



Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



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 2026. We're offering over \$10,000 in cash and prizes. Here's how retailers can enter:

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

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Merch Contest Continued

Top Prizes Include:

Grand Prize: \$5,000

Second Place: \$2,500

Third Place: \$1,000

Honorable Mentions (3): \$500 each

Retailers are encouraged to include Tajín® in merchandising efforts for an extra incentive! This is a retailers chance to stand out, whether a produce pro or marketing guru. [Click here to get full contest details and enter!](#)

Let's make this summer all about bold displays and big wins and help spread the word to enter!



Industry Spotlight: Get to Know Jacky Flores

Company: Bagley Produce Co.

Time in the Industry: I've been working in this industry for 13 years

Time on the Board: I've been on the NWPB since 2023

What's your favorite thing about Watermelon? My favorite thing about watermelon is that it's the perfect sweet snack to bring families and friends together for a great memorable time. It has always been the snack for me that's present during beach days, holidays, pool days, when I need a pick me up, and so on! In my household you can guarantee that when there is a gathering there will always be watermelon served up fresh to support local farmers and industry workers.



What's your favorite item on your bucket list? My favorite thing that I was able to check off my bucket list was seeing Hamilton on Broadway in New York City! It was everything I could have hoped for, and of course I cried about 4 times during the show.

Where Future Watermelon Menus Begin

The NWPB participated in the Center for the Advancement of Foodservice Education (CAFE) Annual Conference in Chicago this June, connecting with culinary educators from colleges and universities across the country. As CAFE founder Mary Peterson often says, "Teachers can't teach what they don't know." By introducing educators to new watermelon applications and culinary techniques, the Board helps ensure future chefs graduate **ready to incorporate watermelon into creative, menu-worthy dishes**.

That message was reinforced during a **panel discussion on industry partnerships featuring Megan McKenna**, where one panelist noted that "what students use in culinary school is what they use in their future kitchens." It was a fitting reminder that engaging educators today helps shape menu innovation for years to come.

Watermelon was featured throughout the conference, giving attendees multiple opportunities to **experience its versatility** across dayparts and applications. At the opening reception, guests enjoyed a refreshing Watermelon Cucumber Cooler alongside a Charred Watermelon Salad featuring pickled watermelon rind. The following morning, watermelon appeared in a vibrant Mexican Fruit Salad served at breakfast, demonstrating its flexibility in both savory and sweet menu offerings.

Beyond the educational sessions, the conference provided valuable opportunities to strengthen relationships with culinary educators who influence curriculum and inspire the next generation of foodservice professionals. By maintaining a strong presence at CAFE, the Board continues to position watermelon as a versatile ingredient while creating opportunities for long term demand across the foodservice industry.



Watermelon Partners with Run Clubs to Champion Hydration Nationwide

Once again this year, NWPB is partnering with run clubs across the country to offer a refreshing post-run treat to participants - fresh-cut watermelon! Each Cool Down local run club will receive **complimentary watermelon** for their members to enjoy after their run, along with educational messaging highlighting watermelon's hydration benefits. Those cities and dates include:

- Minneapolis, MN – Monday, July 20
- Atlanta, GA – Monday, July 20
- Nashville, TN – Tuesday, July 21
- Denver, CO – Tuesday, July 21
- Seattle, WA – Wednesday, July 22
- Chicago, IL – Wednesday, July 22
- Salt Lake City, UT – Wednesday July 22
- New York City, NY – Wednesday, July 22
- Dallas ,TX – Thursday, July 23
- Washington, D.C. – Thursday, July 23
- Austin, TX – Thursday, July 23
- Los Angeles, CA – Saturday, July 25



COOP Mobile Gaming Launch

In June, the Board **launched its first ever immersive media plan with a gamified mobile experience** with partner COOP. The mobile ads use our existing commercial video assets and “gamify” them into playable, engaging ads delivered through top app games including Flapper (Geometry Dash), Runner (Subway Surfers), Matching (Candy Crush), and Catcher (Fruit Ninja) etc. Early results are astounding with a 96% engagement rate and a 77% video completion rate in the first week of activation. The ads are being optimized weekly and will run through August 14.



