



On The Horizon

MARKET UPDATE

Tomatoes: Florida tomato volumes are lighter this week as crops show the results of bloom drop from previous cold weather. Lighter production and yields will continue into the next 7-10 days while farms work through the most affected plantings. Quality is mostly good, with great quality on crown picks and lesser quality and size on 2nd and later harvests. Although supply is lighter, demand has also been on the shy side as well, keeping availability adequate and market conditions in check.

Western Mexico/Culiacan tomato growers are still harvesting strong supplies of rounds and romas. Good numbers should continue into March, providing plenty of supply for at least the next few weeks. Current sizing is on the large end of the spectrum with smaller fruit a little tight. Grape tomatoes are also readily available from multiple areas in Mexico.

Bell Peppers: With both coasts of South Florida rolling, bell peppers continue to be available in good supply. A few of the newer fields on the West side seem to have been affected by the previous cold weather but there's still plenty of product available in all sizes. In the West, Mexico's production remains strong and quality is still excellent.

Cucumbers: Honduras is still bringing in a steady supply of product, but will be lightening up over the next few weeks and they wind down the season. South Florida cucumbers are on tap to start around March 15th, but could begin to show up earlier as warm weather pushes the crops forward. Western markets are seeing less Mexican fruit cross this week but quality is still strong.

Summer Squash: All South Florida areas are going with yellow and zucchini squash but there's definitely not an oversupply available. Plant City will be the next area on the horizon and they should begin in a few weeks. Quality is good on

zucchini, but a bit challenged on yellow due to scarring concerns. Mexico's current harvest areas are past their peaks in production and we anticipate a dip in supply and decline in quality over the next 7-10 days. The transition from Sinaloa to Hermosillo could be a bit bumpy as cooler weather is pushing off Hermosillo's start date.

Green Beans: With warm weather pushing crops to maturity, multiple areas in Florida have strong supplies of green beans available. Quality is very nice. Western markets also have a steady supply of product coming from Mexico and expect that to continue for at least another 7-10 days.

Eggplant: Eggplant supply is still light in Florida. Older fields are wearing down with light yields and less-than-perfect quality. New fields have been slow to come, but should begin in another 7-10 days, easing the supply situation in the East. Overall quality on the product available is just okay. Mexico's production should remain fairly steady for the 10-14 days. Quality continues to be strong. However, expect some struggles with 18-count fruit as weather is cooler in the growing areas.

Hard Squash: As we wait on the Spring crop out of Mexico, we are starting to see quality issues from the current Winter harvest on all varieties. Growers are having to grade product diligently, which has reduced the amount of retail-appropriate fruit available for market. The middle to end of March time frame could present a sourcing challenge as there will likely be a gap in the transition between crops.

Chili Peppers: Chili peppers continue to cross in strong numbers from Mexico this week. Overall quality is good as is the heat at time of consumption. South Florida chili pepper production remains status quo- light numbers of select varieties.

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TRANSPORTATION FACTS

*The National Diesel Average declined for the second week in a row (down \$.036), moving from \$3.06 to \$3.36 per gallon.

* The average price for a gallon of diesel fuel is \$.46 higher than the same time last year.

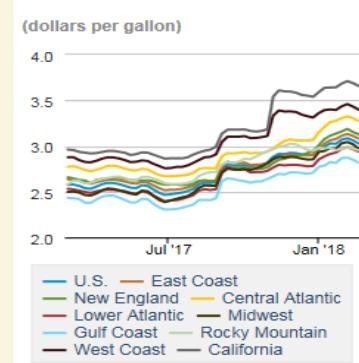
* All ten reporting zones enjoyed price declines with the most significant change coming from the Midwest (down \$.05 per gallon).

*California maintains its role as the high price leader for diesel fuel at \$3.66 while the Gulf Coast region continues to offer the best bargain at \$2.82 per gallon.

*The WTI Crude Oil worked its way up again this week, moving from \$60.60 to \$61.68 per barrel (up 1.8%).

* Although rates continue to be elevated, truck supply is adequate in all tomato and vegetable shipping areas of the country this week.

On-Highway Diesel Fuel Prices



Source: Energy Information Administration

KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE CONSUMER

9 Ways Millennials are Changing the Way We Eat

By: Cara Rosenbloom, www.washingtonpost.com, February 21, 2018

If you've noticed a positive change in food trends over the last 10 years, thank a millennial. Loosely defined as people born from the early 1980s until about 2004, millennials are the largest U.S. age demographic, and as such they are key tastemakers. Their food preferences are helping determine what you'll find in grocery stores and restaurants across the country.

