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NWPB announces early kickoff for annual Watermelon Retail Merchandising contest

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As the scorching summer heat begins to blanket the land, the anticipation for the sweet, refreshing taste of watermelon surges. What better way to celebrate this beloved summer fruit than with a retail merchandising contest that not only engages stores but also delights customers?

Traditionally held from July to August, this year's contest is moving the date up to June through August, extending the excitement and maximizing the season's potential.

The decision to expand the contest period comes from a desire to capture the early summer market when watermelon demand begins to soar, ensuring that participating stores can capitalize on the peak of the season.

The contest invites retailers of all sizes, from small local markets to large supermarket chains, to participate and showcase their best watermelon merchandising.

Whether it's an eye-catching pyramid of perfectly ripe watermelons, a colorful arrangement of fruit baskets, or an inventive watermelon-themed aisle, creativity knows no bounds in this competition.

“Here at Chuck's, we welcome any opportunity to bring a little pizzazz to our community and support this amazing American staple crop,” said Kayla Beal, internal marketing/signs department manager at Chuck's Produce and Street Market Mill Plain in Vancouver, WA, a 2021 contest winner.

“Bringing ideas to life for our customers to get excited about is something we take great pride in,” added Aaron Carroll, produce manager of Schnuck's Markets, a 2022 contest winner.

Stores are also encouraged to use their imagination to craft mixed media tactics online as well as in-store that not only highlight the health, value and versatility of watermelon but also engage customers and ignite their enthusiasm for summer.

From vibrant social media posts and videos to interactive elements like tasting stations or recipe cards featuring delicious watermelon treats, the goal is to create an immersive shopping experience that leaves a lasting impression.

All varieties of watermelon are eligible for inclusion in the promotion, ranging from whole fruits to fresh-cut options, mini watermelons, and a spectrum of colors including yellow and red, or any

combination thereof. Judging criteria will encompass a wide array of marketing endeavors, including category visibility, point-of-sale materials, effective visual merchandising, communication of nutritional benefits, provision of recipes and/or selection guidance, as well as utilization of print, online, and/or digital platforms.

In addition to the opportunity to showcase their merchandising prowess, participating stores also stand to win exciting prizes, motivating retailers to put their best foot forward and go above and beyond to capture the hearts and palates of shoppers.

But perhaps the greatest prize of all is the boost in sales and foot traffic that comes from simply participating. By creating visually stunning marketing and displays, stores can draw in customers eager to indulge in the quintessential taste of summer.

“Each year, FCL and its member co-ops highlight watermelon through flyer and in-store features, and we encourage participation in the NWPB contest each year,” said Joshua Hubert, produce retail operations manager at Federated Co-operatives Limited, a 2023 contest winner. “We recognize that exciting and engaging displays continue to delight guests and drive in store experience. The NWPB display contest is an excellent opportunity for CRS members to highlight their merchandising skills and highlight our focus on seasonal produce favorites.”

The contest will kick off June 8 and will run throughout the month of August, with the last day to submit entries being Sept. 13.

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