

# TESTA PRODUCE Market Report

Outlook for the Week of  
**March 13, 2012**



## Market Report

Congrats to our friend Sarah, Executive Chef at Spiggia for finishing runner up in the Top Chef Competition. All the Chefs did a great job from Chicago and this shows the great depth and quality of the Culinarities in our city. I say this to everyone I meet: Chicago has the best Chefs and the most diverse restaurant base of any city and we are second to none when it comes to food. I also think the vendor community is pretty damn good and that would include all vendors: dry goods, seafood, meat, dairy, and produce.

Things are heating up and that's good for produce. Farmers will get into fields earlier than expected if this keeps up. We could not have asked for a better winter, so let's hope our luck holds out for spring.

Produce prices are starting to change a little bit. Some items are still in the toilet but others are making a move up- but the reality is not for long. Broc is higher next week, Cauliflower is still a little high, Celery is down, Asparagus is still a good deal but next week looks like the end of cheap prices. The market is starting to firm up and most growers agree prices will be higher after next week. Of course Cabbage is a little higher, that could be because some Irish guy's day is next week and of course nobody is going to celebrate that day. It's a very strange holiday- most of my staff who is of Mexican descent becomes Irish. Now I don't know how that happens

but Irish Mexican, just think of the food combination: Corned Beef, Cabbage, and Tacos with a side of Green Tortilla Chips- this is not a bad idea! It goes great with Guac, right color and of course Irish Potatoes and Chili. The Food Channel could get Rick Bayless to do a special on combining the two food cultures and call it 'Potatoes and Tacos: The Ultimate Comfort Food' or 'Ireland One Enchilada at a Time' the possibilities are endless.

Cucs are still cheap, Beans are down, French Beans are reasonable, Wax Beans are still tight, and Eggplant is steady. Green Onions are steady, Yellow Onions are still down, Red Onions are down, but White Onions are pricey in the mid-to-high-twenties. English Peas are a great deal in the mid-twenties, Fresh Garbanzo Beans are back if you're interested.

The Pepper market is a little unstable right now. Green Peppers took a big jump last week and supplies are much tighter but Red Peppers stayed the same, and Yellow also stayed the same. I don't think Green Peppers can stay high but we will see. Potato prices are moving, not a lot but the different groups in spring start to change. Red Potatoes are higher on B's, the same on A's, Yukon Golds are higher on both A's and B's, Box Potatoes are up slightly on all sizes but Utilities are up again for the third week in a row. Kennebec Potatoes are going to have a gap, that's what all of our growers are telling us- we will wait and see how bad it gets. We do have product for now but we aren't allowing any new customers for Ken-

## Market Report, Cont'd...

nebecs, just our regulars.

The Tomato market is also going up. Supplies have tightened up on some of the different sizes and it is mostly the 6x6 and 5x6 and large sizes. Most of the Vine-Ripes went up as well. Plum Tomatoes have been cheap but they went up as well. Cherry Tomatoes are steady but Grape Tomatoes are much higher. We have outstanding Heirloom Tomatoes for this time of year. These are Organic Heirlooms and they have been great. I don't know how much longer this grower is going to go but the quality has been great and price is also very reasonable, in the twenties. Good Beefsteaks are also available if you need them.

The Banana market is still very high and very unstable. Ripeners are still having issues getting color to everyone who needs it. Some chains just buy green Bananas and that's pretty easy to get. But for suppliers like us who need 4-5 different colors everyday, not so easy.

The Berry market is getting better on both price and supply on Strawberries. That can't be said on the other Berries. Raspberry volume is going down because of the transition between crops. Mexican volume drops off right now and does not come back for 4-6 weeks. Oxnard volume is in the early stages and doesn't ramp up for 4-6 weeks, so supplies right now are tight and the market will stay high. Central Mexico Blackberry production is starting to ramp up and by next week will be in full production so Blackberry volume will be good.

The last harvest of Chilean Blueberries will be coming into the U.S. next week. After that we have to wait for Florida, Georgia, Central Mexico, and local California production, which could mean higher prices for 3-4 weeks.

Grapes are still hit-or-miss on quality and size. Growers are struggling with supplies of high-end fruit this year. There are some new Kyoho Grapes and Muscat Grapes available. If you could use them, some Giant Globe Grapes, and I do mean Giant Globes, are available. These are the biggest

Globes I have seen; but remember, Globes have seeds and you must use them knowing that, but they have great flavor.

Spring will bring the following items: Fiddlehead Ferns, Baby Eggplant, Morel Mushrooms, Baby Squash, and more. Some items will come direct from New Zealand such as Baby Kiwi, Figs, and Passion Fruit. Also at some point Feijoas and Red and Gold Tamarillos. Not all of these items are available right away but as they start we will tell you which ones are.

Great Citrus is available right now: Navel Oranges, TDE's, Clementines, Grapefruit, Meyer Lemons, Blood Oranges, to name a few. Other specialty products available now: Mangosteen, Sunrise Papaya, Caped Gooseberries, Kumquats, Baby Brussel Sprouts, Guava, Kiwano Melons, Baby White, Maroon, and Orange Carrots, and Ugli Fruit out of Jamaica. We also have great specials running so check with your sales rep for additional info.

## Produce Quiz

I am the number one cash crop in the United States. Originating in East Asia (Manchuria), I arrived on the U.S. shores with the Mathew Perry expedition. I have more protein and calories than any other legume. I grow on a small bush two to six feet high. I am raised in a velvety pod that can be gray, yellow, black, white or brown. I have an amazing amount of uses. In my infant stage I am used in salads as a sprout. I am fermented, used as coffee substitute, made into cheese, jam, flour, grits, or used for imitation beef, ham, or chicken. Industrially my oil is used for soap, paint or vanishes. I am also a very popular cooking oil. When brewed I make a wonderful sauce, but often my sauce is packaged without any of me in it. It's truly a shame that water, salt, vegetable protein, corn syrup, and caramel color, cheaply replace my rich tangy flavor. I must be cooked to neutralize the anti-nutrients I contain (phytic acid, and trypsin). If defatted or dried, I will store moderately well. If fresh, I must be refrigerated or I will turn rancid in short order. When they dry we are used in stews and casseroles but our pleasant hazelnut like flavor is best when fresh.

**Last Quiz Answer: Daisies**



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