



On The Horizon

MARKET UPDATE

Tomatoes: Both South Florida and Palmetto/Ruskin are into Spring production, providing good supply of tomatoes to the East. Crops are beginning to size up on both romas and rounds and quality reports are good. With optimal growing conditions and more acreage coming into production, supply and quality should be excellent on Florida fruit through the month of May.

With multiple areas in production, Mexico has plenty of roma tomatoes available. Although Culiacan will begin to decline, there are new crops coming from Baja, Obregone, and Hermosillo which should supply solid volumes and quality, barring any major weather disturbances. As for rounds, there is ample volume available to meet demand, but size is dropping off. Larger fruit will likely be a bit light until new areas come to the table. Grapes are also crossing in solid numbers, with mostly good quality.

Bell Peppers: More Florida pepper acreage is coming into production and yields are finally on the upswing. Quality is improving and should continue to do so as farms finish up older fields that were affected by weather. The West offers pepper supply from two areas- Mexico and the California desert. Although there are some growers in Mexico with new crops, much of the fruit is hanging on from Winter plantings and is showing quality concerns such as thin walls and bruising. The California desert is off to a good start and should be ramping up volume over the next few weeks. All sizes are available.

Green Beans: Beans are plentiful in the East and should continue in good supply for the next several weeks. In the West, production is

beginning to transition from Mexico to the California desert. Guasave and Culiacan will continue for another 2-3 weeks, although quality and markets may cause some growers to close up shop early. Desert growers should be into full volume in another 7-10 days, which should keep supply and quality steady during the transition.

Cucumbers: Both Florida and Mexico have adequate cucumbers to meet market demands. Overall, quality is nice with the exception of product coming from older crops in Mexico.

Summer Squash: Multiple Florida growing areas are shipping yellow and zucchini. Newer crops have good quality but there are some concerns from older fields/growing areas. The bulk of Mexico's squash is coming from Hermosillo, where there is more than ample volume of nice-quality fruit available.

Eggplant: Florida farms continue to struggle with yields on eggplant, creating a snug supply situation in the East. Western supply is transitioning from Mainland Mexico, where fruit quality is only fair, to the California desert. Volume should pick up out of the desert in 7-10 days.

Chili Peppers: Sonora continues to see good numbers from their Spring production on most chili pepper varieties. Tomatillos are the challenge this week, with light volume and less-than-perfect quality.

Hard Squash: Sonora has been crossing steady numbers of hard squash this week, although butternut seems to be the short suite. The California desert is the next area to start, but it still several weeks out.

TRANSPORTATION FACTS

* The National Diesel Average raised ever-so-slightly (\$.01) and now stands at \$2.13 per gallon.

* The average price for a gallon of diesel fuel is \$.63 lower than the same time last year.

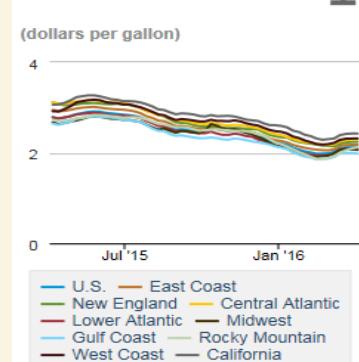
* Diesel prices increased slightly in all areas of the country except New England, where the price remained stable at \$2.37.

* California reports the highest-priced diesel fuel at \$2.44. The fuel bargain in the nation can be found in the Gulf Coast region where the price remains below the \$2.00 mark at \$1.99 per gallon.

* The WTI Crude Oil Price increased significantly (16.4%) this week, moving from \$35.89 to \$41.76 per barrel.

* Trucks are available in good supply throughout the country this week, with a few spots reporting a slight surplus.

On-Highway Diesel Fuel Prices



Source: Energy Information Administration

ON THE HORIZON CONTENTS

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AN APPLE A DAY

Restaurant Guests Seek Help with Healthy Choices

By: RH Editors, www.restaurant-hospitality.com, April 11, 2016

With more Americans viewing "diet" as a four-letter word and gravitating toward well-rounded eating habits, many are looking to restaurants for some guidance.

Recent research from market intelligence firm Mintel suggests that 25 percent of Americans looking for nutritional claims on menus more in 2015 than the year before. About (48 percent) of consumers think finding healthy items at restaurants is too difficult, and 68 percent say more restaurants should call out healthy claims on menus.

