

DECEMBER 20, 2024

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updates

CROP & MARKET

INDUSTRY INFO





MARKET UPDATES

ROMA TOMATOES

We are starting to see a few more romas in Florida now as Lipman and other growers are harvesting from both salvage crops in Palmetto/Ruskin and early plantings in south Florida that were affected by the hurricane. However, volume is still significantly below normal levels due to light yields. We will start to see the numbers pick up after January 1st as new plantings not affected by the storm come online in south Florida. Current quality is pretty good although the size profile is smaller than preferred. Mexico's roma volumes are lighter this week and projected to be similar next week. Both Central Mexico and Baja are seeing growers finish up as the season nears its end, but they will still have at least some romas for the next few weeks. Quality has declined as the crops have and is assessed as fair at this point. Sinaloa's eagerly-awaited new crops are going in a light way but there are only a few growers online at this point. More production will come during the 1st week of January as farms in various areas of Sinaloa are expected to get started then.

ROUND TOMATOES

Although there is a little more fruit this week, round tomato volume remains light in Florida as growers continue to harvest storm-affected plantings in Palmetto/Ruskin and south Florida. Sizing is heavily skewed toward 6x6's and 6x7's and quality can be hit or miss by farm and field. Cool weather has pushed off the start of new, healthy crops about a week, bringing them online with the New Year now instead of Christmas. Most growers report a similar situation and expect to be into more seasonal volumes at some point during the week of January 6th. Western round tomato supply is light, as Central Mexico and Baja work toward the end of their season and very little has started in Culiacan so far. Sizing and quality have declined on the fruit from older growing areas but looks favorable on the new crops. Several growers have pushed their start date out by a week and expect to have consistent volumes by the 2nd week of January.

GRAPE TOMATOES

Florida farms are producing a few more grape tomatoes than anticipated as regrowth from storm-damaged crops in Palmetto/Ruskin and south Florida has produced favorable results. Volumes are still relatively light but we expect more seasonal numbers as new crops get going over the next 10-14 days. Mexico's volume is expected to be light to moderate for the next 2 weeks as Baja and Central Mexico are still the primary areas of supply. Culiacan has been a little slow to get started due

to cooler weather, but will be up and running with more volumes as we go into the New Year. Current quality is fair as growers stretch the fruit to meet demand.

ORGANIC GRAPE TOMATOES

After experiencing short supply for the past several weeks, there are a few more organic grape tomatoes available this week. A few Sinaloa growers have started in a light way and more will be adding to the mix over the next 2 weeks. Steady, more seasonal volumes are expected by the 1st week of January. Quality is good on the new Sinaloa crops but is waning on Baja's late-season fruit.

GREEN BELL PEPPERS

After a week of literally no bell pepper harvests in Florida, there are minimal amounts available this week from a couple of growers that have started new, post-storm crops a little ahead of others. With these being crown picks, the sizing is mostly jumbo and 2X with XL and any smaller sizing very limited. The majority of new crops are expected to come online right around Christmas with more substantial volumes and sizing options after the 1st. In the West, Coachella has wrapped up the season for all practical purposes, leaving supply to Mexico for the Winter months. After a slow and delayed start, we are starting to see a few more peppers come out of the Sinaloa area. Sizing is heavier to big fruit and quality has been very nice. Supply is still at light to moderate levels, but full production is expected by the first week of January as more growers start and harvests pick up.

CUCUMBERS

The Immokalee area has a light supply of cucumbers this week although crops are expected to wind down by the 1st of the year. There's a mix of older and newer fields in harvest, so quality is mixed. But, there's been a higher ratio of #1 product harvested from the newer crops so good quality is available. Honduran import volumes are increasing to more moderate levels as a couple more growers have gotten underway. We should see more volume after the first as another sizable grower will add to the mix. After a rough start on quality, we expect to see improvements as long as the imported fruit isn't in transit or storage too long. The West has strong volumes to offer this week with most coming from the Sinaloa area. Baja and Central Mexico also have fruit and some new fields, but their seasons are winding down. Quality is good on fresh fruit, but with excess supply there is some inventoried product in the pipeline with lesser quality.

SALAD CUCUMBERS

Eastern salad cucumber supply is very minimal with small pockets of product in Florida. Mexico has good volumes and quality available from Sinaloa crops.

