



- Advertisement -

Joolies adding visibility to date category

By

Tim Linden

April 1, 2022

[Joolies Dates](#), a three-year-old company focused on fresh dates especially the Medjool variety as its name suggests, was founded on the premise of bringing marketing savvy to the date category.

“Only 6-8 percent of American households consume dates,” CEO Mark Masten told *The Produce News* recently, indicating that increasing the penetration of dates is the company’s mission.

In 2018, date grower David Kohl of Kohl Family Farm and Greg Willsey, founder of Los Angeles-based consumer brands platform Venice Brands, launched Joolies as their company name and a consumer brand. Joolies has since acquired Desert Valley Date, a Coachella Valley date grower-packer-shipper with more than 35 years of experience. Masten said that in terms of volume, Joolies is now one of the top two or three suppliers of Medjool dates and perhaps the largest producer of organic dates.

The company’s core products are fresh dates and date syrup, and in early March it launched a new line of chocolate-covered date bites.

Masten and the Joolies team believe that dates, especially the Medjool dates, are a vastly underutilized fresh produce item with the flexibility to be eaten as a snack as well as to be used as an ingredient in many high-end dishes. “Lack of awareness,” is the product’s biggest challenge, according to Joolies’ CEO.

Amanda Sains, marketing director of Joolies Dates and Desert Valley Date, said dates have an identity crisis. She noted that many people confuse them with prunes, though there is no similarity when it comes to taste or their digestive impact.

Marketing research conducted several years ago revealed that ethnic communities are the main devotees of dates with other demographics lagging far behind. Joolies is aiming its marketing effort toward millennial moms who are also “well-traveled foodies,” according to Masten.

Dates are often marketed in tubs on a produce shelf below a dry display and not easily visible to the casual shopper. Joolies has created a display case that is upright and designed to stand out. The company has also developed environmentally friendly packaging and is offering dates in unique ways, including in a variety of consumer packs, snack packs and the traditional 11-pound bulk carton.

Masten said the companies packaging and messaging emphasizes that dates are “delicious and sweet.” He added: “We are trying to make dates more accessible.”

Sains agreed, reiterating that the marketing strategy is to bring “more visibility to the category.” The Joolies executives said the company’s offerings are gaining followers as it is the No. 1 date being

sold on Amazon, under its Ugglies brand. For its Amazon offerings as well as its retail sales, Joolies and Desert Valley Date have several labels, including Joolies and Date Shoppe. The “Joolies” brand is utilized for fresh organic Medjool dates (both pitted and whole), as well as for its syrup and its new snack bites offering. Date Shoppe is used for both the Deglet Noor and Medjool date varieties and is offered in organic and conventional packs as well as whole and pitted. The companies also offer dates in a number of other ways, including value-added products, diced and date paste.

Masten said the company’s marketing efforts are working. He revealed that Joolies dates are available in 3,500 stores in the United States from coast to coast, including in some divisions of the larger chains in the country. Sains said there is still a long way to go but inroads are being made and new customers are emerging.

Speaking of the current season, Masten said there are promotional opportunities available for most of its lines. He noted that Joolies and Desert Valley Date have been active in retail promotions with targeted promotions four to six times per year. Currently, he said the brand is engaged in healthy eating promotions for the spring and has also launched its Ramadan promotion, which features special Ramadan-labeled consumer packs.

As he surveys the horizon, Masten sees a bright future for date sales. He said Joolies’ efforts are bringing more consumers to dates and more attention to the category. “We are in a growth mode with 20 percent growth (in supplies) every year.”

[Tim Linden](#)

About Tim Linden |

Tim Linden grew up in a produce family as both his father and grandfather spent their business careers on the wholesale terminal markets in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Tim graduated from San Diego State University in 1974 with a degree in journalism. Shortly thereafter he began his career at The Packer where he stayed for eight years, leaving in 1983 to join Western Growers as editor of its monthly magazine. In 1986, Tim launched Champ Publishing as an agricultural publishing specialty company.

Today he is a contract publisher for several trade associations and writes extensively on all aspects of the produce business. He began writing for The Produce News in 1997, and currently wears the title of Editor at Large.

[Print](#)