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Babé Farms finds success with Pink Rhône

By

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Babé Farms grows, packs and ships a colorful assortment of baby and specialty vegetables in California's Santa Maria Valley and things are looking strong at the company in 2025.



Sarah Grizzle

“This past year reaffirmed that demand for specialty vegetables is stronger than ever,” said Matt Hiltner, marketing manager for the Santa Maria, CA-based company. “Babé Farms experienced steady growth, leading to significantly increased plantings for several of our specialty vegetables. This momentum has us optimistic that 2025 will be equally — if not more — successful.”

Babé Farms was founded in 1986 and continues to farm on the same land today. While it has expanded significantly since the beginning, it remains family-owned and operated by the Lundbergs — one of the original founding families.

Santa Maria's mild, Mediterranean climate makes it ideal for growing a diverse line of specialty vegetables year-round. Additionally, the company's proximity to Los Angeles and the LA Terminal Produce Market provides a key logistical advantage, ensuring fresh product reaches customers quickly and efficiently.

Babé Farms' product line includes a colorful array of root vegetables, baby head-lettuces, its signature Blonde Frisée, Romanesco cauliflower, fennel, celery root and more.

"When taking into consideration all the different packs, sizes and colors available, Babé Farms usually deals with more than 70 different varieties at any given time," Hiltner said.

One of its newest products is the Pink Rhône, which exhibits several desirable qualities of Little Gem, including a sweet crunch, mild buttery flavor and glossy texture. Its appearance, however, resembles more of a European style lettuce — petite in size with loose outer leaves and a tightly enveloped core.

"What truly sets the Rhône apart is its intense pink color, which extends all the way to the core, ranging from wine-red to light-magenta," Hiltner said. "Available year-round, the Pink Rhône can find a home on any seasonal menu. We love pairing it with our chef-ready Platinum Blonde Frisée for a striking contrast on the plate."

Heading into 2025, Babé Farms expanded plantings of Pink Rhône in response to overwhelming demand.

"Since its launch in the summer, interest exceeded all expectations, initially outpacing supply," Hiltner said. "Our summer marketing efforts struck a chord with customers immediately and with additional plantings now online, we're better positioned to meet demand."

Babé Farms' customer base largely consists of foodservice distributors with a sprinkling of select, high-end retailers as well.

"The best way to forge strong partnerships with customers is open communication," Hiltner said. "In an age where orders are mostly placed via email, our sales team makes it a point to get on the phone with customers frequently to help nurture those personal relationships and prevent any miscommunication. In the produce industry there is a lot of give-and-take that happens behind the scenes — we help out our customers when they need it, and we expect the same from them in

return.”

The company’s growth strategy for 2025 is centered around building and maintaining relationships with customers and end-users.

“Getting our boots on the ground in key regions of distribution has long been a priority for us, but Babé Farms doubled down with the hire of Sarah Grizzle,” Hiltner said. “A recent graduate of Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo, Sarah has brought youthful energy to the Babé Farms sales team as the new outside sales representative. A liaison between the sales team and customers, Sarah has already made a huge impact by creating meaningful customer engagement.”

In addition, the company’s sales and marketing team is planning to increase Babé Farms’ trade show presence in 2025, further bridging the gap between the company and its customers and end-users.

At Babé Farms, being family-owned and operated isn’t just a title — it’s a mindset that unites the entire team.

“The Lundbergs treat each employee as part of the family, fostering a culture where everyone from our field staff to accounting, HR, food safety, sales and marketing, feels valued and invested in our success,” Hiltner said. “Our team thrives because we share a common purpose and commitment to quality, innovation, and strong customer relationships. There are quite a few employees whose tenure with the company spans 20 to 30-plus years. This collective dedication has been key to our growth.”

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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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