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Rice Fruit Co. adds to winter apple offerings

By

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January 13, 2022

[Rice Fruit Co.](#) has been in business since 1913 and has quite a long history with apples. In the last few decades, the company has seen an enormous evolution in varietal mix and packaging. In addition, as consumers make lasting changes to eat nutritious and enjoyable diets, apple sales have benefitted.

“Our apple season usually starts in August and finishes nine to 12 months later, depending on the growing year, so winter apple sales are always an essential part of our marketing efforts,” said Brenda Briggs, vice president of sales and marketing for the Gardners, PA-based company. “We partner with our customers to provide a wide selection of Eastern grown apple varieties to meet the taste preference of their shoppers.”

Focusing on fundamentals has always been the key to Rice Fruit Co.’s success, working to provide consistent, high-quality, delicious apples with the right varietal mix, and making deliveries on time, every time.



Brenda Briggs

“We have successfully managed supply chain issues this season and maintain long-developed relationships with local and regional transportation companies to ensure on-time delivery,” Briggs said. “Our proximity to customers gives them peace of mind knowing we can respond quickly to their needs, with lower freight costs. Once we get an apple into the final consumer’s hands, the attractive appearance and delightful flavor will keep them coming back for more.”

Demand for Eastern apples has been good and steady this winter season, which Briggs credits to a high-quality apple crop, coupled with the company’s proximity to Eastern-based customers, which has kept apples flowing steadily to supermarket shelves and into consumers’ homes.

“We offer a mix of bulk apples, bags, pouches, and tote packs,” she said. “There is definitely a demand for that grab-and-go convenience item like a bag or pouch, but we have seen a healthy market for the bulk product. In addition, demand from our customers is thriving as they depend upon us for consistent quality and service with fewer food miles and lower freight costs.”

Since the pandemic began, consumer shopping trends have changed, and retailers have adjusted very well with these changes as there’s now a wide range of shopping choices, including pick-up, delivery, and in-store shopping.

“These changes and the perception of packaged food being safer increased demand for apples in bags and pouches,” Briggs said. “Social media continues to expand and is a great tool for educating consumers about growing practices and how their food gets from farm to table, or to share tasty ways to incorporate local apples into the everyday diet. We like to offer contests and giveaways to keep our followers engaged and interested in what makes our apples so amazing.”

The company recently added Ambrosia, Evercrisp, and SnapDragon apples to its offerings. These popular apple varieties have been well-received and are driving incremental sales in addition to more established varieties like Honeycrisp, Gala, Fuji, and Golden Delicious.

That’s why Rice Fruit Co., sees this as a dynamic time with so much opportunity. It’s now up to retailers to take advantage of all that’s available.

“Alternating red, yellow or green, and bicolor varieties on the shelf helps to draw the customer’s eye

and differentiate between their favorite varieties,” Briggs said. “Calling out promotional items on an end cap or a special floor display will encourage shoppers to take advantage of attractive pricing. Most consumers want an idea of the flavor profile of a new variety they are offered, and many also would like to know where the apples were grown.”

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