



MARKET UPDATE

Tomatoes: South Florida growers are working through the latter stages of tomato plantings, while Palmetto/Ruskin farms are just up and running in new fields. With both areas going, round tomato volumes are expected to remain consistent and adequate to meet market demand for the next several weeks. As normal for this time of year, Eastern roma volumes are declining as there is less acreage planted for upcoming harvests. Grape tomato numbers are expected to improve slightly as more growers get up and running. Overall, quality out of the East is very nice and should continue on track as growing conditions have been near perfect,

As Mainland Mexico works through its seasonal decline in round tomato production, volume, sizing and growers are dropping off. Production is heavier to mid-sized fruit but quality remains nice. Romas are also beginning to transition, with Western Mainland Mexico having the most volume and Baja just getting started in a light way. Quality is more challenging on romas, with reports of green shoulders and discoloration on some lots. With three growing areas in action, grape tomatoes are available in ample volumes. Quality is better from Baja and Central Mexico than from Mainland Mexico farms where fruit hasn't been as strong.

Bell Peppers: Bell pepper supply is lighter out of South Florida this week, as farms are harvesting from older plants that have lighter yields and more troubled fruit. Look for availability to remain snug, particularly on XL and larger fruit until new areas get up and running. In the West, Mainland Mexico continues with Spring production although crossings have been light due to holiday labor concerns. We're seeing more quality issues as warm weather brings heat stress to plants and fruit. The California desert has

beautiful, thick-walled pepper, but production hasn't fully ramped up yet.

Cucumbers: Florida cucumber supply is light this week, as growers in the southern part of the state finish up with older fields and have light yields from newer plantings. Super-sized fruit is particularly on the shy side. Central Florida farms have started up in a light way but volumes are still minimal. Look for production to complete the growing-area transition over the next few weeks. Overall quality is nice from new fields, but there are a lot of offgrades coming from older blocks. Western markets continue to look to Mainland Mexico for cucs. There's plenty of fruit on the vines, but labor shortages have limited production. Look for better numbers to cross toward the middle of next week. Quality and condition have been very nice.

Summer Squash: Farms in the Hermosillo, Mexico area are in the full swing of Spring production, with steady volumes and nice quality. Both South and Central Florida farms are bringing squash to market this week, but Eastern supply is light. As Southern growers move into the seasonal decline, both volume and quality are limited. Central Florida farms are seeing better quality, but production remains light thus far.

Eggplant: Deep into the crop's life cycle, South Florida growers continue to ship light to moderate volumes of eggplant. Quality is fair with more choice than fancy fruit available. Mexico's growers are in a similar situation, but there seems to be enough product available to meet demand. Look for the California desert to come to the table at the end of the month.

Hard Squash: Hard squash growers in Sonora, Mexico are getting into their last sets of fruit now. This early end to the season could create availability challenges in May and June as we wait for California and Eastern growers to come into volumes.

TRANSPORTATION FACTS

* With a \$.03 per gallon increase this week, the National Diesel Average is on the rise- moving from \$2.55 to \$2.58 per gallon.

* The average price for a gallon of diesel fuel is \$.45 higher than the same time last year.

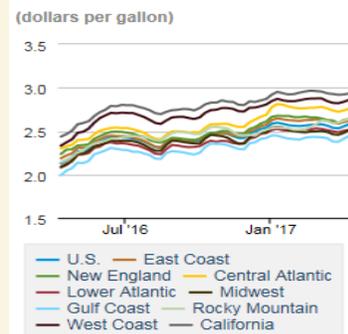
* Prices increased in all reporting areas, with the most notable coming from the West Coast where diesel prices rose almost \$.04 per gallon.

* California remains the high price leader for diesel fuel at \$2.94 while the Gulf Coast region continues to offer the best bargain at \$2.45 per gallon.

*The WTI Crude Oil price climbed 3.7% this week, moving from \$51.15 to \$53.11 per barrel.

*Other than Nogales, which has a slight shortage, all other shipping areas report adequate numbers of trucks available for moving produce.

On-Highway Diesel Fuel Prices



Source: Energy Information Administration

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KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE CONSUMER

Meal Kits Deliver More than Food

By: Gina Acosta, www.retailleader.com, April 2017

A recent Harris Poll shows 1 in 4 adults have purchased a meal kit in 2016 (25%) and 70% of meal kit purchasers are still actively purchasing meal kits.

Meal kits are hitting a mark with consumers and delivering on key convenience and health trends in the marketplace today. Among meal kit purchasers, the top reasons for buying include saving time on meal planning (46%) and the short prep and cook time (45%). Saving time is such a critical factor that even 44% of those who are no longer actively purchasing meal kits say they would consider doing so again due to the time saved on meal planning.

