



Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD

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Farm to Fork in the Field Inspires Culinarians

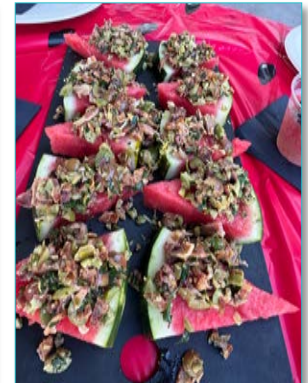
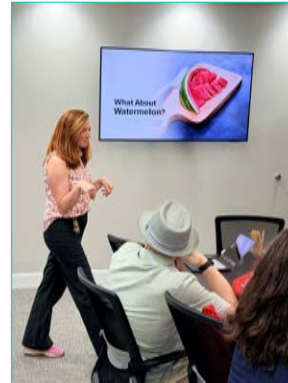
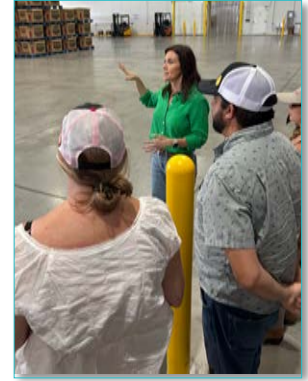
To kick off the month of May, the Board had the pleasure of hosting five foodservice operators and three foodservice media representative in Lake Wales, Florida for its inaugural Field to Fork in the Field Tour, a hands-on experience designed to connect attendees with the people, practices and passion behind watermelon production. Collectively, the participating operators represent more than 1,000 foodservice locations across the country, creating an important opportunity to share watermelon insights and inspire future menu applications.

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Farm to Fork Tour Continued

With harvest season just beginning, attendees had the unique opportunity to experience watermelon at its source. From Watermelon 101 and a farmer-led presentation to a packing shed overview and field harvest walk, the tour offered a firsthand look at the decisions that shape quality, consistency, and supply throughout the season. Discussions throughout the event reinforced how closely foodservice is connected to the field and how decisions made on the farm ultimately impact what shows up in kitchens across the country.



Chef Jason Hernandez and strategic partner Menu Matters **led culinary demonstrations, tastings, and innovation discussions that showcased watermelon as a versatile, menu-worthy ingredient.** Sessions highlighting industry trends, consumer insights, and culinary applications encouraged attendees to think beyond traditional uses and explore new opportunities for watermelon across beverages, appetizers, entrees, and more.



A special thank you to **NWPB President Jill Barton for graciously hosting the group and sharing her knowledge, experience, and passion for the industry throughout the event.**

Experiences like Field to Fork help strengthen the connection between growers and foodservice professionals while creating space for collaboration, education, and innovation. By bringing together operators, media, growers, and industry experts, the Board continues to build awareness of watermelon opportunities and inspire new menu applications that drive demand across foodservice.

Commodity Roundtable Tour

NWPB's Mark Arney and Juliemar Rosado represented watermelon at the The Commodity Roundtable (CR) meeting held May 12-14 in Orlando, FL. Bringing together U.S. agricultural promotion boards, the event brought together CEOs as well as members from the marketing & communications, research and administrative & finance teams. The event began with breakout sessions where **CEOs had strategic discussion and policy updates**, while the other **teams had the opportunity to engage in constructive conversations that included research and marketing strategies**.

The following day, everyone came together for collaboration and learning about how each commodity board's organization, board and programs' work within research, budget and trends changes. The meeting also included a presentation on global consumer trends by Rose Research as well as a presentation on Using AI presented by creative technologist Robin Cowie.



The meetings concluded with Team Watermelon hosting a farm tour and packing shed visit, offering a firsthand look at



the hard work, precision, and dedication that goes into delivering watermelon from field to consumer. Seeing the operation up close reinforced the importance of partnerships, communication and continued investment in agriculture and fresh produce. A **special thank you to NWPB President Jill Barton for the warm hospitality and behind-the-scenes experience!**



Overall, the meeting provided a valuable forum for shared learning, strategic alignment, and planning for the future of U.S. agricultural promotion programs. Other attendee commodities with Watermelon included Eggs, Potatoes, Peanuts, Pecans, Beef and Mangos.



