

PRODUCE TALK

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PREPARING FOR JANUARY

The month of January is unique in that it is our lowest volume month of the year. Sales are derived from citrus, bananas, potatoes, grapes, strawberries, salads and value-added items. This is the strongest period of the year for grapefruit, so big up front displays are a must. Navels are a big seller so you need to display those on tables, loose and bagged, in various sizes. Don't say no to large size navels in bins, they do sell. Ask your merchandiser how many bin navels Crosset will sell this year. It will surprise you. Cost of imported fruit should be reasonable, and grapes especially require large displays. Depending on supplies, strawberries will continue to sell, don't forget about them. Everyone will be on a diet so please maintain those value-added sections, it will pay large dividends.



Vegetables usually are higher in cost with overall quality somewhat lessened resulting from the growing areas. The New Year Dieter comes to produce for low calorie offerings and we have many to sell them. We must maintain those relish tray items and variety lettuces. I hope everyone will remind their crews about how important it is to condition all the leafy greens. That would make a great "New Year's Resolution". Too many stores take product from box to shelf. Ask your merchandiser how that creates shrink.

Refrain from giving the department the exact same look every week and sales will blossom. Changing the department around creates excitement and generates sales. Approach every customer with 'Help you find something'? This will grow sale and keep customers.

New items in January are imported stone fruit, strawberries, California apples and pears, temple oranges, asparagus, honey tangerines, cantaloupes, honeydews, fruit mangoes, cherries and Minneola's. Use Crosset's weekly addition/deletion item sheet as a tool to keep you informed.

New Year's Selling - The one key factor to remember about merchandising for New Year's is that most activities are centered around parties or entertaining. Meals are not full sit-down, but typically are light with considerable hors d'oeuvres. New Year's is also the start of the "dieting season". Make your nut category noticeable as an opportunity to clean up on inventory. Many customers still classify them as healthy and an alternative to sweets.

Vegetables - All relish tray items need heavy emphasis. Those would include, but not be limited to the following: peppers, cucumbers, radishes, mushrooms, green onions, asparagus, parsley, variety lettuce, tomatoes, cherry tomatoes, celery, celery hearts, celery sticks, cauliflower, broccoli, jicama, carrots, carrot sticks, baby carrots, etc. Cost on most of these items is small for carry over, opposed to losing customers. Tying in displays with veggie dips is critical. Convenience trays with cut-up prepared vegetables and party trays will sell well so maintain a full selection and keep them fresh. Don't forget to keep an eye on red potatoes.

Fruit - Lemons and limes always go well for those party time drinks so have extra on hand this time of year. Party tray fruits will get most of the fruit sales. They include, but are not limited to, the following: kiwi, strawberries, melons, oranges, clementine's, cuties/halos, apples, pineapple, mangos, papaya, bananas,

etc. Fruit dip and fruit dip recipes are sure winners for New Year's. The large jar of Kraft Marshmallow Crème usually has a recipe for a fruit dip on the back. Party trays with cut-up fruit will have strong movements and require a large display. Also, consider some two-quart or larger cut-up mixed fruit/berry bowl containers to cover the party needs of the bigger festivities.

The week between Christmas and New Year's is usually slow and you won't sell a lot of fruit or vegetables until a day or two just before New Year's Day, then you'll wonder where all the customers came from. It is a challenge not to run out of those relish tray items knowing sales drop dramatically after New Year's. Spending quality time on orders is a must.

January is the month you really have to promote for sales!! So go for it!!!

Recipes (Source: Allrecipes.com)

SPINACH DIP

Ingredients:

- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 (16 ounce) container sour cream
- 1 (1.8 ounce) package dry leek soup mix
- 1 (4 ounce) can water chestnuts, drained and chopped
- 1/2 (10 ounce) package frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained
- 1 (1 pound) loaf round sourdough bread



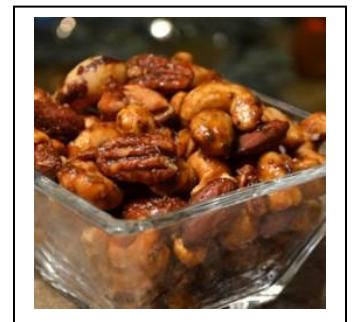
Directions:

1. In a medium bowl, mix together mayonnaise, sour cream, dry leek soup mix, water chestnuts and chopped spinach. Chill in the refrigerator 6 hours, or overnight.
2. Remove top and interior of sourdough bread. Fill with mayonnaise mixture. Tear removed bread chunks into pieces for dipping.

