac, and Ras el Hanout. These bold seasonings allowed chefs to explore how watermelon can carry savory, aromatic, and spice forward flavor profiles.



The Board also presented **Watermelon Carpaccio**, a thinly sliced and compressed preparation that highlighted watermelon as a canvas for Mediterranean inspired ingredients and advanced culinary techniques. The carpaccio sparked strong engagement among chefs who were eager to discuss **applications of compressed and balancing sweet savory flavor** notes for menu development.

Throughout the event, these dishes sparked meaningful conversations with chefs looking for fresh, globally inspired ingredients for modern foodservice menus. NWPB's presence reinforced **watermelon's versatility**, and the Board has already begun to follow up with attending chefs to build on that interest. This continued outreach will help strengthen relationships, support new menu development, and **keep watermelon top of mind in the months ahead**.



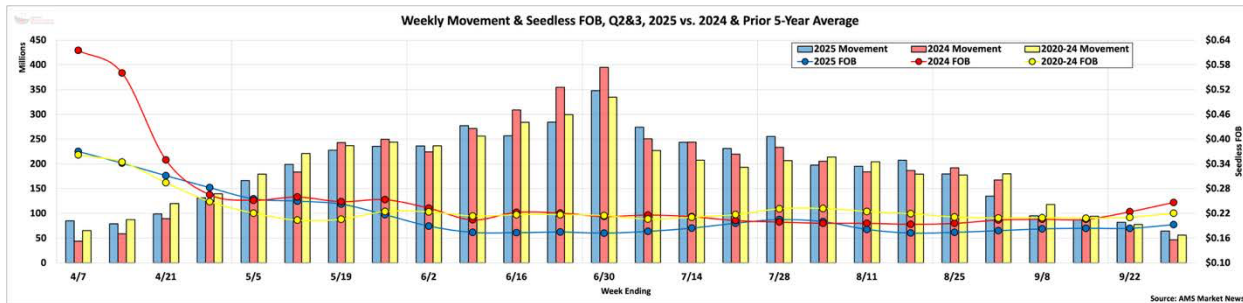
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## Quarter 2 & 3 Watermelon Supply & Analysis



[Click here for larger image](#)

The [Market News portal](#)  hosted by Agricultural Marketing Services (AMS) is a useful tool to analyze how watermelon supply and pricing this year compares to past years. The above chart compares the second and third quarters of 2025 to the prior year and five-year average for each on a weekly basis. The blue columns show weekly movement over these two quarters, and can be compared to the red or yellow columns showing last year and the prior five-year average, respectively. Color consistency carries over to seedless FOB pricing with the righthand axis showing dollar per pound pricing.

**Adjusted figures** in Q2 were often at or near average, while Q3 was more commonly above average. Meanwhile, price was lower than average starting midway through Q2 and persisting throughout the rest of summer.

Additionally, we can take a similar look at retail during this time frame using data supplied by Circana. Total volume in Q2 was 6.3% below average, while Q3 finished 10% higher than average. Total movement for both quarters came in 2% above average trailing only 2020 and 2024.

Across both quarters by category, cut volume was down 10.5% versus average, while dollar per pound was 42.4% above average. Mini volume was up 9.7% with price per each 7% above average. Whole watermelon represented 83% of pounds sold, and while volume was up 2.9%, price per each was roughly double that at 6% above average.



[Click here for larger image](#)

For more information visit the [Supply Chain Research page](#) or reach out to [Jason Hanselman](#) to request custom reports.



## Industry Spotlight – Get to Know Bailey Leger

**Company:** Leger & Son, Inc.

**Time in the Industry:** 5 Years

**Time on the Board:** 1 Year

**What's your favorite thing about the Watermelon Industry?** That we have created such an amazing community that can come together and work to find solutions to challenges that face us as well as the Agriculture industry as a whole.

**What's your favorite item on your bucket list?** My favorite item from my bucket list (so far) has been travelling to visit Machu Picchu.



## FWA & TWA Annual Conventions

NWPB Executive Director Mark Arney delivered presentations at **both the Florida Watermelon Association and Texas Watermelon Association annual conventions last month**. During the FWA event, Arney accepted a Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of the NWPB and received recognition as part of a select group supporting the FWA Queen Program. At the TWA convention, Industry Analyst Jason Hanselman attended on behalf of the organization and provided a presentation.



Arney with Rob Gibson, outgoing president of the FWA.



