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Innovation key for Superfresh Growers

By

Keith Loria

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Coming off another successful cherry and blueberry season, the teams at [Superfresh Growers](#) are diving right into apple and pear harvest.

“Our early varieties like Gala and Honeycrisp have a good crop set and moderate size range, with harvest well underway already,” said Brena Mengarelli, content manager for the Yakima, WA-based company. “Our growers are saying that harvest is wonderful this year with exceptional color.”

Apples are the primary commodity for Superfresh Growers. Last crop year, the company shipped 15 percent of apples.

“We are an apple industry leader, shipping 15 percent of the 2023 Washington apple crop,” Mengarelli said. “We are the largest grower and shipper of Cosmic Crisp.”

The segment has evolved in both volume and variety throughout the years. Back when Superfresh Growers began, Red Delicious was the primary mover, then it became Gala.

Now, focus has shifted to farming for new flavor and texture while still working to maintain the volume and quality of core varieties,” Mengarelli said. “Growing efficiency, increasing tonnage per acre, along with farming for flavor and quality are priorities as we move forward in farming apples. Older varieties that were planted for heartiness and color are being replaced with higher-flavor varieties that can be put into high-density plantings.”

Superfresh Growers has always relied on innovation as a key in the apple category.

“This mindset goes from variety and flavor to farming practices, packaging and sustainability,” Mengarelli said. “The apple category and the apple consumer expect more out of their fruit with each season, requiring us as growers to adapt and innovate in all avenues to remain relevant and efficient.”

This past season, Honeycrisp accounted for 30 percent of Nielsen retail sales. Looking ahead, Washington's Honeycrisp volume is expected to be down this crop season by approximately 26 percent, according to WSTFA, while Cosmic Crisp volume will increase about 40 percent.

"Retailers might consider substituting Cosmic Crisp to maintain year-over-year comparisons, especially since demographic data suggests that consumers of these two varieties are similar," Mengarelli said. "Moreover, we're seeing one-for-one sales for both varieties at a major nationwide retailer."

Speaking of retailers, she also recommends taking advantage of the marketing offerings and educational opportunities Superfresh Growers has to offer.

"Rallying your produce department to create excitement around the current inventory can make a huge difference," Mengarelli said. "Ensuring a neat and clean display with clear signage will attract shoppers."

Superfresh Growers also continues to grow and market its proprietary variety, Autumn Glory.

"This apple is at peak popularity during the fall season when its cinnamon and caramel flavor notes lean into the season," Mengarelli said. "We are ready to support retailers through various in-store materials, demos, digital media and online ads."

As Washington transitioned from a hot July to a cooler fall, the company has witnessed beautiful fruit developing in the orchards.

"Color and quality are exceptional, with the Pacific Northwest once again proving its reputation as a premier apple-growing region," Mengarelli said. "La Niña has brought cooler weather in August, which is helping size later varieties."

The company continues to maintain strong relationships with its customers, which has been a key to success all these years.

"Good partnerships with our customers come from our dedication to finding solutions and care for our relationships," Mengarelli said.

"We are able to meet apple demand year-round and support with marketing activities that secure us as a true retail partner."

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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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