

## FRUIT BASKETS



Fresh fruit in a basket brightens anyone's day, especially when it's tied with bright ribbon with a few added treats. Ripe, seasonal fruits work best if you can hand-deliver the basket; otherwise choose fruits that won't get damaged or age too rapidly in the mail, such as citrus fruits and apples.

### You Will Need

- Basket
- Fruit
- Filler
- Gift items
- Bow (optional)
- Shrink or stretch wrap with heat guns

### How to Make a Fruit Basket

First, you can choose from a wicker, glass or metal basket. The wicker basket is best suited for a better and prettier presentation.

Choose it based on the fruits that you will have to present. So don't choose a tiny basket if you plan to offer a whole watermelon! We must keep appropriate proportions.

You need a basket big enough, either oval, round or rectangular, and again, it depends on the fruit you plan to put in it.

### Preparation of the Basket

Take a few vine leaves, wash them and dry them gently.

Place them at the bottom of your container.

Spread them by making them overflow on both sides of your basket, so they are visible once the basket is filled.

### The Choice of Fruit

You must first sort the fruits according to their size, then select the most beautiful ones and wipe them with a soft cloth for polishing.

### Sort the Fruit in the Basket

Start by having the largest fruit at the bottom of the basket. On each side, put pineapple, in the middle will be red and yellow apples, oranges, pears, mandarins, kiwis, and bananas.

The small red fruits like strawberries, raspberries, and dates will be used to fill holes, but do it gently. Finally, end with beautiful bunches of grapes.

If desired, add some grape leaves for a dazzling effect. Have as much fruit as you want so you get a nice array of colors.

## Sort the Fruit in the Basket

Choose ripe and firm fruit. You can put a cork piece at the bottom of the basket so it will absorb moisture, which will prevent the fruit from spoiling.

If your basket has a handle, you can decorate it with some grapes and roll it around.

You may also include pasta with candied fruit or almond paste for a smooth and original finishing touch.

## Wintertime Baskets

Because winter is prime citrus season in Florida and California, tangerines, grapefruit and oranges make a holiday gift basket that is bright in color and flavor. Choose unusual or exotic orange varieties, such as blood oranges and honeybells, if you can find them. Include a non-fruit item to make the basket look interesting, such as a jar of orange marmalade, gingerbread cookies, a bag of nuts and some recipe cards for food made with citrus fruits.

## Summertime Baskets

Fruit baskets mailed in early spring give folks living in cold climates a taste of the warmth that will eventually reach them. For mailing, include a variety of long-lasting citrus fruits, along with mangoes and honeydew melon. If you hand deliver the basket, add the first strawberries of the year along with apricots if you can find them. A small bouquet of spring tulips or fragrant freesia whispers that spring is here.

## Wrapping and Mailing Baskets

Wrapping a gift basket in brightly colored cellophane paper with an over-sized bow makes the gift stand out. Or, think about your recipient and wrap the gift accordingly, with lacy, tulle fabric for someone who likes that sort of thing, and a dishcloth printed with fruit for someone more interested in practical matters. For mailing, wrap the basket in plastic bag over any decorative wrapping and place it in a large box well cushioned with foam pellets.

## Seven Tips to Help General Gift Basket Sales

- 1) **Advertise.** Use bag stuffers, use your ad, send out letters to civic organizations and businesses in your area, use large window signs, or put a sign on the front door. Have your cashiers tell every customer they wait on about how your store makes the best fruit baskets in the area. Plus, make sure you put your business card in the bottom of every basket.
- 2) **Make a variety of baskets;** you need to have at least 5 different varieties of baskets. Don't just have one or two different types available. Display each of the 5 varieties of baskets with equal amounts of space; don't give 95% of the display space to your cheapest basket. Always

have the most expensive basket first in line, and give each basket 20% of the display space. People buy with their heart at Christmas time.

- 3) **Build a quality basket.** Customers will always remember where they got a quality basket. Remember a repeat sale is your best sale! Don't get so involved in the department that you forget about your fruit basket display. A customer will not remember to where they purchased a bad fruit basket.
- 4) **Find the best location.** If you had a baking bar that would be a great spot for your fruit basket display, if not build a center aisle display up front on pallets. Give them the best real estate in the store. Tie in floral too!
- 5) **Keep at least two of each variety of baskets on display** until 10 days before Christmas, then begin to expand your display.
- 6) **By December 14<sup>th</sup>,** you must have your fruit basket display loaded for bear. You should have at least 5 of each variety of baskets you are going to offer fresh and available for sale.
- 7) **Five days before Christmas display baskets in mass.** A minimum of 25 for a small store and up to 75 for a larger store. Mass merchandising of "fresh" attractive gift baskets creates gift basket sales.

