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Bagdasarian: a Coachella Valley mainstay since 1952

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With more than 65 seasons under its belt, one would think that Richard Bagdasarian Inc. in Mecca, CA, would have some history to draw on regardless of the season. But President Nick Bozick said that while that is true, the proliferation of new grape varieties gives the firm fewer data points than one would think.



Michael Bozick, Mike Bozick and Nick Bozick. "It is interesting (each year) to go back and find a comparison, but these new varieties don't react the same as the traditional varieties so it is difficult to know what will happen," he said.

This season is different than the last handful because growth cycles on the vines are running up to 10 days later than they have the past four or five years. "We are at least a week late because of an extremely cold January and February," he said.

He can dust off the sales books and find a similar season that will tell him how Thompsons, Perlettes and some of the old red varieties might have reacted in similar conditions. But this is the first year the

shipper will be dealing with the late start with the grape varieties such as Valley Pearl and Ivory. Bagdasarian also has a license to grow and sell some of the proprietary Sun World Varieties such as Autumn Crisp and Sable. The situation is the same throughout the valley as many growers have added new varieties. Flame Seedless and Sugraones, both with a good deal of history, still have sizable volume but there are close to 10 other varieties that are much newer with a thinner track record.

Bozick said that over the next five years, he expects the transition to the newer varieties to continue and for a much clearer picture of how they will react to various climatic conditions to emerge.

With this year's late start, he is anticipating a stretching of the season on the back end.

On April 19, Bozick was estimating that the start of the Coachella Valley grape season was still at least three weeks away. Most shippers believe the season will get started with their earliest vineyards beginning production the week of May 13. There may be a few grapes on the market the week before, but the week of May 20 appears to be the first week that significant volume will be marketed. June will undoubtedly be a strong month, and Bozick believes the late start will also create a strong July. "We think July is going to be a big month — at least for the first two weeks," he said.

As far as the company is concerned, Bozick said there are no major changes in the works for this year. Bozick and Franz De Klotz continue to head up the sales team with son Michael Bozick and Julie Fargo continuing to gain experience. 2019 marks the younger Bozick's third season, while Fargo is entering her second year on the sales desk.

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