

JUNE, 17 2022

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ON THE H O R I Z O N

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updates

**CROP &
MARKET**
INDUSTRY INFO





MARKET UPDATES

ROUND TOMATOES

SC and Quincy are both in the peak of production this week, providing adequate and consistent round tomato volumes to the East. Quality has been good out of both areas despite extremely warm temperatures and occasional rains but we could see yields lighten up over the remaining weeks of the season as the weather takes its toll. TN/NC and VA get started after the 4th of July.

In the West, there are still light volumes of vine-ripes coming into Nogales for the next few weeks but the majority of production is now in Baja and East Mexico's hands. Baja is pumping out steady volume with nice quality and larger sizing. East Mexico farms are about to move into some new acreage so we should see a little more from this area crossing into McAllen. Meanwhile, three growers have gotten started in CA's San Joaquin Valley. There are a couple more on tap to get up and running next week, then Lipman will get rolling around July 10th. Current quality is typical for the beginning of crop harvests but should improve as farms get deeper into the season.

ROMA TOMATOES

The East continues to ride out the seasonal gap in production between Ruskin/Palmetto and the NC/TN region. There are a few romas coming from the limited acreage in the Quincy area but that volume is just a drop in the demand bucket. However, the quality is solid and color is good once the fruit fully ripens. We expect the next few weeks to be similar until the NC/TN region gets up and running after July 4th.

Looking to the West, there are several supply pockets in Mexico and we will soon see the first fruit from CA's San Joaquin Valley. Baja and East Mexico are seeing good and increasing volumes, respectively, while West Mexico's numbers will remain light as the season's remaining growers finish up in July.. The newer fruit has nice quality, but we are seeing some issues in the older fruit. All sizing options are available, but the mix is skewed toward the larger end of the spectrum. Domestic production is just about to get underway in CA's San Joaquin Valley. One grower has started in a light way this week and a couple more, including Lipman, should join the party next week.

GRAPE TOMATOES

There are plenty of grape tomatoes in the East with the volume coming from SC and north FL., where some growers have been in a flush this week. The Lipman farming team is winding down in Palmetto/Ruskin, with the majority of our grapes coming from the SC farms. Quality has been great and the fruit has sized down to the preferred level for retail pack. We expect some overlap with our VA program, which should start along with NC and TN in the first week of July.

Western supply is still undergoing transition with Baja and Central Mexico serving as the centers of supply for the Summer. One grower in Baja has been providing the bulk of their volume so far, but there are a few other growers with fruit and our Vizcaino deal has just gotten underway after multiple cool-weather delays. Central Mexico has light to moderate volumes of both field and hothouse grapes available. We should see more volume from these programs as they kick into gear over the next few weeks.

GREEN BELL PEPPERS

It's been smoking hot in GA, but they continue to provide consistent and adequate volumes of bell peppers to market. We do expect to see volume decline over the next few weeks as they move into the latter stages of the season. Quality is still acceptable but we continue to be on the lookout for heat-related issues. Both SC and Eastern NC should get started in a light way next week. Our crop in Clinton, NC has a nice fruit set and looks good, so we are expecting to have consistent supply once they move past initial harvests. First picks will, of course, be mostly jumbo and 2X, but we should see sizing options extend by the last week of the month. As we move into July, there will be a number of states with pepper including KY, VA, NJ, PA and others.

The Western pepper situation has improved this week, even though we're just a few weeks away from another transition. The Bakersfield area is in peak production now, but there's less acreage this year, so we don't expect any major influx of

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volume. Quality has been excellent and the fruit travels well but color is a little lighter than what we've been seeing due to the varieties that are planted. As we move into July, production will transition to the Central Coast area (Gilroy/Hollister).

CUCUMBERS

GA's cucumber production has peaked out this week and looks to be on the downside for the remaining few weeks of the season. Our Eastern NC program has also been into good volumes for the past week or so, but will also start to slow down moving into next week. We're harvesting from multiple plantings and overall quality and yields have been good. (About 60% of the fruit harvested are #1's) NJ farms are up and running in a light way and should be joined by MI and NY in the 10-14 days.

Looking to the West, Mexico's cucumber production is in transition, with a little product here and a little product there. Most Mainland Mexico growers have finished up but there is still a little volume available there if the quality works for you.

Although several growers have started in Baja, volume has been slow to come on due to prior cool weather. However, we should see things start to kick in gear by the 1st of July. Central Mexico also has cucumbers available from new Summer crops but volumes are still light. Quality is excellent in Baja, but some of the Mainland fruit has challenges and won't travel too far.

YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH

Squash production has spread out quickly in the East. GA and coastal NC will finish up over the coming 7-10 days but NJ has ramped up, and programs in VA, Western NC, KY, PA, SC etc. have also gotten underway. With MI and NY growers coming online as soon as this weekend, squash supply looks to be strong for the immediate future. Quality has been mostly good, although there is a little less good-quality yellow squash around than zucchini. Looking to the West, the Santa Maria area and Baja are providing adequate volumes. Santa Maria's quality isn't quite as sharp as Baja's but they do have stronger numbers. The Pacific Northwest is on tap to start this weekend with other CA production areas coming along shortly thereafter.