Hanselman with new TWA queen Lorelai Hill



Arney with former TWA queen Bethany Boller.

## NWPB's Megan McKenna Completes IFPA Leadership Program

The National Watermelon Promotion Board is proud to highlight the participation of Megan McKenna, Senior Director of Marketing and Foodservice, in the International Fresh Produce Association's Leadership Program, Class 29. The **year-long program is one of the produce industry's most respected professional development experiences**, designed to build the next generation of leaders through immersive learning, industry exploration, and collaborative problem solving.



Throughout the program, participants engaged with experts across the supply chain, explored key issues influencing the future of fresh produce, and strengthened skills in communication, strategic thinking, and organizational leadership. Class 29 also completed hands-on learning experiences at multiple industry events and facilities, including visits to a watermelon farm and a fresh cut processor handling watermelon, providing **valuable firsthand insight into production, post-harvest handling, and product innovation**.

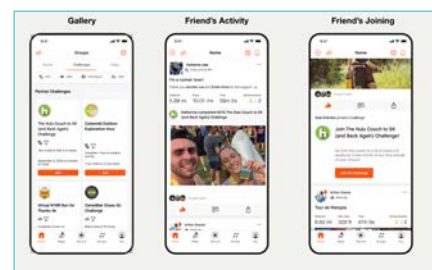
Megan's participation brought a watermelon centered perspective into discussions around marketing, consumer trends, foodservice innovation, and the evolving needs of retail and supply chain partners. These experiences not only deepened connections across the broader produce community but also **expanded opportunities for collaboration on promotion, education, and category growth**.

As Class 29 concludes its year together, **Megan will carry forward these learnings to enhance the Board's work on behalf of the industry, applying new leadership tools, stronger cross category insights, and expanded relationships** to support NWPB's strategic priorities and advance the watermelon category as a whole.



## Strava Team Watermelon Challenge

This January-February, NWPB is teaming up with **Strava (a social network for athletes that tracks and analyzes physical activity)** to launch a two-week movement challenge that brings the joy of simple movement and delicious hydration together. The challenge is open to athletes and everyday movers across the U.S., encouraging participants to complete 100 minutes of movement during the two-week challenge. It's feel-good, flexible, and built for everyone — whether it's a run, walk, lift, yoga flow or dance break. The challenge will be officially announced January 15 and run January 22 through February 5. Participants who complete the challenge earn a Strava badge and can enter to win **a one-year supply of watermelon, to help fuel their fitness journey year-round**. The Board is partnering with three influencers to help support and amplify the campaign.





# Publix Produce for Kids by Healthy Family Project Fall Campaign

NWPB partnered with Healthy Family Project for this year's Publix Produce for Kids Fall Campaign. This effort blended **community support, in-store activation, and high-impact digital reach**.

Together with campaign partners, the program helped donate 875,000 meals across the Publix market and generated 8.5 billion total impressions at a sponsor CPI of just \$0.004. In stores, shoppers encountered 8.3 billion impressions, strengthened by dynamic content across Healthy Family Project's digital channels.

From late September through early November, campaign partners were featured in social content delivering 1.18 million impressions, including 418,000 impressions tied to Publix-focused posts, along with 80,185 views and 3,837 engagements. A national and trade media push added more than 154 million impressions, further expanding campaign visibility.

Program storytelling included a Registered Dietitian-led Halloween grocery haul filled with approachable, better-for-you seasonal ideas. The Fall 2025 campaign highlights how strategic retail partnerships and family-focused content can drive meaningful results for brands and shoppers alike.




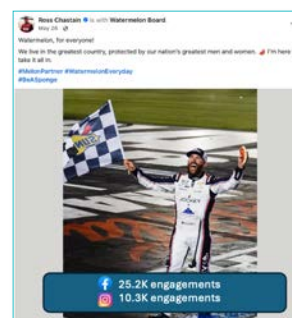
# Ross Chastain Partnership Performance Recap

We're excited to share the strong results from our 2025 social media collaboration with NASCAR driver (and longtime friend of watermelon) Ross Chastain. His #MelonPartner posts delivered immense visibility and meaningful engagement across his channels and helped amplify watermelon all year long.

## Campaign Highlights

- **2.7M+ total impressions** across platforms
- **3.2M+ video views**, marking engaged audiences on video posts
- **180K+ engagements** (likes, comments, shares) reflecting highly invested audiences
- **6.7% engagement rate**, a top-tier performance especially considering his large reach for sponsored posts

 **Thank You, Ross!** We're grateful for Ross's continued promotion and support of watermelon education and promoting the watermelon industry! The authenticity Ross brings to watermelon storytelling and education is not only genuine but remarkable. This partnership delivered both strong performance and strong alignment, a perfect combination!