What's more, more than a third (36 percent) of those in Mintel's study said they are opting to cook healthy at home more often rather than taking their chances at a restaurant. Another likely factor in that shift away from dining out: the perception shared by 64 percent that many healthy restaurant dishes are too pricey.

One way restaurants can satisfy consumers looking to indulge is by offering healthy substitution options. Nearly half (46 percent) of restaurant goers are looking for more healthful side options, and 27 percent are already replacing unhealthy sides with healthier options compared to last year. Another one-third (35 percent) of consumers are interested in more dishes that heavily feature vegetables.

In addition to side alternatives, Mintel foodservice analyst Caleb Bryant says restaurants should showcase healthful preparation methods, such as grilled instead of fried foods. "This provides options for whatever mood diners are in, whether they want to eat healthy, are looking to indulge, or possibly do both."

Parents are especially motivated to seek out healthier menu choices, the study found. Two in five (39 percent) are ordering healthier food for their children more this year compared to last, and two thirds (66 percent) of parents said they would pay more for healthy foods when dining out (versus 41 percent of non-parents). Parents are much more likely than others (62 percent versus 36 percent) to agree that a menu offering healthy options is the most important factor when choosing a restaurant.

But indulgence remains a motivation for restaurant visits, too.

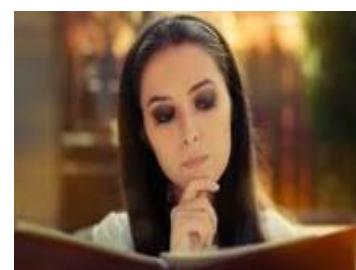
"While healthy dining is very important to families, restaurants need to remember that dining out is also considered a treat by many and an opportunity to indulge, even for children. Like adults, restaurants should look to cater to children who want nutritious items and those looking to treat themselves," Bryant says.



Restaurant guests are also seeking better-for-you alternatives to sugary drinks. Consumers in the study said they would like to see more all-natural beverages (38 percent), more iced tea options (31 percent) and more flavored waters (25 percent).

Mintel's findings mirror the most recent Dietary Guidelines for Americans, which recommend a variety of nutrient-dense foods and a shift to healthier food and beverage choices overall.

They also reflect the National Restaurant Association's 2016 culinary forecast, in which "natural ingredients/minimally processed food" and "healthful kids' meals" ranked among the top 10 trends.





SPOTLIGHT ON LIPMAN Lipman R & D- Estero, Florida

Ever wonder how Lipman comes up with great new tomato varieties like the Crimson Queen and Vintage Ripe? Our Research & Development team, headed by Dr. Mark Barineau, can stake claim to these delicious accomplishments!

Dr. Barineau built this program from the ground-up, beginning as a one-man show in a conference room in 2004. His leadership and Lipman's financial dedication to building a better tomato has resulted in the R&D department's significant growth. The team now includes twelve highly-qualified scientists and staff members who are housed in their own facilities in Estero, FL and California.

The ultimate goal of Lipman's R&D is to create tomato varieties that are better than the existing ones available. This all starts with communication from our sales and administrative teams, who are on top of what consumers want, or from our farm managers and employees in the fields, who handle and assess our products every day.

To develop plants that not only bear nutrient-rich and flavorful fruit, but also produce a high-yielding crop, Lipman has invested millions in these efforts. To develop better and more sustainable hybrids, our scientists begin at the beginning – with the seed. The process, which typically takes about seven years, goes from seed to lab to field and back again over several growing cycles, repeating itself until stable parental lines are produced. Hybrids are tested across the country and carefully analyzed for desired traits. In Naples, 100 million seedlings are produced each year – while on thousands of acres of Lipman farms across the country, 30 of our proprietary hybrids are grown simultaneously. The work is painstaking, but it has paid off: Lipman's proprietary varieties have created a superior, better tasting product, significantly increasing yields while measurably decreasing inputs.

This Lipman team actively participates in community activities that our Immokalee-based home office coordinates. But, they also have their own yearly weight loss competition during the November/December holiday season. For four years, this friendly competition has helped the team to focus on a healthy lifestyle during a season when fattening foods are often highlighted.

