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Gumz Farms: Consistent supply, local sourcing key for retailers

By

Kyle Eberth, Northwest editor

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[Gumz Farms](#) specializes in red and yellow potatoes, along with yellow, white, red and sweet onions, and packing and shipping year-round. Currently, Gumz Farms, based in Endeavor, WI, handles almost 20 percent of the fresh-market red potatoes in the state and grows approximately 40 percent of Wisconsin onions, positioning family farms as a leader in the Wisconsin potato and onion market.

Led now by its fourth generation, co-owners Roderick and Richard Gumz continue the family legacy of consistently producing high-grade potatoes and onions for fresh-market retailers. Their message to buyers is to “continue to grow local programs,” said Roderick. “Consumers value that connection and will engage with opportunities to support local producers.”

It’s been a busy year for Gumz potatoes, with demand for reds steady and yellow demand increasing. The farm is increasing acreage on its yellow potatoes to keep up with the need for supply. “We see a lot of upside on yellow demand and are excited about the upcoming year,” said Gumz.

Similarly, the farm is adding 25 percent more pack capacity this year to meet increased demand, along with a number of labor-saving stackers. “We are continually looking for ways to capitalize on new opportunities as our path to success has been staying responsive to new business.

“Besides yellows in general, we have seen yellow B’s gain popularity and even some No. 2 yellow business grow,” Gumz continued. “Also, our consumer packs: three- and five-pound, have increased, which is why we are adding more pack capacity.”

Gumz Farms has tried to prioritize packing its own label whenever possible as an essential means to spread consumer awareness and engagement around local sourcing. “Most consumers want to know where their food is coming from, and we are proud of our heritage and proud of our farm,” said Gumz.

Gumz sees a trend toward private labels among retailers, a move he sees as counterproductive to local farmers as it hides grower and packer information from consumers. “They have no way of knowing where it was produced,” said Gumz. Missing that key piece of local connection and engagement is what Gumz wants to elevate.

“Every challenge is an opportunity,” said Gumz, who elaborated on rising costs and changing attitudes toward the food supply chain. “We are seeing more growers exit the industry either due to increased risk or age.

“There is an increasing amount of risk in the production of food and the reduced supply will ultimately make it better for the ones that adapt and survive,” continued Gumz. “It will be increasingly important

for retailers to align with producers to secure a consistent supply.” Gumz pointed to last year’s supply shortage of potatoes, “It put a spotlight on finding reliable sources and not just the cheapest,” he said.

He also emphasized the need to invest locally on every level. “Producers need to invest in people, equipment and buildings to stay in business. We are making these investments and hope that others do as well, to have a reliable food supply.”

Gumz Farms has red and yellow Wisconsin potatoes and a whole array of onions at year-round supply.

[Kyle Eberth](#)

About Kyle Eberth |



Kyle Eberth is new to the produce industry, but has grown up around it, in proclaimed "Apple Capitol of the World," Wenatchee, WA. For the past 14-years he has worked in the non-profit sector with an emphasis on brand storytelling, community engagement, and donor relationships.

Kyle graduated from Whitworth University (Spokane, WA) in 2007. He and wife Kelsey were married shortly thereafter, when they moved to Wenatchee to launch their careers. Kyle is "Dad" to Brooklyn and Hudson, together the Eberths enjoy skiing, biking, their family and friends, and playing together in the beautiful place they get to live.

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