## Labor Scheduling Hints

- Scheduling and planning ahead is a must for a successful gift basket program. (Generally, a person can make approximately 6 large baskets per hour and approximately 10-12 small baskets per hour. So please make sure you schedule the hours.
- You can use pre-made baskets from Crosset totally, or as a fill in to save labor hours.
- Have a designated procedure to handle gift basket orders, especially over the telephone.
- Hire part-time help through the holiday season, but remember you must train them.



## Organic Produce

**BEETS:** Beets will continue to see insect pressure to the tops as well as yellowing that to the tops.

**BROCCOLI:** We are starting to see some variable pricing out west. Aphids are affecting some older crops but we have moved away from those suppliers.

**BUNCH CARROTS:** Good Supply available and good quality.

**CABBAGE:** Supply is starting this week out of Georgia and we will be in southeast product for the winter.

**CAULIFLOWER:** Supply has turned around and tightened up out west, we may see prorates on some orders.

**CELERY:** Supply is very stable at the time, supply is good and quality is pretty good.

**CUCUMBERS:** Regional supply will be spotty at best. Product in the southeast is coming in on the smaller side and showing some increased scarring. We will continue to pull product from out west to ensure proper sizing.

**GREEN PEPPERS:** Supply has moved to Florida and South Carolina and has looked great!

**KALES:** Great supplies of Kale currently, plenty of regional product from all over the Midwest available. We are currently sourcing from Georgia and North Carolina.

**LETTUCES:** As we are seeing the transition in growing regions change we are seeing very limited supply on Romaine and what we are finding is poor quality. Better supply on Red and Green Leaf is available. Florida Leaf lettuces will be starting up in a couple weeks.

**RADISHES:** Supplies are impacted by weather out west as heat has really affected what supply is available. Product out of Florida is very clean and looks great!

**YELLOW SQUASH & ZUCCHINI:** We are seeing great supply on Zucchini Squash, with Yellow being a bit more limited. Supply is currently coming out of Florida, South Carolina and Mexico.

## Western Vegetables

**BROCCOLI:** Good quality; 100% Yuma Monday, November 19<sup>th</sup>.

**CAULIFLOWER:** Quality issue amongst the yields. Heavy prorates Monday/Tuesday and zero harvest in Salinas or Yuma for the rest of the week. 100% Yuma by Monday, November 19<sup>th</sup>.

**CELERY:** Strong market; celery will be Oxnard and Salinas with transfers to Yuma for consolidation, when needed.

**ICEBERG LETTUCE:** Good quality and sizing. Finishing Huron this week (very light harvest daily). Yuma has started and we will be 100% Yuma Monday, November 19<sup>th</sup>.

**ROMAINE/ROMAINE HEARTS/MIXED LEAF:** Romaine in the middle of transition. Started in Yuma 50-50 split with Salinas. Will be 100% Yuma Monday, November 19<sup>th</sup>.

## Value-Added

The supply of raw product is very inconsistent at this time due to the transition of growing regions which is resulting in many prorates and shortages of value-added items.

## Southern Vegetables

**BEANS:** Prices remain high and supplies are tight.

**GREEN PEPPERS:** Market remains high through the beginning of December. Georgia is finished and not a lot of volume in Florida.

**MUSTARD, COLLARD, TOPS & KALE:**

**TOMATOES:** Markets have become very strong. Parts of Mexico experienced a freeze and a virus in the tomatoes. Florida is still recovering from the hurricanes so expect the markets to remain high for at least a few weeks.

**YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH:** Markets are up this week; supplies are tight.

## Asparagus

Little market change despite moderate volume out of Peru and light Mexican volume; demand is weak as well keeping costs in check. Look for markets to tighten in front of December as demand will start to increase. Organic asparagus steady; market is stable.

## Fruits

**APPLES & PEARS:** Supplies and quality of apples coming from Washington/California remain good. New crop organic Pink Cripps have started. Good supplies and quality out of the east coast. Midwest supplies and quality of apples coming from Michigan/Pennsylvania remain good. Now carrying Gold Delicious 12/3#. Good supplies and quality out of New York. New crop Pink Lady totes 8/5# and Rome trays have started for the season.

**BLACKBERRIES:** Blackberries remain in steady volume, but overall quality remains fair at best. Market pricing is at bottom, keeping item as a promotable option. Organic blackberries continue to rebound after number of weeks of light supplies and poor quality.

**BLUEBERRIES:** Blueberries continue to arrive in very good volume from out of Argentina, Mexico and Peru. Look for markets to rebound and move back upward in next few weeks as these regions will begin to taper off, and Chile, which will become main source for winter season, is slightly behind in startup. Organic blueberries finally seeing better overall volume and market starting downward slide; look for improved market conditions shortly.

**CANTALOUPE & HONEYDEW:** California/Arizona lopes and dews have finished. First of the season offshore cantaloupes arrived but volume light and market have shot upward because of this factor. Honeydews tightened as Mexican dews are having quality arrival issues and decreased yield out of fields. Offshore just starting and volume a few weeks away.