PRODUCE BAROMETER

ITEM	QUALITY	PRICING
Bell Pepper	Good	Lower
Cucumber	Good	Steady
Eggplant	Fair to Good	Steady
Green Beans	Good	Lower
Lettuce-Iceberg	Fair	Higher
Jalapenos	Good	Lower
Onions	Good	Steady
Tomatoes	Good	Lower



APRIL CALENDAR

All Month

Fresh Florida Tomato Month
Celebrate Diversity Month

April 18

National Stress Awareness Day

April 22

Earth Day

April 23

National Picnic Day

Immokalee, FL Weather

Thu Apr 14	Fri Apr 15	Sat Apr 16	Sun Apr 17	Mon Apr 18	Tue Apr 19
86°F 66°F	86°F 68°F	84°F 66°F	84°F 64°F	84°F 66°F	84°F 68°F
S 7 MPH Precip 20% Averages 85°F/59°F	SSE 12 MPH Precip 20% Averages 85°F/59°F	ENE 11 MPH Precip 40% Averages 86°F/59°F	ENE 13 MPH Precip 10% Averages 86°F/59°F	ENE 14 MPH Precip 10% Averages 86°F/59°F	E 11 MPH Averages 86°F/59°F

NEWS IN THE GROCERY TRADE

Avoid Mistakes When Connecting Digitally with Shoppers

By: John Karolefski, www.progressivegrocer.com, April 11, 2016

There is a generational gap going on regarding consumers' use of all things digital, and grocers need to pay attention. According to MarketingSherpa, a marketing research firm, half of smartphone users who are 18- to 35-years-old research products, compared to about a third of those 55 years old and up. We have all read other statistics indicating the gap between generations in their use of digital technology.

Millennials are the most important grocery shoppers nowadays because they are starting families. Because they are the digital generation, grocers need to engage them digitally in the pre-shop, shop and post-shop modes. The key is determining the best way to do so, while also serving other shopper segments.

Many – but not all – grocers are reaching out with the obvious tactics: email blasts, social media, digital circulars, apps, and the like. While these are somewhat effective, I wonder if they are good enough. While researching this topic recently, I asked several experts what mistakes do grocers make when reaching out digitally to shoppers. What they told me was surprising, but made sense. Here are several of the mistakes they listed, including some of my own:

Emphasizing Discounts: Overemphasizing incentives and discounts and underemphasizing the value they provide to customers leads to several problems. It hurts margins, and encourages price-sensitive shoppers to switch stores where they can find lower prices or bigger discounts.

Maintaining Organizational Silos: Offering a seamless shopping experience is challenging if the company maintains different organizational silos, such as one for digital strategy, another for in-store strategy, and so forth. They need to communicate and coordinate.

Being Annoying: Receiving too many email blasts tests the patience of shoppers. A recent Forrester study commissioned by SAP Hybris revealed that 40 percent of consumers believe most promotions don't deliver anything of interest, and 44 percent say they receive too many offers and promotions.

Failing at Omnichannel: Grocers not set up properly for omnichannel retailing can't consolidate shopper data into one customer profile. Because consumers shop online and in-store, their preferences and experiences may vary. Understanding their full behavior is critical to connecting with them.

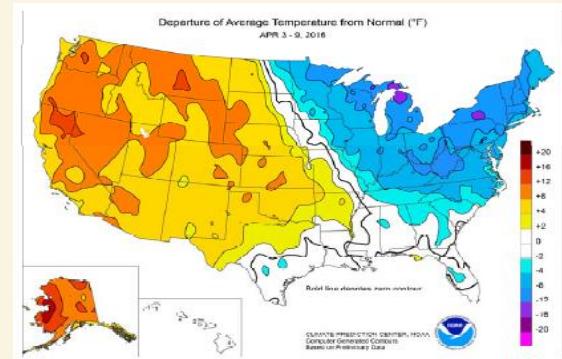
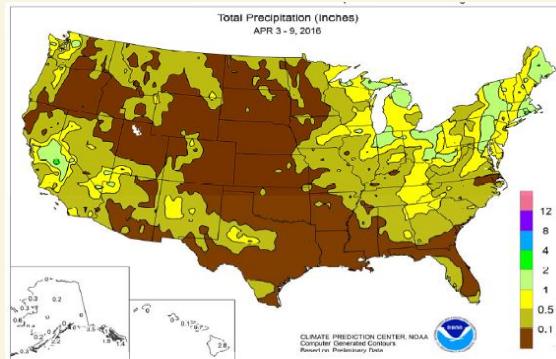
Lacking Personalization: Because generic content is not personalized, it is neither appropriate nor effective enough. For example, pet owners receiving coupons for dog food if they own cats, not dogs.

