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Divine Flavor, Sun World collaboration a game changer for premium table grapes

April 12, 2023

Grupo Alta announced April 12 that [Divine Flavor](#) and [Sun World International](#) executed an enhanced collaboration agreement for premium table grapes.

Industry pioneer and leader in table grape breeding and licensing Sun World International LLC and Divine Flavor, a produce brand representing one of the largest grape-growing operations in Mexico, have reached a strategic collaboration agreement to deliver more premium table grapes to North American markets at strategic times of the year, bolstering volume for key holiday timeframes.

The collaboration agreement will bring more than 3 million boxes of Mexico-grown table grapes to market, supplying South American product during the months of December through May, with Sun World's premium green seedless AutumnCrisp branded grapes being the primary focus.

The collaboration agreement was signed in Hermosillo, Mexico, at the offices of Grupo Alta, where David Marguleas, CEO of Sun World, was joined by Alan Aguirre, president and CEO of Grupo Alta/Divine Flavor, Carlos Bon, vice president of sales for Divine Flavor, alongside Petri van de Merwe, global licensing director for Sun World, and other members of the companies.

Two of the principal aims of the agreement are to ensure that consistent and promotable supplies of AutumnCrisp brand grapes are available for North American retailers and to introduce several promising early-ripening varieties for production in the chief growing regions of Sonora, Mexico. In so doing, the two companies aim to profoundly reshape the Mexican table grape industry, Marguleas and Aguirre said in a statement.

"We are ecstatic about being able to supply more volume of an excellent grape such as AutumnCrisp and expanding its availability at key times of the year," said Bon. "Divine Flavor anticipates delivering AutumnCrisp grapes from December to the end of May, ensuring volume of the mid- to late-season green grape from Christmas through Memorial Day weekend. We're the only company who is capable of pulling this off, and we eagerly look forward to the opportunity."

The agreement will contribute significantly to the South American import deal, but a cornerstone of the strategic agreement also involves Grupo Alta's newer vineyard in Jalisco — Don Mario — that produces grapes from the end of March to mid-May, as well as various parts of Sonora during the traditional Mexican table grape season.

Marguleas explained how and why this collaboration unfolded, and expressed his enthusiasm for both companies moving forward. "This strategic collaboration agreement between Sun World and Grupo Alta/Divine Flavor will result in expanded access to commercial volumes of new and superior Sun World grape varieties for discerning retailers and consumers throughout North America at important times of the year," he said.

It was nearly 20 years ago when Marguleas and Aguirre met and began exploring opportunities to bring new table grape and stone fruit varieties to Mexico. During that time, Sun World and Grupo Alta have worked together closely to trial new fruit varieties for adaptation to farms in Sonora, and more recently in Jalisco, Mexico.

“Grupo Alta and Sun World share a commitment to innovation, to consistently delighting consumers, and developing unique growing regions like Jalisco,” said Marguleas. “Together, over the past two decades, we have trialed new fruit varieties, gained insights into our companies, and have delivered several important new Sun World-bred table grapes to customers around the world. We are especially encouraged by Grupo Alta’s expanded supply of AutumnCrisp brand grapes during the underserved April-May market window as well as the bold footprint they have established on their own farms and with affiliated producers throughout Sonora where several promising new Sun World varieties are being trialed.”

During the signing ceremony, the two companies announced plans for replacing older varieties with newer ones, including several red seedless varieties that will eventually replace the Flame seedless.

Bon noted that Divine Flavor is constantly searching for the best varieties to grow, and it has aggressive plans to stay one step ahead when it comes to supplying newer varieties.

“Divine Flavor and Grupo Alta have excellent relationships with first class breeders around the world, and this gave us the opportunity to trial certain varieties which we believe are the future of the grape industry,” said Bon. “AutumnCrisp brand grapes have proven to be a clear winner as the premium green seedless in the marketplace due to their outstanding flavor, proper aesthetics, and ability to provide consumers with a great eating experience.”

Bon continued, “Being able to provide this premium grape variety during critical windows of the year, when no other grape company has, will be a major game changer for Divine Flavor and our grower family, that is exactly what this collaboration agreement with Sun World entails.”

Aguirre, too, commented enthusiastically that an agreement such as this one is a career-defining moment, which will have meaningful impact for both Divine Flavor/Grupo Alta and Sun World companies.

“This collaboration agreement between our companies is a major milestone for all of us,” said Aguirre. “I’m very thankful to know David, and we are very grateful he considered Grupo Alta for this opportunity to grow more premium grape varieties, which we know will impress our retailers and consumers around the world. Our journey started in 2006 and it has taken a lot of work on all sides, with Sun World finding the best varieties to grow, Grupo Alta as the grower, and Divine Flavor as the marketer. I’m proud and humbled to be a part of it.”

Photo: David Marguleas, CEO of Sun World International, and Alan Aguirre, president and CEO of Group Alta/Divine Flavor, shake hands after signing an agreement for enhanced collaboration on premium table grapes at the Grupo Alta offices in Hermosillo, Mexico.

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