Watermelon Inclusion on Southeast Produce Council Foodservice STEP-UPP Tour

In the second week of May, the National Watermelon Promotion Board was proud to host a watermelon farm tour in Cordele, Georgia, as part of the Southeast Produce Council's STEP-UPP Foodservice program. The experience gave **15 foodservice buyers**, primarily distributors, the opportunity to step into the field, ask questions directly to growers, and gain a deeper understanding of the work behind every shipment across the produce industry. By connecting buyers with the realities of production, harvest timing, quality standards, sustainability efforts, and logistics, the program helps strengthen partnerships across the supply chain. Understanding seasonality, supply considerations, and product handling helps distributors and operators make **more informed purchasing decisions and better utilize watermelon on menus**.



While the crop was still several weeks away from harvest, attendees received a comprehensive look at the journey of watermelon from field to foodservice operation. The tour began at the packing shed with a presentation on watermelon in foodservice, followed by a watermelon flavor pairing tasting that highlighted the fruit's versatility on menus. Participants then toured the packing facility, learning how watermelons are graded, packed, and prepared for shipment during the season. The group concluded the experience in the field, where they observed growing watermelon approximately one month from harvest and gained firsthand insight into crop development and growing conditions.



Thank you to NWPB Ex Officio Lee Wroten for graciously hosting the group and sharing his expertise throughout the day. Experiences like these help build stronger connections between growers and buyers while increasing understanding of the challenges and opportunities throughout the supply chain. We look forward to continuing to support programs that bring the field and the foodservice community closer together.

Watermelon Board at National Restaurant Show

The National Restaurant Association Show is one of the foodservice industry's most **influential annual gatherings, bringing together operators, distributors, manufacturers, media, and culinary leaders from across the country**. As summer menu planning ramps up, the event provides an important opportunity to showcase watermelon innovation, strengthen industry relationships, and inspire new menu applications.

The Board kicked off the Restaurant Show by co-hosting a foodservice media dinner with the Idaho Potato Commission, an opportunity to engage directly with influential foodservice journalists and content creators. The following evening, alumni of the International Foodservice Editorial Council gathered to reconnect and celebrate the relationships and professional connections built through the organization over the years.



Next was the annual NRA Brunch, one of the weekend's most anticipated satellite events, where chefs, operators, foodservice media, and industry leaders gathered for great food, conversation, and networking. The Board also sponsored the Culinary Institute of America Alumni and Friends Reception, where guests enjoyed a Savory Watermelon Bite featuring marinated watermelon, whipped feta, pickled watermelon rind, herb oil, and toasted pistachio, alongside a refreshing watermelon agua fresca. Together, these events provided opportunities to engage culinary leaders and industry influencers while showcasing watermelon through innovative and memorable menu applications.

On the show floor, the Board partnered with Libbey, an American manufacturer of glass tableware, to feature a variety of watermelon-inspired food and beverage concepts. Featured menu items included Watermelon Shrimp Ceviche Crisps, Dirty Watermelon Soda, the Sandia Jungle Bird cocktail and Melon-Hibiscus Agua Fresca. These concepts sparked conversations with operators seeking fresh menu inspiration and creative ways to incorporate watermelon into food and beverage programs.

Collectively, these events **provided opportunities to engage thousands of foodservice operators, chefs, media, and industry influencers** at the start of the summer menu season while demonstrating watermelon's versatility across the menu and the year.

