
*In Memory of
Robert Sanderson*



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Jonathan Sprouts mourns legendary former president

January 23, 2023

Robert Sanderson, co-founder and former president of Jonathan Sprouts Inc., died Jan. 9 due to complications with pneumonia. Mr. Sanderson, along with his wife, Barbara, started Jonathan Sprouts in 1976, and the two have been credited as pioneers of the U.S. commercial sprouting industry.

Mr. Sanderson was born June 23, 1943 in Boston and attended Phillips Academy-Andover, and University of California-Berkely where he was a Buckminster Fuller enthusiast, active in the free speech movement and played in several jazz bands.

By 2021 when the Sandersons sold the business to family members after 46 years at the helm, Jonathan's had become one of the largest and most venerable growers of green sprouts in the U.S., and can be found in major grocers in the Northeast, including Stop & Shop, Shaw's, Market Basket, Hannaford Bros., Price Chopper, Big Y, Giant, Food Lion and Giant Eagle, as well as major foodservice distributors such as Sysco, Fresh Point, Costa and Baldor.

In 1990, Mr. Sanderson and Barbara helped found the International Sprout Growers Association, which will hold its 30th convention in Miami this May. Mr. Sanderson was president of ISGA from 2001 to 2019.

Mr. Sanderson's leadership as a developer and promoter of sampling and testing protocols has led to the reshaping of the sprout industry as well as the produce industry at large. He was on the steering committee of the FDA Sprout Safety Alliance to develop sprout a safety audit with FDA and USDA and was a frequent presenter at industry meetings, including International Association for Food Protection and First World Congress on Organic Food, where he spoke about risk-management strategies. In addition, the Institute for Food Safety and Health recognized Mr. Sanderson and Barbara as the 2018 Darsh Wasan Food Safety Award recipients. This award is given to recognize the achievements of individuals in the field of food science and technology who have made outstanding contributions to food safety or nutrition across government, academia and industry.

Mr. Sanderson was a devoted musician, playing flute and clarinet for the South Coast Tri-County Symphonic Band, several small instrumental groups, as well as playing at many functions in the community.

Mr. Sanderson is survived by his wife, brothers Colin and Ken, his daughter Samantha Sanderson, stepchildren Donald and Francie Brewster, and five grandchildren, as well as numerous cousins, nieces and nephews.

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