

Fresh Digest

A Publication of the Fresh Produce & Floral Council

March / April 2020



CAITLIN TIERNEY
OF
99 CENTS ONLY STORES

ANNUAL DINNER DANCE,
URBAN LIGHTS
PHOTOS & THANK YOUS

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WORKING HARD
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EDITOR'S VIEW

By Tim Linden



The Produce Industry's *First Lady*

Elsewhere in this publication, we have re-published the obituary of Frieda Rapoport Caplan as it appeared in the Los Angeles Times on January 19, 2020, several days after she died.

Of course, Frieda was one of our own. I first met her as a kid as my father worked on the Seventh Street Market in a produce house next door to Frieda's ground-breaking, first-ever, woman-founded wholesale produce company. I've had many interviews and conversations with her over the years. I wrote a relatively short obituary for *The Produce News* the day she died, and I will write a much longer "Tribute" piece in that publication in the coming weeks.

But we are publishing the *L.A. Times* story in its entirety here because I can think of no better way to illustrate her impact on our industry and the world. The *L.A. Times*, one of the great newspapers in the world, called her the "Kiwi Queen" in its headline and gave her treatment reserved for queens, the royal kind, in its pages. I suspect no other produce professional has ever been feted similarly with such a thorough story in the *L.A. Times*. No doubt, the editors felt that Frieda was one of their own. She grew

up here and worked here all her life. In her hey day, she was regularly seen on local television touting her specialties or commenting on produce issues as the mainstream's media go-to representative for our industry

There is no doubt the treatment then and the lengthy obituary was richly deserved. Check out page 12 to see how she was viewed outside of our industry.

For the title of this column, I noted that Frieda was "The Produce Industry's First Lady." That designation is literal, with first being an adjective. She stood on her own and was our industry's first lady.

Frieda was a legend and a pioneer in the produce industry. She almost invented the specialty crop category when our produce departments barely carried 100 SKUs. There are thousands of women in our industry today and it is not much of an exaggeration to say she was the first. She was certainly the first to break into the good ol' boys network, which unfortunately is still not dead. She remembers being addressed at her first United convention. "It was in San Antonio and M.A. Ellison was the chairman. He opened the convention by welcoming everyone saying 'Gentlemen

and Frieda Caplan.' I was the only woman there," she recalled for me years later.

The *L.A. Times* article in this edition give Frieda her due as do the many other stories that have been written in recent weeks in other publications and magazines. I will not use this column to repeat those accolades, though that would not be a waste of space.

Instead let me advocate for more women and diversity in our industry as a tribute to Frieda. When I officially started in this business as a 22 year old given the privilege to attend national conventions because of my reporting job, I was struck at the homogenous, almost-exclusively male, look of our industry. While there are many, many great examples of women who have risen to important positions over the last few decades, there needs to be more. The progress that has been made is good but not enough has been done. These efforts need to be deliberate and pro-active. It's not enough to just interview candidates of all stripes, they have to be hired and promoted. Simply stated, the world and our slice of it, needs more women at the helm. We will be much better for it.

Frieda, R.I.P. 🌱

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EXECUTIVE NOTES

By Brian Cook



FOCUSED ON MEMBER VALUE

This year the FPFC is taking a look at each of our events to assure that there is value to our membership in every meeting. After each event, it is our practice to gain membership feedback to make sure the event is worth the time of everyone involved. This feedback is valuable to our success as an organization.

We have recognized that each year there are increasingly more produce industry events that can pull our members away. Our newly formed membership committee will focus solely on membership feedback and outreach. The committee has been put in place to ensure that each event is delivering the right opportunities in networking, education, and/or professional development.

We started out the 2020 year strong with our Annual Dinner Dance – Urban Lights, in the City of Industry. I believe most people had the thought when they first saw it “Huh. Why there?” After getting acquainted with the Pacific Palms Resort and touring the reception rooms, ballrooms, and seeing the beautiful view that overlooks the

San Gabriel Mountains, the overwhelming response from attendees was very positive for the new venue. Dinner Dance arrived on January 25th and as day fell to night, attendees passed through the opening gate and drove to the top of the hill to see that their way was beautifully lit. The evening began for sponsors, buy-side attendees, and our soon-to-be graduating Apprentices at the VIP reception in the Concourse Foyer, which was a small and intimate room with views of the mountains and golf course. Lively conversations and laughter could be heard spilling out of the room as our guests thoroughly enjoyed the venue.

The night then moved to the lobby outside the ballroom where all the guests began networking with their peers in jovial discussion about the night to come and, of course, what is happening in the world of the produce business. In the Ballroom everyone enjoyed mouthwatering Ceviche Shooters to start the dinner portion of the evening followed by the main course of a Steak Filet and Chilean Seabass – absolutely delicious!

After the awards ceremony and graduation of the 2019 Apprentice Class, the room dispersed with each attendee gravitating toward their favorite after dinner activities – be it tripping the lights fantastic on the dance floor or conversing and networking in the lobby or at the bar. It was an amazing evening indeed.

As with every event, there is always room for improvement, with our guests giving us very positive feedback as well as great suggestions for the coming years. We were happy to work with Pacific Palms to offer our guests great savings if they spent the night at the resort, which had all of the CFO’s dancing!

Now we enter the next phase of our networking and educational tour. Our FPFC luncheons will also have a refreshed format this year. You may have heard that we have reduced the total number of luncheons by one. Our next step was to move one Southern California Luncheon to Northern California to better serve our membership upstate. We will have three luncheons in Northern California and four in Southern California, with our two annual philanthropy luncheons in

Southern California remaining the same. The reduction in luncheons will give members fewer opportunities to miss and we expect that it will help get buyers in larger attendance to each one. There is a larger focus on education as well this year so that attendees leave each luncheon with a nugget of growth personally and for their businesses. We fully understand the time away from the office and are dedicated to bringing value to individuals and company.

The FPFC EXPO will be going through some changes this year. The original Monday night soiree will be missed as our home for the last couple years has been rented out by another. No reason to fret as we have some creative ideas floating around to take its place, so I am very excited to see the event take shape. The EXPO is in its planning phase so please reach out to info@fpfc.org with any ideas or improvements for 2020. Remember this is YOUR association so your input and help is integral to the success of the events and the FPFC. If you are so moved, drop us a line in the passionate areas where you would like to volunteer. We would love to have you.

Until we meet here again, go out and be a light to others. God Bless! 🍀



2020 MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON SCHEDULE

February 19

FPFC MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON
Castlewood Country Club, Pleasanton, CA.

