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Perishable Specialist celebrates 20 years

By

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It was 20 years ago that Frank and Ana Ramos started the Perishable Specialist, customs brokers who take care of picking up produce at the airline, clearing customs and delivering it to its import customers.

“I don’t sell the product, so I don’t have any information on statistics of sales,” Frank Ramos said. “We specialize in perishables; we’re a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week operation and our job is to facilitate the import of the products so our customers can concentrate on what they do best, which is sell the product.”



Ana and Frank A. Ramos.

The Doral, FL-based company is a licensed customs broker by U.S. Customs & Border Protection, a division of the Department of Homeland Security specializing in perishables.

Ramos further explained that Perishable Specialist takes care of the red tape — customs, agriculture and FDA — to clear the product as quickly as possible.

Over its 20 years, it has developed strong relationships with customers that import fresh fruits and vegetables from Argentina, Chile and Guatemala. Berries is one of its top items.

“We do year-round blackberries from Guatemala,” Ramos said. “Blueberries we do from Argentina, with the first shipments having started in mid-August. We are going to have a nice flurry from Argentina, which will go on 2-3 months, and then we jump over to Chile.”

The Chilean market for blueberries is a “big monster season” in a short period of time, and that will take the company all the way through January.

When COVID-19 first reared its ugly head in March of 2020, imports came to almost a complete stop, and it impacted the company greatly.

“No one really knew what was going on; it was dead in the water for about three weeks,” Ramos said. “We’re now about a year and a half into it, and just like everything in life, people make adjustments and the wheels started turning again.”

He feels blessed that he was able to keep his entire staff employed and everyone has stayed healthy.

“There were some adjustments to operations where we had to scatter the shifts and separate the desks, but all of that seems normal now,” Ramos said.

Because change was required in all areas of the process, there were adjustments made by the airlines that also impacted how business is being conducted.

“Before, you would have drivers walk into the airline at the same time and be helped by multiple people at the counter,” Ramos said. “Now, everyone is separated, so instead of having five, there are only two, and the drivers can’t all walk in at the same time. What used to take two hours, now takes four.”

Still, business has been very strong in 2021 with numbers rivaling the best months ever.

“Our customers are trying to make up for lost time and sales and we are reaping in the rewards of that,” Ramos said. “Berries are known to be a good-for-you fruit. And with everyone being more worried about their health, people are continuing to eat healthier, and what better fruit than a blueberry.”

The Ramos’ are very proud to have reached 20 years in the business and look forward to continuing success in the years to come.

“Our secret is grinding — when you’re in the perishable business, you have to continue to grind,” Ramos said. “This business is not 9-5, it’s a 24/7 operation and you have to be willing to put in the time to get those rewards. Both Ana and I are in the trenches and know what’s going on.”

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