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## **Crown Jewels enjoying the San Joaquin Valley**

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Crown Jewels Produce has long been a trusted name in grapes thanks to centuries of combined experience at the top, and working with some of the best grape growers in the world on its farms. Working in the San Joaquin Valley has been key to producing an outstanding quality of grapes year after year.

“Crown Jewels has been involved in the grape business since the company began 20 years ago,” said Stephen Thomason, sales for the company. “We are currently around 2 million cases annually and are projected over the next few years to get to about 3 million cases.”

The Fresno, CA-based company offers different varieties of red, green and black grapes, plus innovative varieties such as Krissy, Magenta, Ivory and Timpson. It also offers a complete program of all seedless varieties as well.

“New varieties are always trending and that’s no different this year,” Thomason said. “Crown Jewels makes sure to offer a great selection of new varieties when we can.”

Quality and size are the two factors in grapes that most care about, and Crown Jewels ensure that its grapes are tops in both categories.

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For the 2020 season in the San Joaquin Valley, the company is predicting a better-than-average crop and should be harvesting soon.

“It looks very good right now, as the weather conditions have been ideal during bloom until late May,” Thomason said. “We spare no expense to get the biggest and best quality grapes. Of course, weather plays a factor in things we can’t control, but so far, that hasn’t been an issue for 2020.”

Naturally, what has been an issue is the same thing that has impacted just about every produce company this year — the COVID-19 pandemic. Crown Jewels has remained open and adapted to the environment quickly and safely.

“We are taking temperatures of the workers before they start and if they have an elevation in temperature, they’ll be sent home,” Thomason said. “We are putting in more sanitation stations and putting up more barriers in the shipping office like Plexiglas.”

But the coronavirus isn’t the only challenge the company faces. Labor and lack of water are both issues that have caused concern in years’ past and continue to be challenges today.

“We are going above and beyond to make sure everything is clean and safe for our workers,” Thomason said.

The company has ambitious plans to continue to grow and expects to increase grape production by as much as 33 percent in the next three years.

Crown Jewels also works with other produce items such as Mexican dry vegetables (eggplant, squash, cucumbers green beans), Mexican grapes, cantaloupe, honeydews, apples, pears and pomegranates.

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