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Spring melon deal under way for Divine Flavor

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With the spring season and warmer weather now the norm, [Divine Flavor](#) will be in full swing with its melon program for the next 50 days.

With offerings of watermelon (regular seedless and mini seedless), cantaloupe and honeydew grown both organically and conventionally, the Nogales, AZ-based grower-shipper anticipates a strong month of May in terms of volume and promotion for its expanded melon program in Mexico.



Elizabeth Smart, melon category manager for Divine Flavor, and Alejo Bay of melon grower Grupo Bay.

Divine Flavor's melon program, which is based in the northern state of Sonora on the outskirts of Hermosillo, normally starts around the first week of April, but the season was delayed this year by a few weeks due to cooler weather in the late winter. Although the programs were pushed slightly, the company anticipates rebounding quickly in the coming days, which will set up a strong month of May for volume and promotion.

Elizabeth Smart, melon category manager for Divine Flavor, commented on the importance for this season to continue availability and dependability throughout the next month.

"The season started now, and quality looks good and promising," said Smart. "We've added to all sides of our melon deal, expanding our organic and conventional melon commodities, which will be

essential for breaking new ground with our customers and their needs. Each season we continue to grow with this commodity, and this adds to our ability to be a dependable source of quality melons of each variety all in one shot.”

The company, whose melon program originated with its principal grower, Grupo Alta, has shifted to another strategic partner, Grupo Bay, a Sonoran farmer that has been producing for more than 30 years. Led by Alejo Bay, the melon veteran mentions the season will get back on track starting the first week of May and will have a positive outlook until production concludes in mid-June.

“Sonora is a prime location for growing melons because of the weather and most of all, because of the soils we have here,” said Bay. “This season, we’ve bolstered our melon offerings with increased acreage with each of our melon commodities, including our organic and conventional mini seedless watermelons, our regular seedless, and cantaloupes and honeydews. To help us be more efficient with our expanded production, we built a new packing facility to help with all aspects of the supply chain including quality, sizing, packaging, and food-safety areas.”

Bay’s company and Divine Flavor have been partners the past few seasons since they took over Grupo Alta’s melon production, but the two produce companies have history that dates to when he and Carlos Bon, Divine Flavor’s vice president of sales, were kids.

“There’s a lot of history between Carlos and I, as we grew up together as children in Hermosillo,” said Bay. “We’ve known the Grupo Alta and Divine Flavor family for quite some time, and vice versa. Our partnership continues to develop, and we are very excited to see the growth both on our side, and the distribution side with Divine Flavor’s client base.”

Smart said that having a veteran grower who specializes in the melon commodity has been a key to expanding the program.

“Alejo is as professional as it gets in this business,” she said. “He’s awesome to work with and his grower team does a fantastic job producing top-notch melon products from seed to shelf. He sees the bigger picture when it comes to innovation and helping grow our melon program, and his commitment to the commodity falls in line with what we seek with all our growers.”

Divine Flavor started its program the last week of April and the company expects to see peak production starting the first week of May. Though Smart will oversee the category this season, she will be adding two Divine Flavor sales veterans, Alan Morfin and Luis Rodriguez, to assist with the expanded volume. Melons from Divine Flavor are expected to be available until June.

Top photo: Elizabeth Smart, melon category manager for Divine Flavor, with Luis Rodriguez and Alan Morfin, sales veterans with Divine Flavor.

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