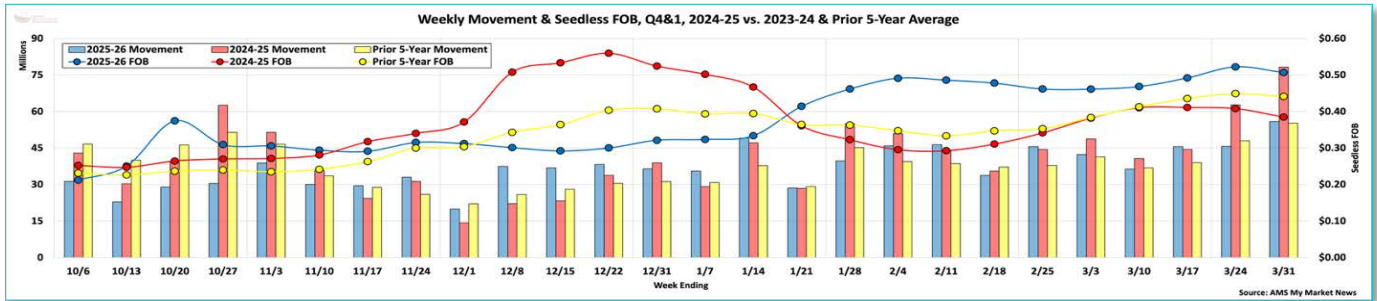


Supplier Database

Join 164 companies in the Supplier Database! This exclusive resource connects growers, shippers, and industry partners with retail and foodservice buyers seeking watermelon. Get listed at watermelon.org/supplierdatabase, email supplierdatabase@watermelon.org, or call 407-657- 0261 to learn more.



2025 Q4 & 2026 Q1 Market Recap



[\(Click here for larger image\)](#)

The My Market News portal hosted by Agricultural Marketing Services (AMS) makes it easy to analyze how supply and pricing this year compares to past years. The following charts **compare the fourth quarter of 2025 and the first quarter of 2026 to the prior year and five-year average for each**. Additionally, we can take a similar look at retail during this time frame using data supplied by Circana.

The blue columns above show weekly movement over the past 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.

Volume in Q4 2025 totaled 414,313,672 pounds, 9.4% lower than the prior five-year average, while Q1 2026 accrued 550,648,663 pounds, which was 6.6% higher than average. Total movement for both quarters came in around 0.9% below average. Moving to seedless FOB averages, we found Q4 2025 equaled \$0.299, 6.5% above average, while Q1 2026 averaged \$0.457, which was 17.5% above average. Combining the quarters shows 2025-26 15.1% above average at \$0.389.

Pounds sold at retail approximated 502 million pounds trailing only 2023-24 of these past four terms and ending up around 6% above average. Whole pounds were 13.4% above average at nearly 260 million pounds, while dollar per each was up 1.1% at \$6.88. Mini pounds were highest of these years up nearly 5% on volume totaling nearly 114 million pounds, while dollar per each was down 1.5% versus average at \$4.86. Lastly, the cut category was down 6.2% on volume with roughly 129 million pounds, and up 23% on dollar per pound of \$3.55.

For more information visit the Supply Chain Research page or reach out to Jason Hanselman to request custom reports.



[\(Click here for larger image\)](#)

NWA Nook: Building Momentum in Washington

As we prepare for IFPA's Washington Conference this month, NWA is continuing its work to ensure the watermelon industry's priorities are heard in Washington, D.C. While members are focused on planting, harvest preparation, and day-to-day operations, NWA is working with policymakers, industry partners, and our representatives at The Redding Firm to advocate for policies that support the long-term success of watermelon growers, shippers, and allied businesses.



◆ Agricultural Labor Remains the Top Priority

Agricultural labor continues to be the most important policy issue facing many watermelon operations. NWA remains actively engaged in discussions surrounding H-2A reform and broader workforce solutions, and we are encouraged by indications that House Agriculture Committee Chairman GT Thompson is preparing to introduce agricultural labor legislation in the near future. We continue to advocate for practical reforms that improve affordability, reduce bureaucracy, and help ensure growers have access to the workforce they need.