EGGPLANT

Plant City's eggplant crops are mostly wrapped up except for local business, but GA's production is peaking this week and next. Quality is mostly good with only the occasional hit or miss issue. As with most items, production is on the verge of becoming more regional. Our coastal NC crops are scheduled to begin in 2 weeks and we're 2-3 weeks from seeing programs get rolling in VA, KY, Western NC, and others.

Although still challenging, the Western supply situation is showing signs of improvement this week. Fresno has just gotten started and more of the early harvests have been the larger 18 ct size. But, we anticipate somewhat stronger harvests and a little less size for next week. Things look to remain snug until the end of the month, when Baja, Mexico and Bakersfield, CA get started.

GREEN BEANS

Although GA will still have beans for another week or so, Eastern production has made the transition to coastal NC and VA. TN and NY are also expected to get underway over the next few weeks, so supply looks to be consistent for the immediate future. Overall quality is good with no major issues from any area. There are several areas (Baja in Mexico and Fresno, Watsonville and Brentwood in CA) with beans in the West, but no big volume in any one place. Until areas with more acreage come into production, we'll need to source from multiple districts to cover load volume.

COLORED BELL PEPPERS

Canada's colored pepper production is in a lull this week as it works through a downturn in the production cycle. Reds and oranges are snug, but there is a good amount of yellows available. Fruit quality and sizing are good, and we should work back into more normal volumes in 10-14 days. Down south, Central Mexico has been slow to get rolling but there is a limited amount of new crop fruit crossing into the US. So far, everything is on the larger end of the size spectrum and quality is beautiful. Production should pick up in about 2 weeks.

TOV's (Tomato-on-the-Vine)

With minimal volumes of Mexican fruit for the Summer, TOV supply is coming from several domestic areas (CA, TX, UT, etc) and both Eastern and Western Canada. Volume is adequate to meet demand and there are no major quality issues.

MINI SWEET PEPPERS

Mini sweet volumes continue to be limited this week as we wait for Baja's crops to get started. Their season has been delayed due to a period of cool temperatures during the growing cycle that hasn't allowed the fruit to color up. We'll limp along with the remaining Mainland Mexico product until new Baja crops get started... likely within the next 10-14 days.

ORGANIC ROMAS

Western Mexico is winding down on organic romas, making way for the newer crops coming out of Baja and Central Mexico. Availability has been consistent but we expect to see more volume in Baja over the coming weeks. Overall, quality is good.

ORGANIC GRAPES

Light to moderate volumes of organic grapes are available in Mexico. Baja has now started production in a light way and expects to see harvests pick up as we move into July. Central Mexico farms are plugging along, providing a relatively steady source of supply. Now that the older crops are out of the picture, quality has improved and is good.

ORGANIC MINI CUCUMBERS

Excellent volumes are available as two of Baja's growers are flushing and there's still product available from Mainland Mexico.



NEWS IN THE INDUSTRY

Ultrafast Grocery Delivery Isn't a Priority for Most Consumers: Stor.ai

By: **Jeniece Drake**

[WINSIGHTGROCERYBUSINESS.COM](https://www.winsightgrocerybusiness.com)

June 15, 2022

While ultrafast grocery delivery appeals to some consumers, it is not a popular choice for the general population, according to a report published June 15 by Stor.ai, a digital strategy partner for grocery retailers and wholesalers. The report further finds that many consumers also are not willing to pay a premium for the service.

Of approximately 1,000 U.S. consumers surveyed, the majority (57.5%) said they are not willing to pay premium fees for ultrafast delivery. Less than 2% of consumers said they would be "very likely" to pay premium fees.

The report went on to reveal that 26.9% of U.S. consumers said they would "more likely" use online delivery platforms more often if the user experience were improved (among consumers ages 25 to 34, 36% agreed with the statement). More than one in five (22%) said that the greatest inconvenience of using online grocery delivery is out-of-stock items.

"Grocery shopping is undergoing an era-defining transition," Mendel Gniwisch, CEO of Stor.ai, said in a news release. "In an age of instant gratification, there is a common misconception that shoppers crave speedy deliveries; instead, this report has demonstrated that customers prioritize fulfillment."

Other report findings include information regarding in-store grocery shopping and online grocery shopping: 37.2% of U.S. consumers said they exclusively shop in-store; 22.7% mostly shop in-store; 25.5% are more likely to shop in grocery stores that have digital tools (for consumers between the ages of 25-34, that number rose to 32.5%); 2.6% said they use online grocery services exclusively; 23.3% use online grocery services at least once a month; and 7.2% use online grocery services on a weekly basis.