SWEET, SALTY, SPICY PARTY NUTS

Ingredients:

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| Cooking spray | 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper |
| 1 cup untoasted walnut halves | 1/4 teaspoon ground cumin |
| 1 cup untoasted pecan halves | 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper |
| 1 cup unsalted, dry roasted almonds | 1/2 cup white sugar |
| 1 cup unsalted, dry roasted cashews | 1/4 cup water |
| 1 teaspoon salt | 1 tablespoon butter |



Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Line a baking sheet with aluminum foil and lightly coat with cooking spray.
2. Combine walnut halves, pecan halves, almonds, and cashews in a large bowl. Add salt, black pepper, cumin, and cayenne pepper; toss to coat.
3. Heat sugar, water, and butter in a small saucepan over medium heat until the butter is melted. Cook for 1 minute and remove from heat. Slowly pour butter mixture over the bowl of nuts and stir to coat.
4. Transfer nuts to the prepared baking sheet and spread into a single layer.
5. Bake nuts in the preheated oven for 10 minutes. Stir nuts until the warm syrup coats every nut. Spread into a single layer, return to the oven, and bake until nuts are sticky and roasted, about 6 minutes. Allow to cool before serving.

Western Vegetables

ARTICHOKES: The artichoke market has tightened up as Salinas has finished, Oxnard is laying out until after the New Year. Mexico has been yielding great quality product.

AVOCADOS: Supplies and price are still steady even with the fires in California affecting supply. As Mexico regions transition, we could see an uptick in price and a possible lapse in supply in the coming weeks.

BROCCOLI: The broccoli market remains to have a wide range throughout the industry. There are multiple regions that are harvesting which in return are creating a wide range of pricing and quality. Numbers are scheduled to remain steady for the next few weeks, however product is projected to see a gap in January.

CAULIFLOWER: We are enduring heavy prorates. As the weather cooled off and Salinas finished, we have saw a swift decrease in volume. In addition, the sizing in the fields has been skewed, which is causing yields to drop significantly. Weather will play a significant factor in volume going forward, as cooler weather is expected in the Yuma region. We are projecting to see a gap in product as we approach January.

CELERY: The market has continued to stay steady after the Christmas pull.

ICEBERG LETTUCE: The lettuce market has been depressed for the past few weeks. However, with cooler temperatures expected throughout the week in the Yuma region in addition to the expected increased demand after the first of the year, the market is starting to tighten up.

ROMAINE/ROMAINE HEARTS/MIXED LEAF: The mixed leaf market remains steady, quality remains good. Harvesting both domestic and Mexican romaine hearts at this time. All colors are being grown domestically and quality remains good on them as well. Red leaf numbers have tightened up slightly. Organic romaine hearts are now being harvested out of Mexico and brought in to Yuma for shipment.

Value-Added

Cooler nighttime temperatures in the southwestern US and Mexico growing regions is causing slower growth of most raw crops. It is also causing a heavy frost in the fields each morning resulting in delayed harvest schedules.

Southern Vegetables

BEANS: Will come down a little bit.

CABBAGE: Good supplies.

CORN: Market is still fairly high.

CUCUMBERS: Market stable.

GREENS: Decent supplies on all greens out of the south.

HARD SQUASH: Plenty coming out of Mexico.

ONIONS: No changes in the western onion markets. Supplies continue to be good.

PEPPERS: Coming out of both Florida and Mexico; market fairly stable.

POTATOES: Markets will hold firm to higher through the first of the year. Supplies and quality are good.

YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH: Slight increase.

Organics

BEETS: Beets still remain a challenge due to curly top virus that impacts the plant leaves and bulb. Supplies will be limited for a few more weeks until growers move to lower elevation new fields that should be clean.

BROCCOLI: Due to weather issues (heat) in growing regions in the west, we are seeing suppliers limit available supply driving market cost up. There will be discoloration to the tops as heat will cause a darker head on the broccoli.

BUNCH CARROTS: Supply has rebounded quite well and we are seeing much better quality.

CABBAGE: Regional supply has really come on from the southeast. Supply will be great for the first part of the year!

CAULIFLOWER: Supplies are starting to improve and the quality is good. Market has gradually decreased; high temperatures out west should not affect supply.

CELERY: Supply is getting better as we have moved up in to California regions. Pricing has started to tick up over the past couple weeks.

CUCUMBERS: Supply is starting to slow down as cooler temps in Mexico has affected growing areas. We will remain in-stock, but pricing will increase.

GREEN PEPPERS: Steady supplies available as the Nogales season is starting up. Supply will become more promotable at the first part of the year.

KALES: Great supplies of kale currently; plenty of regional product from all over the Midwest available. We are sourcing from Georgia, Florida and other regions. Product is in great supply and pricing is very promotable.

