

On The Horizon

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Market Update

Tomatoes: With Ruskin closing out the season, Homestead's heavy rains, and Immokalee still a few weeks away from any substantial production, tomato availability is very slim in Florida this week. The limited amount of fruit in the Eastern market is showing effects of previous weather with less- than- perfect quality. Look for the Immokalee area to increase in volume very slowly as they move toward mid- January when new crops mature and production is expected to improve.

Western markets are also reporting a tough tomato week. This is normally the time that Mexico kicks things into gear, but cold and rainy weather patterns have slowed tomato production to a trickle. Most farms report that crops are 10-14 days behind schedule, which shifts full production of rounds and romas out toward the middle to end of January. Grape tomatoes have also been affected by weather and remain short as well.

Bell Peppers: South Florida continues with steady production of peppers. There are still reports of bruising, but quality is improving as growers drop out of older acreage. The West also has an adequate supply of bells, although availability is skewed toward smaller sizes. Western Mainland Mexico's cooler temperatures have slowed production but fortunately the plants and fruit were not harmed by the recent near-freeze.

Green Beans: Although crop damage is still being assessed in northern Mexico, there is a little more

product crossing this week due to new farms coming online in the southern region. In the East, Florida expects to see availability improve in a few weeks, when the lake area gets up and running with new crops.

Cucumbers: Florida's cucumber crops continue to wind down as offshore volume begins to ramp up. Quality has been nice on the Honduran imports so far. In Mexico, production has improved slightly with all sizing available. Most cucumber crops are in more southern growing regions and dodged the brunt of the cold front that passed through.

Summer Squash: Yellow squash is especially short in both the East and West with scuffing, scarring and quality problems on the fruit that's shipping. Zucchini has fared weather conditions a little better and offers more availability and nicer quality. Florida expects to see new yellow squash fields in 10-14 days which could help the East out. Mexico is beginning to see new blocks start in southern growing areas which will result in better availability in the short term. However, northern crops sustained significant damage from the cold and will continue to stress the market.

Chili Peppers: Most chili pepper production is open field in Mexico and those crops were hit hardest by the recent cold weather. Although full damage reports aren't in, we could see some volatile markets over the next few weeks. The Mexican national market is very active this week, which has reduced crossings, particularly on jalapenos, serranos, and tomatillos.



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Transportation Facts

*The National Diesel Average continues to fall and dropped another \$.05 this week. The price now sits at \$2.24 per gallon.

*The average price for a gallon of diesel fuel is \$.98 lower than the same time last year.

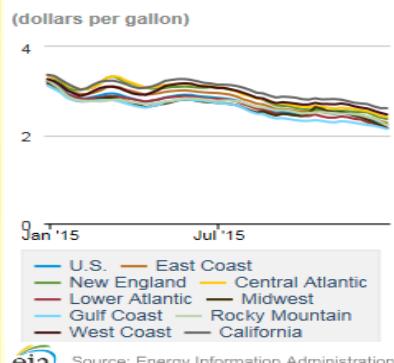
*Diesel prices dropped in all areas of the country with the largest price decrease coming from the West Coast (-\$.08).

*As usual, California reported the highest-priced diesel fuel of the week at \$2.61. The fuel bargain in the nation can be found in the Gulf Coast area at \$2.14.

*The WTI Crude Oil Price moved upward for the first time in several weeks, rising 9.0% from \$34.74 to \$37.87 per barrel.

*As normal for holiday weeks, there are slight transportation shortages reported throughout the country.

On-Highway Diesel Fuel Prices





An Apple a Day HOW TO HACK YOUR NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION FOR SUCCESS

By: Bonnie Taub-Dix, www.usnews.com, December 23, 2015

I've never liked the words "objective" or "goal." Perhaps my distaste for such terms can be traced back to elementary school, where the teacher would write the word "objective" on the blackboard in giant letters. Then, we had to talk about why we were doing what we were going to do that day. *Why didn't we just do the activity and then talk about it?* I wondered. It seemed like such a waste of time.

I feel the same way when it comes to setting a goal weight. All too often I hear clients say, "I need to lose 20 pounds by my wedding" or "I'd better knock off 50 pounds before my high school reunion." But focusing on a weight goal without appreciating every step of the process can leave you with a goal that's attainable but not sustainable. It's the ups and downs during the process itself that teaches you how to get to a place where you feel proud of your achievement. This enlightening journey often gets short shrift – especially when you set an unrealistic weight goal or an unreasonable time frame to achieve it.

