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**Ocean Mist Farms has a long history of success**

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By

Keith Loria

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As [Ocean Mist Farms](#) readies itself for the upcoming Southern Innovations show, where it will be at booth No. 206, company leadership is thinking back at the last century of success.

**Ocean Mist Farms, which celebrated its 100th anniversary earlier this year, was originally established in 1924 when founding members Daniel Pieri, cousins Amerigo and Angelo Del Chiaros and Jim Bellone immigrated from Italy and landed in Castroville, CA — the self-proclaimed Artichoke Center of the World.**

It's here where they met and partnered with local vegetable grower, Alfred Tottino, and formed the California Artichoke and Vegetable Growers Corp. That was the name it operated under until 1995, when the company officially rebranded to Ocean Mist Farms.

Early on, the partners conducted business in a rustic tin-roofed shed with no electricity, no telephones and business was done with a handshake. The first crops were Brussels sprouts, broccoli and artichokes, arguably the most challenging vegetable to grow.

The team quickly realized that Castroville provided the perfect trifecta of year-round sun, fertile nutrient-rich soil and fog which provided natural air conditioning to the fields. These factors create one of the few Mediterranean climates in the country, which these founding fathers knew artichokes loved and thrived in.

Over the decades, Ocean Mist continued adding more vegetables to its line-up, acquired more acreage and eventually established southern growing regions for its winter crops. In 1988, the first winter harvest in Coachella, CA, yielded a bounty of vegetable crops effectively ensuring year-round availability of their entire product line to consumers nationwide. And back up north, by 1998, the company moved into its new cooling facility and corporate headquarters office in Castroville.

In 2007, turning its sights on the increasingly important southern growing region, the Coachella cooler and distribution center was expanded; and eight years later it underwent a \$20 million overhaul which increased the plant to 65,000 square feet, 25 loading docks and a new administrative office. This latest remodel firmly established Ocean Mist's presence in both Northern and Southern California, cementing their position as the largest grower/shipper of artichokes in North America.

Today, Ocean Mist Farms has grown its offering to more than 30 fresh vegetable commodities and value-added items including the award-winning Season & Steam line.

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“We’ve long since earned the coveted ‘largest grower/shipper’ claim for our artichokes,” said Chris Drew, president and CEO of Ocean Mist Farms. “But the knowledge and perseverance that positioned us to master growing the often-fickle artichoke, continues to drive us to develop, grow, harvest, package and distribute all of our premium fresh vegetable products to meet the demand of consumers nationwide.”

This summer has been a time of celebration, reflection, and appreciation for Ocean Mist Farms. To commemorate its 100th anniversary, the company has held a number of events which will culminate in a grand company-hosted family picnic in September at the Monterey County Fairgrounds.

“At the end of the day, it’s about our most valuable assets, our people, who made and make this company amazing, productive and successful — from our founding fathers, and the four generations that followed to the many people who have led, directed, challenged and worked so hard for this company over the past 10 decades. As the officer at the helm of this company during our centennial year, I have such a great sense of pride, mixed with a heavy dose of humility, that I feel for the achievements of the many Ocean Mist Farms’ employees — past and present — who have brought us to this milestone,” said Drew.

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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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