These are some of the results of The Harris Poll of 2,015 U.S. adults aged 18+ surveyed online between December 27 and 29, 2016, including 474 who have purchased a meal kit in the past 12 months either in-store or online.

Why buy?

Rounding out the top five reasons for purchasing are saving time on grocery shopping (37%), trying new recipes (36%), and the healthy recipes (34%). A majority of active meal kit purchasers agree that meal kit dinners are healthier than prepared foods from their local grocery store. Seafood-based meals may be one of the new recipes that meal kits encourage buyers to try as two-thirds of active purchasers say they eat seafood more often when purchasing meal kits (66%).

When it comes to the contents of the meal kits, a vast majority of active purchasers appear to be very satisfied. Over 9 in 10 each say they are satisfied with the quality of the produce in their meal kits (92%) and with how the fresh meat is packaged (91%). While healthiness is clearly important, when it comes to meats, 89% of purchasers say they would be satisfied with regular (i.e., not organic) meat.

Room for improvement

While the list of benefits is lengthy, there are also areas for improvement. A majority of active purchasers are looking to feed their sweet tooth as well, with 86% saying they would add dessert to their meal kit if the option was available. Among those who have purchased previously but are no longer doing so today, nearly half say that a low cost would influence them to purchase. Over one-third would also be influenced to purchase meal kits if they were available in their local grocery store.

So is this latest entry in the food-prep scene here to stay or just a passing fad?

"Consumers wanting convenience is here to stay, and providing a full-meal solution clearly meets a need for consumers. There is ample opportunity for both delivery and in-store options to capitalize on that need," said Meagan Nelson, associate client director of Nielsen's Fresh Growth & Strategy team.

LIPMAN 5K RUN FOR BACKPACKS



Lipman will donate a school uniform shirt for each student of the Immokalee-area school with the most participants in the race!



APRIL 22, 2017 ● GARY BATES STADIUM
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 STUDENTS \$15
 ADULTS \$25

DAY OF REGISTRATION:
 ALL RUNNERS \$30

JR FUN RUN FOR KIDS 10 & UNDER IS FREE

PRODUCE BAROMETER

ITEM	QUALITY	PRICING
Bell Pepper	Fair to Good	Higher
Cucumber	Good	Steady
Eggplant	Fair to Good	Steady
Green Beans	Good	Steady
Jalapenos	Good	Steady
Onions	Fair to Good	Higher
Squash	Fair to Good	Steady
Tomatoes	Good	Steady



APRIL CALENDAR

All Month
 National Garden Month
April 18th
 Stress Awareness Day
April 20th
 National Get to Know Your Customers Day
April 22nd
 Earth Day

Estero, FL Weather

Fri Apr 14	Sat Apr 15	Sun Apr 16	Mon Apr 17	Tue Apr 18	Wed Apr 19
82°F	84°F	82°F	84°F	84°F	84°F
64°F	68°F	68°F	68°F	68°F	70°F
ENE 15 MPH	ENE 16 MPH	E 10 MPH	E 7 MPH	E 7 MPH	E 7 MPH
		Precip 20%		Precip 20%	Precip 20%

RESTAURANT INDUSTRY NEWS

Teen Food Spending Hits New High

By: Ron Ruggless, www.nrn.com, April 10, 2017

Teen spending on food has hit a new high in Piper Jaffray's twice-a-year survey of that age group, with limited-service brands leading preferences, the investment banking firm said Monday. The "Spring 2017 Taking Stock With Teens" survey of nearly 5,500 students found the largest spending category was food, reaching 24 percent and passing clothing for the first time. In spring 2014, spending on food had been 18 percent. "We believe this reflects the restaurant industry's arguably less discretionary nature as a category of spending relative to other consumer (discretionary) categories," noted Piper Jaffray & Co. analysts Nicole Miller Regan and Joshua Long.

Piper Jaffray surveyed 1,393 students in an upper-income student data set, with an average age of 16.4 years and a weighted average household income of about \$100,000. The firm also surveyed about 4,109 students in the average-income student data set, with an average age of 16.4 years and a weighted average household income of about \$54,000.

The survey reflected "a shift in preference toward the limited-service segment, which has increased to 67 percent preference during the last 17 [half-year] survey cycles." Teens continued to shift their spending to quick-service and fast-casual brands from full-service restaurants, the Piper Jaffray spring study found. "In spring 2009," the survey noted, "full-service concepts had a 57 percent preference, which has slowly shifted toward a preference for limited-service concepts now at 67 percent in spring 2017."