Advancing Compressed Watermelon



Innovation often begins with a simple question: **How can watermelon solve more challenges for foodservice operators while creating new opportunities for the industry?**

This spring, the National Watermelon Promotion Board completed Phase 1 of its Compressed Watermelon Innovation Project, an initiative designed to evaluate the commercial potential of a value added compressed watermelon product for foodservice. The project explored whether a standardized, ready to use product could reduce operational barriers, expand menu applications, and ultimately create new demand for watermelon.

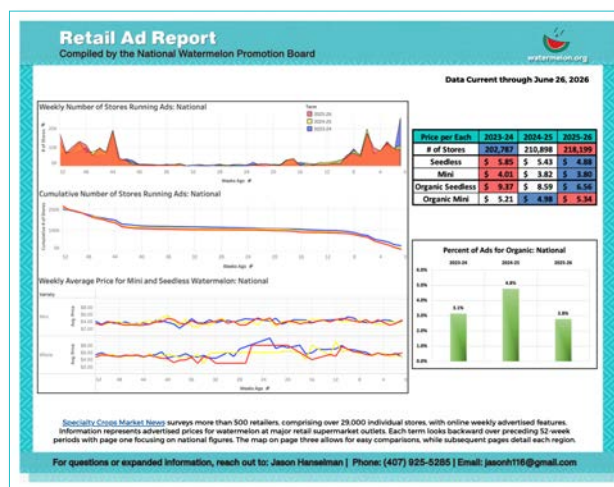
The market analysis combined insights from watermelon industry leaders and foodservice operators representing a wide range of segments, including restaurants, catering, higher education, travel, and noncommercial foodservice. Across interviews and market analysis, a consistent theme emerged: operators are looking for solutions that reduce labor, improve consistency, simplify back of house preparation, and preserve the fresh, refreshing qualities consumers expect from watermelon. The findings also identified a unique market opportunity, with no commercially available compressed watermelon product currently serving the foodservice market.

Beyond validating the opportunity, Phase 1 established a clear roadmap for development. Rather than creating a product simply because it is new, the project defined the characteristics operators value most, including a refrigerated, vacuum sealed, ready to use format that integrates seamlessly into existing foodservice operations and distribution systems.

With Phase 1 complete, the **project is now advancing into product development**, where these findings will help guide formulation, processing, and pilot testing. By building on the opportunity identified in Phase 1, the Board is taking the next step toward developing a practical solution that could expand menu applications, address operator challenges, and create new opportunities for watermelon across foodservice.

Retail Ad Report Offers Weekly Retail Market Updates

Each week, NWPB **provides a look at the retail scene** using the Retail Ad Report found on the [Retail Research](#) page of watermelon.org. The report sources from the National Retail Report produced by USDA-AMS, but with the focus exclusively on watermelon. The source report covers 29,000+ stores across more than 500 retailers, and the rich archive allows for comparisons over time. The Retail Ad Report provides analysis at national and regional levels for key metrics such as number of ads and price per each for mini and seedless watermelon. Much of the report relies on year-over-year comparisons, though you will also find weekly-level changes, as well as a look at what is occurring most recently.



Takeaways from the [most recent report](#) include a lower “on ad” price at retail with seedless averaging \$4.88 over the past 52 weeks compared to \$5.43 for the prior year and \$5.85 two years ago. Minis are following a somewhat similar trend at \$3.80 for the current year versus \$3.82 year ago and \$4.01 two years ago. When looking at ad count, we can see store-ads 7.6% higher than two years ago, while the 218,199 for this current term is around 3.5% higher than prior year. Regionally, we see that the Southeast ran over a quarter of store-ads (59,505) in the current term, while the Southwest, Northeast and Midwest clustered closely between roughly 38,000 to 40,000 ads. South Central is a little lighter around 31,000 and Northwest, which is typically lightest, was around 10,500. This is where price per each has been highest (\$5.93), though most other regions were between \$4.50 and \$5.00. Check the [Retail Research](#) page weekly for the most recent report or reach out to [Jason Hanselman](#) with questions.



