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Basciani Foods managing significant growth

By

Tim Linden

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To explain the company's aggressive business model, [Basciani Foods](#) Chief Financial Officer Joe Basciani repeats the business philosophy drilled into him by his father and grandfather when they ran the multi-generational family business: Keep moving forward, build more, always re-invest.

"We are very thoughtful in our five- and 10-year strategic plans, but we are always wanting to grow," he said, noting that the growth rate is aggressive but they do it in a conservative way. They add capacity with a clear plan of how they are going to increase sales in an efficient manner.

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In the past year, Basciani Foods opened 14 new growing rooms to its Avondale, PA, facility, adding about 170,000 square feet of growing space. Earlier this year, on a much smaller scale it added more square footage, doubling the space devoted to Oyster mushrooms; a logistics division to offer better deliveries to its customers and the industry at large; and another bagging machine to increase capacity to what is becoming a signature item for the 98-year-old company.

“Our latest initiative is the addition of a five-pound, patented breathable bag of sliced white mushrooms,” Basciani said. “It is for the foodservice industry but we are attracting interest from some retailers.” Two five-pound bags come in a 10-pound package.

The bag is the result of input from restaurateurs who were constantly asking the Basciani team members for a product that could check several boxes, including extending shelf life, taking up less room in the typically cramped restaurant cooler and delivering a fresher product.

“This bag is designed with versatility in mind for all chefs in various kitchen sizes,” Basciani said, noting that it was designed to replace the five-pound bucket of sliced mushrooms that is commonplace in the industry. “We have converted almost all of our customers to this new bag and they love it,” he said, revealing that shelf life has been doubled to about two weeks.

As an added bonus, the new packaging is more consumer friendly than the bucket as it uses reduced the plastic waste by over 1,000 percent. It is also provided in a smaller footprint than the five-pound bucket and is tamper-proof, which increases food safety, security and eliminates the possibility of foreign materials entering the product.

The extended shelf life has the added advantage of helping Basciani Foods expand its foodservice

reach. “We service the Eastern Seaboard, Midwest and south central regions daily,” he said.

Aside from its headquarters in Pennsylvania, Basciani Foods has facilities in Orlando, Chicago and Minnesota. “Right now, we have customers in about two-thirds of the country.”

Basciani is clearly very proud of the family farming heritage as well as the many individual family members that are still an integral part of the operation. His great grandfather started the company in 1925 with the next two generations each taking the organization to a higher level while they were in charge. Today there are 17 members of the third-, fourth- and fifth-generations employed by Basciani Foods and its sister companies. Basciani was the first member of the family tree to graduate from business school, but he will not be the last.

He quipped that when he was a young man contemplating his career in the family business there were many other members of his generation already working there: “There was no room for me yet, so I went to the University of Georgia to study finance and real estate.”

[Tim Linden](#)

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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