

# On The Horizon

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## Market Update

**Tomatoes:** Although Virginia has begun harvesting the Fall crop of round tomatoes, volume remains light in the East. Local deals have slowed down due to a cold snap and North Florida is a little slow to start with volume. Romas and grapes are following suit with rounds. South Carolina expects to start with Fall grape tomatoes by the end of the month.

Northern California farms expect to run through October with fruit, although crops are beginning to size down. Baja is transitioning on rounds and romas with light volume, smaller sizing, and quality concerns. However, they've started Fall grape tomato crops and expect nicer fruit as they get deeper into the fields. Eastern Mexico's tomatoes round out the mix in the West with light volume. We look for overall supply to increase in mid-October, when Baja hits its stride.

**Bell Peppers:** Bell pepper availability has been affected by cooler weather patterns in the East, but there is still ample product to meet market demand. California growers have also seen a decrease in volume, but theirs was due to extreme heat. Stronger harvests are coming out of Salinas, although Stockton, Fresno and Oxnard are in production also.

**Green Beans:** The West continues to struggle with green bean availability. Several California areas are in

production, but volume and quality have been inconsistent. The California desert is on tap to start in mid-October, which should bring relief in time for holiday orders. In the East, production has been steady out of Tennessee, Michigan and Virginia.

**Cucumbers:** As Michigan and New Jersey wind down for the year, the East is pulling cucs from North Carolina and Georgia. Quality and volume have been nice on these Fall crops. There are a few more cucumbers available from Mexico this week, with more on the way in the next 7-10 days as growers ramp up Fall crops.

**Eggplant:** Eggplant has solid availability in both Eastern and Western markets this week.

**Summer Squash:** Yellow and zucchini squashes are also available in good supply throughout the country. Most quality reports are good, although there are scuffing concerns on yellow in the West.

**Chili Peppers:** Local chili pepper deals in the East are still shipping, although some varieties and growers are dropping out for the season. Baja has increased volume this week on all but Anaheims. Quality and sizing have been nice. California's local chili deals have experienced some inconsistencies due to heat.

**Hard Squash:** Hard squash availability is solid throughout the country. Growers are looking forward to Fall pulls.

## Transportation Facts

\*The National Diesel Average dipped almost \$.02 this week and now stands at \$2.52 per gallon,

\*The average price for a gallon of diesel fuel is \$1.28 lower than the same time last year.

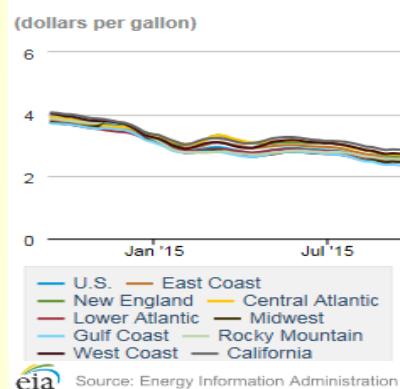
\*Fuel prices dropped in all areas of the country this week.

\*As usual, California reported the highest-priced diesel fuel of the week at \$2.86. The cheapest fuel in the nation is in the Gulf Coast area at \$2.36.

\*The WTI Crude Oil Price fell 2.9% this week, moving from \$45.94 to \$44.59 per barrel.

\*Transportation availability is solid throughout the country, with a slight surplus at Mexican crossing points.

### On-Highway Diesel Fuel Prices



Source: Energy Information Administration

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## An Apple a Day

### PILOT PROGRAM HELPS LOW-INCOME PRESCHOOLERS LEARN TO LIKE VEGGIES

[www.foxnews.com](http://www.foxnews.com), September 11, 2015

In a pilot study, the Harvest for Healthy Kids programs helped preschoolers in Head Start centers be willing to try and to like foods like butternut squash, turnips and asparagus. "We know that children develop their food preferences based on early experiences with foods, so it is important to introduce healthy foods in early years," said lead author Betty T. Izumi of Portland State University in Oregon.