GREEN BEANS

Florida's green bean production is a bit lighter this week, primary due to the hit-or-miss planting schedule many experienced due to weather in the Immokalee, Lake and Homestead areas. Our farm is currently harvesting twice a week with average yields and good quality. We expect to see more consistency in harvests in the next 10-14 days. The West is seeing moderate volumes coming from the Sinaloa area. There are still some farms that haven't started, but we should see them get up and running and overall volumes increase over the next 2 weeks. There's been a mix of quality depending on grower and harvest- some nice beans and others with irregular sizing, light color and broken bean concerns.

YELLOW AND ZUCCHINI SQUASH

Florida has had a lot of squash available over the past several weeks, as extra plantings had been put in after the hurricane to compensate for other crop losses. Supply remains more than adequate, but there's a little less now as some are walking away from older fields. Plant City should be mostly finished after the 1st, so numbers will be lighter going into January. Quality has been good overall but some recent winds and weather may impact fruit harvested over the next 7-10 days. The West continues to have moderate to strong volumes. There are still some squash in the southern Sonora area, but the bulk of production is coming out of Sinaloa. Quality continues to be good with fruit traveling well.

EGGPLANT

Florida's eggplant supply remains adequate but is a notch lighter this week. Plant City is in the last few weeks of the season, which will leave south Florida as the primary production area for the next few months. Volume usually slows some in January and February as the temperatures drop but there should be fruit available consistently. Quality has been good and is expected to continue in that mode. Mexico has strong supply and good quality crossing into Nogales daily.

HARD SQUASH

Although there is still a little local storage crop here and there, hard squash production has finished for the Eastern season. Honduras imports aren't expected to get going until February so demand will shift to Mexico until then. Mexico has good supplies on all varieties coming from both Sonora and Sinaloa. Overall quality has been very nice on butternut and kabocha, but there have been a few issues with ground spotting on acorns and scarring on spaghetti.

CHILI PEPPERS

Eastern chili pepper supply has been somewhat inconsistent as growers in both Plant City and south Florida continue in a light mode with item availability varying on a daily basis. Plant City will continue harvests into January, then chilies will only be available in the southern part of the state for a few months. Cubanelles and long hots have been especially short. Fortunately, West Mexico is coming in with moderate to good volumes on all but Anaheims. They are running a little behind the other chilies due to weather and the nature of the variety. No major quality issues have been reported.

ENGLISH CUCUMBERS

Mexico's English cucumber volumes are low to moderate this week with marginal quality. Supply has been reduced from prior levels as some growers picked and dropped due to low market prices, then a shot of cooler weather slowed production.

RED, YELLOW & ORANGE BELL PEPPERS

Red, yellow and orange bell pepper supply is very snug this week as there's not much coming from Central Mexico or the new crops in West Mexico. However, during the last days of December we'll start to see more volume from new crops and by the 2nd week of January supply should return to solid, consistent levels. In the meantime, greening will be a concern as growers stretch supply.

MINI SWEET PEPPERS

Availability is gradually improving on mini sweet peppers. Volumes will continue to build until the 2nd or 3rd week of January, when we should see production at seasonal levels. Quality has been nice on the new crops.

ORGANIC MINI SWEET PEPPERS

Availability is improving on organic mini sweet peppers as another couple of growers have now started new crops in the Sinaloa area. There are still a few more to come online after the 1st of the year, which is when we expect to have adequate volumes to meet all demand. Quality has been nice so far and should continue to be as all the fruit is coming from new crops.

ORGANIC RED, YELLOW & ORANGE BELL PEPPERS

Organic R, Y and O bell pepper supply remains snug as Central Mexico's growers wind down and we wait for the Sinaloa area to start in earnest. One grower has gotten underway with new crops, but others aren't expected to follow suite until the 1st week of January. Sizing and quality have been of some concern on the older Central Mexico crops, but the newer Sinaloan fruit looks to be much improved.

ORGANIC GREEN BELL PEPPERS

Sinaloa's organic green bell production continues to be on the lighter side but there's enough available to meet demand. Most of the fruit is in the XL to L size range and has nice thick walls and a strong shelf life.

ORGANIC YELLOW AND ZUCCHINI SQUASH

Mexico's Sinaloa region has plenty of organic yellow and zucchini squash available this week. Quality is fair to good, depending on grower and lot, but there are reports of scarring, scuffing, and some occasional color issues.

ORGANIC CUCUMBERS

Organic slicer cucumber supply has improved slightly this week and should maintain at these levels for the next 2-4 weeks. Quality varies by grower. Some have nice fruit and others have some concerns with soft ends and scarring.

