



- Advertisement -

Potato promotions proven to power purchases

Nearly 90 percent of consumers have potatoes on their grocery shopping list before they even leave the house, according to 2020 research from Potatoes USA and Kantar Insights Consulting. So how can you make sure these spud seekers come to your store for their potato purchases?

Strategic promotion is key, advised Ross Johnson, director of category management for the Idaho Potato Commission. “Most people are making potato shopping decisions based on an ad they’re looking at, so you need to ensure you’re advertising the right variety of potato products for your customers,” he said. “That’s where the power of Idaho comes into play, because the brand resonates with consumers as high quality and consistent.”

In fact, over half of regular produce shoppers say it’s important to shop specific brands in the produce department versus nonbranded products, according to new research from Foodmix Marketing Communications in Chicago. More than two-thirds of millennials and Gen Z consumers are likely to purchase branded fresh produce, and produce brands with an established story generate trust and engagement among consumers, the company reported.

“Through our research, we have identified that customers will indeed buy more at higher margins from brands who embark on sharing a true, sustainable story,” said Dan O’Connell, Foodmix CEO.

### **Idaho reigns**

Nine in 10 Americans say they associate potatoes with Idaho more than any other state in the nation, and 72 percent would be inclined to eat Idaho® potatoes over potatoes from other states, according to a Kelton Global survey conducted for the IPC. Retailers can easily leverage the Idaho potato brand’s popularity in their promotions and advertising with the IPC’s colorful, eye-catching in-store signage and other assets.

“This fall we created a special section on the IPC website [[idahopotato.com/retail/retailad](http://idahopotato.com/retail/retailad)] where retailer marketing teams that are building ads can download any Idaho potato images they need, from bags and logos to bulk product,” said Johnson. “We have sports for different seasons, along with holidays like 4th of July — there’s a lot there to have fun with and catch your shoppers’ eyes as they go through your ad.”

### **Eyeing russets**

Among Idaho potatoes, the humble russet is by far the most popular variety, so it pays to feature this tuber both in-store and in advertising circulars. Russet ads have been proven to drive dollar sales growth, up to 13 percent higher than the competition, according to IPC data.

“The russet potato accounts for more than 50 percent of all potato dollars, and the potato’s versatility generates traffic to the produce department and across departments,” Johnson said. “Potatoes are the vegetable that drives the highest basket rings — consumers with fresh potatoes in their carts have an average basket size of \$91.79 — and Idaho potatoes will drive more sales than other produce products.”

Promoting russets can also elevate sales of newer categories and items, such as gourmet potatoes. IPC research shows that 43 percent of customers who purchased bagged russet potatoes in a russet

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promotion also scooped up a package of creamer, baby or fingerling potatoes.

“IPC data has shown gourmet potatoes and russet potatoes can drive category growth at the same time, so merchandising them properly is key. Consumers will purchase a russet along with another variety because they solve different meal occasions,” Johnson said. “They don’t mind paying a little bit more for additional or newer items within the category once they are in the potato aisle. The key comes in the advertising and merchandising strategy.”

### **Building on displays**

Secondary displays are another effective way to harness the promotion power of Idaho potatoes, Johnson said. IPC research has demonstrated that secondary displays of Idaho spuds drive an incremental 22 percent sales dollar growth versus comparable stores, without cannibalizing other potato sales. In a recent research project, test stores that exhibited secondary displays of Idaho russets delivered a 10-fold growth advantage, while comparison stores with no secondary display achieved only an average category growth of 2.5 percent.

For extra support in creating a crowd-pleasing display that boosts in-store engagement, produce managers can enter the 2022 annual Idaho® Potato Lovers Display Contest. Each winter, retailers dream up imaginative Idaho potato displays that increase sales during typically slow months, incorporating IPC custom point of sale materials and recipes along with partner products from Hormel and Fresh Gourmet. In addition to awarding more than \$150,000 in cash and prizes, the 2022 contest includes a random drawing for a seven-day trip for two to Casa Marina resort in Key West, FL. Each entrant will also receive a free Idaho potato Manchurian ash six-piece steak knife set.

Product display entries for the 2022 competition must be up in the produce section of the store for at least one week between Feb. 1 and April 15, 2022. For more information about entering the 2022 Idaho® Potato Lovers Display Contest, go to [idahopotato.com/retail](http://idahopotato.com/retail).

### **Recipes for success**

Highlighting Idaho potato recipes on retail websites, in-store signage and displays continues to be a strong promotional strategy in the wake of pandemic-influenced consumer behavior, said Johnson.

One of the benefits of the COVID-19 pandemic is that it has driven consumers back to their kitchens and helped them fall in love with cooking at home. “People are looking for unique recipes and ways to utilize potatoes,” he said. “They want different ways to incorporate different potato varieties — red, yellow, gourmet — into their meal planning as well.”

The IPC provides an assortment of creative potato recipes that retailers can download to use in advertising at [idahopotato.com/recipes](http://idahopotato.com/recipes). Retailers can also promote this website address to steer customers to enticing meal solutions in the IPC recipe database, which includes more than 1,700 tasty dishes such as Crispy Smashed Potato Salad, Cheesy Potato Drumsticks, and Slow Cooker Pork Roast and Potatoes.

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