When work toward a goal (say, to lose a few pounds), you may start off feeling motivated, optimistic and prepared for any obstacles that may get in the way. Yet, even with the best of intentions and a strong desire to accomplish your goal, once a barrier (like a long-awaited vacation) presents itself, willpower slides and you resolve to go right back to your goal after the vacation is over. Until the next vacation, that is.

For all too many of us, the same process recurs when it comes to setting a New Year's resolution. Yes, I realize that many of these *intentions* are made on New Year's Eve accompanied by a

side of champagne or other adult beverages. Still, people make lots of promises this time of year and often abandoned them by the time Valentine's Day chocolates start to appear. So, if you are a chronic New Year's resolution setter and a before-the-winter-is-over resolution breaker, these tips from four nutrition pros are just for you:

1. Don't make promises you can't keep.

"Don't embark on a complete diet overhaul. Those overreaching goals seldom have a happy ending! Instead, choose one or two things about your diet or lifestyle that you'd like to change for the better, and make those changes first. Everything can be done in time, but why stress yourself out trying to change everything at once? If you take the time to do it right, it's more likely that you'll follow through on making your goal happen."

– Abby Langer, registered dietitian nutritionist

2. Set goals within your control.

"Instead of saying, 'I resolve to lose 10 pounds by February,' say, 'I resolve to eat foods that fuel me and make me feel good.' If you were to eat balanced meals with lean proteins, healthy fats and plenty of vegetables and *not* lose 10 pounds by February, you might be upset and give up. But if you eat those meals, feel great and just happen to lose some weight, that feeling of accomplishment might make you more likely to continue to eat in that fashion. Goals like healthy eating tend to better continue healthy habits than goals like a specific pound weight loss within a specific timeframe because the controllable goals don't tend to disappoint."

– Amy Gorin, New York City-area dietitian and contributing blogger for WeightWatchers.com

3. Be realistic – and seek support.

"Don't make a resolution to run a marathon when you have never even run a mile. Perhaps start small by working your way up from running on a treadmill to running a 5K, and eventually build your way up to the marathon. Unrealistic New Year's resolutions leave people feeling frustrated and discouraged, which can prevent them from setting future goals. It's also helpful to create a New Year's resolution in which you can seek a team or licensed professional for support. For instance, if your resolution is to lose 10 pounds, seek the guidance of a registered dietitian or join a support group. The support person or people will help by providing motivation and keeping you accountable to your goals."

– Kristen Smith, registered dietitian nutritionist and founder of 360FamilyNutrition

4. Keep your eye on the prize.

"Display your specific goal in a place where you will see it regularly. Stick a Post-it on the bathroom mirror or make it your phone or laptop wallpaper so that you're constantly reminded of what you want to achieve. We are so easily distracted each day that it's easy to forget the promises we make to ourselves. You can also keep your eye on the prize by choosing a reward for meeting your goal ahead of time. If you lose the weight, meet your vegetable goal, work out five times a week or finally break your addiction to social media, reward yourself with a spa day, fun vacation or a new pair of shoes."

– Marisa Moore, registered dietitian nutritionist, owner of Marisa Moore Nutrition and contributor to the U.S. News Eat+Run blog

**Vintage
Ripes
are
available
year
round!**



AUTHENTIC TOMATO FLAVOR



If you haven't tasted our
Vintage Ripes ... you haven't
tasted an authentic tomato!

A proven customer favorite, this variety is field-grown and
vine-ripened for the one-of-a-kind flavor available only from
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the star of a meal, you'll notice the vibrant red color ...
but you'll never forget the juicy taste.

FLAVOR IS THE DIFFERENCE.

