



Fruit for Thought

Fall 2024



Fresh Frozen Fruit a Key Ingredient to Elevate Drink Menus



Schools Offering Prepared, Healthy Meals to Boost Student Nutrition



Grower Q&A: Craig Arnold, Arnold Farms



From Processing Peaches to Talking Politics



IQF FRUITS

Fresh Frozen Fruit a Key Ingredient to Elevate Drink Menus

In today's evolving foodservice landscape, consumers are increasingly seeking beverages that not only refresh but also excite their taste buds, deliver health benefits, and align with their wellness goals. Wawona Frozen Foods, known for its premium selection of fresh frozen fruits, is perfectly positioned to help restaurant operators meet these rising trends with versatile offerings that can elevate any drink menu.

Hard Kombucha: 57% Growth on Menus Over Four Years

This fermented tea offers probiotics and is aligned with health-conscious consumers looking for functional beverages. A twist on this popular drink is hard kombucha, which includes alcohol, providing a healthy buzz while keeping in tune with wellness goals. **Wawona's frozen peaches, strawberries, and mangos** make perfect additions to kombucha drinks. A strawberry-peach hard kombucha, for instance,



Working with major foodservice operations, my customers have told me that Wawona's frozen fruits provide a burst of fresh fruit flavor to many beverages and cocktails. The fruits are available in various styles—from slices to cubes or purees—which make it easy for foodservice operators to reduce loss and improve speed to service."

Marci Clark
Director of Sales, Wawona Frozen Foods

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Fresh Frozen Fruit a Key Ingredient to Elevate Drink Menus

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combines tart and sweet flavors, offering a unique drink that rides both the health and flavor trends.

Savory Cocktails: A Growing Trend of Bold Flavors

Bartenders have been experimenting with bold flavors, unique garnishes, and innovative ingredients. A Barbacoa Margarita with pineapple and a chorizo garnish, and a Al Pastor Margarita featuring grilled pineapple, showcase how savory and fruity elements can blend into refreshing, spicy beverages. **Wawona's pineapples** are a great option to feature in these cocktails, offering vibrant tropical flavor and a consistent quality that bartenders can rely on. Grilled pineapple margaritas are easy to craft with **Wawona fruits**, turning traditional cocktails into standout drinks.

Mocktails & Mangonada: 35% Growth in the Past Year

Mocktails have seen growth in the past year as consumers seek flavorful, non-alcoholic alternatives. One such drink is the Mangonada, which has experienced a 23% increase in popularity. This

Mexican-inspired beverage combines mango with a tangy, spicy kick of chamoy and Tajín, a match made in heaven with **Wawona's mangos**. Similarly, Peach Nectar is seeing a surge, with a 63% growth rate over the past year. **Wawona's perfectly ripened fresh frozen peaches** allow foodservice operators to create a rich and delicious peach nectar, perfect for both standalone beverages and cocktail bases.

Blends & Smoothies: A Consistent Favorite

Blended drinks, especially smoothies, remain a favorite

among consumers. New twists on classic beverages often involve adding a blend of fruit juices or carbonated drinks to create something fresh.

Wawona's wide range of fruits – like strawberries, blueberries, and mangos – can be effortlessly integrated into smoothies or other blended beverages. Wawona also has a variety of different mixed fruit blends that minimize prep and labor.

Add a Spicy Kick with Tajín® Fraddies

One spice seeing a rise in beverage popularity is Tajín, a chili-lime seasoning that perfectly complements fruit-based drinks. Wawona is already ahead of the curve with its **Tajín Fraddies**, a spicy, fruity delight that combines the refreshing sweetness of their frozen fruit with the tangy kick of Tajín. This product is perfect for adding a bit of flair to drinks like Mangonadas or mocktails.



Tajín Fraddies



With the rise of kombucha, savory cocktails, mocktails, and blended beverages, the beverage scene in foodservice is transforming rapidly. Wawona's premium frozen fruit selection offers endless possibilities to innovate and stay on trend.