Piper Jaffray said full-service restaurant brands are adopting new sales platforms, such as takeout and delivery, and introducing new culinary innovation that blur the lines between segments. "On a go-forward basis," the analysts said, "we expect to see operators continuing to evolve and improve value propositions around convenience, menu/taste profiles, enhanced service initiatives and physical assets."

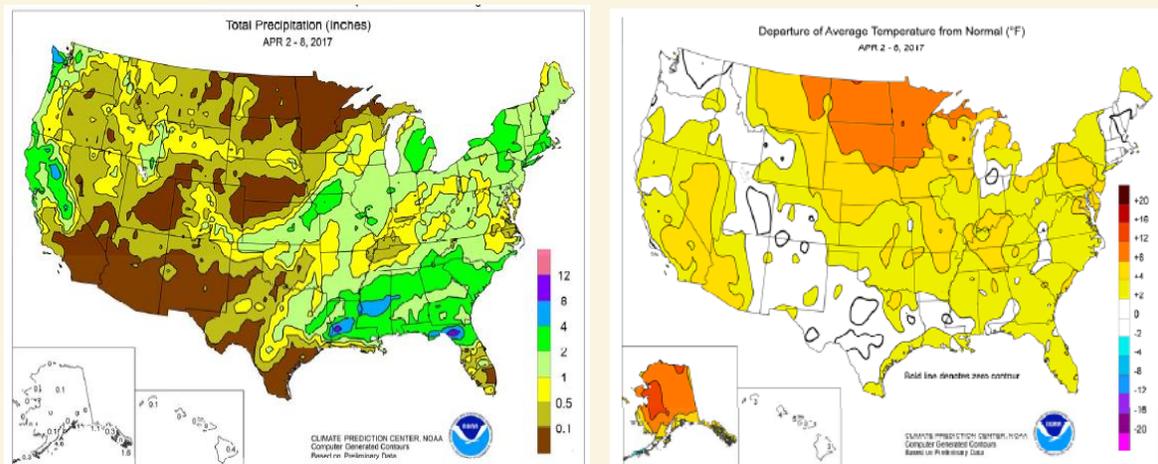
Among factors that were driving teen food spending decisions, Piper Jaffray said taste again ranked the highest among students. "Nutrition maintained its position as the lowest-ranked attribute of influence," the study noted. Convenience stayed at the No. 2 position, which has been consistent since fall 2014.

As for daypart breakdown among food purchases by teens, the survey found breakfast captured 2 percent of meal occasions, lunch 18 percent and dinner 65 percent.

"We would note this survey data is relatively in-line with data reported in prior surveys," the analysts said. "Discretionary snack and late evening dayparts remained relatively unchanged vs. prior periods. Dinner has evolved to become a social tradition and a form of entertainment for teens, especially as discretionary spending has been reevaluated during recent times of increased economic pressures," the analysts said.

NATIONAL WEATHER SPOTLIGHT

Weekly Precipitation and Temperature Deviation



NEWS IN THE GROCERY TRADE

Study: The Most In-Demand Technology for Retailers is...

By: Deena M. Amato-McCoy, www.chainstorage.com, April 13, 2017

A new survey confirms what many retailers are already living: getting up to speed with digitally speaking is a priority.

The most in-demand new technology for retailers is mobile payment capabilities (65%), followed by self-checkout (49%), scan as you shop (44%), click and collect (41%) and in-store customer analytics (37%), according to research from Zynstra, a U.K.-based enterprise-grade IT software provider, which polled 300 IT managers and c-level professionals in the retail space across the U.S. and U.K.

When asked about current challenges, U.S.-based respondents cited budget, security and lack of skills most frequently. Cost and effort of managing remote systems was the most identified issue (59%), followed by keeping systems up to date and secure (52%), and a lack of in-branch IT skills (31%).

“In the retail branch (store) IT space, technology is playing an ever-more important role in helping businesses meet both current and future demand; not only from an operational point of view, but also in enhancing the customer experience,” said Nick East, CEO, Zynstra. “However, as the research points out, the application of this technology or the readiness to adopt it can be a challenge.”

An overwhelming 97% of businesses see IT as a strategic business asset, and seven in 10 respondents said IT could enable them to meet future demands, including reducing operating costs, speeding up roll-out of new stores, supporting new business opportunities and streamlining IT management.

Yet, a mere 48% of those surveyed said they had the proper resources, support and infrastructure to meet their current demands.

FRESH

TOMATOES


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May 22-26, 2017
 United Fresh Produce Inspection Training
 USDA SCI Training & Development Center
 Fredericksburg, VA
www.unitedfresh.org

August 14-16, 2017
 The Packer's Midwest Produce Expo
 Sheraton Kansas City Hotel at Crown Center
 Kansas City, MO
www.midwestproduceexpo.com

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