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Roger Pepperl set to retire after 40 years of produce innovation

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Produce marketer and former retail buyer/merchandiser Roger Pepperl is retiring after a 40-year career spent elevating the produce experience for shoppers through innovation, branding, and storytelling. Pepperl has spent 20 years as marketing director for Stemilt, a tree fruit leader based in Wenatchee, WA. The development of the Lil Snappers kid-size fruit brand and A Half Mile Closer to the Moon cherries are just a few examples of Pepperl's success stories while at Stemilt.



Roger Pepperl

“Roger never ceases to amaze me with his innovative mind, and ability to create brands and programs that benefit the grower, the retailer, and the consumer,” said West Mathison, Stemilt president. “My family and I cannot thank him enough for the work he’s done to transform our company into a recognized brand. His retirement is well-deserved, and I can’t wait to hear about his journey in this next chapter.”

Pepperl joined Stemilt after a 21-year tenure in produce at Meijer in Michigan. He bought cherries from Stemilt, and worked alongside founder Tom Mathison, to become the first retailer to merchandise cherries in catch-weight bags. The innovation transformed how the cherry industry sells fruit today.

“Roger was alike my grandfather, Tom, in so many ways,” said West Mathison. “He wasn’t afraid to try something new at retail, as long as it meant selling more and never sacrificing quality! His gift to see things that others cannot see has been inspiring.”

Pepperl joined Stemilt in 2000, moving across the country with his wife, Joni, and son, Alex, to build Stemilt’s marketing department from one designer to the seven-member powerhouse team it is today. He traveled the world on Stemilt’s behalf and volunteered his time and passion on committees and boards for United Fresh, Produce Marketing Association, and the Produce for Better Health Foundation. Among Pepperl’s many accolades include the first-ever recipient of United Fresh’s FreshMKT Achievement Award in 2017.

“Roger has a brilliance about him. He is practical, functional, and fun. He is going to be greatly missed around here,” said Mathison.

Pepperl will officially retire from Stemilt and produce on Dec. 31. He is looking forward to spending more time with his family, including his new granddaughter. He will also continue his passions of traveling, hiking, gardening and rooting on the Michigan State Spartans.

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