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**Trucco expanding blueberry program**

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By

Keith Loria

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[Trucco Inc.](#), the importing/distribution sister company of wholesaler A.J. Trucco, which has been around for more than eight decades, first operating in downtown Manhattan and eventually becoming a staple at the Hunts Point Terminal Market in the Bronx in 1965, is expanding in blueberries.

It's a category the company first entered about 10 years ago, and today it offers fresh, sweet blueberries from an international network of growers year-round.

"It's newer so it's not our bread-and-butter, but it's turned into a staple for us," said Tony Biondo, sales director for the company, who works in Hunts Point and in Vineland, NJ. "Everyone in the industry knows we're in the blueberry game now. We have blueberries year-round from all different growing areas."

Half of Trucco's blueberries are sold under the TruStar Blueberries brand, the other half are grower/shipper labels. Trucco's blues are packaged in 6-ounce, 18-ounce and 1-pint clamshells.

"We have consistent retailers buying blueberries from us year-round," Biondo said. "To solidify our standing with blueberries, we started an import deal out of Peru, as well as Chile. It's been great and supplemental with the domestic blueberry deals we have."

As of early June, the company was in the midst of the North Carolina blueberry season. The New Jersey blueberry season was about to begin with everyone at the company excited about what's ahead. In total, Trucco has approximately 500 acres between all the farms it works with.

"We have multiple growers in New Jersey of conventional and organic," Biondo said. "The crop looks great. The market is going to be very strong this year because there's a shortage and demand is exceeding supply."

That was true last year as well for New Jersey, but with short supply in Georgia and North Carolina this year, it's driving the price up even more. The season will go until the middle of July and then Trucco will work with British Columbia, where it has a strong grower.

Having been in blueberries for about a decade now, Trucco has learned that the key to success is consistency.

"People rely on our consistency for quality and service," Biondo said. "We have customers who give us orders 2-3 days a week and they always know we will have good quality blueberries at a fair price."

Trucco has grown exponentially in blueberries by about 10 percent this year.

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“That’s due to us having a stronger import deal between Chile and Peru,” Biondo said. “That’s only going to grow. We’re going to start earlier this year, probably importing by the middle of August, and we’re going to go all the way until May or June of next year.”

The biggest challenge is having enough supply with the market seeing such a demand.

“Just getting enough product to supply all of our customers,” Biondo said. “We have so many people relying on us for fruit and we do all we can to provide a great level of service and meet those demands.”

Outside of blueberries, Trucco continues to see strong sales in kiwi, its main item, which keeps it busy.

“We’re growing in all categories,” Biondo said. “We’re growing in limes, we’re growing in mandarins, we’re growing in kiwi. We’ve gone from a smaller boutique to something much, much bigger and a force to be reckoned with.”

Trucco is always looking for more retail customers as it continues to increase its business and looks forward to the future as the category continues to grow.

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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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