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Organic Connection: Organic produce quality makes a big difference in sales

By

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Suppose you needed a ladder to paint some walls in your home office. You go to your local home improvement store to buy a stepladder. You see many different options with a wide range of prices. Do you buy the smaller, lighter, cheaper ladder or a better-quality heavy-duty priced ladder? Basically, which ladder would you feel safe climbing with a full gallon of red paint?

What about shopping for fresh fruits and vegetables in the produce department? Some customers want to buy small sizes or second-grade product for a lower price. Shoppers may have done that years ago, however, there is a newer and younger generation today that wants better and healthier food and they are willing to pay the price to get it.



If someone would have told us 30 or 40 years ago that organic fruits and vegetables would someday turn into a large section in the produce department, we would have locked them in the cooler and thrown the key away. Besides, the amount of space back then was allotted to conventional produce

for the majority of the display area.

Today's consumers shop in modern supermarkets with larger produce departments. They are able to purchase a wide range of exciting items from category sections. These sections are literally sub-departments within the department. Organic produce now has its own section that is also one of those sub-department categories.

During the earlier years of the variety revolution, most odd fruits and vegetables were termed as specialties or exotics. About 10 to 15 items were displayed in a special section consisting of small wicker baskets. Shredded excelsior was stuffed between the baskets for added appearance. The sections actually included a few organic items. That is how organics was treated in those earlier days.

Produce managers had no clue as to what most of the variety items were, where they originated, how they tasted and especially how to present them on display. The era of variety produce was quickly unde rway in a big hurry without anyone having the proper knowledge and understanding of the category line, and organic items were part of that growing era of expanded produce.

Consumer health and nutrition awareness has been responsible for much of the fresh fruit and vegetables growth over the past years. Now produce has increased even more with one of the fastest growing category trends to hit our industry — organic produce.

Regardless of the impressive growth of organic produce, many supermarkets still do a soft job of merchandising the category. There are usually 12 to 15 items hidden in the darkest and loneliest location of the produce department with a soiled and tattered organic sign barely hanging at the top of the case.

Yet other supermarkets have committed to an organic program by displaying it like they mean to sell it. These merchants carry up to 100 or more items and even advertise three or four every week in their advertising flyer.

A big boost in produce growth over the past couple of decades, and especially today, is primarily due to the improved quality of organic fruits and vegetables in general. Overall, organic produce is superb in every way.

There are organic growers that are really doing a fantastic job. They have upgraded the quality of produce with hard work, patience, technology and especially by being good listeners to retailers and consumers.

Growers have committed much to the exquisite quality of organic produce we now have in the marketplace.

Premium organic quality is the dramatic driving mechanism that increases the sales volume of produce. With quality comes success. That's why you should want people to buy their organic produce from you.

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