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Church Brothers Farms seeing big results from Tuscan Salads blends

By

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Church Brothers Farms is a vertically integrated family-owned and operated company that produces a full line of fresh vegetables year-round with an in-house farming/harvest program and state-of-the-art processing plant, True Leaf Farms.

Church Brothers has been selling leafy greens since the company was founded in 1999 and it now represents more than 70 percent of its overall business.

“Leafy greens are our largest and most diverse category for both foodservice and retail, from whole head products such as romaine, green leaf, petite romaine and little gems to tender leaf products like spinach, arugula and our Tuscan Salads blends,” said Loree Dowse, director of marketing for the Salinas, CA-based company. “Over the years, we’ve definitely seen a shift in what customers are wanting and asking for. These days customers have evolved past iceberg and spring mix, and are looking for items like little gems and our new Tuscan Salads blends with versatility and flavor. We’ve worked hard to give them that.”

As a vertically integrated grower-shipper, Church Brothers said it has a big advantage thanks to having full visibility and control over food safety, quality consistency and year-round supply.

“Success in this category is also about constantly looking at not just the newest product, but also how to improve on what we already have,” Dowse said. “Over the last three or four years, we’ve been really focused on variety selection, trying dozens of varieties to best suit different weather conditions and growing locations. As a result, we’ve found lettuces that perform well in terms of yield and disease resistance but also offer really great flavor and texture.”

Last year, the company saw considerable growth for both little gems and baby Romaine. This year, the launch of its Tuscan Salads line has teed it up for continued growth.

“We’re in the middle of transitioning to our winter growing season in Yuma which will last through April,” Dowse said. “The transition from the Salinas Valley to the desert has lined up well and so far the desert crops are looking really strong.”

The company sells to everyone from the big broadline foodservice distributors to national restaurant chains, to club stores, national and regional retailers.

“As with any business, strong partnerships come from communication and transparency are the keys to success,” Dowse said. “We are in constant communications with our customers about supplies and quality today as well as what’s in the pipeline.”

Church Brothers launched its Tuscan Salads line of blends over the summer and expects to continue to grow sales into 2024.

“We will also begin shipping out of the new facility in Salinas that we acquired earlier this year,” Dowse said. “We’re also continuing to expand our operations in Mexico throughout 2024.”

On the retail side, storytelling is important to consumers, and Dowse noted that consumers want to know where their food comes from.

“We launched the Our Roots Run Deep campaign earlier this year with the goal to educate and inspire people with our family farming story, so you’ll be seeing more from us on that in 2024 too,” she said.

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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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