March 5 *[THURSDAY]*

FPFC MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON
Sheraton Cerritos, Cerritos, CA.

April 8

FPFC MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON
Sheraton Cerritos, Cerritos, CA.

May 13

FPFC MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON
Castlewood Country Club, Pleasanton, CA.

August 5

FPFC MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON – City of Hope
Sheraton Cerritos, Cerritos, CA

September 30

FPFC MEMBERSHIP LUNCHEON
Castlewood Country Club, Pleasanton, CA.

December 2

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Sheraton Cerritos, Cerritos, CA.

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Caitlin Tierney of 99 Cents Only Stores

Produce Program Making Significant Inroads

By Tim Linden



The 99 Cents Only Stores have built in price challenges with fresh items such as produce, nonetheless the chain has built a very credible produce program and that department is the leading seller for the deep discounter.

Caitlin Tierney, who is director of fresh for the close to 400-store chain, joined the outfit in 2016 as a veteran produce retailer with more than a decade of experience across the country in a diverse array of operations.

Her story begins in Farmington Hills, Mich., a suburb of Detroit, where she grew up and attended high school. Unsurprisingly, her father worked for the area's ubiquitous automobile industry as he had an executive position with the Ford Motor Company. But Caitlin had different ambitions. She went to

Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Mich., beginning her studies as a pre-med major with dreams of becoming a doctor.

At the two-year mark, she switched to entrepreneurial studies determining her talents and interests lie in a different direction. While still in college, she started working for a mortgage company, but didn't particularly like that industry, and decided to try her hand at retailing.

It wasn't long before Caitlin Tierney found her niche. She first took a position with Spartan Stores in Michigan as a category assistant in the produce department. "I learned about the industry one strawberry at a time," she quipped.

About a year later, she was promoted to produce buyer and fell in love. "I love the supply chain and

find it fascinating,” she added.

Caitlin stayed with Spartan Stores for six years before a change in management caused her to look elsewhere and expand her experiences. She soon moved to New York and began working for Fresh Direct, the online retailer that emphasizes top-notch produce for its customers. She called it a great experience. “The quality of produce we sold was amazing. We had to make sure it was perfect and only bought the top grades,” she said.

She loved the experience and could have stayed their longer, but Tesco, one of Great Britain’s leading chains, came knocking. They wanted some help with their on-line business and the job soon grew into a senior produce buying position when the chain launched Fresh & Easy in Southern California as its entry into U.S. retailing. Caitlin moved to California and was with that retailer until it closed its doors. She again learned a lot and was grateful for the experience.

The now-veteran produce buyer uses similar adjectives to describe her stop in between Fresh & Easy and 99 Cents Only Stores. For more than two years, Caitlin was with Bayer CropScience working with seed producers, growers and retailers as the seed division of Bayer attempted to engage the end buyer to create demand for its particular seed varieties. The idea was to have large retail buyers commit to buying specific varieties, thus creating demand for those varieties.

While Caitlin called it fascinating, she admits to missing the dynamics involved in retailing and driving consumption at the end of the supply chain, rather than at the beginning.

It was 2016 and the position at 99 Cents Only Stores emerged. Caitlin has found it to be a great fit. “I love it. We serve the underserved creating a viable option for groceries for those who can least afford them.”

99 Cents Only Stores has outlets in four states: California, Arizona, Nevada and Texas. The majority of the stores are in California, but it is continuing to expand and it has a distribution center in Texas as well as in the Golden State.

Caitlin loves making deals and creating great bargains for the retailer’s customers. Along the way



she has helped upgrade the offerings and is proud of the produce she buys and is stocked on the shelves for the eponymous 99 cents.

Since she has been with the company, produce sales have grown tremendously. It is now the chain’s top seller and within produce, organics make up 21 percent of sales. To accomplish this, 99 Cents Only Stores has expanded its pricing format. For produce, there are now three sets of prices: 99 cents, \$1.49 and \$1.99. Those pricing numbers are used to sell multiples, such as three lemons for 99 cents.

Caitlin said it is virtually impossible to have a credible and well-stocked produce department if you only stayed within the constraints of the store’s name. And she admits that it is sometimes an issue as some customers want to hold them to that. But she quickly rattles off several \$1.99 prices that are killer deals for customers. “Most of our customers don’t mind when they see we are giving them two pounds of avocados for \$1.99 or a bag of apples for \$1.99. That’s a much better value than they can get anywhere else.”

She noted that packaged salads sell for that price as well as some great organic items. But there are still many items at 99 cents, including a one-pound



Plus, building the organic department from nothing to more than 20 percent of produce sales in three years is quite an accomplishment. Caitlin believes the retailer's produce sales will double in the next five years.

While the chain is clearly a deep discounter, Caitlin lists all retailers as competitors. "Everyone in L.A. is fighting for the same customers," she said. "Our goal is to have those customers make 99 Cents Only their first stop."

She said the chain cannot fill up the average customer's entire basket, but if they can get the shopper to come to their store first, they can pick off some sales with some of their unquestionably great deals.

It appears that Caitlin Tierney's goal is now to grow the produce department one strawberry – make that one load of strawberries – at a time. 🍓

clamshell of organic strawberries from Mexico that the chain offers about 30 weeks of the year.

While the retailer attempts to offer every item, every day, Caitlin says that is not always possible. She called cauliflower "a problem child" and said when celery prices rose into the stratosphere last year, "that became a bit of a challenge."

"But usually we find a way. We adjust sizes or variety. We don't buy the sizes in the greatest demand. We are always looking for value but our goal is to be a number one grade or better," she said.

She said the produce department is heavily concentrated toward the top sellers but the company has more than doubled the number of SKUs it carries since she came aboard.



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'KIWI QUEEN' FRIEDA CAPLAN, PROD

(Reprinted from the Los Angeles Times)



They called her “Kiwi Queen” and “Mother Gooseberry.” “Mushroom Lady” and “the “Mick Jagger of the produce world.” The woman who broke the glass ceiling in the testosterone-doused produce world and forever changed the way Americans eat fruits and vegetables.

She was Frieda Rapoport Caplan, a tenacious maven credited for introducing kiwis, mangoes, habanero and shishito peppers, passion fruit, bean and alfalfa sprouts, baby carrots, sugar snap peas, starfruit, blood oranges, shiitake mushrooms, turmeric, and hundreds more fruits and vegetables into the supermarket mainstream, and into the bellies of American consumers.

She was loquacious, driven and loved to take risks.

“I had a reputation of trying anything new,” she told the Pasadena Star-News in 2003. “I couldn’t compete with all the boys on the big items ... so I built

the business selling things that were different.”