2026 Assessment Due Dates

Please note the following **due dates** for 2026:

- Product handled in May, must be postmarked by June 30, and received by July 10, 2026
- Product handled in June, must be postmarked by July 30, and received by August 10, 2026
- Product handled in July, must be postmarked by August 30, and received by September 9, 2026

The full calendar can be found [here](#). [Click here](#) to file your online Handler’s Report. Never used the online Handler’s Report? Check out the step-by-step [Online Handler’s Report User’s Guide](#).

NWPB Participates in IFIC Food & Health Communications Summit

In June, Stephanie Barlow from the NWPB the 2026 IFIC Food & Health Communications Summit in Washington, D.C., joining food, nutrition, health, research, and regulatory leaders from across the food system to **discuss emerging consumer trends and the future of food and health communications**.

The summit featured an exclusive preview of the 2026 IFIC Food & Health Survey, along with discussions on consumer perceptions of food safety, dietary guidance and labeling, GLP-1 medications, ingredient transparency, and the role of processed foods in healthy eating patterns.

As an IFIC member, NWPB values access to the organization's consumer research and insights, which help inform our communications strategy and provide context for evolving consumer attitudes and behaviors. The annual IFIC Food & Health Survey remains a valuable resource as we continue to develop messaging and programs that connect with today's consumers and reinforce watermelon's place in a healthy lifestyle.



Director Nominations Due Dates

Just a quick, friendly reminder to all our nominees! **The deadline for submitting your Nomination Packet is Wednesday, July 15th** (§ 1210.401 District conventions - The Board staff must forward the completed qualification statements...not later than July 15 for appointments to become effective on the following January 1).

Serving on the board is a fantastic opportunity to impact the future of our organization directly. Your leadership and insights are invaluable in guiding our initiatives and ensuring we continue to serve our industry effectively.

Please send in your packet as soon as possible. Your participation is vital to our organization. We understand how busy everyone is. If you've already submitted your packet, thank you for your promptness! We appreciate your commitment.

If you have any questions or need assistance with your forms, don't hesitate to reach out to Andrea Smith in Industry Affairs at asmith@watermelon.org or call (407) 657-0261, ext. 205. We look forward to receiving all nomination packets and appreciate your dedication!



NWA Nook: Watermelon's Voice in Washington

Last month, the National Watermelon Association joined produce industry leaders in Washington, D.C., for IFPA's Washington Conference, where the **watermelon industry delegation** met with policymakers to discuss the future of American agriculture. The conference provided an important opportunity to reinforce the watermelon industry's priorities while continuing conversations on agricultural labor, the Farm Bill, specialty crop research, transportation, trade, and other issues critical to specialty crop producers.

◆ Agricultural Labor Reform Gains Momentum

One of the most significant developments from the conference was the introduction of the **Securing Agriculture Workforce Act of 2026** by House Agriculture Committee Chairman GT Thompson. NWA worked closely with Chairman Thompson's office, The Redding Firm, and coalition partners throughout the development of the proposal and was proud to support the legislation as one of its early industry supporters. While there is still significant work ahead before any bill becomes law, its introduction represents meaningful progress toward one of the watermelon industry's highest priorities.



◆ Taking Watermelon's Priorities to Capitol Hill

Throughout the conference, the watermelon industry delegation met with Members of Congress, congressional staff, federal agencies, and industry leaders to discuss the issues affecting watermelon growers and shippers. The delegation included growers, allied industry members, National Watermelon Association staff and volunteer leaders, as well as National Watermelon Queen Katelyn Lindsay and several state watermelon queens. Conversations focused on agricultural labor, transportation, specialty crop research, trade, and continued progress toward a modern Farm Bill. Every meeting helped strengthen relationships and ensured the watermelon industry remained part of the conversation as federal policy continues to develop.



