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## Frank Donio Inc. celebrating 90th anniversary

By

Keith Loria

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[Frank Donio Inc.](#) is celebrating 90 years and the Hammonton, NJ-based company continues to thrive.

“I’m incredibly honored to be part of my family’s legacy,” said Annie Pape, a fourth-generation family member of the company. “I get to continue on a path set by generations of hard work and entrepreneurial spirit alongside my mom, uncle, cousins and brother-in-law and that’s a uniquely special experience that gives so much meaning to the work that we do.”

The company’s headquarters and warehouse are still at the original location across the street from the house of founder Frank Donio, who was a first-generation American born in 1898 to Italian immigrants.



Annie Pape and Wayne

Kuehner, director of IT.

“The office and warehouse have grown and changed so much over the past decades, from an open dock to a now 185,000-square-foot temperature controlled warehouse with a full production room and state-of-the-art cooling equipment,” Pape said. “My great grandfather was always very involved in the community on a personal level, and actually served as mayor. The idea of giving back, and service to the community is something that has become a core value at our company. We work with the New Jersey Foodbank and other local nonprofit organizations to help fight against food insecurity year-round.”

The 2023 market demand has been ok to date, but the company is seeing the economy having consumers be a little more selective of the items being purchased at retail level, with people seemingly only purchasing more of the needs, and less of the wants.

Blueberries were originally looking like they were going to start early due to some early warm weather but it seems like that has leveled out. The season will most likely start the second week of June.

“Mother Nature gave us a nice taste of spring in mid-April for about 10 days, that gave us a little jump start on our spring crops, then pulled a Punxsutawney Phil giving us colder than normal days and nights for the past three consecutive weeks, and 6 to 7 inches of rain, which has slowed down some the spring crops almost to a full halt,” said Bob Delash, category manager for the company. “Warmer temps now are pushing things along nicely, and the quality is excellent.”

This season, Frank Donio Inc. will be partnering with a customer to do front-of-store displays to promote the company’s Jersey Fresh vegetables.

Working in New Jersey has been a key to the company’s success over the years, as it has to the many generational family farms that have thrived in the Garden State.

“Hammonton is known as the Blueberry Capital of the World because the area produces roughly 80 percent of the state’s total blueberry volume,” Pape said. “We play a crucial role in the produce supply chain and establishing trust by delivering quality fresh produce is just as important as being a knowledgeable and honest resource for market information and collaborating to create point of sale marketing and consumer educational materials.”

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The biggest challenge the company is facing right now is increased costs at every level of production — from fertilizer to seed, to labor and transportation.

“We’re combatting a lot of this on the farm by using a sustainable and regenerative approach,” Pape said. “We create our own organic compost for use on our farmland to put nutrients back into the soil. Using low till, strategic crop rotation, and regenerative pest management approaches like trap crops are aimed at needing less synthetic and chemical based soil amendments and pest control. Our goal is to be ‘loyal to the soil’ by investing in the health of our land to continue to yield high quality produce year after year.”

[Keith Loria](#)

**About Keith Loria** | 

A graduate of the University of Miami, Keith Loria is a D.C.-based award-winning journalist who has been writing for major publications for close to 20 years on topics as diverse as real estate, food and sports. He started his career with the Associated Press and has held high editorial positions at magazines aimed at healthcare, sports and technology. When not busy writing, he can be found enjoying time with his wife, Patricia, and two daughters, Jordan and Cassidy.

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