That was the Caplan way, a gritty business owner deemed the first woman to own and run her own produce house in Los Angeles’ Wholesale Produce Market and the U.S.

In heels and a skirt, she revolutionized the way the produce world did business, adding recipes and cooking instructions on packages of “exotic” produce to tame the distrust of an unsuspecting public.

Caplan died Saturday morning in Los Alamitos after a brief illness, according to an email sent by her daughters, Karen Caplan — president and CEO of Frieda’s Specialty Produce — and Jackie Wiggins Caplan, the company’s chief operating officer. She was 96.

“Who the hell had heard of jicama or spaghetti squash?” said Ben Faber, a UC Cooperative Extension

UCE INDUSTRY PIONEER, DIES AT 96

sion farm advisor who works with specialty crops. “We were a meat and potatoes society in the 1960s,” he added. “She changed our eating habits.... Frieda was able to tap into aspirations that people had after the Second World War ... something new and different other than mac ‘n’ cheese.”

Born in 1923 in downtown L.A., Caplan was the daughter of Russian immigrants and raised in Highland Park. Like many great success stories, Caplan’s stratospheric rise as the mother and pioneer of specialty produce came from happenstance.

The year was 1945, and Caplan had recently graduated from UCLA with a degree in economics and political science. Soon after, she landed an office gig working for an attorney who headed the CIO’s political action committee in L.A.

In 1951, she married labor consultant and president of a longshoreman’s union, Alfred Hale Caplan. Four years later, they had their firstborn, Karen.

She started searching for a job with flexible hours, as she wanted to care for and breastfeed her baby at home. Her husband’s uncle and aunt, who managed a produce house, happened to be looking for a bookkeeper, so they brought Caplan on board.

Then her boss went on vacation, and Caplan was asked to fill in as a cashier. As buyers came in for produce, the young Caplan nudged them toward a pallet of fresh brown mushrooms. One man agreed, but his order was massive, and they didn’t have enough in stock to fill his request.

She panicked.

Everyone she called was out of the fungi, so she went hunting for them at the Ocean View Mushroom Farm in Orange County. They too were sold out, but she saw employees packing mushrooms and lent a hand.

She got what she wanted and filled the buyer’s request.

It was a steady trajectory from there as Caplan developed her marketing expertise.

Encouraged by the manager for the Southern Pacific Railroad, which ran the market, Caplan launched her own business with the help of a loan from her father, focusing on overlooked foodstuffs.

“The other people on the market were only interested in high-volume items,” Caplan once said. “Small farmers had no place to go. Nobody was interested. So I started listening to all these small farmers.”

And slowly, her reputation for selling fruits and vegetables no one had heard of stateside had swelled.

“Go to Frieda,” growers and buyers often heard when they sought an offbeat product no one knew about.

The kiwi, Caplan’s first claim to fame, made its debut after a Safeway buyer asked if she carried “Chinese gooseberries,” which he’d encountered on a recent trip to New Zealand.

She didn’t. But months later, a broker walked through the market with a box and Caplan bought some. She renamed the brown fuzzy edible kiwifruit, thinking customers would find its new name more appealing.

It took nearly a decade for the fruit to popularize. “I like to call it our 18-year overnight success,” she once said. Ironically, she grew allergic to the fruit in her later years.

“Her introduction of kiwi made people less risk-averse to try new things,” said Marianne McGarry Wolf, head of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo’s Agribusiness Department.

Gradually, Caplan carved out a niche for herself. After hustling for years, working from 1 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, Caplan founded her own company in 1962. Purple became her signature color because, at the time of her business launch, it was the only hue the sign maker she hired had on hand.

“There have always been exotic food items,” Caplan told *The Times* in 1972 on the key to success. “We just showcased them, dressed them up and sold them.”

She even supplied the “alien” fruits for “*Star Trek*” episodes, which helped boost sales.

Also a sales success was her introduction of packaged produce, an idea that spawned when customers in Chicago couldn’t tell the difference between the ginger and sunchokes they’d purchased from her.

So Caplan found a solution: She labeled their products and added a note telling customers to call Frieda’s for recipes and more information. “We were flooded with letters,” Caplan said in the 2015 documentary “*Fear No Fruit*.” Every week, they received 400 to 800 letters.

“Success came because I never saw obstacles,” she told the *Orange County Register* in 2018.

In the mid-1980s, when Frieda’s Inc. had established itself as an industry leader, she told *The Times* that her success was due to the health and fitness craze of the time, medical reports stating that eating more fresh produce showed a lower cancer rate, and a spurt of restaurants specializing in fresh and exotic foods.

Before long she was supplying produce to stores like Vons, Ralphs, Trader Joe’s, Bristol Farms and Whole Foods.

The media had long ago taken notice of her, and had been following her rocketing career.

The *Times* in 1990 listed Caplan as one of a dozen Californians — including Steve Jobs and Jane Fonda — who shaped American businesses in the 1980s.

“You gotta hand it to her,” said an admirer to *The Times* in 1972. “She made something from nothing. There isn’t a produce man in the market who doesn’t take his hat off to her.”

And throughout her long, fruitful life and career, others took their hats off to her, too.

Her many accolades included an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo; a Lifetime Achievement Award from United

Fresh Produce Assn.; a Legacy Award from National Assn. of Women Business Owners; received the first Working Woman’s magazine’s first and was the first woman to receive *The Packer* newspaper’s “Produce Man of the Year” in the 1970s, which she rejected until it was renamed “The Produce Marketer of the Year.”

By 2018, Frieda’s, Inc. had boomed into a \$50-million-plus business with 75 full-time and 110 part-time employees, an 81,000-square-foot warehouse in Los Alamitos and customers from across the world.

Until recently, Caplan still showed up to work. Cane in hand, always donning purple, she filed invoices and kept a keen eye on the next big product, leaving her daughters Karen and Jackie to run the business.

“She works like someone is keeping time on her,” her granddaughter and the company’s sales manager Alex Berkley once said.

But despite all her innovations and accomplishments, her accolades and title as “the marketing genius who galvanized the California farm industry and almost singlehandedly created fruit and vegetable trends,” as many described her, there’s one thing Caplan didn’t do: She never learned how to cook. 🍷

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JMB KICKS-OFF CALIFORNIA ASPARAGUS DEAL

BY TIM LINDEN

From March until mid-May, asparagus specialist Jacob, Malcolm & Burt will be featuring both organic and conventional asparagus grown in California's San Joaquin Valley.