Millennials are in college, starting new jobs, getting married or having kids. Right now, there are more millennials in the workforce than any other age bracket, and their consumer choices matter. Here's how this generation is influencing the way we eat. (These are generalizations based on statistics, and not necessarily true for every millennial you know.)

They want the truth from food manufacturers. Big food producers are starting to listen to consumer demands for transparency about ingredients and sources, and this request is largely driven by millennials who want to know how their food is made. We all benefit from seeing more informative food labels on grocery store products.

They love customization. Millennials don't want the same sad burger that everyone else is eating. They want to custom-design the flavor and personalize their meal. And why not? They are paying for the food; it may as well be exactly what they want. If you notice more quick-service restaurants offering customizable options that you love, thank a millennial for that.

They want easy. According to the International Food Information Council's 2017 Food and Health Survey, 55 percent of millennials say convenience is a top driver when buying food, while baby boomers say taste matters more. Millennials are the drivers behind meal kits, grocery delivery services, food trucks, online ordering and the growth of heat-and-eat options at grocery stores.

They are redefining "healthy." If you ask a millennial what a "healthy" restaurant food is, they won't say low-fat or high-fiber. According to

statistics, they may tell you it's food that's natural, organic, locally sourced or sustainable. That's why many menus now list the farm where your lettuce was grown or offer organic options.

They want better baby food. When my daughter was born 11 years ago, feeding a baby was all about powdered rice cereal and jars of mashed green beans. Have you strolled down the baby food aisle lately? You'll find gourmet blends in convenient pouches — organic chicken risotto and portabella mushrooms, anyone? Becoming a parent changes food habits more than any other milestone, and millennials tend to focus on food quality once they realize they are responsible for feeding a little person. While some of the products are outlandish, the variety and quality has certainly improved because of demand.

They value the planet. While older shoppers still read labels for information about calories and fat grams, millennials are more interested in how the food was sourced and grown, and how that affects their carbon footprint. Sustainability is a priority for them when buying food at grocery stores or restaurants. Millennials' awareness of environmental issues has influenced food manufacturers to institute better earth-friendly practices.

They love to snack. Because some millennials graze instead of eating large meals, snack options have exploded, and there are many healthy offerings, such as chia seed pudding, roasted chickpeas and popped sorghum. Millennials have also pushed food companies to meet their need for convenience by demanding food packages that are resealable, easy to open and portable.

They love the keto diet. According to IFIC, 47 percent of millennials say animal protein is healthy, whereas just 26 percent of older cohorts say this. And millennials are more likely than older cohorts to say saturated fat (found in keto-friendly coconut oil, cream and butter) is healthy. Whether you love

or loathe the high-fat keto diet, millennial interest is driving researchers to take a closer look at it, so we will have some evidence-based answers about its efficacy soon.

They will try anything. Millennials are described as open-minded and curious. They like trying new flavors, love ethnic cuisine and won't shy away from vegetarian and vegan options. As menu choices expand and you try new things, know that's driven by millennials.

While there are many positive changes in food and nutrition because of millennials, there is one troublesome statistic to note. According to IFIC, about 40 percent of millennials say that friends and family are a top source of their nutrition information (only 21 percent of boomers give that answer — they trust doctors and dietitians more).

There's no way to know how trustworthy someone's sister's nutrition information is. Plus, millennials rely heavily on websites, bloggers and social media fitness professionals for health information. This can spread nutrition myths (like their love of organic food), and can be harmful for future generations, including their very well-fed babies.



Registered dietitian Cara Rosenbloom is president of Words to Eat By, a nutrition communications company specializing in writing, nutrition education and recipe development. She is the co-author of "Nourish: Whole Food Recipes Featuring Seeds, Nuts and Beans."

Veggie of the Week- Okra

Maturity Indices

Okra pods are immature fruits and are harvested when they are very rapidly growing. Harvest typically occurs 3 to 7 days after flowering. Okra should be harvested when the fruit is bright green, the pod is fleshy and seeds are small. After that period, the pod becomes pithy and tough, and the green color and mucilage content decrease.

Quality Indices

Okra pods should be tender and not fibrous, and have a color typical of the cultivar (generally bright green). The pods should be well formed and straight, have a fresh appearance and not show signs of dehydration. Grade is U.S. no. 1. Pods are packed based on length with Fancy, Choice and Jumbo designations for size categories. Okra should be free of defects such as leaves, stems, broken pods, insect damage, and mechanical injury. The tender pods are easily damaged during harvest, especially on the ridges and this leads to unsightly brown and black discoloration. Quality losses that occur during marketing are often associated with mechanical damage, water loss, chilling injury, and decay.