"There's a general myth that kids don't like vegetables," but that's not necessarily true, Izumi told Reuters Health by phone.

Between fall of 2012 and spring of 2013, four Head Start centers in Portland, Oregon, implemented the Harvest for Healthy Kids program.

The "target" foods included carrot, butternut squash, sweet potato, cabbage, turnip, rutabaga, berries, beet, and asparagus, all prepared with simple recipes designed to highlight, not mask, their flavor. The researchers chose local, seasonal foods, as they would be more affordable and would taste best, Izumi said.

Two centers used a low-intervention form, which only included food service changes wherein the target foods were served twice per week as the fruit or vegetable component of meals. The other two centers used a high-intervention form, with

food service changes as well as nutrition education, with monthly activity kits designed to improve food knowledge through cooking activities, read-aloud book discussions and mealtime discussions.

Teachers at these centers completed a four-hour hands-on training session before the intervention began and then a two-hour booster session. Before and after the program, trained researchers assessed 226 participating children, who averaged about five years old, by offering them small samples of each target food.

In the low-intervention group, willingness to try the foods increased after the program for four of the nine target foods: cabbage, rutabaga, turnip and beet. In the high-intervention group, willingness to try increased for every food. In this group, 55 percent of kids were willing to try rutabaga before the program and 84 percent were willing to try it after the program.

Among those who tried the foods, the number who said they liked it also increased for carrot, cabbage and berries in the low-intervention group and for carrot, rutabaga and berries in the high-intervention group, the authors reported in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*.

"It makes perfect sense that the schools that got high intervention which included nutrition education had better

results," said Abbie Nelson, the director of Vermont Food Education Every Day (VT FEED), a farm-to-school program connecting schools to local farms in the state. Nelson was not part of the new study.

"It's not just about throwing a rutabaga stick at a kid and saying, try this," she told Reuters Health by phone. "It's more about familiarity, what does rutabaga look like, smell like, feel like."

One of the key parts of teacher training involved role modeling. Even if the teachers themselves did not like the foods, they were directed to try it and find something interesting about the food to share with the kids, Izumi said. "That could be, 'this is really crunchy, why don't you take a bite,'" she said. "It's really important not to fake it."

"Parents influence children's food preferences more than anybody else," she said. "Even if children eat foods in preschool, after graduation, we need to continue to provide children with vegetables beyond that period."

It can be hard for low-income families to buy and prepare fresh vegetables, but persistence is key, Izumi said. "If you have a picky eater, then you continue introducing the foods and serving them but in different ways, try roasting them," she said. "It's important not to hide vegetables."



## GETTING TO KNOW YOUR VEGGIES

### Interesting Facts About Butternut Squash!

#### What is butternut squash?

Butternut squash is a member of the gourd family which also includes courgettes and pumpkins. This vegetable is delicious and nutritious with a sweet, nutty taste.

#### Why should I eat butternut squash?

Butternut squash is low in salt, fat and contains few calories. It is a great source of a complex carbohydrate providing a slower more sustainable release of energy. It provides significant amounts of potassium, which is important for bone health, and vitamin B6, which is essential for the proper functioning of both the nervous and immune systems. The folate content in this vegetable significantly adds to its heart-healthy reputation and helps guard against brain and spinal-cord-related birth defects. Butternut squash is also rich in phytonutrients and antioxidants making it even more valuable nutritionally.

**What season?** Butternut squash is in season domestically from July/August to November/December, so it is classified as an autumn vegetable.