LETTUCES: Inbound quality on leafs from the west have rebounded in quality and we are seeing much better supply. Lady Moon has had great supply in Florida with great quality!

RADISHES: Supplies are improving with better quality tops. Very little damage now to the tops and they look much cleaner than they have been.

YELLOW SQUASH & ZUCCHINI: Like cucumbers, temps have really affected supply in the Nogales growing region. We will see very limited supply on organic yellow squash.

Asparagus

The market leveled out and steady for next few weeks but volume will dip out of Peru in mid-January and costs will jump as volume falls off. Overall quality is solid.

Fruit

APPLES & PEARS: Both organic and conventional apples continue to be in very strong supply. With the Sweet Tango coming to an end, we will be bringing in the Ruby Frost apple from New York next week.

BLACKBERRIES: Market and supplies are stable; quality has improved. Organics are steady. January will be good period to promote all varieties, either organic or conventional.

BLUEBERRIES: The conventional market is still strong and overall outlook is not favorable as some yields out of Chile are coming in below projections and could keep markets strong throughout the season. The organic market is up significantly and limited in supplies in coming weeks.

CANTALOUPE & HONEYDEW: Cantaloupes and honeydews coming strictly off shore out of Honduras and Guatemala. Very small pockets of honeydews available out of Mexico. Imported off shore lopes excellent quality but supply is tight as decreased plantings will have smaller overall volume for this season.

CHERRIES: Due to quality issues with boat fruit, we'll stick with air fruit. Few Rainiers left just a small deal.

CITRUS: Navel supplies remain good. Fruit quality is very good and markets continue to be firm.

CLEMENTINES: The item to promote; good deals. The quality from both areas looks outstanding, the California Halo's or the Darling imported. The value is in the imported Spanish from Darling. .5# crates, along with popular 3# bags; good promotion items.

GRAPES: California grapes virtually finished except for some small pockets. Transition into Peruvian/Chilean grapes will be complete for the first of the year. The volume on the Peruvian/Chilean fruit won't be significant until after the first of the year, and costs will be strong.

PINEAPPLES: Steady volume and pricing. Seeing promotable pricing in the market.

RASPBERRIES: Supply has been affected by delayed inbounds on the east coast leaving us to move out west on orders. Supply should bounce back to loading in the east.

STRAWBERRIES: The Florida berry swing is in full affect and as we move closer to the first part of the year, we will see more promo ability on the fruit. The flavor profile is amazing!!

Chilean Stone Fruit

Will be adding on nectarines to go with the peaches this coming week's order guide.

Tropical Fruit

BABY FRENCH BEANS: Tight item for Christmas week business.

KIWI: Pricing steady with good volume.

LIMES: Prices has firmed up and increased on some sizes with better demand this week. Size 200 and larger remained limited. Overall quality is very nice.

MANGOES: Both conventional and organic markets are in good supply. Great time to promote!

MARIDOL PAPAYAS/ GOLD PAPAYAS: Stable market; excellent quality on Caribbean Red Maridol papayas and Brazil Gold.

SUGAR SNAP PEAS/SNO PEAS: Cost down as volume picking up.

Merchandising Tips

As the New Year approaches, now is the time to look ahead but also to recap the holidays that just pasted. Take some time to gather your sales numbers along with your invoices from Thanksgiving to the end of the year and make some notes as to successes and opportunities lost during the holiday season. Could you have used some more celery for Thanksgiving week? Were you a little heavy on mushrooms for Christmas? What were some items customers were asking for that maybe you did not order? Make notes on these include retails, weather conditions if pertinent, truck schedules and include notes on better use of man hours. These notes and numbers will be a very useful tool when planning next year's holiday season helping attain maximum success. Ask your merchandiser for hints on better record keeping to make your department run smoother during this hectic time.

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

CROSSET NEW ITEM & DELETION SHEET

W/B: 1/7/18

ITEM #	<i>NEW ITEMS</i>	SIZE
4520	Celery naked	24ct
31060	Apple Ruby Frost	40/45ct.
78515	CV PT Blueberries	12pt
<i>DELETIONS</i>		
39070	Bin Navel Orange	150/4#
101405	Budda Hand	10ct
64030	Mango	12ct
4530	Celery naked	30ct
22380	Mushroom White OG	12/8oz.
62020	Fuyu Persimmons	18/20ct
69020	CV Black Seedless Grapes	19#
97430	Pomegranates OG	30ct
69150	Holiday Red Seedless Grapes	19#
69419	CV Red Seedless grapes	19#
69211	CV White seedless Grapes	19#
79460	OG Peeled Chestnuts	12/6.5oz
69416	Holiday Red Seedless Grapes -MC	19#