Optimum Temperature

7-10°C (45-50°F) Very good quality can be maintained up to 7 to 10 days at these temperatures. If stored at higher temperatures, the pods lose quality due to dehydration, yellowing and decay. When stored at lower than recommended temperatures, chilling injury will be induced (see physiological disorders). Chilling symptoms include surface discoloration, pitting and decay. Okra can be successfully hydrocooled or forced-air cooled.



Cantwell, M. and Suslow T., 2001. Okra: Recommendations for Maintaining Postharvest Quality. http://postharvest.ucdavis.edu/Commodity_Resources/Fact_Sheets/Datastores/Vegetables_English/?uid=&ds=799

PRODUCE BAROMETER

ITEM	QUALITY	PRICING
Bell Pepper	Good	Steady
Cucumber	Good	Steady
Eggplant	Varied	Steady
Green Beans	Good	Steady
Jalapenos	Good	Steady
Onions	Good	Steady
Squash	Varied	Steady
Tomatoes	Good	Steady



MARCH CALENDAR

March-All Month

National Nutrition Month

March 2nd

Employee Appreciation Day

National Salesperson Day

March 3rd

Simplify Your Life Day

March 8th

International Working Women's Day

Estero, FL Weather

Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
Feb 23	Feb 24	Feb 25	Feb 26	Feb 27
84°F	84°F	84°F	83°F	84°F
65°F	65°F	68°F	67°F	66°F
ENE 10 MPH	E 9 MPH	ESE 9 MPH	SE 9 MPH	NE 7 MPH
Precip 20%	Precip 20%	Precip 30%	Precip 30%	Precip 30%

RESTAURANT INDUSTRY NEWS

How to Prepare for the Quick Service Restaurant of the Future

By: Joe Mach, www.qsrmagazine.com, February 2018

The 21st century restaurant and quick-service restaurant environment is a jungle, and just when merchants think they've hacked their way through it, it gets more complicated. With regulatory advancements, technological progress, generational development, and the growing eCommerce industry which is expected to surpass \$1.9 trillion by 2018, it is important for merchants to turn these challenges into opportunities and cater to the evolving needs of the connected consumer. To survive in today's competitive industry and accommodate consumers' ever-changing preferences and behaviors, traditional tactics must change.

Restaurants and quick-serves need to unify their brand and have an omnichannel strategy.

Forty two percent of consumers say the ability to order online would make them choose one restaurant over another. It is important for merchants to tear down the silos between their online and physical locations. While visiting stores and restaurants, consumers increasingly have their smartphones at the ready to aid their purchasing decisions—whether to compare menu items, or to find deals and locate products as they walk the aisles. Connecting both channels can provide them with access to the advanced consumer data and analytics needed for better targeting, consumer insights and personalization across all customer touchpoints.

In today's environment, for brands to succeed, they need an omnichannel strategy that is consistent across digital signage to mobile to online and is in sync with their experience at the restaurant, to engage with consumers. However, creating a consistent and seamless experience is easier said than done, considering the complexity and ever-changing nature of technology, apps and regulation—not to mention the limited bandwidth of IT resources.

Fortunately, payment technology offers a solution for merchants to overcome these obstacles. Recent innovations in this space have catapulted POS technology far beyond merely "payment acceptance." For example, one of the country's top 10 quick-service and fast-casual restaurants wanted to further expedite the ordering process for customers. They have successfully implemented a system that integrates online and instore experiences by implementing an easy and convenient way for their customers to order online and pick up at the store. With the capability to engage with consumers through kiosks, mobile, and web, they are on track to surpass 1 billion transactions by the end of 2017.

The introduction of new payment methods is constant.

It's important for merchants to stay nimble and adapt to new technologies, such as mobile payment applications, as they emerge. Apple Pay is reporting more than one million new users each week. Popular cloud-based wallets such as WeChat Pay and Alipay are breaking down borders and disrupting the payments ecosystem. User adoption will continue to increase and payment providers and businesses need to prepare to accept a growing number of alternative payments.

Quick-serves especially need to think outside the checkout.

A major complaint from modern diners is that checkout lines take too long. Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE), 3G/4G and WiFi connectivity combined with mobile or portable POS (mPOS) devices allow merchants to extend the POS beyond the counter. These technologies help reduce long checkout lines creating a faster, more convenient experience for diners. Additionally mobile pay solutions offer secure pay-at-the-table solutions leading to a quicker turn on tables and increased tipping due to the shorter wait times. Dependable, fast and secure kiosk ordering is also proving invaluable in many of the larger quick-service chains. These solutions expedite ordering while lowering overhead and are expected to continue growing over the coming years.