Statistics and information on beverage trends from Datassential



Sparkling Wine with Peach Purée




SCHOOLS

Schools Offering Prepared, Healthier Meals to Boost Student Nutrition

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has long regulated school meal programs, providing nutrition guidelines for public schools to serve healthy dishes and limit “junk foods” in vending machines.

Lunches must have five food components (milk, fruits, vegetables, grains and meat) while breakfast must include milk, fruits and grains.

Recently, with the help of funding from states as well as charity foundations, two innovative approaches are further raising the health bar in school meal programs: Scratch Cooking and Smart Snacks.

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THE BENEFITS OF FRESH, FROZEN FRUIT

Wawona Frozen Foods processes more than 100 million pounds of fresh peaches, strawberries, blueberries and about a dozen other fruits every year. These fruits undergo a special process to preserve their quality, nutritional value, flavor, color and texture – it’s called Individual Quick Freezing (IQF).

The main advantage of flash freezing is it allows Wawona to harvest its fruits at peak ripeness, locking in the maximum flavors and nutrients. In addition, school operators and chefs appreciate Wawona’s fruits because there’s no prepping (cutting, peeling, etc.) and they don’t spoil, which basically eliminates any waste!

As a result, Wawona’s IQF fruits are ideal ingredients for scratch-dishes, such as smoothies, salads, parfaits, etc. In addition, Wawona offers popular fruit snacks such as cups, pops and fruit-a-roos.



Schools Offering Prepared, Healthier Meals to Boost Student Nutrition

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Cooking From Scratch

Ideally, schools offering scratch-prepared meals can control ingredients and provide students with healthier, more satisfying dishes. To kick start the concept, the Chef Ann Foundation created a program to recruit and train foodservice chefs as part of its initiative called the Healthy School Food Pathway (HSFP).

Piloted in 24 school districts across the country, the program teaches kitchen basics to chef trainees with the goal of cooking prepared meals using as many fresh ingredients as possible. By offering healthier school meals, students learn better eating habits, stay more engaged in the classroom, improve their attendance, and hopefully achieve higher grades and test scores. In addition, by serving fresh vs. processed foods, schools can improve diets and help in reducing child and teen obesity rates, which are at 19 percent.

The Smart Snack program

Because preparing entire meals from scratch may be daunting, many school meal operators are starting with scratch-made snacks, such as pastries or treats to improve their healthy offerings. It's estimated that 25% of calories consumed by students every day come from snacking. Schools offering a la carte snacks prepared in-house, can control student options and steer them to fruits and lower-sugar foods.

Schools can make a huge difference by providing students with more appealing, healthier meals and snacks, which will have a positive impact on attendance, grades, and overall attitudes and behavior.



“ We first started serving Wawona bulk IQF mango chunks at our high schools last year, and this year, I menued them at all grade levels. They have been a very popular fruit option at the middle and high schools, but not as accepted at elementary (K-5) school. We offer it as self-serve at middle school and high school and in OVS (Offer vs. Serve) dishes at K-5.

We follow this exact same process with Wawona's bulk IQF pineapple and bulk mixed fruit at middle and high school only. In addition, on the days we offer mango and pineapple at the high schools, we offer Tajín packets on-the-line. The pineapple and the mixed fruit have been just as popular as the mango. When these items are offered, sometimes up to 40% of students served will choose them.

I have been so happy with the popularity of these products and having the option to serve something that is not canned. I did a cost analysis last year prior to menuing these and the cost per serving for each of these products came out to be almost identical to those of our canned fruit, therefore justifying the ability to serve them often.”

Catherine McCleskey
District Dietician, Bryan (Texas)
Independent School District



GROWERS

Q & A WITH CRAIG ARNOLD, ARNOLD FARMS



DATE FARM FOUNDED: 1901
OWNERS: William (Bill) Arnold, 3rd generation, Craig Arnold, 4th generation
FARM LOCATION: Winton, Calif.
FARM SIZE: 800 Acres
SIZE OF PEACH ORCHARDS: 100 Acres
YEARS WORKING WITH WAWONA: 4 Years

What's it like growing peaches in the San Joaquin Valley?

