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**Northland Potatoes wows with bold flavors at IFPA show**

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By

Keith Loria

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[Northland Potato Growers Association](#) has been representing and advocating for potato growers in the neighboring states of Minnesota and North Dakota since its inception in 1946.

The Red River Valley is home to more than 200 potato growers and shippers. This robust potato growing region is shared among the two states of North Dakota and Minnesota, with 72,000 acres of potatoes grown in North Dakota and 8,800 acres in Minnesota. Red River Valley potatoes are raised primarily for process (fry), chip, fresh and seed uses. These growers rely on Northland Potatoes to represent their collective interests in promoting potato production, marketing, research, governmental policies and programs and other areas.

That's why Northland Potatoes' appearance at the IFPA Global Produce & Floral Show was so important, as those present championed the growers of red and yellow potatoes. Northland Potatoes had a display booth that hinted toward an ice cream parlor, where mashed potatoes were scooped into a cone — an idea that sprung from Ten Acre Marketing, its new marketing company.

“We are in the 76th year of our association and this is the first foray into using a third-party creative marketing company to bring some emphasis and pizzazz to what we're all about,” said Donavon Johnson, president of the East Grand Forks, MN-based organization. “We think potatoes don't have to be this perceived bland vegetable; we wanted to bring some excitement to it and that's why we are partnering with them.”

Both red and yellow potatoes were featured at the show, with Chef Heather Schneider, local to the Red River Valley, and her original creation of new mashed potato recipes with some fun, out of the box toppings sprinkled on the mashed potatoes.

“We're just taking things in a little different direction than what's normal,” Johnson said. “This is all about our growers. We wanted to create a space that showcased our growers' high value potatoes and initiate conversations that will help our growers network with current and new buyers of fresh potatoes. This event gives them the opportunity to share their farm story firsthand and explain the quality and taste profile of potatoes sourced from the Red River Valley.”

As the calendar heads to the end of 2022, Northland Potatoes is ecstatic with how the year played out.

“Due to a wet spring, it was a late planting season and we didn't know what to expect for production,” Johnson said. “But we have been blessed with adequate and timely rains, warm growing days and a fabulous fall, allowing for a great harvest. With the geography of our area, the cooler fall temperatures ensure we have the freshest potatoes heading into storage until they are ready to ship to the buyer.”

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With the 2023 potato crop fresh out of the Red River Valley soils, buyers can look to the growers of Northland Potatoes to purchase a good supply of high quality, and great-tasting potatoes for their produce shelves.

One of the priorities of the association is working with research breeders to develop improved varieties that will create a better potato from a taste and quality standpoint.

“Our association is funded by growers, and we use those dollars to invest in research and we will continue to do that,” Johnson said, explaining breeders spend a lot of time and do a great deal of work on developing new varieties.

The association also works with growers to aim for continued improvement in other parts of the potato production process in order to meet the demand for increased consumer consumption of potatoes.

“Our growers always striving for increasing production, growing healthier potatoes and educating consumers on the nutritional benefits,” Johnson said. “The fact of the matter is, potatoes are still the No. 1 consumed vegetable in the U.S., and it’s a very healthy vegetable.”

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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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