Neglecting Social Media: Content on social media sites needs to be updated frequently to remain fresh and maintain the interest of shoppers. Not responding to posts by shoppers is interpreted as ignoring them.

Daniel Burstein, director of content for MarketingSherpa, put the topic of digital engagement into the proper context for purveyors of food. "Grocers can use their digital channels to tell the story of the food they are selling and show the store's value proposition," he said. "Food was the original community builder. Farming helped us settle into villages, and we have always gathered around meals. By using digital channels to tell a story, grocers can build that community, which will then manifest itself through positive word of mouth on social media, through email, and in real conversations as well. While a digital circular and digital coupons have their place, other industries have learned that these digital storytelling and community-building opportunities are the real power of these relatively new digital channels."

NATIONAL WEATHER SPOTLIGHT

Weekly Precipitation and Temperature Deviation



RESTAURANT INDUSTRY NEWS

How to Put “Hospitality” Back into the Restaurant Industry

By: Roger Beaudoin, www.restaurant-hospitality.com, April 12, 2016

I was recently talking with a chef friend who gets it. He's owned his own fine dining restaurants and one of his secrets to success was treating every guest as if they were the most important guest, even when his restaurant was full. I had the same philosophy for all the years I owned and operated restaurants and as we were chatting, we suddenly wondered why so many restaurants in the hospitality business are missing the hospitality.

True hospitality is in many cases a lost art. Generations ago, gas stations would wash your windshield and check your oil and restaurants would thrive by providing exemplary service. You would be greeted at the door by name, the host would take your coat, seat you at your favorite table and the owner or maitre'd would make sure that every aspect of your dining experience was unforgettable. This approach began with one singular mission: Treat every customer like they were your only customer and train each and every staff member genuinely to care about making each experience everything it could and should be.

If you are an owner, manager or front-of-house staffer, I am certain that whenever you dine out in a restaurant you see and experience what I'm talking about. The type of concept makes little difference. More often than not, the service provided will have missed many of the important details. You may enjoy the food and atmosphere, but your overall experience may have been negatively overshadowed by the service. This happens to me all the time.

I believe the answer lies in the basics of hiring and what we do with new staff once we've hired them. Restaurants are very much transient employers. People come and go and, unfortunately, service is negatively affected by turnover. Unless you have figured out that regular and consistent training is the absolute foundation of your restaurant and your first priority, your guest experience will be inconsistent at best.

The key in hiring is to look for approach, attitude and true desire to serve over prior experience. If these core values are present and you take the time to develop and train your fledgling staff, your customers will notice and reward your restaurant with their business. Once you believe in and practice effective consistent training and recognize and reward your standouts, your restaurant will have a lasting powerful advantage over your competitors. This is a simple concept, yet too often overlooked with all the other important details in running restaurants.

As we continued our chat, the chef and I recalled early mentors in this business who imparted the basics of hospitality and the true meaning of that word. I learned long ago that hospitality is present when something happens "for" us and is absent when something happens "to" us. It's an important distinction.

Why not start with a fresh perspective and look at your restaurant from your guest's point of view? Make it a habit to dine out at least once a week in your restaurant. Experience everything your customer experiences, from the greeting at the front door, to the interaction of each front-of-house team member who serves you. And yes, I know that staff may treat you differently as the owner or manager, but you will see, hear and learn just as much from watching your staff interact with other guests nearby as from your own experience.

Don't let hospitality be a lost art in your restaurant. Develop a new game plan that begins with your staff understanding and practicing the nuances of what service really means and what your guest seeks. Train consistently, overdeliver on each guest's expectations and take pride in sustaining the magic.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR & PACK YOUR BAGS

May 4, 2016

New England Produce Council Breakfast
New England Produce Center & Boston
Market Terminal
Chelsea, MA
www.newenglandproduceCouncil.com

October 23-25, 2016

Multi-Unit Foodservice Operators Conference
Hyatt Regency at Reunion Tower
Dallas, TX
www.mufso.com

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Contact: joanna.hazel@lipmanproduce.com