PRODUCE BAROMETER

| ITEM | QUALITY | PRICING |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|
| Bell Pepper | Good | Steady |
| Cucumber | Fair-Good | Steady |
| Eggplant | Fair-Good | Higher |
| Green Beans | Good | Steady |
| Lettuce-Iceberg | Fair | Higher |
| Jalapenos | Good | Higher |
| Onions | Good | Steady |
| Potatoes | Good | Steady |
| Squash | Fair-Good | Higher |
| Tomatoes | Fair-Good | Steady |



January Calendar

All Month

National Soup Month

First Week

Diet Resolution Week

January 1st

National Bloody Mary Day

January 4th

National Spaghetti Day

Estero, FL Weather

| Thu Dec 31 | Fri Jan 1 | Sat Jan 2 | Sun Jan 3 | Mon Jan 4 | Tue Jan 5 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| FOG | SUN | SUN | Rain | Rain | SUN |
| 84°F | 84°F | 77°F | 75°F | 72°F | 75°F |
| 68°F | 68°F | 64°F | 61°F | 57°F | 64°F |
| SE 8 MPH | WNW 6 MPH | NE 8 MPH | N 9 MPH | NNE 11 MPH | ENE 9 MPH |
| Averages 74°F/52°F | Averages 74°F/52°F | Averages 74°F/52°F | Averages 74°F/52°F | Averages 74°F/52°F | Averages 74°F/52°F |



News in the Grocery Trade

6 WAYS FOOD RETAILERS CAN USE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE DATA

By: Dale Roberts, www.progressivegrocer.com , December 30, 2015

Consumers make an average of 83 trips to the supermarket per year, according to *Consumer Reports*. With 52 percent of consumers reporting to PricewaterhouseCoopers that they return to a grocery store based on the in-store experience, it's important that retailers pay attention to what customers are saying, to build customer loyalty and retain business over time. Understanding what your customers are saying about your store, your employees and your products can help not only to optimize elements of your customer experience, but also to mitigate any risk of losing your customers to a competitor or even facing legal action. Layering this type of customer feedback on top of the point-of-sale and CRM data you already have offers a holistic understanding of who your customer is, and how she's experiencing the in-store environment. Here are six ways customer experience data can help shed light on what is, and what isn't, working for your customers.

1) Identify the Struggling Departments

With so many departments in a store, it's unlikely that they're all performing at the same high level necessary for success, regardless of how much effort you may believe is being invested. Looking at customer experience data can point your management team to specific areas of the grocery store that may have poor quality or poor customer service, and then focus in on what changes are necessary for improvement. By keeping track of store-wide performance, both at the departmental and the regional level, you can ensure that no one area is dragging down the overall experience.

2) Demonstrate the real value in promotions

Purchasing data will let your team know what promotions and coupons are popular with your shopper base. By looking into customer feedback data, it's possible to know not only if customers appreciate certain promotions, but *why* those promotions are valued. For instance, are your shoppers buying a certain product because that specific brand is a favorite, and perhaps your purchasing team can investigate other items from the same brand?

3) Show product availability versus inventory

Inventory is a great way to understand what items you have on hand, but product availability is a different ballgame. By listening to customers' favorite brands or specific products, not only can you stock the items that are more likely to sell out, but you can adjust delivery times for when those shoppers are more likely to purchase those items.

4) Motivate and engage staff members

In collecting customer experience data, shoppers can provide valuable insights into which departments have staff members who are going above and beyond. In the case of one U.K.-based grocery store retailer, weekly employee recognition reports are sent to the director of customer services and to other team members, spotlighting those who are delivering excellent customer service. The initiative has led to increased employee engagement and has fostered a customer-first attitude among team members.

5) Help avoid legal trouble – early

With the number of customers visiting all parts of your store, it's likely that they will notice areas of concern before you will. These observations, coming to you in the form of customer feedback, can be monitored and organized so that certain types of feedback are addressed immediately. For instance, in one leading U.K.-based retailer, shopper comments that mention taking legal action or talk about finding mislabeled products or expired produce are fast-routed directly to a specialized service center where specific representatives reach out to the customers to remedy the situation. By having this sort of system in place, potential legal issues are handled swiftly & effectively.

