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Big numbers expected at NEPC Expo

By

Keith Loria

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The 22nd Annual [New England Produce, Floral & Food Service Expo](#) will be held Aug. 24-25 at the Omni at the Seaport Hotel in Boston. As always it will include an exceptional line up of speakers and more than 100 produce and floral exhibitors showcasing their products.

“The biggest difference with this year’s show is the venue. It’s brand new, having just opened in September, and they like to call themselves a destination resort rather than a hotel,” said Laura Sullivan, executive director at New England Produce Council. “It has seven restaurants, a full spa, a rooftop pool, and what makes it different for our event is we’re able to host everything under one roof, where in the past we would be between the hotel and convention center.”

Now, the exhibit floor, educational sessions and reception are all part of a one-stop shop at the Omni, making it more convenient than ever.

“There is quite a lot of excitement and we have a wait list for booths this year, which is a first for our event,” Sullivan said, explaining the expo floor caps out at around 140 exhibiting companies. “We’re expecting full support from New England retailers, as well as some of those on the Northeast, and even some from outside the Northeast. We’re trying to expand our attendee base and we’re expecting a great number of people.”

The NEPC show is a great opportunity for retailers to come and see new products and hear about new services, and for vendors to showcase their new stuff or packaging, or whatever it is they want to display.

“We get great attendance from the buying side, both heavy retail and some foodservice buyers,” Sullivan said. “It’s a smaller show, a regional show, and a great opportunity to get facetime with every buyer in the New England area in one day.”

The show also has plenty of networking opportunities, a great reception and an educational aspect that companies look forward to each year.

“One of the changes we’ve made this year is to the schedule. In year’s past, the day prior to the show we would do set-up and then the educational session, and the morning of the show we would do the keynote,” Sullivan said. “This year, we’re going to be doing the educational session the morning of the show as a breakfast, then we will close the show floor down from noon to 1 p.m., and that’s when we will have our keynote address and luncheon.”

This year’s keynote will be delivered by Blake Bolden, a former NWHL player and pro scout who is considered the Jackie Robinson of women’s hockey. She will be talking on the topic of Overcoming Adversity with a Healthy Mind and Body.

“She not only broke the glass ceiling for a lot of women, but she also eats a plant-based diet, so she really is a good fit for us,” Sullivan said.

The educational component, which will take place from 7:45 a.m. to 9 a.m., on Aug. 25, will be a panel discussion on how to minimize produce supply chain challenges moderated by

Rebeckah Freeman Adcock, vice president of U.S. Government Relations for IFPA. Panelists include Mark Donley, vice president for ADUSA Procurement; Jon Eisen of American Trucking; Dave Patnaude, sales manager for Coast to Coast Produce and Joshua Noonan, director of delivered sales for C.H. Robinson Fresh.

“Everyone is struggling with supply chain issues, from transportation to gas to product supply, and this is a great panel of experts who are dealing with these issues,” Sullivan said. “They will hear how these companies have combated these obstacles and get some insight on what the future will look like.”

Photo: Blake Bolden, a former NWHL player and pro scout.

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About Keith Loria |

A graduate of the University of Miami, Keith Loria is a D.C.-based award-winning journalist who has been writing for major publications for close to 20 years on topics as diverse as real estate, food and sports. He started his career with the Associated Press and has held high editorial positions at magazines aimed at healthcare, sports and technology. When not busy writing, he can be found enjoying time with his wife, Patricia, and two daughters, Jordan and Cassidy.

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