The company, which is headquartered in San Ramon, CA and has roots going back more than 130 years, is expected to begin harvesting its close to 1000 acres the first week in March. "The crop looks very good," said Production Manager Dan Miller. "We've had a good winter with plenty of moisture."

The longtime asparagus veteran estimated that the acreage will produce between five and six million pounds of spears with about 90 percent being conventional asparagus and 10 percent certified organic. All the California production will be green asparagus.

Craig Rolandelli, who is president of the firm, said that while California's asparagus production has declined quite significantly over the last couple of decades, JMB is committed to the Golden State. He said the firm is only one of a few that still has a growing deal in California and is by far the largest grower-shipper.

He noted that California still has a very good asparagus reputation and there are customers all over the country looking for JMB's U.S. grown "grass" once it is in season. Miller predicted that there would be promotable volume from about March 15 through Mother's Day.

Rolandelli said the asparagus will be offered in both 28-pound and 11-pound cartons and he anticipated good demand for both, including an active export market. JMB exports to both Asia and Europe on a regular basis. Joining Rolandelli in selling the crop for JMB will be Sales Manager Chris Brazeel and salesman Donald Alford.

The company president reiterated that there will be promotable volume and program selling throughout the California season, especially for the conventional supplies. Organic asparagus sales are a bit different as demand typically exceeds supply.

Speaking specifically from the production end, Miller noted that the company is not anticipating any issues. "We have had no water shortage for the last three years so that is not impacting the crop," he said.

Asparagus is a labor-intensive crop as all operations from harvesting to shipping are accomplished by hand with each spear having to go through several operations. But with the deal beginning in March and concluding by mid-May, the need for labor comes before the heavy California demand in late spring and early summer. "We are the first job of the season for a lot of these workers," Miller said, adding that he anticipates no problem lining up adequate crews.

Jacobs, Malcolm & Burt has been in business since 1888. The company began as a wholesaler in San Francisco and continued that business model for more than 100 years. In 1963, company executive Leo Rolandelli purchased the wholesale operation, and in the 1970s he started working with asparagus growers, expanding the scope of the business. Asparagus became the firm's number one crop as JMB became a grower-shipper, importer, wholesaler and broker of asparagus on a year-round basis. In 2012, the firm sold its wholesale produce market business, moved its offices out of the City by the Bay and concentrated its efforts on asparagus and a couple of other seasonal items.

Besides its California production, JMB sells and represents year round asparagus production from Mexico and Peru, allowing for year-round asparagus supplies to its customers. 🌱



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BOUNCE-BACK YEAR EXPECTED WITH PROMOTABLE VOLUME

By Tim Linden

In its final pre-season crop forecast, the California Avocado Commission (CAC) announced a significantly larger crop for 2020, compared to 2019 volume.

For this fiscal year (November 2019 through October 2020), CAC has estimated that 369 million pounds of avocados will be shipped. This volume will certainly mean a longer California avocado season and expanded distribution compared to 2019.

"The current estimate for the 2020 California avocado crop, 369 million pounds, is 70 percent higher than last season," said Tom Bellamore, California Avocado Commission president. "There was plenty of much-welcomed rain last year, which had a positive impact on tree health and this year's bountiful fruit set."

Jan DeLyser, the commission's vice president of marketing, said the increased volume will allow for many more promotional opportunities by retailers. While the majority of the fruit will be marketed in the West, there are retailers all over the country who like to feature California avocados when the fruit is available. "We expect that the handlers will have promotable volume from April through August," DeLyser told the Fresh Digest in early February.

In fact, she revealed that some smaller California retailers already had transitioned to California avocados, with early harvesting in January. There are always many avocados promotions leading up to Super Bowl weekend, and some retailers did jump on the California avocado bandwagon in time for those sales.

California avocado season is expected to build through March on a weekly basis, with peak volume availability from April through August, encompassing the American summer holidays of Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day. There is expected to be California fruit beyond September.

"Distribution will be targeted mainly to California and the West, and with greater volume there may be opportunity this year for customers outside this region who prefer to merchandise California avocados in season," said DeLyser. "We're working with avocado handlers, participating retailers and foodservice operators to set up timely crop transitions and customized promotions in advance of new advertising that will start in spring."

In support of this year's larger crop, the commission is evolving its *Made of California* advertising campaign with new creative materials, innovative uses of media, interactive communication with fans

and brand advocates, and participation in several regional events.

DeLyser noted that the new consumer advertising campaign is rooted in the earlier efforts that emphasized that the fruit came from California and is symbolic of the state's personality, if you will. The campaign is designed to differentiate California from increasing competition from countries with similar seasonality. CAC's new campaign reminds people that "The best avocados have California in them". Literally! The visuals point out the state's abbreviation is contained in the fruit's name: avo-CA-dos. Each consumer ad features the word "avocados" with the "CA" creatively transformed into an iconic representation of the state. The campaign utilizes nine words that evoke images of the Golden State: California, freshness, summer, dreams, sunshine, love, vibes, coasts and Zen.

In addition, CAC teamed up with Vans, the popular shoe and clothing retailer, on the "vibes" artwork to make it authentically California. The Vans brand represents effortless California cool and with its partnership, the commission made the iconic check-board slip-on shoe a key element of the California avocado vibes artwork.

The new consumer ad campaign begins in March with a combination of traditional and digital media in the West and a focus on California.

"When you come off a light crop year (2019), it's really great to have a crop you know you can market," said DeLyser, adding that retailers are very excited about being able to offer significant volume of California avocados to their customers this season. 🌱

The advertisement features a stylized illustration of onion plants in a field under a blue sky with clouds. In the top left, a white sign with a brown border contains the text "PERI & SONS®" in a serif font, "F A R M S" in a spaced-out sans-serif font, and "Where good things grow.™" below it. To the right of the sign are three onions. The main headline "premium & organic onions" is written in a large, dark, serif font. Below this, the text "FARM FRESH AND SUSTAINABLY GROWN" is written in a smaller, all-caps sans-serif font. In the bottom right, there is a smiling onion character, a purple butterfly, and the text "all kinds of Good". A QR code is located in the bottom right corner, with the text "watch us Grow" next to it. At the bottom left, there is a "CERTIFIED ORGANIC" logo. At the bottom center, there are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Instagram, followed by the phone number "775-463-4444" and the website "PeriandSons.com".

HAB Offers New Marketing Tool for Retailers

The Hass Avocado Board has released a new Avocado Category Market Development Tool designed to help retailers and industry stakeholders identify, quantify and prioritize potential market-level opportunities for 45 markets. Each market has a unique profile, which varies significantly by population, category development, and other measures using a multi-metric model approach to reviewing market-by-market differences and their implications for category growth.



