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Garden Fresh Salad Co. team sticks together to achieve success

By

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Employees at Garden Fresh Salad Co., which is a staple on the New England Produce Center in Chelsea, MA, appreciate the camaraderie that exists among those working in the area.

In fact, working in the Boston area has been a key to Garden Fresh Salad Co.'s success, with company owner Patrick Burke noting how great a produce town it is championing all the city has to offer. Working in the New England Produce Center just makes it that much better.



“It’s a close-knit community and that makes it a pleasure to do business here,” he said. “All the bays in here are competitors but we also have a close relationship and it’s almost like a brotherhood. We’re all on the same page, we work crazy hours and we can relate to each other.”

During the pandemic, work slowed down a bit, but everyone pitched in and the Garden Fresh Salad Co. team worked together and gave their all, and kept the company strong.

“When you talk to someone outside the produce industry and you tell them what you do and the crazy hours, they look at you like you’re crazy,” Burke said. “But when you’re here — whether it’s the customers or other vendors, they all work just as hard and understand what you’re going through. It’s a great community.”

While things started out slow in 2021 due to everything happening with the pandemic, business has bounced back close to where Burke said it should be at this point.

“We expected to get back to this point, but it was still hard to strategize for the year,” he said. “But things are back to more normal numbers as we sit here in November.”

With the holidays approaching, he does expect that things will pick up even more than they had in the fall, and he’s looking forward to that.

Garden Fresh Salad Co. distributes to customers from New York throughout New England and into Canada. Historically, its customers are primarily wholesalers who sell direct to retailers and foodservice operators, though it also services retail chains and some one- and two-store independent retailers.

The company has seven bays in the New England Produce Center and a separate processing plant.

“We’re trying to keep current customers happy with good product and continue to service them as we have for the last 50 or so years,” Burke said. “We have a very large processing operation and we can do orders from five-pound units all the way up to thousands of pounds. The chopped lettuce and Romaine lettuce seem to be very popular. We have a steady stream of items. We do a lot of processing and those are all steady.”

With the pandemic, he has seen people leaning more towards the packaged products, which because the company works mostly for foodservice, it perfect for them.

“We have some things already to go in a bag and no one can put their paws on it,” Burke said.

The company, like most, are facing the challenges of labor, truck costs and truck availability, and is doing what it can with what it has.

“I think at this point, we’re all dealing with the same issues one way or another,” Burke said. “We have all stepped up and pulled a little extra weight from top to bottom to keep things going. We have a lot of people here with 20 years-plus of experience and that’s definitely helping us out at this point.”

Garden Fresh Salad Co. is always looking to grow business and will go into 2022 as it always has, looking for the right opportunities that make sense for increasing business.

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