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In a crowded apple market, bet on winners

With this year's U.S. apple crop projected to be even larger than last year's, how can retailers cut through the noise to maximize their apple sales? Next Big Thing, A Growers' Cooperative suggests you kick off your apple season with proven, perennial winners like Sweetango – its great eating experience, huge fan base and coordinated marketing support make it a sure bet for retailers, the apple's growers say. Sweetangos will start shipping from across the country shortly.



While apple growers typically don't show favor, Sweetango growers repeatedly rate this apple their preferred eating experience.

"The best-flavored apple is back! Sweetangos are sweet, with a touch of citrus, honey and spice — and that crunch," said Kaari Stannard of New York Sweetango sales desk Yes! Apples. Stannard is the board chair of Next Big Thing, A Growers' Cooperative, whose 50-plus U.S. and Canadian members grow, pack and sell Sweetango. She stressed the apple's versatility, noting for example, "I love eating them fresh in hand or sliced with almond butter."

That Sweetango flavor generates standout sales when it's in the market, data show. And the apple will be in the market longer this year as supplies ramp up, growers say.

"Sweetango's phenomenal flavor helps make it a standout in Nielsen retail scan data every year," said Brianna Shales with Washington state Sweetango grower and sales desk Stemilt Growers. "Retailers can make an impact on their apple category by featuring Sweetango during their high-velocity selling season."

So in this year's crowded market, retailers should bet on proven winners, Sweetango growers say.

They pointed to the value of getting on board with a brand backed by coordinated marketing and



sales support from coast to coast.

“The U.S. apple market is crazy, crowded and confusing right now. In such a busy environment, SweeTango stands out,” said Scott Swindeman with SweeTango grower and sales desk Applewood Fresh in Michigan. “SweeTango hits all the retail sweet spots: It’s got great flavor, crucial season kick-off timing, a hungry fan base and coordinated push-pull marketing.”

“Each year, the excitement surrounding SweeTango grows among both retailers and consumers. What sets the SweeTango program apart is its comprehensive marketing and sales backing at both the national and regional levels,” said Casey Jarrard with SweeTango sales desk BelleHarvest Sales in Michigan. “This robust support significantly enhances and expands the brand presence of this delicious apple.”

Retailers should place orders now with their SweeTango sales desks to ensure they will have fruit when fans come knocking, growers say.

“We have a large, loyal and loud consumer fan base that watches for this apple to return to stores every fall,” said Austin Fowler with SweeTango grower and sales desk Fowler Farms in New York. “SweeTango retailers understand that, and partner with their sales desk to work it.”

And sellers should plan to stock SweeTango for longer this year, as new plantings are now coming into production. “Retailers can capture more dollars to the apple category by expanding during the key August to December apple market timeframe,” said Stemilt’s Shales.

SweeTango growers across all regions report fruit flavor and quality is outstanding. Nationally, supplies will be up this year as significant new plantings are now bearing fruit. Applewood Fresh’s Swindeman reports growers are seeing a good mix of fruit sizes on the trees, meaning SweeTango shippers will be able to meet all retail needs — bulk, pouches, Euros, totes and a new three-pound poly bag — both conventional and organic.

“In Canada, last year’s crop sold at the fastest clip we’ve ever seen. That left us with a larger than expected gap for SweeTango fans to wait for this year’s crop,” said Dennis MacPherson with SweeTango grower and sales desk Scotian Gold Cooperative Ltd. in Nova Scotia. “With retailers and consumers hungrier than ever, I’m happy to report that the pipeline will fill quickly. And the season will be jammed with exciting promotions and even more opportunities for consumers to get their



hands on SweeTango.”

To drive consumer traffic into retail stores, NBT is coordinating a season-long marketing strategy with its regional sales desks.

“We will be emphasizing that SweeTango is no ordinary apple, it is head and shoulders above the crowd. We know that’s the SweeTango experience our fans have come to expect – and that new

fans will appreciate,” said NBT Executive Director Jen Miller. “For example, our ads will be showing this extraordinary apple in extraordinary places and extraordinary situations.”

To alert long-time fans that SweeTangos are back in market, while also creating awareness among potential new fans, the brand is buying “push” digital video advertisements geotargeted to SweeTango retailers’ markets. A store locator on the brand’s website, [SweeTango.com](https://www.sweetango.com), helps consumers find SweeTango retailers near them. SweeTango enjoys a strong social media presence across platforms, which the brand will help to activate its loyal fanbase to share SweeTango retail sightings.

Each respective sales desk will layer on its own regional marketing activities, including Apple of the Month in-store promotions from the West, influencer outreach in the Midwest and from the East cross-merchandising, e-commerce highlights, sampling, coupons, visibility in a pop-up grocery store and online ordering.

“Tailored SweeTango marketing generates significant lift and conversion,” said Tenley Allen Fitzgerald with New York’s Yes! Apples. “Our sales desks are ready to work with retailers to get SweeTango in the hands of as many of their customers as possible — including Millennial and Gen Z consumers, who love SweeTango’s high flavor and bitey crunch.”

Retailers can locate their region’s SweeTango sales desks at [SweeTango.com/about/for-retailers/](https://www.sweetango.com/about/for-retailers/). In addition to the regional U.S. sales desks, SweeTango sales in Canada are handled by Scotian Gold and Quebec’s Jean-Yves Boileau et Fils.

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