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La Bonanza registering solid growth in fresh and processed avocados

By

Tim Linden

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Though 2023 has been a challenging year, La Bonanza is still looking ahead to bigger fresh volume as well as an expanding role in the processing sphere. In early 2023 it completed the 100 percent stock purchase of its processing plant, Avo-King, and rebranded it LA Bonanza Fresh Guacamole.

Focusing first on the current marketing conditions, Maggie Bezart-Hall, La Bonanza's senior director of strategic sales and marketing, noted that it has been difficult for the past few months and it appears the same situation will continue into the fall. "The 2023 Loca bloom, generally available June to September, was predicted to be abundant. We set programs with our customers in anticipation of a great summer selling season," she said. "Mother Nature put a stop to that with unseasonably high temperatures and late rains."

Bezart-Hall said the result was small fruit and stressed trees. She added that the typically consistent summer rain has not been plentiful and the fruit is still having issues reaching its normal size curve. Passing on comments from La Bonanza owner Gabriel Villasenor, Bezart-Hall revealed that "48s will continue to be in very short supply even at the start of the Aventajada in mid-September. We need the industry to switch from 48s to 60s. Prices will continue to escalate on 48s and 60s. 70s and 84s are currently the best value for the remainder of the Loca Bloom."

The company is a 100 percent vertically integrated avocado company that has been growing and packing Hass avocados in Uruapan, Michoacan, MX, for the past 30 years. In 2019, La Bonanza opened its first U.S. Import office in Mission, TX. Currently 98 percent of its production is sold to the U.S. market.

"Our owner, Gabriel Villasenor, is committed to the growth of our company as a grower, harvester, packer, processor, exporter and importer of Mexican Hass avocados," Bezart-Hall said. "During COVID-19 he made substantial investments in land, trees, water reservoirs, an avocado packing plant, processing plant and import office."

Bezart-Hall said La Bonanza owns thousands of acres throughout Michoacan and in the past couple

years has added 700 acres in the higher elevations (6,500 feet) to improve supply in the summer months.

In 2022, La Bonanza Avocados completed an expansive renovation at the packing facility to double its volume capabilities. “With 10 baggers and 11 sorting lines, our talented employees can pack over 60 loads in just 1 shift,” she added.

The big news this year came from the processing side of the business with the purchasing and rebranding of that facility. CEO Alberto Chavez said the plant has been reconfigured for higher efficiency and new equipment is being added.

“Our new small cup machine has been installed which allows us to add two-, three- and four-ounce packs to already extensive line of options,” he said.

La Bonanza recently sampled the spicy Mexican blend, shipped frozen from Mexico, at the International Fresh Produce Association Foodservice Show in Monterey, CA. “Customers commented on the excellent flavor and the fact that there was no after taste,” said Bezart-Hall. “We offer year-long contracts and specialize in private label and proprietary recipes.”

She added that the company will be introducing a new retail design to market worldwide that will include the “Flavors of Mexico” as well as social media programming.

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About Tim Linden |

Tim Linden grew up in a produce family as both his father and grandfather spent their business careers on the wholesale terminal markets in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Tim graduated from San Diego State University in 1974 with a degree in journalism. Shortly thereafter he began his career at The Packer where he stayed for eight years, leaving in 1983 to join Western Growers as editor of its monthly magazine. In 1986, Tim launched Champ Publishing as an agricultural publishing specialty company.

Today he is a contract publisher for several trade associations and writes extensively on all aspects of the produce business. He began writing for The Produce News in 1997, and currently wears the title of Editor at Large.

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