# NWPB Unveils New Omni Channel Strategies to Drive Watermelon Category Growth

The National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB) has released its newest research, **Omnichannel Strategies for Watermelon Category Growth**, offering fresh insights into how changing retail formats and shopper demographics are reshaping the watermelon category. The findings reveal substantial momentum: **since 2021, the category has gained 7 million new purchasing households, reaching 75 percent of all US households**. These new buyers contributed 782 million dollars in incremental purchases, pushing total category sales to 3.2 billion dollars over the period.

NWPB Executive Director Mark Arney noted that the analysis provides a clear roadmap for growth across modern retail environments. **Retailers, marketers, and industry stakeholders can use the data to refine strategies and strengthen engagement** with both established and emerging shopper groups.



## Key Insights from the Research

- **Channel growth is diversifying.** Grocery remains the category's top channel, but Mass, Club, and Online are adding new shoppers and growing at faster rates. Tailoring merchandising and marketing strategies to each format can help maximize reach and conversion.
- **Club channel momentum offers a major opportunity.** With Club shoppers purchasing larger volumes per trip, channel specific tactics that encourage bulk buying can support continued expansion.
- **Shopper demographics continue to evolve.** Watermelon growth is strongest among younger, smaller, higher income, and more diverse households, while engagement among older households is also rising. Balancing efforts between loyal heavy buyers and these emerging segments will be essential for long term category growth.

To help stakeholders act on these findings, NWPB has also developed a companion **Marketing Guide, translating the research into practical strategies for merchandising, marketing, and cross channel execution.**

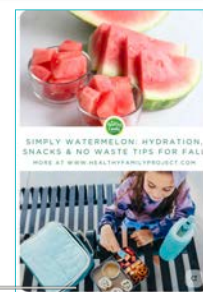
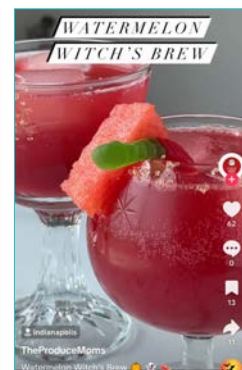
The release announcing this work was shared with trade media, generating strong pickup across major retail and produce outlets, and was also featured on NWPB's LinkedIn channel to **extend reach and visibility among industry audiences**. This multi-platform communication effort helped ensure the research and marketing guide reached the stakeholders best positioned to apply these insights. Access the full research report and companion Marketing Guide at:

[www.watermelon.org/audiences/industry/research/retail-research](http://www.watermelon.org/audiences/industry/research/retail-research).



## Fall/Winter Influencer Highlights

Watermelon friends and partners **continue to educate about watermelon with seasonal relevance above and beyond the owned Watermelon Board social channels**. Cook at Home Dad's Halloween-themed IG/FB reel on carving a watermelon instead of a pumpkin garnered a high engagement rate. And Jen Fisher with The Fit Fork posted air-fried Fall recipes including Watermelon Rind "Fries" with yogurt dip. Healthy Family Project highlighted watermelon in their Hydration, Snacks and No Waste Tips for Fall post on all channels. The Produce Moms shared their Watermelon Witches brew on TikTok, and RD Chrissy Carroll made Pinterest collages featuring watermelon recipes for football season and Thanksgiving.



## NWA Nook: Get Ready for St. Pete Beach!

It's official — **registration is open for the National Watermelon Association's 2026 Annual Meeting & Convention, coming to St. Pete Beach, Florida**, and you won't want to miss it! Visit [www.watermelon.ag](http://www.watermelon.ag) to get registered and be part of the watermelon industry's biggest gathering of the year.

This year's convention will feature all the annual favorites that make it the *Watermelon Family Reunion*: the always-anticipated Auction, our celebratory Banquet, and, of course, the National Watermelon Queen Competition, where we'll crown the next ambassador for our industry.

We'll kick off with the Arnold Mack Memorial Golf Tournament at the world-class Copperhead Course at Innisbrook—home of the PGA Tour's Valspar Invitational—just weeks before the pros tee off on the same course.