ORGANIC MINI CUCUMBERS

Baja is still in the organic mini cucumber business, but their season will be winding down in the next few weeks. Meanwhile, there are new crops in Culiacan and volumes are expected to kick in over the next 7-10 days. Quality has been pretty good from the new crops, but is lesser from Baja's declining plantings.



CUSTOMERS ARE MAKING RESTAURANT RESERVATIONS EARLIER IN THE WEEK

[RESTAURANTBUSINESS.COM](https://restaurantbusiness.com)

DECEMBER 11, 2024

When it comes to restaurant reservations, is Monday the new Saturday? Not quite. But the gap is getting smaller.

More customers are booking tables earlier in the week. In the third quarter, Monday and Tuesday saw an 11% increase in the number of reservations year over year, according to data from tech supplier Toast. That was the biggest increase for any day of the week.

Overall, Monday still makes up the smallest percentage of total bookings at 6%, and Saturday remains the busiest day, accounting for 27% of all reservations.

But the early part of the week is heating up faster than the weekend. And Saturday reservations actually decreased 1% in the third quarter, Toast found.

Toast theorized that customers may be trying to avoid weekend crowds or are choosing to go out to dinner after work rather than cook at home.

It is true that reservations at popular restaurants have become harder to get since the pandemic, so much so that there is now a secondary market for reservations in some cities. That could be pushing people to book at off-peak times.

Customers are also opting to eat earlier in the day. Reservations for 6 p.m. or earlier are growing fastest, while those made after 8 p.m. are shrinking.

Six o' clock remains the sweet spot, accounting for 27% of bookings in the third quarter, an increase of 6% year over year. And 7 is still a very popular time, making up 25% of reservations. But the 5 p.m. dinner is gaining ground, with reservations in that hour up 8%, for a total share of 14%.

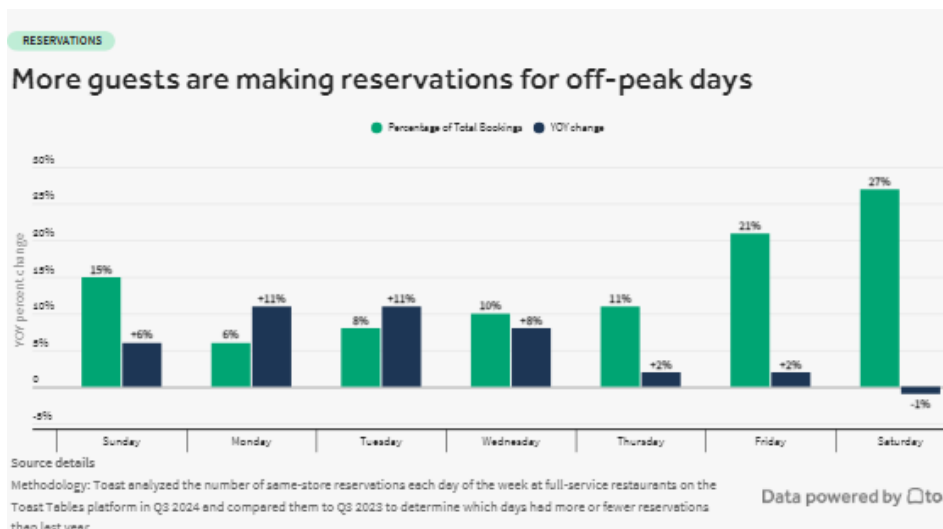
One possible explanation for this trend is that many people now have more flexible schedules thanks to remote work, allowing them to eat earlier. Consumers could also be going after early-evening happy hour deals, which have become more popular due to inflation.

Restaurateur Danny Meyer has even floated the idea that people want to eat early so they can get home and either keep working or stream something on TV.

Whatever the reason, the shift is generally good news for restaurants, because it smooths out traffic and allows operators to make better use of fixed costs.

And in another bit of good news, fewer customers are cancelling their reservations. About 17% of bookings were cancelled in the third quarter, down from 19% a year ago.

The data comes from Toast's Q3 Restaurant Trends Report, which looked at results across selected restaurants that use Toast.



WILL CONSUMERS TURN THE CORNER IN 2025?

PROGRESSIVEGROCER.COM

DECEMBER 13, 2024

Is the midpoint of the decade also an inflection point for grocery shopping? A new slate of 2025 predictions from Acosta Group indicates that consumers will still be driven by value in the year ahead, but that definition is changing and they are guided by a better outlook and interest in enjoyable experiences.

