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Trucco stays true to kiwifruit

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By

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When it comes to the booming kiwifruit market, patience has always been a virtue at [Trucco Inc.](#)

The Bronx, NY-based importer of a wide range of fresh and dried fruit and nut products became involved with the kiwifruit category nearly 30 years ago, when current CEO and President Nick Pacia, and others saw an opportunity to import kiwifruit from Italy.

“It was around 1994 or 1995 when I saw that there was a lot of potential for kiwi in this country if it was introduced correctly and marketed correctly,” Pacia said. “In the beginning it was pretty difficult. Not many consumers were familiar with kiwi. But we knew that, over time, and with the right marketing, we could build a strong market for the product if we explained the different varieties and encouraged the consumer to taste the fruit.”

Today, the company, which has a distribution center in Vineland, NJ, and has about 130 employees, offers its retailers and consumers three varieties of kiwifruit year-round under the KiwiStar brand (gold, green and organic) from farms in Italy, Greece and Chile, in addition to the full Zespri portfolio during the New Zealand and Italian seasons. Trucco has also started experimenting with a red kiwi product, grown out of Italy, a few years ago.

“There was no specific event or anything like that which helped us turn the corner on building a successful kiwi business here,” Pacia said. “I think we just started with the right strategy and found that consumers really liked the taste of kiwi — and still do — so it simply became a game of creating awareness of the fruit, it’s delicious taste and its many health benefits.” Kiwifruit is high in vitamin C, offering 150 percent of the DV in one serving, and is also a good source of both Potassium and Fiber.

Pacia is quick to add that education and quality remain top-of-mind at Trucco. “Kiwi has to be ready-to-eat, and we keenly understand that the fruit we offer must be high quality,” he noted. “It took us a few years to get our programs and partnerships in place, but we worked closely with our farmers throughout the world, to refine our processes which ensure the highest quality fruit across the supply chain. It took time, but it has paid off nicely for us.”

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Maintaining the growth trajectory has now become a major goal at Trucco. Pacia, who became CEO about 10 years ago after holding a vice president position for 15 years before that, said that the introduction of the Zespri SunGold variety has really given the kiwifruit market a boost in growth.

Retailers most definitely play an important role in the future growth of the kiwifruit category, Pacia said. “We need to work together to make sure the product is visible to consumers in various locations of the store,” he said. “I think the message to retailers is to simply give us the space, including secondary displays that could be at the front end, so that consumers see the availability of the product year-round. Kiwifruit needs to be on the shelves and on display all the time.

“Having specialized in kiwifruit for many years, I can tell you that this is an amazing fruit with a great future,” Pacia continued. “There is potential here. We need to work as a team across the supply chain from the growers to the retailers to continue to ensure success of the category.”

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