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Sunny Valley riding strong momentum into berry season

By

Keith Loria

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Fall is a transition point for [Sunny Valley International](#).

“Typically, we wrap up our eastern stone fruit program shortly after Labor Day and position ourselves for our import deals,” said Tom Beaver, director of sales and marketing for the Glassboro, NJ-based company. “We are coming off of an excellent summer for New Jersey blueberries and peaches from South Carolina and New Jersey. Retail interest was strong throughout both deals, and we were able to drive promotions throughout the season.”

The company hopes to carry this momentum into the fall with its imported berry, citrus and grape programs.

“We are a leading supplier of imported blueberries from Peru and Chile,” Beaver said. “We work with some of the best growers in both locations and supply premium berries from September through March. We have both conventional and organic blueberries and are a full-service supplier for our retail and wholesale partners. We’re starting now with limited volume and expect that by mid-September we will be fully ramped up for the season.”

After an unusually light crop last season, Sunny Valley anticipates the Peruvian deal will be back on track for the upcoming season.

“Volume will start to ramp up in September and there should be excellent opportunities for promotion throughout the season,” Beaver said. “It’s too soon to truly gauge Chile’s crop, but all early indications suggest a strong crop. We are cautiously optimistic that blueberries will be a heavy hitter at retail from mid- to late-September through the end of the Chilean deal in early April.”

Sunny Valley markets cranberries on behalf of Shamong, NJ-based Whalen Farms, a grower-member of the Jersey Fruit Cooperative.

“We are also excited about our upcoming Jersey Fresh cranberry program,” Beaver said. “Primarily, we ship fresh cranberries in 12-ounce full-graphic poly bags, adorned with the

iconic 'Jersey Fresh' branding. We also do bulk packs. It's a great fall seasonal item and must-have particularly when we get into October and November. Our retailers make this program a fixture of their fall produce promotions. We're expecting an excellent crop of cranberries with full color this year."

For imported berries, it is all about quality and consistency, and that winning formula has made Sunny Valley a leader in the berry business.

"The varieties growers are using in Peru and Chile are top notch, with excellent sizing, color, bloom and taste," Beaver said. "These advancements in varietal development have catapulted the imported blueberry category to one of the most popular items at retail. The influx of custom packaging has also allowed retailers to differentiate themselves and move volume during periods of heavy import arrivals."

Sunny Valley works with a who's who of major retailers, wholesalers and foodservice buyers up and down the East Coast.

"For us, strong partnerships start with trust," Beaver said. "Our customers rely on us because they know that we will work harder for them than anyone else. We try to anticipate the trajectory of each crop to identify suitable windows for promotion. Our goal is to give our partners every tool they need to be successful."

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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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