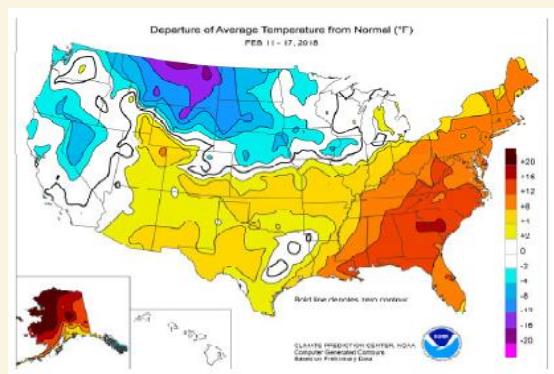
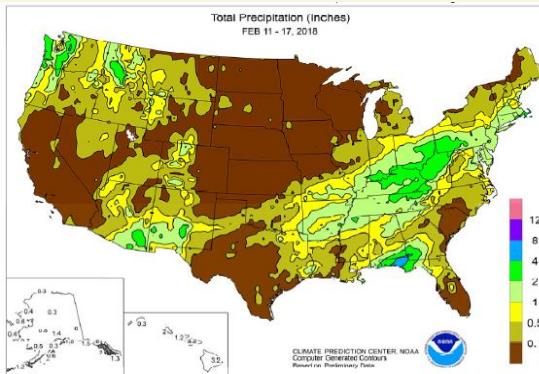
Security needs to be a priority.

Given that there is unprecedented growth in the digital payments industry, with more alternate payment options available to consumers today, security will become even more necessary and will need to evolve. All merchants—regardless of size—are vulnerable to payment system attacks, and customers are concerned about the security of their information when making payments. Merchants want to know that their devices and systems are as secure and future-proof as possible.

To summarize, payment technologies have evolved, payment devices no longer just accept payments, they are now powerful business solution tools that enable merchants to create innovative and future-ready experiences for the connected consumer of today. Businesses that continue to evolve, stand to win customers and tap new revenue opportunities.

NATIONAL WEATHER SPOTLIGHT

Weekly Precipitation and Temperature Deviation



NEWS IN THE GROCERY TRADE

10-Minute Merchandiser: Keep 'Em Coming Back

By: Armand Lobato, www.producertailer.com, February 14, 2018

I think about repeat sales, especially in so many walks of life, such as when I get my hair cut. My neighborhood barber shop (Louie's) is always there for me and countless others, to trim and tidy up what nature grows. I could get my regular haircut at any of a dozen places around town. Many are chain businesses, charge a bit less, or send coupons. What sets my independent-run barber shop apart? They have a great reputation and more.

My barber pays a lot of attention to details that I think matter to his customers. He and his small crew make it a point to interact with the customers. They ask about the family, banter back and forth in good-natured teasing.

The television is tuned into sports, and they cater to the younger ones with treats for sitting still, support local sports teams with posted schedules, and have a pop machine on site that charges only 50 cents a can. And even though they charge a bit more than the norm for haircuts, they usually have a waiting line. Do they know how to keep their customers coming back, or what?

Fresh produce sales depend on repeat business too. I suppose the barber reference could be tagged as what kind of culture a business presents. If so, I'm all for cultivating a positive and enriching culture. So much of what we do as produce professionals may seem on the surface that we're simply displaying an array of fruits and vegetables with the hope that full, inviting displays and marketing fresh produce at competitive prices is enough. And perhaps in many cases, it is.

However, I'm also of the opinion that the above-average produce department is a lot like Louie's humble barber shop: a place where people drive a bit farther to do business, who are willing to pay a bit more. They expect and receive a higher level of quality. They're welcomed with a warm greeting, and are attended to a bit closer. They get service superior to "the guy down the street" and feel like they've been appreciated that much more.

I suspect the average produce department can't cater exactly the same as Louie's. After all, the business model is different. But it sure seems like there are some lessons to be learned in this informal compare-and-contrast exercise.

It starts at the top. An effective produce manager will be the example, interacting with customers on the sales floor; showing a sincere interest in their questions; helping sample, select and direct the shoppers in full view of his or her employees. That in itself can cultivate a good beginning.

Armand Lobato works for the Idaho Potato Commission. His 40 years' experience in the produce business span a range of foodservice and retail positions. E-mail him at lobatoarmand@gmail.com.



**MARK YOUR CALENDAR
PACK YOUR BAGS!**

March 1-3, 2018
Southeast Produce Council's
Southern Exposure
Tampa Convention Center
Tampa, FL
www.southernexposure.seproducecouncil.com
Come see Lipman at Booth 535!

May 19-22, 2018
National Restaurant Association Show 2018
McCormick Place
Chicago, IL
www.show.restaurant.org



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