This Market Development Tool uses a multi-dimensional approach as indicated in the diagram to help avocado merchandisers and industry stakeholders identify, quantify and prioritize potential market-level opportunities for their business.

“We are very excited to publish this new category development tool for the industry,” said Emiliano Escobedo, executive director of the Hass Avocado Board. “It is the first tool of its kind, and it provides a multi-dimensional approach to gauging individual opportunities in each market.”

This tool provides an understanding of individual markets by reviewing five key multi-metric models:

- Avocado Category Development Index – Ranks growth opportunity relative to population;
- Avocado Fair Share Analysis – Quantifies potential dollar opportunities if gaps are closed;
- Avocado Category Dollar Trend Opportunity – Ranks the markets by growth opportunities;

- Distribution vs. Velocity Quadrant Analysis – Total Category and Bagged Avocados – Identifies the market development strategy suggested by each quadrant; and
- Avocado Distribution Opportunity – Total Category and Bagged Avocados – Ranks the markets by potential dollar growth opportunities if gaps are closed.

Retailers and industry stakeholders are encouraged to utilize this Market Development Tool by applying it to their business in three steps: 1) Focus on the markets they supply; 2) Evaluate each opportunity model for opportunities in their markets; and 3) Evaluate potential opportunities for expansion into new markets. Even if a market is more developed than others, high development does not signify a lack of opportunity. As an example, Los Angeles is one of the largest markets in the avocado category and one of the most developed.

However, there are still opportunities for growth. When reviewing each of the dimensions, the Los Angeles market shows opportunities in the dollar trend, distribution, and quadrant analysis models for the total category and bagged avocados.

To further the example, the avocado category is also not sold everywhere when comparing to “All Other Produce” sold in Los Angeles. All Other Produce is sold in 93.4% of stores in Los Angeles, while avocados are sold in 91.9% of stores. This gap represents an opportunity of +\$2.7 million in category sales.

The Hass Avocado Board releases unique analytical tools, such as this Avocado Category Market Development Tool, along with a variety of industry information and studies to assist marketers and retailers with uncovering growth opportunities and planning for store promotions. HAB offers these insights and detailed retail information as the only avocado organization that equips the entire industry for success, with clear and actionable data and metrics that can be used to drive their avocado business. 🌱

Hass Avocados Spark Summer Sales

Summer continues to be a great time to promote avocados. Summer avocado sales continue to grow as consumers add fresh Hass avocados to a variety of dishes to celebrate Father's Day, Independence Day, and the start of a new school year. The Hass Avocado Board recently published sales trends for these Q3 holidays in its quarterly holiday recap report, which provides the industry with insights for next year's holiday avocado promotion planning.

"As planning for the new year begins, it is important for retailers to look at historical sales data to plan promotions as they look ahead," explained Emiliano Escobedo, executive director of the Hass Avocado Board. "With advanced planning, retailers can get a head start on preparing their promotions and merchandising of fresh Hass avocados. The Hass Avocado Board encourages the industry to use the 2019 Q1 report as we enter the new year and utilize the Q3 report for planning summer fresh avocado promotions."

The latest holiday recap release for Q3 shows that families across the nation, and especially in California and the West regions, celebrated Father's Day with fresh avocados, as national dollar sales increased +7 percent to \$56 million. In fact, Father's Day week dollar sales have increased each year for the past four years, up +35 percent over 2016.

The most prominent holiday of the summer is 4th of July. This year, dollar sales reached \$62 million, up +16 percent over the prior year and +38 percent vs. 2016. All regions contributed to dollar growth and dollar sales increased by +\$8.7 million nationally. Regional dollar gains ranged from +3 percent in the Northeast region to +25 percent in California and the Great Lakes.


"The 4th of July is traditionally a high-volume holiday as shoppers add fresh avocados into their dishes



The Hass Avocado Board's recently published Q3 2019 Avocado Holiday Retail Recap reveals continuing sales growth for the category during Father's Day, 4th of July and Labor Day. Retailers can look ahead and start planning their summer promotions.

and as a topper to burgers, hot dogs and so much more. However, we continue to see more holidays spike in avocado sales including Father's Day and Labor Day," said Escobedo.

Labor Day marks the start of a new school year for many busy families, and is the last summer celebration. This past Labor Day, sales increased +6 percent over the prior year approaching \$54 million. The Northeast led dollar growth at +12 percent and per store sales were especially strong in the West and California regions.

The Hass Avocado Board releases a holiday recap each quarter, covering avocado sales trends for the corresponding holidays and events. The Hass Avocado Board offers these insights and detailed retail information as the only avocado organization that equips the entire industry for success, with clear and actionable data and metrics that all can use to drive their avocado business. For more information about avocado sales for each holiday, visit www.hassavocado.com/research-insights/ 

Urban lights

Annual Dinner Dance January 25, 2020



The Annual Passing of the Gavel from the 2019 FPFC Chairman, Andrew Bivens of Westlake Produce Company to the 2020 FPFC Chairman, Brian Cook of Pete's.



FPFC Dinner Dance Committee Jeffrey McLellan, Credit Consulting, Brian Cook of Pete's, Therese Ferrara of Preferred Sales, Debi Orrin of Pura Vida Farms, Brandon Gritters of Interfresh, Sean McClure of Professional Produce, Lynnne Nojadera of Quebec Distributing Co., Nancy Betancourt of Vision Produce Co., Natalie J. Machado of FreshSource, LLC, Rachelle Schulken of Renaissance Food Group, and Blair Butterworth of Grimmway Farms.



