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**Sunny Valley International anticipates strong peach season ahead**

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By

Keith Loria

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[Sunny Valley International](#), a shipper and full-service marketing company, specializes in imported and domestic fruit, with particular expertise in stone fruit from South Carolina and New Jersey and East Coast blueberries.

The company's prominent South Carolina peach program is a cornerstone of its operations, with peaches directly supplied to retailers serving customers throughout the East Coast and into the Midwest.

“We had what I would consider to be a perfect winter, with plenty of consistent cool weather down in South Carolina,” said Tom Beaver, co-owner and director of sales and marketing at the Glassboro, NJ-based company. “This allows the trees to be dormant and get those hours of rest they needed, which contributes to a very nice crop with excellent fruit size and quality, and also excellent sugar content within the fruit. That was a real feather in our cap heading into the spring.”

He added that South Carolina experienced some very cooperative spring weather as well, so the peach crop is looking to be very strong for the 2025 season.

“We are just starting this week [May 7] and we anticipate it will be a fantastic season with great volume and great quality, really from Day 1 all the way through the end of the season in August,” Beaver said. “South Carolina has the perfect weather for peach production. When it cooperates, as it did this year, that contributes an excellent consumer experience.”

Sunny Valley has enjoyed a nine-year relationship with its grower partner Dixie Belle, a multi-generational family grower with an unwavering commitment to picking, packing and shipping only the best peaches.

“Dixie Belle has gone above and beyond to integrate the best varieties of Eastern peaches, perfectly suited for South Carolina's unique growing conditions, characterized by hot, humid

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days and cool evenings,” Beaver said. “Varieties are selected for taste, quality and cosmetic appearance, and excel in all three areas. Above all, they’re picking peaches that flat-out eat better than anything else in the marketplace.”

Dixie Belle also has a state-of-the-art packing line, which uses infrared scanning technology to identify defects that wouldn’t be caught by the naked eye. This further ensures that only the best peaches are making it into every box.

“There’s nothing quite like an Eastern peach in the summer, just for the excitement it creates and how synonymous it is for summer with the weather warming up,” Beaver said. “It’s just a totally different eating experience than anything you’re going to find from any other peach production area in the world.”

For the most part, Sunny Valley deals with direct to retail customers, shipping peaches up and down the East Coast and into Canada and going as far west as Chicago and Detroit.

“Our goal is to get the peaches in front of as many consumers as possible,” Beaver said. “We’re certainly top-heavy with direct retail sales but we also deal with high-quality wholesalers that we know are looking for premium stone fruit throughout the summer.”

In addition to peaches, Dixie Belle also has a small but growing fresh strawberry program in South Carolina, which will wind down at the end of May. “It’s a fantastic program. It started mostly as a direct-to-consumer program but because of how successful it was and how strong the varieties it has now are, we’ve evolved it to a retail program as well,” Beaver said. “It’s a great evolution for us and Dixie Belle.”

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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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