#### Fun facts

- It originated from South America and has been eaten by the Mexicans as long ago as 5000BC.
- Australians actually call the butternut squash a butternut pumpkin.
- Butternut squash is one of the longest-keeping vegetables, lasting over three months when stored properly.
- Butternut squash and pumpkins are very similar; however a pumpkin is classified as a fruit, whereas butternut squash is classified as a vegetable.
- Easily found in supermarkets today, this winter squash variety is fairly new to consumers. It wasn't introduced commercially until 1944.
- Butternut squash can be used as a substitute in any recipe that calls for pumpkin.
- Butternut squash are cousins to the melon and cucumber.
- Don't forget the seeds! The seeds in most Winter squash are much like those of pumpkins. They are delicious roasted with a little salt and organic butter, coconut oil or olive oil.

#### PRODUCE BAROMETER

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



#### September Calendar

##### All Month

No Kid Hungry Month

**3<sup>rd</sup> Week**

National Farm & Ranch Safety Week

**September 22<sup>nd</sup>**

American Business Women's Day

**September 24<sup>th</sup>**

National Teach Ag Day

#### Exmore, VA Weather

Thu Sep 17	Fri Sep 18	Sat Sep 19	Sun Sep 20	Mon Sep 21	Tue Sep 22
82°F	82°F	82°F	79°F	77°F	77°F
64°F	68°F	68°F	68°F	66°F	64°F
SSE 5 MPH	SE 6 MPH	SSE 8 MPH	NNE 5 MPH	ENE 12 MPH	ENE 12 MPH
Averages	Averages	Averages	Averages	Averages	Averages
80°F/62°F	79°F/61°F	79°F/61°F	79°F/61°F	79°F/60°F	78°F/60°F



## Restaurant Industry News

### HOW MUCH ARE YOUR BEST CUSTOMERS WORTH?

By: Winston Lord, [www.restaurant-hospitality.com](http://www.restaurant-hospitality.com), September 9, 2015

Every restaurant owner knows that your most loyal guests are your bread and butter. It costs far less to get their visit than new diners, and many times they become a brand ambassador, recommending your concept to friends. Just how significant is this group? Venga, a CRM that integrates point-of-sale and OpenTable data, tried to place a value on the loyal customer. Here's what they found.

#### 1. They may look small...

Venga found that just a small portion of your guests represent a large chunk of your revenue: in fact, the top 5 percent of diners bring in 20 percent of a typical restaurant's revenue. It's worth your while to break down this group to find out more about their habits and preferences. If you have access to your guest data, try seeing what menu items they order to determine what dishes are bringing guests back.

#### 2. ...but they come in large parties.

Of that top 5 percent, 40 percent belong to large parties. A large portion of your top spenders are part of large or private parties. Make sure to market your event space for corporate meetings and parties. Promote your venue as a celebratory location to win birthdays and other lifetime milestones.

#### 3. Their friends are an untapped resource.

Over half of the top 5 percent are repeat diners. Aside from increasing their frequency or check average, increasing cover size is a great way to bring in more business. Plus, it's an easier way to win over a new fan. Run a "dine with a friend" campaign and offer a paella for four or a prix fixe meal with two appetizers and four entrees.

