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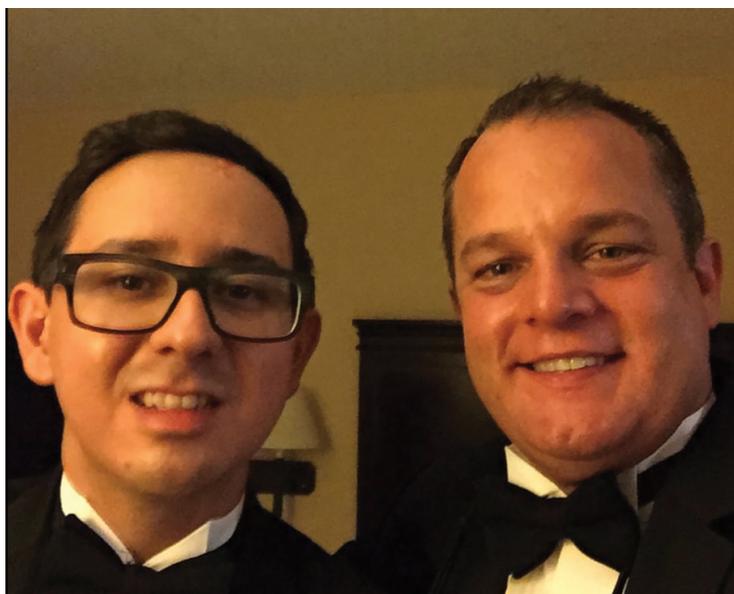
Epic Produce thriving on two-way Mexican trade

By

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Two-way produce trade with Mexico continues as the cornerstone of business for Epic Produce Sales LLC, based in Phoenix.



Peter Jurado, vice president of export

sales for Epic Produce and Art Miller, owner of the company.

Company owner Art Miller said the export of potatoes and other fresh produce to Mexico is his principal business. But the firm also imports Mexican produce when good opportunities meet demand. For U.S. customers, Miller can supply items like broccoli, romaine, cauliflower and celery when California runs short, “if there is nice quality and it makes sense.”

Miller’s Mexican customers are scattered throughout the country. This includes Mexico City and many cities near the U.S. border. “Anywhere we can get traction,” he added.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, “it’s been a weird year for us,” Miller said. “We sell a lot to foodservice companies in town (Phoenix) and there were closures” for either part of the year, or some restaurants closed forever.

Epic Produce does have a diverse business, which helped the company navigate 2020’s COVID storm.

Mexico continues to restrict the importation of U.S. potatoes to go only to customers near the U.S. border. Miller believes the rule is unjustifiable, other than to protect Mexican potato growers, but he’s lived with it for years. “The Mexicans spend a lot of money to keep our potatoes out of their country.” Russet potatoes are the primary variety Epics ships to Mexico.

At the same time, Epic’s exports to Mexico also include berries, fruit, watermelon, cantaloupe, grapes, apples, broccoli, onions and cabbage.

As in selling to U.S. customers, Miller and Peter Jurado, Epic’s vice president of export sales, are very selective in assuring that their Mexican customers are good credit risks. Collecting on unpaid bills in Mexico is a challenge. Furthermore, “you can’t get a federal inspection in Mexico.”

Miller noted, “We work with people that we’ve worked with for a long time,” to reduce risks.

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