Our education program will bring fresh energy and perspective, featuring a half-day workshop with QIMA, a session exploring labor solutions through multiple lenses, and Women's Leadership programming designed to empower and connect the leaders shaping our industry's future. Stay tuned for speaker announcements and more exciting updates as the event approaches.

From learning to laughter, from advocacy to celebration, the 2026 NWA Convention promises an unforgettable week of connection and inspiration. Spaces will fill fast—so register today and join us in St. Pete Beach as we celebrate the people, partnerships, and progress that make this industry thrive.





## U.S. Watermelon Adds Flavor to the Taste of the Caribbean Culinary Event

The Caribbean Hotel and Tourism Association (CHTA) closed another dynamic edition of Taste of the Caribbean, naming Bonaire the Caribbean National Culinary Team of the Year. Held in Barbados from November 16–18 alongside the Caribbean Hospitality Industry Exchange Forum (CHIEF), the event once again served as the region's premier culinary stage—part competition, part cultural celebration, and part professional exchange.

Eleven destinations competed this year, each bringing its own rhythm of technique, flavor, and creativity.

A number of special recognitions highlighted standout talent—including two awards presented by the NWPB, which joined the event as a **first-time sponsor**:

- Best Use of Watermelon (Culinary): Gabrielle Martin, Turks & Caicos
- Best Use of Watermelon (Beverage): Ninus Charlouis, St. Lucia

Other honors spanned Certified Angus Beef excellence, contemporary Caribbean cuisine, creative mixology, and competition spirit, reflecting the depth and diversity of talent across the region.

This year's competition reaffirmed the region's rising talent and the growing network of partners eager to support it. With fresh collaborations—like NWPB's debut—the event continues to open new doors for chefs, mixologists, and emerging professionals across the Caribbean.

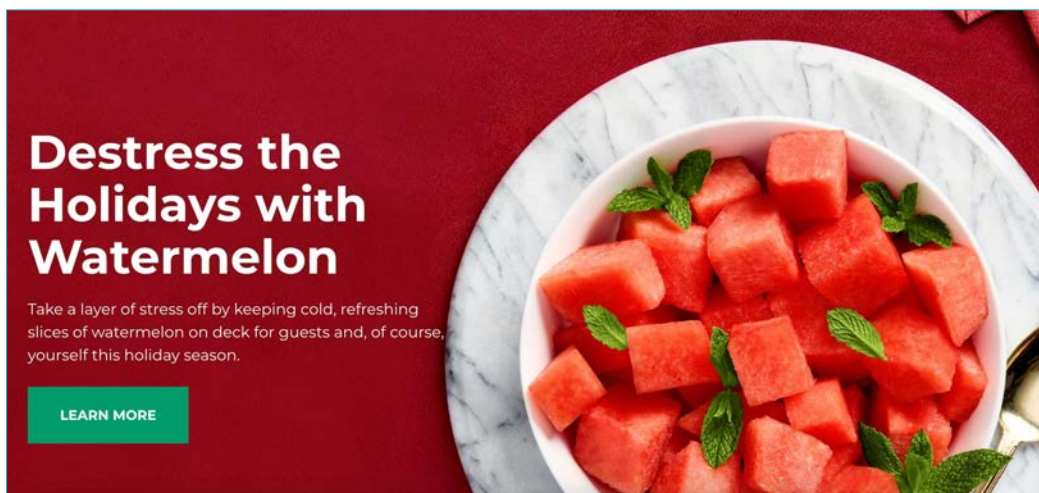




## Destress the Holidays with Watermelon

Just in time for the busiest season of the year, we're spotlighting how watermelon supports wellness, hydration, and balance during the holidays. This timely new blog post gives consumers practical, uplifting ways to enjoy watermelon throughout the season. Read the blog post here:

<https://www.watermelon.org/the-slice/destress-the-holidays-with-watermelon/>



## Watermelon on the Menu

The Woodall, a restaurant in Atlanta, GA serving contemporary American fare, is currently offering a **Burrata Watermelon Salad** including, guajillo vinaigrette, mint, and shaved baguette.



## NWPB Connections

**Illiana Watermelon Association Annual Convention** – French Lick, IN – January 15 – 18

**South Carolina Watermelon Association Annual Convention** – Hilton Head, SC – January 15 – 18

**Georgia Watermelon Association Annual Convention** – St. Simons, GA – January 22 – 24

**Western Watermelon Association Annual Convention** – Las Vegas, NV – January 30 – February 1

**MarDel Watermelon Association Annual Convention** – Cambridge, MD – February 5 – 7