Farming anything especially in California must be a labor of love. I have a hard time describing how it feels to shape and prune a tree in the winter, watch the tree make its pretty pink flowers in the spring, and steadily grow those blossoms from a little green nub to a beautiful brightly colored peach. We have the right soil and climate in central California to produce a multitude of crops, and we consider ourselves lucky to have a partner like Wawona to purchase and process the fruit we love to grow.

What are the advantages of selling your peaches for Individual Quick Freezing (IQF) with Wawona vs. into the fresh fruit market?

Our farm sells a very limited number of fresh peaches directly to consumers in our farm store. While our customers rave about the chance to have fresh off-the-tree peaches, the season is very short, and the peaches don't last long once picked. The ability to purchase fresh frozen peaches and/or frozen peach products, allows consumers to enjoy the flavor of summer year-round.

What's it like working with Wawona Frozen Foods?

My family has been in the peach business for a long, long time. We have watched the number of

California packing houses and canneries dwindle over the years. Those that have not closed their doors have sold their family-run business to larger corporations. Wawona and the Smittcamp family have proven to be resilient and strong. It is refreshing to be able to have a conversation about topics positive or negative with any level of their management and know that my concerns will be addressed.

Are there farming practices you use on the farm that explain the quality of the fruit?

The Central Valley of California is a special place. With good soils and a great climate, we can produce so many different crops. Our peaches grow well in our sandy, well-drained soil. We monitor the weather constantly doing our best to protect them from frost in the spring, to extreme temperatures in the summer. The trees are all irrigated with drip irrigation, which is scheduled based on weekly crop evapo-transpiration. Our certified Crop Advisors monitor the trees weekly, providing valuable recommendations for fertilizer and tracking the presence of pests. Most importantly our long-time employees care for the trees, from planting to hand picking each peach!

Do you have a favorite Wawona fruit product?

I love the Peach Jewels; the little pastries are delicious!





EVENTS

From Processing Peaches to Talking Politics

Wawona Hosts U.S. Rep. John Duarte

Since its founding in 1963, Wawona Frozen Foods has been a regular campaign stop for Congressman, Senators, and even Presidents (George H.W. Bush was here in 1990). On Aug. 23, Wawona had the honor of hosting Rep. John Duarte at its peach processing facility in Clovis, Calif.

The luncheon and tour were attended by Fresno dignitaries and leaders from the Central Valley's frozen food industry. Together, they raised \$17,000 for Rep. Duarte, who's in a tight race and has been a great champion for our industry – supporting the SHOPP Act, food waste reduction, and the dignity of choice for food stamp recipients.

Rep. Duarte was excited to be with farmers and members of the agriculture community. "How did this farmer, a nursery guy from Modesto, end up in Congress? Well at the end of the day, we have a responsibility to our state and our community."



He also offered special thanks to Wawona President & CEO Bill Smittcamp, his wife Linda, and their children Blake, Blair, and Bradley, who hosted the event in a beautiful peach-filled setting. Rep. Duarte also acknowledged the support from the other industry partners in attendance, including Del Mar Foods, Jain Farm Fresh, SureFresh Produce, Inn Foods, Eckert, US Cold, Smucker's, and Conagra Brands. "It is great seeing so many of you in person," he said.



(From left) Wawona President & CEO Bill Smittcamp, U.S. Rep. John Duarte, AFFI President & CEO Alison Bodor, Wawona EVP Blake Smittcamp

Bill closed by thanking everyone: "Thank you John, a farmer, a nurseryman, a politician, and a Californian, who's back there fighting the good fight for all of us."



From Processing Peaches to Talking Politics

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Following the luncheon, Rep. Duarte and other leaders toured the Wawona manufacturing facilities.



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