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Spring deal looks bright for Divine Flavor

By

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Divine Flavor is set for a strong spring Mexican vegetable deal.

This will be refreshing, since the Nogales winter vegetable deal was challenging for Nogales distributors, and this included Divine Flavor, according to Michael DuPuis, quality assurance and public relations coordinator.

“Things have been a little tight” in the West Mexico vegetable business, DuPuis indicated at the end of January. “It’s been challenging for a lot of the industry, with low volumes. It was not what we were expecting. The produce has been finicky. So, it’s been tight on most of our vegetable commodities; not just for Divine Flavor. But it was a rough January for us.”

Looking toward a brighter market situation in February and March, DuPuis pointed to Divine Flavor’s close alliance with Hortifresh S.A. de C.V. and Agrícola Chaparral, two major Mexican vegetable grower-packers. Both companies are based in Culiacan, Sinaloa. “They have taken their success in Sinaloa to also produce in Jalisco and Nayarit.”

He added that the allied companies also share Divine Flavor’s commitment to social responsibility, which places a high value on good working and living conditions for all employees.

DuPuis said Divine Flavor has the longest working relationship with Hortifresh and that cooperation “and that has pretty much allowed us to get where we are. They have invested in the packaging, greenhouse technology” necessary to excel and persevere, even in difficult times.

Hortifresh and Chaparral both have the experience and resources to respond very quickly when the industry doesn’t operate smoothly. So, DuPuis added, as the West Mexican deal rolls into February and March, “things will come into fruition to meet expectations.” If a company has not the infrastructure or ability to react to the market, an entire season could be lost, he noted.

DuPuis said Roma, Beef, grape and vine ripe tomatoes, like Bell peppers, are all an important part of Divine Flavor’s winter and spring vegetable offerings.

“We want to assure that we are a reliable one-stop shop for conventional and organic products for our retail and wholesale customers. We will be strong for February and March.”

Divine Flavor grapes

Divine Flavor is a long-established leader in shipping Sonoran spring table grapes.

The firm's parent company, Grupo Alta, has invested a great deal of money to develop, plant and market special new, flavorful and colorful varieties.

DuPuis notes that customers asked for these varieties well beyond Sonora's May-to-July production period.

In 2019 for the first time, Divine Flavor started shipping from a new vineyard in Jalisco to extend the early side of Mexican table grape production.

Also, in recent years, Divine Flavor has made alliances with growers in Peru and Chile to produce these and other special varieties for distribution by Divine Flavor in North America.

Divine Flavor seasonally moved Peruvian grapes in November and December, with volumes slowing in January 2021.

In late January, DuPuis noted that "we're starting our first shipments from Chile." Those were being received in Philadelphia and California seaports.

For Divine Flavor, strong proprietary varieties arriving from Chile include Autumn Crisp, Sweet Globe and red-green hybrid Muscat Beauty.

Other special new varieties are a high-end type of Thompson Seedless and "a very, very nice Sable Seedless, which is black."

DuPuis said Divine Flavor's already-famous specialty varieties, such as Jellyberries and Cotton Candy are also arriving from Chile.

DuPuis said the 2021 Jalisco deal will mark the second season of commercial volumes.

Jalisco has an unusual climate in that it can potentially produce grapes 12 months a year. But the best time to harvest grapes in Jalisco is in April, which happens to be the ideal time to be in the market before Sonoran volumes begin in May.

DuPuis noted that Divine Flavor's Jalisco vineyards are in a beautiful location. The plantations are separated from the Pacific Ocean only by one mountain range. And the vineyards are planted on scenic rolling hills.

Antonio Escobar

DuPuis noted that since Carlos Bon, Jr., was promoted to become Divine Flavor's vice president of sales last year, Antonio Escobar, newly promoted to table grapes category manager, has moved to carry many of Bon's previous responsibilities. Escobar, who has worked his way up through the company over many years, has a broad and deep knowledge of the table grape business.

DuPuis emphasized that expectations for the Divine Flavor sales staff go beyond simply moving product to market.

The company needs for the sales team to communicate quality and flavor "and now how to get the best product to our customers."

As Escobar is focused on building grape sales, Bon is focused on Divine Flavor's entire commodity list.

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