

TESTA PRODUCE Market Report

Outlook for the Week of
March 19, 2012



Market Report

The weather is what controls my industry the most and right behind it is transportation. If you have been paying attention lately, both items are causing havoc across the country. The severe weather in the Midwest and the amount of damage it has caused is unprecedented at this time of year. We are deeply saddened by the loss of life brought on by these storms and hope that the lives of everyone affected can be more normal as time goes on. The storms, the rain, and the cold they bring is effecting spring crops and we fully expect early planting; that doesn't happen if your farm has been destroyed by a tornado, as has been the case across the Midwest. Also severe rains on the coast are wreaking havoc on Strawberry fields in Oxnard and with the Florida crops finishing up there could be a big issue for Easter. The other problem I see for Easter will be Asparagus. I think the market will start to rise quickly next week so watch out for the increase. The price of diesel fuel is tied to gas prices as well so the cost of transportation is about to get crazy.

Bean prices went down, Cauliflower prices stayed the same, Celery is going up, and Broc is steady. Broc Crowns are also steady but because of the rain towards the end of next week prices will get higher. Carrots are steady but cooler weather will be an issue. Eggplant is unsettled as production starts to ramp up but most product is Choice or under sized- we need more production to get a steady large size product.

Green Onions are steady, Spanish Onions are steady, Red Onions are steady, and Knob Onions are the same. The Pepper market continues to be an issue. The Green Pepper market is higher again next week, the Red Pepper market is steady and so are Yellow Peppers. All of your specialty Peppers are steady, except Shishitos which are stupidly high priced.

The Lettuce market is surprisingly quiet. Head Lettuce is still steady and Leaf Lettuce, both Red and Green, are steady. Romaine is steady and so are Romaine Hearts. Growers will be switching areas over the next week to Huron. Production will be light for the first week or so.

More growers will be in full production in a week so supply should not be a problem but you never know. Mesclun is running fine, Baby Spinach is steady, and Baby Arugula is also steady. Most of my customers tell me they prefer the Organic Mesclun, Baby Spinach, and Baby Arugula and that is what I try and bring in all the time. Occasionally we have to use conventional but very rarely; the price difference between the Organic and conventional is negligible and most of the time the organic is better.

The Hard Squash market is very expensive; if you can stop using them I would suggest you do that. Prices have gone over 40 dollars a box or close to it, and growers are not getting a good supply so prices have gone up quickly.

Market Report, Cont'd...

Zucchini is still down in price, but Yellow Squash is much higher in price. The Tomato market is very active, Mexican product is slowing down and Florida production is starting back up. Florida product is in better shape than Mexico and growers are considering switching all product back to Florida.

Watermelon is much higher on both Seedless and regular- but Seedless is the main one. Prices are closing in on over 40 per case- that's the highest price for Watermelon in years.

Bananas are still in bad shape. The latest reports we are getting are not too good; the growing areas are all reporting rain, flooding, cool weather, and bug problems. All of the above are making growers very nervous and resulting in lower crop yields and very tight supply issues. We are hoping this clears up soon but as of right now its not looking good.

The Strawberry market is getting ready for the Easter pull and growers are not happy. The rainy weather is putting a damper on supply and will probably take the market way up there. Add to that, growers have made ad commitments to chain stores and food service is going to take it in the shorts.

You must always remember most growers are retail driven and when it comes to Bananas and Strawberries its all about the loss leader prices to get people in the door.

Raspberries are the tightest Berry and supplies are not getting better for weeks. Blackberries are better and Blueberries are starting to firm up, but gaps in production from Florida, Georgia, and California are going to keep prices higher for spring.

Navel Oranges are going strong and quality has been outstanding. We also have Cara Cara Oranges, which are even better. Blood Oranges are starting to wind down a bit. We still have Organic Citrus available and it has been outstanding as well.

Red Grapes are very tight and expensive of late, all are out of Chile and product is getting a little tired. Green are better and less expensive but both are

coming by boat; and they haven't made a boat yet that gets here fast from South America- unless you're a drug smuggler, then you have the best boat money can buy.

Lastly, As many of you have heard European Imports was sold earlier this month. The guys over there always intrigued us. The company was like a treasure chest. You would look through their catalogs and everything looked great. All of it looked so good. But (as the problem with all importers), availability was always hit or miss. I know the new owners are taking a different direction with their sales, so let us know if you need any items. We carry many of the dry goods, cheeses, specialty items. If not, we can try and source it for you. And it will just come with your regular produce order, so you won't have outrageous lead times or minimum orders.

Produce Quiz

Originating in the hot sultry climate of the Mediterranean region and then spreading to Southern Europe, and much later to North America, I am the herb for all occasions. I am the perfect herb, growing as a vine or a bush, and I have over 400 different varieties. Sometimes referred to as French, English or the Mother, my Greek name means "courage". The Greeks truly thought of me as an aphrodisiac as noted in the poem below. But I have also been thought to produce happiness, thriftiness, strength and courage. My other medicinal uses include treatment for nervous conditions, asthma, sore throat, whooping cough and stomach cramps. My versatility has let me stand the test of time as a culinary giant. My tiny leaves are very soft, but use me with restraint, because I have a strong pungent flavor and leave a faint clove aftertaste. I am one of the herbs in Bouquet Garni. I'm used in breads, beverages, salads, sauces, meat entrees, eggs, cheeses, vegetables, oils, vinegars and even fruits and desserts. Pick a few of my blossoms early and serve them on your favorite summer drink.

Last Quiz Answer: Soybeans



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