**CHERRIES:** First season Argentina cherries now readily available; market beginning to decline but overall still strong. Quality looks great with good sound color. Rainiers available for next few weeks; great looking fruit. Both items are high impulse purchases by customers and get out on display to capture these sales.

**CITRUS:** Navel orange packing continues to increase. Size structure is small to start with 88/113/72 size; quality is excellent. 56size and larger are limited. Availability on organic navels is increasing on a weekly basis; sizing is small to start with an 88/113 peak.

**GRAPES:** Central California Valley grape harvest is starting to wind down rapidly and most growers will finish packing in the next few weeks but good volume on all colors remain available. Scarlet Royal Red is dominant red variety, along with Crimson and Allison, also in the mix with greens, will be Autumn King for late part of season; both excellent eating grapes with good sizing. The ever popular Holiday red seedless also continues through the start of December. We have freestanding graphic display bins available for merchandising, ask your Crosset Merchandisers for information. Organic grapes will continue in steady supply through most of

November, but as we move into December both green and black will finish, leaving only the reds.

**PINEAPPLES:** Steady supplies; market down but will move back upward as move into the holiday seasonal demand.

**RASPBERRIES:** Good overall volume on red raspberries; overall quality solid but could see some effects from recent rain on new arrivals in coming weeks.

**STRAWBERRIES:** Strawberries continue to battle a number of issues on late season crop. All areas struggling with cool temperatures which is slowing production and labor problems as wild fires raging in certain growing areas has hampered the harvest because of the poor air quality. Salinas/Watsonville quality is subpar as color problems are persisting. Santa Maria and Oxnard preferred region for loading but overall quality is just average on late season California strawberries; still seeing occasional bruising and white shoulder showing. Mexican strawberries will be best alternate in coming weeks for improving quality, but December will be limited overall volume.

## Tropical Fruit

**BABY FRENCH BEANS:** Supplies remain steady with little market change.

**KIWI:** Steady supplies; best quality remains out of New Zealand. Italian kiwi offer is best value.

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

**MANGOES:** Conventional mangoes currently arriving from out of Brazil and Ecuador; best quality appears to be coming out of new regions from Ecuador. Brazil production is already dropping off as we move to the end of their season. Organic mangoes started out of Ecuador; price strong but will level out as volume builds steadily.

**MARIDOL PAPAYAS/ GOLD PAPAYAS:** High volume on papayas continues.

**STAR FRUIT:** Good supply; sizing ranging from large 16ct to 25ct for value.

**SUGAR SNAP PEAS/SNO PEAS:** Snow peas market moving upward. Sugar snaps very strong and limited best quality comes out of Peru but at a high price.

## Merchandising Tips

With so many floral items being highlighted in your stores, let's recap some basic care procedures to give your department a real sales boost and keep your customers happy. Group all like items together: poinsettias grouped by size and color to give a burst of color; same with mums and Christmas cactus. Don't decorate your store with floral. Keep them grouped in an easily shopped display for best results. Be sure to display below eye level to better show off the color your customers are attracted to. Nobody wants to look at leaves and stems! Water as needed. Repeat. Nothing can prolong the life of your plants than proper watering. Keep soil moist, but don't over water. Remove the decorative mylar pot cover, or cut a slit in the bottom to allow excess water to drain. Pooled water in a pot invites bacterial growth, robbing your plant of shelf life. Keep your pots away from cold drafts, i.e. store front entrance areas. Remember, poinsettias are a tropical plant and don't like cold. Also be aware of overhead heat ducts. These will dry your plants quickly. Stems of your fresh bouquets should be cut anew upon arrival and be sure your water

pots are cleaned, sanitized, and filled with fresh, clean water. You'll be amazed at how these simple, basic steps will prolong the life of your floral and increase appeal and sales.

## CROSSET NEW ITEM & DELETION SHEET

W/B: 11/25/18

ITEM #	NEW ITEMS	SIZE
55060	Mandarine Stem/leaf	18#
64100	OG Maradol papayas	12pt
16510	Purple Asparagus	11#
16605	White asparagus	11#
9610	OG Belgium Endive	10#
78015	OG Driscoll Strawberries	12/8oz
55033	Clementine's	5#
78515	PT Blueberries	12pt
78545	Blueberries 18oz	8/18oz
<b>DELETIONS</b>		
34990	Kiku Apple	27#
6020	Organic Corn	45ct
89049	Mixed Potatoes	16/1.5#
89056	Fingerling Potato	16/1.5#
89025	Red Rooster Potato	10/5#
3040	Yams	40#
7020	Bin Cabbage	600#
15660	Bin Cauliflower	60/80ct
69405	Muscato Grapes	6/3#
79470	OG Italian Chestnut Shipper	54/3.5oz