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National Mango Board attacks color differentiation

BY TIM LINDEN

Although many people say that the yellow-skinned mango is the best tasting of all and that green-skinned mangos have a great flavor as well, U.S. consumers tend to prefer mangos when they have that eye-pleasing red-colored skin.

It has long been asserted that people shop the produce section with their eyes rather than anything else, and red just seems to connote ripeness to more people than does green.

The mango industry has long known that if the casual consumer would try these other varieties, they would not be disappointed. To help sell the message, the National Mango Board has designed two new point-of-sale pieces to spread the word. Both headers tell consumers that green- and yellow-skinned mangos are good to eat and inform them when they are ripe. The green mango header, which has a background in green to emphasize the point, shouts out "Green-Skinned Mangos Sweet & Juicy With A Smooth Texture." The yellow mango poster is similar with its mes-

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sage: "Yellow-Skinned Mangos Sweet, Rich Flavor With A Smooth Texture."

Wendy McManus, director of marketing for the board, believes retailers will embrace this new method of distinguishing the various mango varieties because it is an easy program to execute. "We hope these new messages will help educate consumers and chip away at the notion that mangos have to be red to be desirable."

Besides its point-of-sale material and dissemination of vast amounts of information to retailers via its web site, www.mango.org, the National Mango Board also goes directly after the consumer with a variety of efforts.

Virtual test kitchen

This program involves a yearlong outreach to national magazines, top newspapers and on-line editors across the country to provide them with solid information about mango varieties and using mangos at different levels of ripeness, with the rationale that getting the attention of food writers will eventually get the message to consumers. Ms. McManus said that the board is delivering information, mangos and videos to these writers for each of the top six commercial varieties. This ongoing

effort is expected to reap results in terms of editorial coverage over the next couple of years.

She said that this program reflects the evolution of the board's marketing efforts. "For our first four years, we've been focused on the mango basics — how to cut, selection, ripening, storage and recipe ideas. In the past year, editors started asking for more in-depth information. We developed a virtual test kitchen as a direct result of this feedback."

Ingrid Hoffmann connection

Once again the board will utilize Ingrid Hoffmann from the Food Network's "Simply Delicious" to help push mango sales through the creation of new recipes. A video has been prepared featuring Ms. Hoffmann making one of the recipes, while at the same time imparting information about selection, ripening and cutting of mangos. The segment will appear on cable TV on the "Home and Health Report" and on the iTV network of cable news station web sites throughout the summer. "Based on similar programs in the past, we expect this video to be viewed approximately 28 million times," Ms. McManus said.

Other avenues of promotion

This year, the National

Mango Board has also partnered with the National Cattleman's Beef Association on a full-page, full-color newspaper article, which is being submitted to food page editors across the country. This partnership allows for a sharing of costs and maximum exposure. The board estimates that the article will be seen by at least 8 million readers in the spring and summer.

The mango board also is continuing its social networking. Its mango ambassador, Jango Mango, has more than 500 fans on Facebook and about 250 followers on Twitter. The board also posted a how-to-cut-a-mango video on YouTube that has been viewed more than 180,000 times.

Ms. McManus said the effort to influence consumers through the media has been undertaken because it is the most cost-effective approach. "Our budget is too small to effectively buy consumer advertising for a program that has to promote mangos year-round and across the country," she said. "Working with the media and getting them to tell the mango story for us has been extremely cost-effective."

The board estimated that in 2009 it received editorial coverage that would have cost it \$22 million to buy in consumer advertising.