#### 4. They have specific preferences.

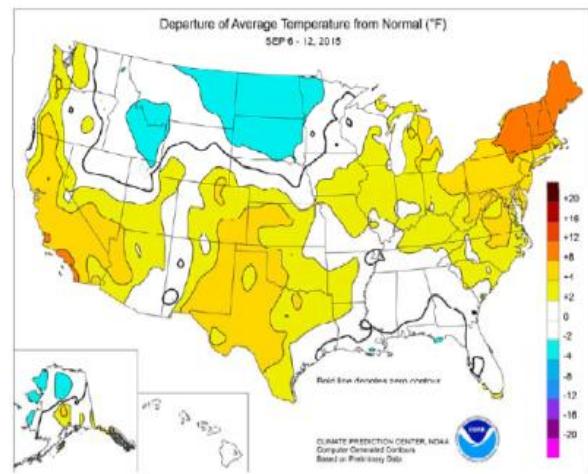
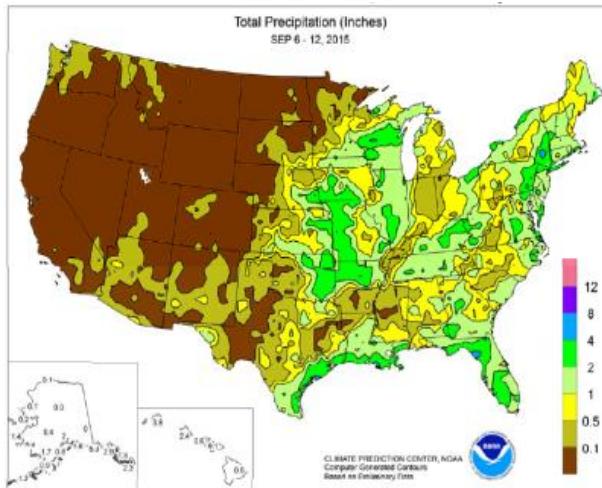
40 percent of top guests have no notes. You're missing a huge opportunity to wow your guests by not tracking their likes and dislikes. By knowing someone's favorite wine, the sommelier can make more tailored wine recommendations or comp a glass of their favorite Pinot Noir. These personal touches are what cement these guests as your loyal followers.

#### 5. They want to hear from you.

15 percent of guests book another reservation after receiving a followup. Marketers these days are hypersensitive to guest inboxes—but this group actually wants to communicate. By sending a simple "thank you for visiting" or "we miss you" message, you're sure to get these guests back into your restaurant.

## NATIONAL WEATHER SPOTLIGHT

### Weekly Precipitation and Temperature Deviation





## Keep Your Eye on the Consumer SLOW COOKERS ARE HOT AGAIN: NPD GROUP

[www.progressivegrocer.com](http://www.progressivegrocer.com), September 15, 2015

Slow cookers are on the fast track.

Backed by more than four decades of staying power, increasing interest in freshly prepared meals has made them the hot new appliance, says The NPD Group, a leading global information company.

Consumers are either dusting off the slow cooker in their pantry -- since 81 percent of homes already own the appliance -- or buying new ones. In the 12 months ending June 2015, 12.6 million slow cookers were sold and dollar sales reached \$334.1 million, up 4 percent from same period a year ago, according to NPD's Consumer Tracking Service.

Consumers' dual interest in freshly prepared foods and convenience is a key reason for the increasing use of slow cookers. In 1985, about 9 percent of households used a slow cooker in a typical two-week period. But that figure has now climbed to about 18 percent, or twice as many as 30 years ago, finds NPD, which forecasts continued growth for the consumption of fresh meals and snacks -- as well as convenient food preparation -- over the next several years.

The stage is in turn set splendidly for the increasing use of slow cookers, according to NPD's The Future of Eating.

"Consumers continue to demonstrate their interest in home-cooked meals, their willingness to pay for convenience in creating them, and their propensity to pay more for a premium product," said Lora Morsovillo, president of NPD Group's Home division. "More slow cookers have sold each year for the past three years, and the consumer spend on them has consistently grown at an even faster pace, indicating some consumer trade-up. Growth has slowed a bit this year, but that is to be expected after last year's significant bump, especially for a category that has been around for generations."

"Since our forecasts expect consumers to continue using slow cookers more often, marketers should let consumers know how their products help spice up or flavor dishes as consumers reach for appliances such as the slow cooker," added Darren Seifer, NPD Group's food and beverage industry analyst. He in turn advises retailers to "Be sure to position yourself as either fresh or the perfect accompaniment to fresh foods."

### Mark Your Calendar & Pack Your Bags



September 23<sup>rd</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
FFVA's 72<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention

The Breakers  
Palm Beach, FL  
[www.ffva.com](http://www.ffva.com)

September 28<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
United Fresh Washington Conference  
Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill  
Washington, D.C.  
[www.unitedfresh.org](http://www.unitedfresh.org)

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