Additionally, participants in the survey were asked what causes the most inconvenience when using online grocery delivery services: 22% of consumers said out-of-stock items, 7.8% said lack of product choice, 5.7% said lack of convenient delivery availability and 4.5% said a clunky interface.

"Grocery retailers today need to focus on the convenience and simplicity that characterize online shopping at its best and fuse these characteristics with the experiential peaks of in-store shopping, especially at local establishments," Gniwisch said. "Simultaneously, retailers need to find ways to implement this hybrid offering to boost their bottom lines and secure a profitable future for their business."



NEWS IN THE RESTAURANT WORLD

4 RIVERS SMOKEHOUSE DEBUTS AN 'INFLATION MENU' TO CUSHION RISING PRICE

[RESTAURANTBUSINESSONLINE.COM](https://restaurantbusinessonline.com)

By Patricia Cobe

Mar. 15, 2022

In the last year, CEO John Rivers raised menu prices twice at the 17 locations of his fast-casual concept, 4 Rivers Smokehouse.

"The price of brisket increased 101% year over year," said Rivers, whose signature house-smoked Angus brisket is menued in sandwiches, platters, tacos and more. "Food costs went up by double digits, and every projection going forward was bleak. But if we raised menu prices again, we would outprice our customer. We couldn't charge \$20 for a brisket sandwich." Pork, another menu mainstay, is now 15% higher.

So Rivers and his team came up with an outside-the-box idea: Why don't we lower prices and serve larger portions?

If that sounds like a formula for failure, think again. The team came up with 50 menu items, since whittled down to 12, that could run on a limited-time menu, a few at a time. All are culinary-inspired and nothing is priced above \$9.99.

Several names were thrown around by the marketing team to identify this new menu section, but Rivers said, "let's call it what it is, an 'inflation menu,' and that's what we went with."

The menu launched in January with the intent to fill the inflation gap until the supply chain loosens up and costs start coming down. The strategy—serve slightly smaller meat portions, rounding them out with trend-forward complementary ingredients, many of which are house-made.

The Barbacoa Bowl in the current lineup illustrates this strategy. It comes with a choice of a protein (smoked brisket, pulled pork or chicken) or layered vegetables, along with shredded lettuce, rice, black beans, cilantro-lime creme fraiche, guasacaca (avocado sauce), cilantro-onion salsa and queso fresco. It shares the menu with the Buffalo Chicken Mac Attack—chicken tossed with buffalo sauce, french fries, mac and cheese, jalapenos, queso fresco and cilantro and served with a side of ranch or blue cheese.

"The goal was to use what we had on hand, since every time you add a new ingredient, food costs go up," said Rivers.

He will rotate new items onto the Inflation Menu every 45 days or so, continuing to offer great value to customers while keeping food costs in check. Since its inception, "we reduced food costs by 40% and guests get more volume of food," he said.

As with many restaurants, supply challenges have also impacted 4 Rivers' menu. When wing concepts proliferated, Rivers pulled wings from his menu because of short supply and high prices. Another item came off because it wasn't selling.

"We offered roasted cauliflower in buffalo sauce as a healthier option for our bowls," said Rivers, "but people don't come to a barbecue restaurant to eat cauliflower."

Several items are in the works to rotate onto the Inflation Menu next, including a burrito and a pork torta. 4 Rivers is also looking at seafood items to add, perhaps smoking fish for another protein option. "We're having a lot of fun with this menu," said Rivers.



UPCOMING EVENTS:

July 13-14, 2022

Organic Produce Summit Monterey

Conference Center Monterey, CA

www.organicproducesummit.com

Lipman will be at booth 416!

JULY 28-29, 2022

IFPA Foodservice show

Monterey, CA

www.freshproduce.com/events/the-foodservice-conference/

Lipman will be at booth 100!

October 27-29, 2022

IFPA's Global Produce & Floral Show

Orange County Convention Center

Orlando, FL

www.freshproduce.com/events

Lipman will be at booth 3462!

PRODUCE BAROMETER:

ITEM	QUALITY	PRICING
Bell Pepper	Good	Higher
Cucumber	Good	Steady to Higher
Eggplant	Varied	Steady to Higher
Green Beans	Good	Lower
Chili's	Good	Steady
Squash-Hard	Varied	Steady to Higher
Squash-Soft	Good	Lower
Tomatoes	Good	Steady



ETHNIC SPARKS OF FLAVOR

[@FOODBYMARIA](https://www.instagram.com/FOODBYMARIA)

This is one of my absolutely FAVORITE dishes- Greek green beans with an incredibly lush tomato sauce. Growing up I remember standing over the stovetop while my YiaYia and Mom were cooking and taking in this divine aroma of all sorts of ingredients. I ALWAYS grabbed a slice of bread to sneak a taste part way through cooking- because honestly, the sauce is JUST TOO HEAVENLY not to. There is definitely something to be said about this combination, how warm it makes you feel and all of the special memories that flow through my mind while making it!

[Click to see the full recipes in our Summer '22 Newsbites Edition](#)