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COVERING FRESH PRODUCE AROUND THE GLOBE SINCE 1897

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## Mango board issues tips for best handling practices at retail level

By TIM LINDEN

For this year, the National Mango Board is placing a special emphasis on training and education in an effort to improve mango handling practices, enhance mango quality and boost mango movement at retail. As part of this strategy, the board is hosting a Mango Handling Best Practices webinar on March 17, designed specifically for U.S. retailers and U.S. importers to cover handling from the importer to the retailer.

The webinar is being conducted by the University of California at Davis Post Harvest Technology Institute, and presented by the board and its post-harvest research team.

The information presented is the result of the research that has been done over the past 18 months by produce experts from the University of Florida and the University of California-Davis, along with several consultants. The goal was to monitor and evaluate the entire mango supply chain and determine best practices. Members of the team visited five different mango-producing countries throughout the year to evaluate mango export handling operations and to conduct mango shipping trails on certain shipments. The team members evaluated those same shipments upon arrival in the United States.

The group also evaluated retail mango displays in Florida and California to study the quality of mangos being offered to consumers at retail throughout the year. The findings from this research project are the subject of the webinar and will be the foundation for the *Mango Best Management Practices Manual* to be published this spring.

Wendy McManus, director of marketing for the board, said the research uncovered some great ideas that retailers can use immediately to both handle fruit better at the warehouse and increase sales at the store level. She outlined the main points that will be contained in the "best practices" manual.

### For Retailers

At the warehouse/distribution center:

- Move fruit directly to cold storage after receiving.
- Store pallets on racks at 54-60 degrees F.
- Maintain relative humidity at 90-95 percent.
- Scrub ethylene from cold room
- Maintain storage temps during loading.
- Minimize exposure to extreme hot or cold outside temps during loading and unloading.
- Ensure that trucks are pre-cooled, but not below 50 degrees F.

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# Mango board issues tips for best handling practices at retail level

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## At the store

- Store at 54-60 degrees F, and never below 50 degrees.
- If appropriate cold storage is not available at the store, store at ambient temperature but order more frequently.
- Display whole mangos in the produce department at ambient temperature, not in refrigerated cases.
- Keep displays well stocked, but do not stack too high to avoid bruising.
- Display according to variety and size.
- Group fruit of similar ripeness together to help customers buy mangos for eating immediately and mangos for eating in several days.
- Inspect displays several times per day and remove over-ripe, shriveled, injured or decayed fruit immediately.
- Educate customers about the selection, ripening and cutting of fresh mangos.

## Mango selection for retail customers

- Color is not the best indicator of ripeness in all varieties, and the red blush on some varieties has nothing to do with quality, maturity or ripeness.
- Squeeze gently to judge ripeness.
- A ripe mango will "give" slightly and is a good choice to eat immediately.
- A firmer mango is a good choice to be eaten in several days.
- Ripen firm mangos on the counter at room temperature.
- Move ripe mangos into the refrigerator to slow down ripening.

The Mango Handling Best Practices webinar will take place Tuesday, March 17, at 1 p.m. EST/10 a.m. PST, and will run for 60-90 minutes. Space is limited and reservations are required. Register by contacting the National Mango Board.