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Southern Specialties is evolving to meet the customers' needs

By

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Officials at [Southern Specialties](#) have put a lot of work into developing a company that could provide retailers across North America with a quality line of value-added specialty produce and private label products.

It appears to have paid off handsomely.

Founded in 1990 by Robert Colescott, who is still the president and CEO of the Pompano Beach, FL-based company, Southern Specialties had developed a solid reputation as a produce supplier that provides consumers with delicious, nutritious, safe and convenient produce for the entire family.

“Southern Specialties has spent more than 32 years ‘Growing in the Americas,’” said Charlie Engle, vice president of business development and a company employee for 22 years. “Over the years, we have invested in our infrastructure, farms, technology, quality assurance and food safety programs and team members to make us a company that top-tier customers, across all sectors, want to partner with.”

Colescott started the company to provide restaurants and hotels the highest-quality specialty produce items along with great service. After successfully developing that business, Southern Specialties moved into doing business with retailers through its Southern Selects line of produce, which was developed to meet the needs of culinary creators, do-it-yourself grill masters, healthy snack sharers and kitchen trailblazers. The company also developed its extensive private label program.

“Our packaging hits the sweet spot for those who crave convenient and flavorful dishes and take pride in creating new things,” according to the company’s website. “We’ve always focused on fresh gourmet taste, convenience, accessibility, and affordability — making our specialty fruits and vegetables perfect for today’s fresh generation.”

Eagle said that Southern Specialties markets more than 250 SKUs and will be offering some new items in coming months. “A couple of the newer crops we will ship this spring include snipped green beans and green onions,” he noted. “Of course, some customer favorites include Southern Selects French beans, hand-peeled baby carrots in a rainbow assortment or orange, asparagus and more.

“We have also expanded our avocado program to include year-round availability from several producing countries, Eagle continued. “Product reaches customers accustomed to their requirements. The company will be offering promotions during Cinco de Mayo in support of its avocados.”

So, what is the key to the company’s long success? Eagle said that it is a combination of being

responsive to customer needs and offering products, including the private label items, that can be brought to market year-round at a high level of quality and in various presentations.

“Customers may ask us about launching private label programs that would be better suited marketing a packer label,” he added. “We try to guide them through the process of evaluating this type of program and then work with them to successfully launch the program best suited to their needs.”

He is also quick to note that the market continues to evolve and that means the company must evolve with it. “In recent year we have seen consumers gravitating toward more packaged vegetables,” Eagle said. “At the same time foodservice distributors are addressing their customers’ demands to reduce labor costs for restaurants and institutions by offering more processed and prepped produce items.

He added that the company’s Pompano Beach facility, and product line, is set up to meet all those needs. Most of the Southern Selects value-added produce is packed at that facility and the company offers a pack size and style ideal for any customer.

“As a company, it’s rewarding to have traveled so far and have such great visions for the future. We look forward to continuing our enduring partnerships, and providing the freshest and most delicious, quality assured fruits and vegetables to our valued customers for years to come.”

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