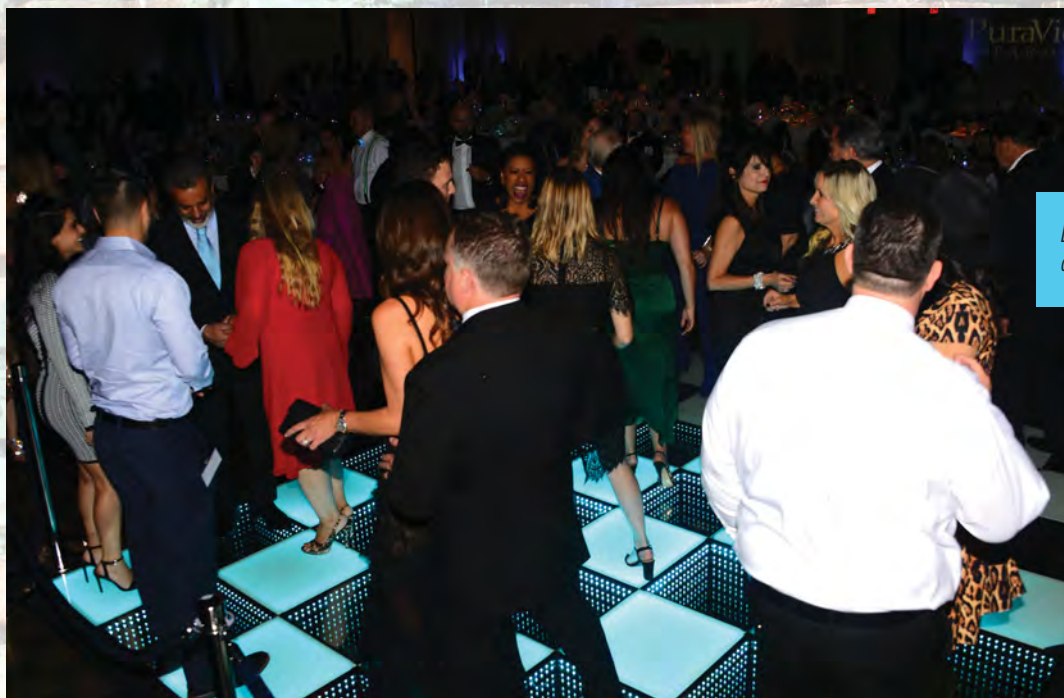
FPFC 2019 Apprentice Class Photo: Kevin Trisko of Taylor Farms, Jessica Garcia of Veg-Fresh Farms, Thomas Rossi of Fresh Concepts, Briana Giampaoli of Live Oak Farms, Jeffrey Fish of Western Mixers, Denise Gonzalez of Charlie's Produce, Lizbeth Reyes, Amanda Nojadera of Quebec Distributing Co., Esmeralda Mejia of Westlake Produce Company, Destiny Dulaney of Sunkist Growers, Jose Morales of Progressive Produce and Julie Boland of Bonduelle Fresh Americas.



2020 FPFC Board of Directors – Kelly Craner of B&C Fresh, Michael Schutt of Raley's Supermarkets, Andrew Bivens of Westlake Produce Company, Jeffrey McLellan, Jeffrey McLellan Credit Consulting; Brian Cook of Pete's, Sean McClure of Professional Produce, Alfonso Cano of Cardenas Markets, Roger Schroeder, Bill Coombs of DLJ Produce, Marta Moreno of Rose-Gonzales Plants, Kristen Reid of MIXTEC Group, Paige Venable of Vallarta Supermarkets, Lynnne Nojadera of Quebec Distributing Co., Harland Heath of Heath & LeJeune, Inc., Kori Martin of The Oppenheimer Group, Natalie J. Machado of FreshSource, LLC, and Rachelle Schulken of Renaissance Food Group.

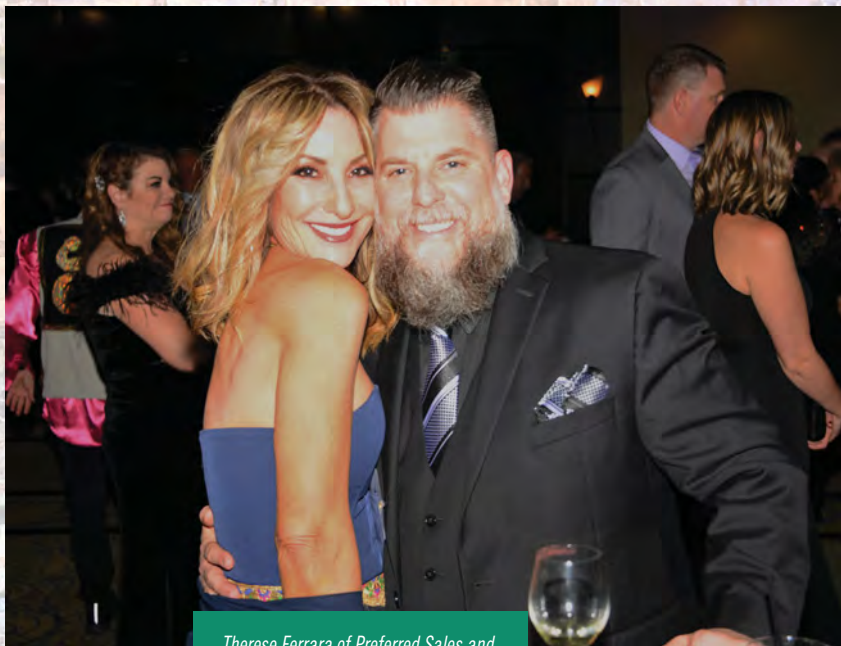


Cote Clark, Jordan Hesson, and Pamela Clark of LA Produce Distributors.



Dinner Dance attendees hitting the dance floor after the program.

Patty and Baltazar Garcia of Pete's, posing for a quick photo with Kristen Reid of MIXTEC Group.



Therese Ferrara of Preferred Sales and Michael Schutt of Raley's Supermarkets.

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QSI Produce

Invitation Co-Sponsors
California Avocado Commission
Legacy Farms

Event Video
Kern Ridge Farms

Centerpieces
Veg-Fresh Farms

Mints
The Giumarra Companies

Event Signage
Legacy Farms

Wine Corkage
DLJ Produce

Décor
The Little Potato Company

Coffee Bar
Beachside Produce, LLC

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Fresh Gourmet Company

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Pura Vida Farms

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Dinner Dance attendees enjoying the magician at the general reception.



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Pete's

New York City
The Oppenheimer Group



Natalie J. Machado of FreshSource, LLC with Myisha Nathaniel of Raley's Supermarkets and Jennifer Zendejas of FreshSource, LLC.

Claudio Ponte and Amanda Grillo of CMC Sales & Marketing enjoying the general reception.



Larry Olivarez of Veg-Fresh Farms with Wendy and Jeff Sunahara of Westlake Produce Company.



Don and Heidi Gann of Stater Bros. Markets with Michelle and Kelly Craner of B&C Fresh.