◆ Advocating for Specialty Crop Priorities

Beyond labor, NWA is engaged on issues including Farm Bill development, research funding, mechanization and automation programs, trade, transportation, and economic assistance for specialty crop producers. Recent federal discussions have included increased support for specialty crop research and mechanization, as well as additional economic assistance for specialty crop producers—areas that align closely with NWA's priorities for helping growers remain competitive in an increasingly challenging environment.

◆ Transportation and Regulatory Challenges

Transportation remains an area of concern for many members. NWA has been working with industry allies and The Redding Firm to better understand challenges related to driver availability, CDL enforcement, and transportation regulations that impact agricultural operations. These conversations are ongoing, and we will continue to advocate for practical solutions where opportunities arise.

◆ Join Us in Washington

If you'll be attending IFPA's Washington Conference, we'd love to connect. Some of the most effective advocacy comes directly from growers and industry leaders sharing their experiences with policymakers. If you're planning to attend, please let us know by contacting NWA staff at george@nwawatermelon.com so we can help coordinate efforts and ensure the watermelon industry's voice is well represented.

Advocacy is most effective when it is grounded in real-world experience. Every member conversation helps us tell the story of the watermelon industry and reinforces the importance of practical policies that support American agriculture.

NWPB Launches 18th Annual Retail Merchandising Contest with Tajín® Partnership and Call for Entries

The National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB) is proud to announce **the launch of the 18th Annual Retail Merchandising Contest**, inviting retailers from across the country to showcase their creativity and merchandising excellence for a chance to win top prizes, including a \$5,000 grand prize.

This year's contest **introduces a partnership with Tajín®**, encouraging retailers to incorporate the iconic chili-lime seasoning into their watermelon displays. To celebrate this collaboration, the first 100 qualifying entries that feature Tajín® in their merchandising will receive a \$20 Amazon gift card. In addition, the first 25 entrants will receive a \$20 digital gift card just for participating.

Retailers are encouraged to highlight watermelon's key attributes including health, happiness, value, and versatility, through innovative in-store and digital merchandising efforts. Eligible displays may feature any type of watermelon, including whole, fresh-cut, mini, yellow, red, or any mixed thereof.

Judging will be based on several criteria, including:

- Category visibility
- Visual merchandising creativity
- Effective use of materials
- Communication of nutritional benefits
- Inclusion of recipes or selection education
- Integration across print, online, and digital platforms

Prize Structure:

- 1st Place: \$5,000
- 2nd Place: \$2,500
- 3rd Place: \$1,000
- Honorable Mentions (3): \$500 each

The contest officially **begins June 8, 2026, and runs through August 31, 2026**. Merchandising efforts must take place a minimum of one week throughout the months of June, July or August. For more information, including Official Rules and an Online Entry Form, visit <https://www.watermelon.org/audiences/retailers/retail-contest/>. Entries, including entry forms and photos, can also be submitted via email to retail@watermelon.org. All submissions must be received by midnight EST on September 14, 2026.



Watermelon Board Connects with Nutrition Professionals at Today's Dietitian Spring Symposium



In May, Stephanie Barlow and Summer Walker representing the Watermelon Board brought a fresh slice of inspiration to the Today's Dietitian Spring Symposium in Orlando, Florida, connecting with registered dietitians from across the country through education, engagement and, of course, delicious watermelon samples.

The Watermelon Board proudly sponsored part of an invite-only dietitian-hosted Sunday evening pizza party, helping kick off the event with a fun and memorable watermelon twist. During expo hours on Monday and Tuesday, attendees stopped by the booth to sample two creative recipes that showcased both flavor and versatility: **Sweet Watermelon Pizza and Shredded Watermelon Rind Slaw**. The recipes **highlighted watermelon's ability to shine in both sweet, savory and surprising simple recipes while also reinforcing "Use the Whole Watermelon" sustainability messaging**.

