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Date shippers in full swing for Ramadan

By

Adam Campbell, digital publisher

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No matter when Ramadan falls on the calendar, it is one of the busiest times for date industry. Typically, preparations for the holiday require a 10-week pipeline in order to ramp up for the increase in demand. This year, however, that timeline coincided with Christmas, New Year's and other holidays. For date shippers, that created an especially busy period from the end of 2022 well into 2023. "For us it feels very rushed," said Mark Tadros of Aziz Farms. "Ramadan is much closer this year and our sales got off to a very slow start. All of a sudden the market woke up and woke up fast. It feels like a rush to the finish line."

Ramadan is an important promotional tool in every date packers playbook. "We know its coming," he said. "We know the orders will be large and we know that volume will move." Based on the customer base, the grades shipped are traditionally very high. "I refer to these customers as date experts, they know dates better than most customers. This allows us to showcase the best of the best during this time frame and helps highlight the best of what we do in the retail space," he said.

The holiday becomes a valuable opportunity for exceptional quality dates to be eaten by all consumers, who continue to buy more dates every year. "Dates are coming into their own and getting more and more attention and credit for being a versatile, nutritious snack or a healthy addition to any meal," said Kristy Kneiding, manager of the California Date Commission. "As more consumers become educated on the health benefits of dates, coupled with easy ways to incorporate them into their diets, the more demand we will see."

The commission's marketing efforts are driving this messaging and working toward not only growing brand awareness, but more importantly, increasing sales. "Our marketing initiatives are really starting to highlight the fresh feel that is California," said Tadros. "Our household penetration is increasing in the United States and people are finally starting to realize that what we grow and pack is not only good, but good for you. Dates are great and the public is starting to realize why. The industry has done an amazing job banding together to research and market the potential of this super fruit."

March is the BNP Paribas Open — one of the most popular and highly anticipated tennis tournaments in the world — and the commission provides dates for the locker rooms so players have easy access to their nutrients. Dates are also made available to VIPs and the media and are integrated into the menu offerings for tournament attendees to enjoy. Dates are always a big hit, and are a unique benefit offered only at this Indian Wells tournament.

The CDC supports growers and shippers through a variety of programs including marketing, public relations, research and government affairs. Each of those activities raise the profile of California dates and lead to increased consumption in the category.

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