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Crystal Valley sees spike in value-added asparagus packs

By

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Value-added asparagus packs are becoming increasingly popular with Miami-based Crystal Valley Foods having several options for retailers and consumers.



“We have many customers reaching out about all of our value-added packs, including our value-added asparagus,” said Katiana Valdez, marketing director for the company.

She noted that Crystal Valley has an eight-ounce pack of tips and a 12-ounce cut asparagus presentation, as well as one-pound and two-pound bags. “There are a few benefits from the retail and consumer standpoint,” she said, articulating several of them. “1. They are in a controlled atmosphere bag, which helps extend shelf life a bit; 2. depending on the type of pack, they are ready to eat or cook; and 3. most of them come in a microwavable bag.”

Valdez theorizes that consumers continue to be concerned about cleanliness and health. “There is good demand for packaged produce that gives shoppers a sense of security. Packaged or value-added produce also typically comes with a scannable barcode which helps with touchless or ‘scan and go’ checkouts some retailers are moving towards.”

As Crystal Valley surveys the current asparagus supply situation for the fall months, it expects supply and demand to somewhat mirror the 2020 fall period.

“Although nothing is easily predictable with the pandemic in the picture, we believe it will be pretty similar to last year,” Valdez said. “We will have promotable volume for the holidays.”

Asparagus is an item that does receive good retail promotional support especially in the fall season when cooking vegetables are more popular. “Retailers do a nice job with asparagus by putting it front and center during promotions and making it top of mind for their customers,” Valdez said.

“Retailers can continue to educate consumers about asparagus usages and health benefits through traditional POS (point-of-sale material) as well as by sharing recipes and information on their websites and social platforms. In store demos are also a great vehicle for increasing retail movement and offer customers a chance to try the product perhaps in a unique way that they might not have thought of before.”

She added that cross merchandising asparagus with complementary products is also a way to increase sales. “Asparagus is popular prepared with lemons, meats (steak), and bacon so those products would be good to pair with the vegetable. It is also a favorite for spring and summer cookouts, parties, family gatherings and it is quickly becoming a holiday staple so retailers should cross merchandise asparagus with meats and other grilling and holiday essentials,” Valdez noted.

“It is also becoming a popular brunch item and can be added to quiches, frittatas, and other egg dishes,” she added.

She did mention that these are challenging times with costs related to the coronavirus continuing to increase.

“We have seen an increase in asparagus costs across the supply chain. For example, there are labor shortages which has caused labor costs to increase. Packaging and transportation costs have also had significant increases. These increases have had and will have an impact on asparagus pricing until things get back to normal again.

Crystal Valley is not anticipating any significant changes to its own Peruvian asparagus program this year.

“We will continue with the same mix this year and we do green and white asparagus from Peru 52 weeks a year, and on a limited basis, we have a small volume of purple asparagus four to five months of the year.”

As far as logistics are concerned, the company will continue to offer asparagus to its customers via air or boat shipments. “We try to keep a good balance between air and boats transportation in order to cover our customers needs and requirements,” Valdez said. “We always try to fly as much as we can, especially when air freight is competitive.”

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