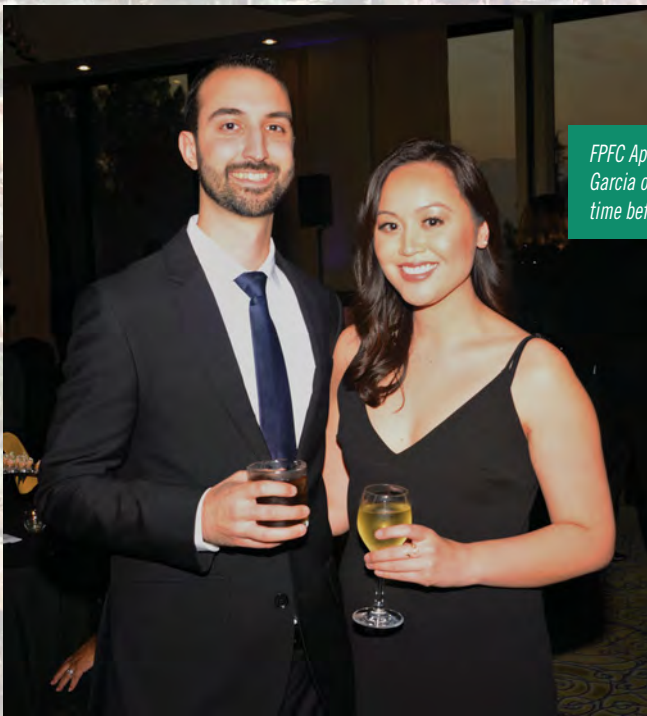
Karen Caplan of Frieda's and Jan Delyser of California Avocado Commission catching up.



Kent and Vicki Kuwata of Smart & Final enjoying the VIP Reception.



Brian Cook of Pete's catching up with Linda and Brad Martin of Perimeter Sales & Merchandising.



FPFC Apprentice, Amanda Nojadera and Peter Garcia of Quebec Distributing Co. having a great time before the Apprentice Graduation.



Pat McDowell of Perimeter Sales & Merchandising with Dick Spezzano of Spezzano Consulting Services.



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Therese Ferrara:

Working Hard, Playing Hard

By Tim Linden

Therese Ferrara credits her father for all that she has achieved in her business life. He even was the inspiration for the name of her sales marketing company.

“He was the biggest influencer in my life,” she said, noting that she still bears the weight of his passing five years ago. “He taught me a lot of great lessons in life including to make sure the thought goes through your brain before coming out of your mouth.”

Therese grew up in Orange County near the Carbon Canyon area of Brea and went to local Catholic schools for 12 years including graduating from Mater Dei High School in the early 1980s. Then she took a year off and started college at Cal Poly Pomona before transferring to Chapman University and graduating in 1986 majoring in Communications with a minor in Business. Both educational paths have served her well over the past few decades. She honed those skills during college internships at agencies and the Orange County Register, and has made it a life-long commitment to excel in the communications arena.

Therese’s first job out of college was with Nutri-system as she started in sales and eventually moved into management. “Helping people lose weight was

a natural for me as I grew up as a chunky Italian girl and had experience with that,” she said, adding that she gained valuable sales and management experience during her five-year tenure with the company.

Following that experience, she sold a line of direct mail franchises for a couple of years, which indirectly led her to the food industry and the business sector she has pursued since the mid-1990s.

Therese’s first stop was Prepeco where she represented a line of croutons and snacks. Next up was a position with a potato chip company. This experience eventually pushed her from center store to the perimeter.

Therese explained that she was representing Poore Brothers potato chips while the Cape Cod brand was being represented by Tim Stejskal. Their paths would often cross in the waiting room of one retailer or another. Therese saw the two as not-so-friendly competitors, but Tim obviously appreciated Therese’s

work ethic. When he left Cape Cod and joined Dole Vegetables, he recommended Therese for his old job. She took it and stayed for a few years until Tim further influenced her career by offering her a regional sales position with Dole Vegetables in 2004.

In 2008, she was on the move again, reuniting with another old boss to start a company featuring a



high-end soda. As the recession took hold, high-end anything was a bit of a struggle.

It was in 2011 that Therese took stock of her career and did a deep assessment of which direction to take. “I had an epiphany that I wanted to get back into produce. I felt at home in the produce industry and felt a sense of community.”

She also had a very close working knowledge of the food broker business and believed there was a niche play for an independent representative to take on just a few promising manufacturers and do them justice. “The large brokers don’t have time to pioneer a line,” she said, noting that they just can’t spend the extensive time necessary to develop a small company when they have so many other clients.

Therese was determined to handle only three or four lines at a time when she launched Preferred Sales in 2011. The company name is a tribute to her father who owned the escrow company Preferred Escrow when she was growing up. “I felt privileged to be able to honor my dad in the naming of my company,” she said.

She created a business proposal, developed a PowerPoint presentation and sent her concept to everyone she could think of. Ironically, her first customer was the The Laura Scudder’s Company, which had developed a line of a bagged spices to make your own salsa or guacamole by adding the appropriate produce items. It was a good company to launch her firm, but the product line did not take off.

Fortunately, Preferred Sales secured two other clients early on that have proven to be winners. Zola and its signature coconut water signed with Therese during her first year in business, and the Little Potato Company came aboard within two years. Both are still being represented by the one-woman band called Preferred Sales. Therese remembers prominent produce retailers arguing that they would never sell coconut water in a can in the produce department. History belies that belief. And she recalls that the Little Potato Company sold 43,000 pounds of potatoes in her territory when she signed on. “This current fiscal year, they will sell 6.7 million pounds in my territory,” she proclaims proudly.

Her eclectic mix of clients include Setton Farms Pistachios and Wildbrine, which is a fermented, vegan kimchi and kraut brand.

Therese’s involvement with the FPFC began in earnest with her employment by Dole. She has been a regular attendee ever since at luncheons, and many other FPFC events. She has also served the council as a member of many committees including the Expo Committee and the Dinner-Dance Committee, of which she is a current member. She is also involved in other volunteer efforts, including as an active member of the produce committee that works closely with the City of Hope.

In describing her time away from her business life, Therese says “I work hard and I play hard. I am one of those people who live for Friday night.”

She unabashedly admits that cocktail hour on Fridays begins at 4:30 pm as she fires up the barbecue for her regular Friday night routine. “I have a family, including three brothers and my mother, but I also have a family by choice, which consists of nine very close friends.”

Therese revealed that most of these friends have been in her life for many, many years and every Friday night is open house at her place. “I love to barbecue. I can cook, but what I have really mastered is the barbecue. Everyone is invited every week.”

She also utilizes the weekend for a little outdoor therapy on the links. “I love to get out on a golf course and just enjoy the day. It is very peaceful.”

Snow skiing is another passion that Therese enjoys including frequent winter jaunts to Utah, Colorado and Wyoming.

