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Flavor 1st Growers & Packers has a long history in North Carolina

By

Keith Loria

May 29, 2023

[Flavor 1st Growers & Packers](#), which grows and packs more than 30 different varieties of produce from its Mills River, NC, location, has recently started harvesting in south Georgia, and is looking forward to a successful Georgia growing season.

“In North Carolina, we have veg plantings in the ground down off of the mountain. Here in our mountain valleys we are prepping the ground, getting plastic pulled and laying the framework to start dropping plants in the ground to get us off and running towards a successful summer,” said Seth Grant, who works in sales for the company.

Business has started off strong, which Grant noted is usually the case in the beginning of the year as people are eating healthier with New Year’s resolutions, and the company typically sees demand go up during the first couple months of every year.

“Veg items have already started in south Georgia, with quality looking good so far,” Grant said. “Tomatoes will start around the end of May/early June. With the warmer spring and full moon on June 3, we are anticipating the South Carolina crops to start a little earlier than normal. We are expecting quality to be good this season once they get going.”

North Carolina is home to the majority of Flavor 1st’s day-to-day team, and the company takes a lot of pride in being strong during its own growing season.

“We have a lot of history here,” Grant said. “Flavor 1st is a family-based company, and we have farmed in these fertile mountain valleys of western North Carolina for eight generations, dating back to the late 1700s. Many of our team members grew up in and around produce and agriculture in this area, so it’s in our blood.”

He credits the summers in the mountains of western North Carolina, with its long, warm days and cooler nights — coupled with the fertile, river bottom valley soils — to help the company produce high quality, great tasting tomatoes and vegetables.

“We will pick here in the mountains until the frost, which is usually around October 10,” Grant said. “After we are done picking here, we can continue to pick down off the mountain as they usually stay warmer for a couple more weeks.”

Working in North Carolina is vital to Flavor 1st, and the company is strategically located on the East Coast, giving it the ability to ship overnight to most everywhere east of the Mississippi River.

“If we can’t get there overnight, we can get there in two days,” Grant said. “This allows us to get

very fresh product on the store shelves, giving us a high level of consumer satisfaction.”

Flavor 1st has recently updated some of its equipment lines in the main packinghouse in North Carolina in order to help increase its efficiencies and put out a better end product for its customers.

“This will also increase our ability to produce more packages during the day, leading to more opportunities for growth,” Grant said. “The key to our strong retail partnerships is communication. With all of the uncertainties that we deal with in produce, unexpected issues do happen. The key to maintaining strong partnerships is constant communication from plantings all the way through delivery.”

He noted that people in produce all deal with a lot of the same challenges day-to-day, and competition among all ends up benefitting the customer in the end because everyone is pushing each other to put a better product on the shelves for the customer.

“I’m proud of our strong history of customer service, focusing on today, while also balancing an eye on the future and growth,” Grant said. “I think you have to maintain this balance to be successful and sustainable in the industry today.”

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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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