In addition to samples, the booth featured educational handouts, recipe inspiration, promotional giveaways, stickers and cheerful watermelon-themed items designed to spread happiness and encourage dietitians to keep watermelon top of mind for clients and consumers. Conversations throughout the event focused on watermelon's hydration benefits, versatility, nutrition and easy ways to add more watermelon to everyday meal planning and grocery lists.

This annual Spring Symposium provides a peak season kick off in timing and an incredibly valuable opportunity to connect directly with nutrition professionals, share new resources and continue building relationships with RDs who help educate and inspire healthy eating habits nationwide.



Mind Your Melon Event



Stephanie Barlow from the National Watermelon Promotion Board attended the 2nd Annual “Think Outside the Barn” Benefit hosted by Mind Your Melon, focused on farmer mental health, wellbeing and strengthening the agricultural community through conversation and connection. The evening brought together growers, industry leaders and agricultural partners from across the country to discuss efforts supporting resilience and wellbeing in agriculture.

Watermelon industry attendees included representatives from the Illiana Watermelon Association, NWA and other partners, providing an opportunity to connect and engage in important conversations impacting agriculture beyond the field. **Congratulations to Kelly and Aaron Tyner** of the Illiana Watermelon Association, who were recognized with the Founder’s Visionary Award for their commitment to the agricultural community.



West Coast Produce Expo

NWPB once again exhibited at the 13th annual West Coast Produce Expo, held in Palm Desert, CA from May 28th – May 29th. Representing the board were Juliemar Rosado and retail account manager Katie Manetti. The two-day event featured a robust lineup of **networking opportunities, educational sessions, and a bustling expo floor**.

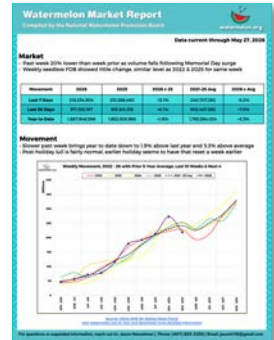


Adding extra sweetness to the event, NWPB offered fresh watermelon samplings of the popular **watermelon limeade** and **watermelon salad with feta and mint**, highlighting the fruit’s versatility. The expo had a significant increase in attendance with a terrific attendee mix of retail and foodservice professionals.

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

Watermelon Market Report Update

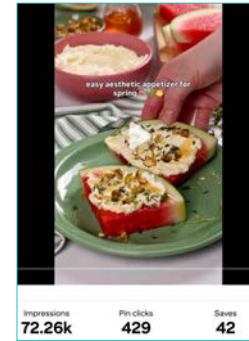
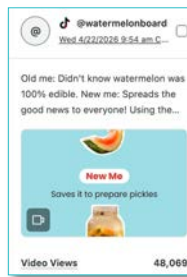
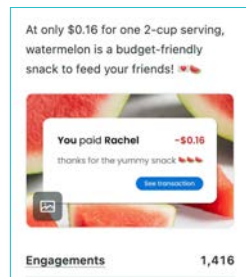
You may have noticed a few changes to the Watermelon Market Report over the past year as we worked through an issue with the source data. We're happy to share that the issue has now been fully resolved, including updates and corrections to the 2025 figures (now available on our site: <https://www.watermelon.org/audiences/industry/research/supply-chain-research/>)



Even better, the Watermelon Market Report will be returning to its earlier streamlined format, making it **easier than ever to quickly catch up on the latest supply trends and market insights.**



Top Social Posts



Watermelon on the Menu

On April 1 Lazy Dog Restaurants, which has more than 50 locations nationwide, started offering the **Watermelon Margarita** on the Spring Menu which includes Lunazul Tequila, fresh watermelon, triple sec, agave sweet + sour, and a Tajín Chamoy rim. It is available during Happy Hour and as a shareable pitcher at brunch or Happy Hour.



NWPB Connections

IFIC Communications Summit – Washington, D.C. – June 10 – 12

Center for Advancement of Foodservice Educators – Chicago, IL – June 23 – 24