She added that hanging with her 91-year-old mother is another very important and fulfilling aspect of her life. “We just moved her from Brea to Laguna Woods near me. She is still super sharp and I make sure I spend time with her as often as I can.”

Though retirement is still down the road, Therese calls herself a “saver of money” (another trait she inherited from her father) and said she is looking forward to a time in her early 60s when she can cut back a bit and enjoy the fruits of her labor. “Working for myself, I have not taken off more than five days in a row – with two of them being the weekend – since I started my company. I have not had the luxury of spending two weeks in Europe or anywhere else. I am looking forward to that.” 🍷

New Consumer Data to be Presented at OPS 2020

New consumer data and analysis related to increased organic fresh produce sales from a pair of the industry's leaders will be featured as part of an educational session at the fifth annual Organic Produce Summit, in Monterey, CA, scheduled for July.

Laura Batcha, president of the Organic Trade Association, will discuss research done in conjunction with the Natural Marketing Institute (NMI) on messaging to organic customers, and the development of a toolkit for organic industry members to use based on the findings of the research. Steve Lutz, senior vice president of insights and innovation for Category Partners, will update OPS attendees on the latest organic retail sales data, analysis and trends, while providing an overview of increased sales opportunities.

The session, *Organic Fresh Produce Sales Data and Analysis*, will be moderated by Tonya Antle, co-founder of the Organic Produce Network. "As organic fresh produce sales continue to grow and outpace conventional produce sales, there is outstanding information and data to be shared among OPS attendees on where opportunities for further growth lie, as well as areas where new customer acquisition can come from," said Antle.

Category Partners' Lutz said his presentation will focus on organic fresh produce performance at retail and consumer alignment as the category continue to grow. "How are consumers aligning their increased demand for organic fresh produce into actual purchases at store? What are the key purchase barriers and ways to convert potential customers into consistent buyers? We will explore the trends and opportunities that lie ahead for all OPS attendees," Lutz said.

In its fifth year, the Organic Produce Summit is the only event dedicated exclusively to bringing together producers and buyers of the organic fresh produce industry. The announcement of the first educational session announcement is part of six breakout educational sessions for OPS attendees. Additionally, the event recently announced the first of its keynote presenters, co-founders of nationally acclaimed fast casual restaurant chain sweetgreen, Nicolas Jammet and Jonathan Neman, as one of three keynote presentations.

Among other educational sessions on tap for OPS 2020 are:

- Obstacles and Opportunities for Organic in Foodservice
- Is Regenerative the "New" Organic?
- How Do Independent Retailers Handle Organic?

The fifth annual OPS features a sold-out exhibition that will showcase 152 of North America's organic fresh produce growers, shippers and processors exhibiting their products to over 250 retailers and buyers. Field tours at several of the nation's leading organic producers are also available for qualified retailers and wholesalers at OPS.

Retailer and general registration for OPS 2020 is available at www.organicproducesummit.com. Additional information about the event, including schedule, sponsors and a complete list of exhibiting companies is also available on the website.

The event will be held July 8-9, in the Monterey Conference Center. 🌱



THE FPFC WELCOMES THE FOLLOWING NEW MEMBERS

Jacob Thill
Fruit Growers Supply

Nick DeSai
PeaTos

Matt Rhodes
Varsity Produce

FPFC MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Fresh Produce & Floral Council is to connect members to the information, education and professional network they need to increase knowledge, grow their businesses and collectively advance the industry.

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SCHEDULE SET FOR 2020 APPRENTICES

This year the committee encouraged companies to look beyond the usual job classifications for potential candidates, noting that “The FPFC Apprentice Program is not limited to sales and marketing professionals, but is open to any employee of a member company, regardless of age, experience or function within the company.”

The Committee also released the schedule that the apprentices will follow in 2020 including the industry events in which they will participate.

2020 SCHEDULE

April 14

First Meeting of the Class

May 6

Leadership/Management Panel

June 11

Public Speaking Session

July 12-14

The FPFC Expo

August 5

Industry Trends

September 10

Food Service Panel

October 4

City of Hope, Walk for Hope

October 5

Oxnard-Area Tours

November 4

Homework Presentations

December 2

Food Safety and Crisis Communication

January 23, 2021

Annual Dinner Dance

February 2021

Northern California Membership Luncheon

FPFC and Superfresh Growers Donate Raffle Prize to Caterina's Club



Fresh Produce and Floral Council (FPFC) and member Superfresh Growers kicked off the decade by donating the 2020 FPFC Annual Dinner Dance raffle prize to one of FPFC's key partner organizations, non-profit Caterina's Club. The donation will help feed nutritious meals to underprivileged children in Orange County, provide housing for homeless families, and job training for at-risk teenagers.

The FPFC held its annual Dinner Dance on January 25, 2020, where cash prizes were raffled off. Superfresh Growers won \$2500 and immediately thought it would be best to donate the money. "We are so impressed by what Chef Bruno and Caterina's Club does for the Orange County community and the children that they provide nutritious hot meals for. Their work fits well with our culture and values of giving back to our communities both around our farms, and the communities where we deliver fresh produce" describes Catherine Gipe-Stewart, communication manager

at Superfresh Growers.

Four-hundred thousand Orange County residents struggle to get their food needs met on a regular basis. Caterina's Club Feeding the Children program "identifies food insecure children who are at high-risk of malnutrition and are extremely underprivileged in our communities. We ensure these children have access to warm nutritional meals nightly by delivering the meals to their after-school programs," describes the Caterina's Club website. Chef Bruno stated "It is thanks to the generosity of the Fresh Produce & Floral Council, we have been able to add more locations in more cities and the ability to move so many more families out of the perils of Motel living. We have also been able to begin our hospitality academy, teaching high school aged teen's workforce skills. We couldn't do any of this without their assistance."

"Caterina's Club is such an important part of our community. What they do; it goes to the kids.

They feed 5,000 kids a day, and that hits home. It's nice to see Superfresh Growers and the FPFC get behind their mission of feeding kids and their families," said Kent Kuwata, category manager at Smart & Final, former FPFC Board of Directors member.

The Fresh Produce & Floral Council mission is to connect the produce industry to information, education, and professional network to increase knowledge, grow their business, and collectively advance the industry. The FPFC raises money for Caterina's Club annually during their Holiday Charity Auction.

Superfresh Growers is a leading grower and shipper of apples, pears, cherries, apricots, blueberries, and kiwi berries from the Pacific Northwest. They believe in being a part of the communities they serve in the Pacific Northwest, as well as the communities that they deliver fresh fruit to and those of their retail partners. 🌱

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