◆ Watermelon on Display

National Watermelon Queen Katelyn Lindsay joined state watermelon queens during IFPA's annual **Joy of Fresh** event, where they served fresh watermelon to Members of Congress, congressional staff, and conference attendees. Beyond showcasing one of America's favorite summertime fruits, the event creates valuable opportunities for policymakers to connect with the people and products that make up America's specialty crop industry.

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NWA Continued

◆ Advocacy Doesn't End When the Conference Does

Washington Conference is just one part of NWA's year-round advocacy efforts. We continue working with The Redding Firm, coalition partners, and policymakers to advance priorities including agricultural labor reform, transportation, research funding, trade, and a strong Farm Bill for specialty crops. While much of this work happens behind the scenes, every conversation helps build momentum for the watermelon industry.

We appreciate every member of the watermelon industry delegation for investing their time and helping ensure the watermelon industry's voice continues to be heard where important decisions are made. Together, we're helping shape a stronger future for watermelon growers, shippers, and the entire specialty crop industry.



Sponsored Media Segment with Registered Dietitian Karolin Saweres



On June 6, NWPB sponsored a lively 4½-minute segment on Fox 19 in Cincinnati, Ohio, featuring registered dietitian Karolin Saweres, whom NWPB staff connected with at Today's Dietitian Spring Symposium in May. The live recipe demo **highlighted easy, approachable, and visually appealing ways to enjoy watermelon** throughout the summer season, with a focus on hydration, versatility, and balanced eating habits. Karolin shared simple wellness routines, entertaining inspiration, and Mediterranean-style flavor combinations designed to resonate with busy families and health-conscious viewers alike. Featured recipes included watermelon whipped feta, watermelon fries, prosciutto skewers, watermelon salsa, and a refreshing grain salad, all of which received great feedback and looked fantastic on camera.

As an added value, Karolin **extended the reach of the segment by sharing it across her social media channels**, helping amplify NWPB's summer messaging and inspire even more consumers to incorporate watermelon into their seasonal routines. [You can watch the segment here.](#) 



Changemakers Visit NWPB Office

ChangeMakers is a Canadian marketing and communications agency that specializes in strategic brand growth and public relations. As the dedicated Canadian agency partner for the NWPB, ChangeMakers spearheads the MAP (Market Promotion Program) Canada initiative, driving consumer awareness and demand for watermelons across the Canadian market.

The Changemakers agency team recently visited the NWPB office for a collaborative session into the MAP Canada program, where they **reviewed market performance, analyzed evolving consumer trends, and brainstormed innovative promotional ideas**. This strategic alignment, which also included vital discussions and localized Canadian retail market research, successfully strengthened their joint international marketing priorities moving forward.



Individuals with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations and or alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, LEP, etc.) should contact: Juliemar Rosado at jrosado@watermelon.org within three days of event. The National Watermelon Promotion Board is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Happy National Watermelon Month & Happy Independence Day!

Celebrate with some of these staff-favorites – all recipes available on watermelon.org!





May Top Social Posts – TikTok Spotlight

 @watermelonboard Thu 5/7/2026 10:00 am CDT Video Views: 841,508	 @watermelonboard Fri 5/22/2026 9:48 am CDT Video Views: 810,530	 @watermelonboard Mon 5/18/2026 12:09 pm C... Video Views: 243,265
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Watermelon on the Menu

With support from the Board, and for a limited time, Tropical Smoothie Cafes nationwide are serving a **Watermelon Mojito Smoothie** that includes fresh watermelon, mint, strawberries and lime



NWPB Connections



Kinetic12 Noncommercial Collaborate Innovation – Orlando, FL – July 8 – 9

Cool Down Run Club – Various – July 20 – 25

IFPA Foodservice – Monterey, CA – July 22 – 25

The Flavor Experience – Newport Beach, CA – August 2 – 4