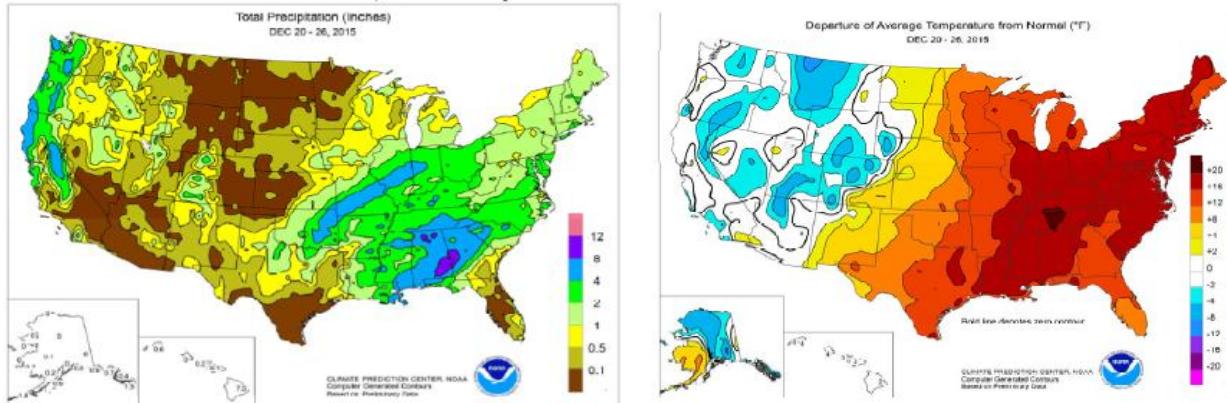
6) Responding to your community

If your store is part of a larger chain, it can be easy to standardize across every location in the hopes of delivering a streamlined customer experience. However, each community is different. One group of customers may look for their products to be organic, pesticide-free and non-GMO, while another community may have a larger presence of a certain ethnic group looking for more off-the-beaten-track products. By listening to your customers online, you can be sure to stock the types of products they're looking for, thereby building customer loyalty.

By truly understanding the voice of your customer, gathered from insights shared across call center notes, surveys, emails, online chat transcripts, social media posts, and more, you can capture a comprehensive understanding of what your shoppers are looking for. With this information, you can not only stock the right items, but respond to concerns and rave reviews, ultimately earning the appreciation of your customers and positioning the business for success.

NATIONAL WEATHER SPOTLIGHT

Weekly Precipitation and Temperature Deviation





Restaurant Industry News

NRA SEES VEGETABLES IN STARRING ROLE

By: Tom Burfield, www.thepacker.com, December 23, 2015

Produce-centric menus and restaurant concepts — with vegetables becoming the star of the plate — are among the foodservice trends to watch during the coming year, said Annika Stensson, director of research communications for the Washington, D.C.-based National Restaurant Association.

The boost in vegetable placements might be a cost management strategy, since some key protein costs have risen, as well as a push toward nutritious menu items, she said, but it's also about "celebrating produce in and of itself — everything from staple items like carrots and beets, to less familiar items like watermelon radishes, fiddleheads and kohlrabi."

She sees a trend toward a wider variety of house-made and artisan pickles in many varieties beyond cucumbers. Stensson also expects to see restaurants selling raw high-quality ingredients in their stores in the near future, including fresh produce items that chefs use in restaurant dishes. Other growing menu trends in 2016 include African flavors, authentic ethnic cuisine and condiments, she said.

Kale salads and gluten-free cuisine will be slowing as trends, though they're both likely to move toward becoming menu staples rather than disappear as fads, she said.

Meanwhile, local sourcing likely will gain even more momentum, and environmental sustainability will be a "strong culinary theme that reflects other areas of consumers' lives, as well as chefs' attitudes," Stensson said.

The restaurant industry continued to post modest growth in 2015, along with the gradual improvement of the U.S. economy.

Industry sales topped \$709 billion and grew at a 3.8% rate — or 1.5% when adjusted for inflation — she said, marking the sixth year of positive sales growth after the Great Recession.

Checking out individual foodservice segments, the trend continues with limited-service sales growth outpacing table service, she said.

"Sub-segments that also emphasize off-premise traffic and flexible dayparts are the fastest growing when it comes to sales," Stensson said.

"Next year, we'll see continued moderate growth throughout the industry, with many of the same long-term trends in effect when it comes to sales growth," she said.

"But a range of challenges also face restaurant operators in the year ahead, she said, "including government in the form of increasing regulatory burdens and complex issues with unclear guidance."

Recruitment and retention also is making its way back as a top challenge, as restaurants hire at a fast pace, and the overall unemployment rates trend downward, she said.

Mark Your Calendar & Pack Your Bags

February 2nd-4th, 2016

Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention
Hershey Lodge and Convention Center
Hershey, PA



www.mafvc.com

March 29th-31st, 2016

Restaurant Franchising & Innovation Summit
The Highland Dallas
Dallas, TX

www.franchisinginnovation.com

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