As 2025 arrives, the market may be shaking off some of the heaviness associated with the successive early-decade challenges of COVID, supply chain bottlenecks, inflation, lower consumer confidence and other issues.

"Last year, it was more about price and promotion optimization to try to force some unit sales. I think consumers are more optimistic going into this year – consumers, manufacturers and retailers are getting tired of this and saying, 'Let's get back to something else, let's start enjoying life'," Colin Stewart, EVP, business intelligence at Acosta Group told Progressive Grocer in a recent interview.

That said, enjoying life doesn't mean a shunning of practicality. "That's where we get back to value," Stewart pointed out.

Acosta Group's first prediction for 2025 is a new definition of value that is driving shopper decisions. Although price is a priority and retailers are highlighting price cuts, shoppers are looking for authentic connections with brands and retailers. "Consumers have become very astute value seekers, reshaping the overall retail experience by demanding more than discounts," said Kathy Risch, SVP, thought leadership and shopper insights at Acosta Group. Innovations will be embraced by these consumers, as 84% of CPGs expect to launch some form of innovation next year, per Acosta's report.

The four other 2025 predictions from Acosta Group include the following movements:

-Consumers crave affordable indulgence in foods away from home. Forward-looking shoppers may be still minding their dollars but are willing to pay for premium products and flavors. "The concept of affordable indulgence is gaining traction," reported Risch.

-Shoppers' in-store experience is the new canvas for retail media. Shoppers appreciate the omnichannel experience, but most retail sales still happen in stores. There, retailer and brands are finding success with digital apps, dynamic retail media and other AI-driven technologies. "A lot of manufacturers are still struggling with the investment they need to make there, but the reality is that it is probably the best way to reach your target shopper if you do it right and work with retailer to sync up data and retail media," Stewart said. In its trend

predictions report, Acosta also underscored the importance of understanding a brand's objectives and implementation costs to create the best integrated shopper experience.

-Shoppers embrace effortless shopping in their social feeds. Acosta Group's trendwatchers anticipate social commerce that combines personalized content and commerce within the retail channel, as grocers and brands are able to reach out to customers directly. "As consumers are spending more time on their social feeds, they are also spending more time using these platforms to do product research, read influencer posts, discover new products they 'didn't know they needed,' and with the convenience of a click, make a purchase they believe meets their needs or preferences," said Risch. "It's a perfect blend of entertainment, personalization, connectivity and convenience that is important for brands to build into their commerce plan."

-Empowered shoppers drive a wave of change in health and wellness. Living healthier lifestyles isn't just about New Year's resolutions as 2025 kicks off. As Acosta points out, health-conscious shoppers are seeking overall transparency from brands and are exploring avenues like individualized health management, food-as-medicine innovations and weight-loss options including GLP-1 prescriptions.

Stewart and Risch delved deeper into the 2025 trends during an online symposium hosted by the Jacksonville, Fla.-based Acosta Group.



UPCOMING EVENTS:

JANUARY 13-14, 2025

GLOBAL ORGANIC PRODUCE EXPO

**JW MARRIOTT MIAMI TURNBERRY RESORT
& SPA**

ADVENTURA, FL

[www.events.farmjournal.com /gopex2025](http://www.events.farmjournal.com/gopex2025)

MARCH 6-8, 2025

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www.seproducecouncil.com/events-networking/southern-exposure/



Lipman Family Farms

December 17 at 4:46 PM · 🌐



Freshen up your holiday spread! Lipman's juicy tomatoes and fragrant basil bring a bite-sized burst of flavor everyone will love during the festive season. Here's to heartwarming gatherings and unforgettable bites! 🍅🌿

1 French baguette, sliced into ½ inch rounds
1 cup Lipman cherry tomatoes, diced
1 cup fresh mozzarella, diced
¼ cup fresh basil, chopped
1 tbsp olive oil
Salt and pepper to taste
Balsamic glaze for drizzling

1. Preheat your oven to 375°F (190°C).
2. Arrange the baguette slices on a baking sheet and lightly brush with olive oil.
3. Toast the baguette slices in the oven for 5-7 minutes or until golden brown.
4. In a bowl, combine the diced tomatoes, mozzarella, basil, olive oil, salt, and pepper.
5. Spoon the mixture onto each toasted baguette slice.
6. Drizzle with balsamic glaze for an extra burst of flavor.
7. Serve immediately and enjoy the fresh flavors as you welcome the New Year!

Happy Holidays! ✨