

# TESTA PRODUCE Market Report

Outlook for the Week of  
**June 11, 2012**



## Market Report

So you have decided you want to be in the produce business. You are going to set the world on fire, and you are going to do it better than anybody else. You are going to get the best product at the best price and deliver it at the crack of dawn with no issues and no returns, and the customer is going to fall madly in love with you and your produce and the world will be a great place to live.

If all of the above were true, I would have a lot more competition and would likely look for a different job. The reality is the produce business is extremely tough and margins are very slim and are constantly being squeezed by all components of business: vendors, customers, government, and employees. No different than any business, but more personal for me. What drives me, and every other businessperson I know, is to make a good living for my family and I, after that it's all in how you run the show. I always hope I make the right decision and when I don't, the people around me tell me so, and that is also the right way to run a company. If all you hire are 'yes people' you will fail eventually. Having someone say yes to a stupid idea once-in-a-while is not always a bad thing, just make sure you don't need them when they do it too often. Now, on to the important stuff.

The produce markets are in good shape mostly- lets start with Asparagus. The local crop has about two, maybe three, weeks left for steady production, then sporadic supply for a week or so, and then it's done. Prices have gone up recently because demand exceeds

supply, which will happen with local product every now and then because of the 'I want local movement' and its nice Asparagus, of course. It also helps when Asparagus growers in all the growing areas raise their prices and the local guys think, 'we can raise our prices also, so let's do that.' (And you thought the local guys were behind the times.) One thing local growers are really good at is figuring out what the market is and how to make money.

Beans are down for next week. Regular Beans are under twenty and French Beans are steady. Cucs are higher, Seedless are steady, Celery is down, Eggplant is higher, and Corn is steady. I grilled some Corn over the weekend and it was great, so don't be afraid to buy Corn, its got delicious flavor.

The Pepper market is still very active. Green Peppers are up in price, Reds are steady, and Yellows are steady also. You can also try Mini Red and Yellow Peppers right now, they make a great addition to a kabob and can be part of your 'eat more veggies' week. Spanish Onions are higher, Red Onions are higher, and White Onions are still high. Don't forget Knob Onions when you are grilling, they make an excellent addition to any kabob.

If you're into grilling, you also want Potatoes to be part of that, and roasted Potatoes on the grill are always great. Now the tricky part is figuring out which kind of Potato is the one you want to use; you have lots of choices so don't be afraid to try different ones and see what cooks up the best. And if you're grilling, don't forget Hard Squash, they are outstanding grilled.

## Market Report, Cont'd...

Zucchini is active and prices have moved up, and the same is true for Yellow Squash. Both items are very temperature sensitive and the weather has not provided the greatest growing conditions for Squash.

Tomatoes are going strong. We have new Arkansas fields coming on line and quality is very good. An Arkansas Vine Ripe is different from a Mexico Vine Ripe mostly in the sizing. Arkansas will pack what I call a hodge-podge type of 4x5, which is  $\frac{3}{4}$  sized,  $\frac{1}{4}$  not. You will get a 4x4 Tomato and a 5x5 Tomato in the same box. They do not layer them like other growers, but Arkansas Tomatoes will beat Mexico for flavor 10 out of 10 times; and when Kentucky starts it's not even a contest. We will use Arkansas Vines as long as we can, but most seasons of Vine Ripes are short and some run the same time as others, so it gets a little tricky with supplies.

Strawberries are improving this week, prices have come down and it's a good time to promote Berries. Blues are still running strong, Blackberries have been and still are a little tight in supply, and Raspberries are in good supply and prices have come down.

The summer fruit has started: Peaches, Nectarines, Plums, Apricots, and Cherries are all available now. New crop Figs have started and by weeks' end they should be in pints, we will see. Both Black and Green usually start, but sometimes Green are delayed. My grandmother use to make the best Fig cookies, none of my family learned how to make them after she passed away, which is too bad, because they were the best. I would like to see more kids eat Figs, they always seem so afraid to try them. There has got to be a way to dress them up so kids will try them, I think all you chefs out there need to work on this.

Grapes are back and prices have gone back to normal, quality is improving each week and all flavors are available: Green, Red, and Black. Watermelon continues to struggle, it seems growers are having big issues with supplies and quality is a problem. Even my neighbors complain they can't get a good Watermelon- every time they buy it at the store, they cut it and it's rotten on the inside. I told them to bring it back, but they said it's not worth the expense

to return it. I don't blame them. Getting in your car and driving to the store to return a Watermelon is a lot of time and money and everyone is just too busy.

Cantaloupes have been a real pain in everyone's butt lately. Growers have planted a lot less and sizes are very tight on smaller stuff some weeks and others tighter on larger sizes. Prices have gone up and down very quickly, and mostly up is where they are. It gotten so bad that only one size was available and the market had no supply of Melons for 3-4 days and that never happens at this time of the year. We apologize if you don't get your regular size Melon and we sub with another, but we feel its better to give you a Cantaloupe than leave you without. We understand some customers portion out Melons, if that's the case, return it if you cant use it. We think this situation will last another week or two. Honeydews are having a little drama on size and flavor could use a little help also. We do have Crenshaw and Casaba Melons and we will get a few others shortly, so if you need variety Melons, they are here.

## Produce Quiz

Although I am a member of the carrot family, I have no fear of being eaten by rabbits. I am beautiful and internationally popular. One of my names is derived from the word bedbug because it is said that I emit a similar odor. An ironic fact considering that I am known for increasing the appetite as well as for being a fragrant ingredient in various perfumes and cosmetics. Dating back over 3000 years, I was used by Hippocrates as a medication. The Romans added me to vinegar to preserve meat, and the Chinese Han dynasty (207 B.C. – A.D. 220) believed I possessed the powers to give immortality. In the Arabian fantasy The Thousand and One Nights, I was referred to as an aphrodisiac. My entire plant is useful, including my roots, leaves and seeds. My flowers are white, pink or pale mauve. My leaves are light green and look a bit like flat parsley, but my taste has much more bite. My long roots have a nutty flavor while my seeds have overtones of citrus. I am used everywhere in the culinary world and I play nicely with beets, onions, or potatoes. My leaves and seeds are essential ingredients in any good curry, and no good guacamole could survive without my leaves chopped into it. My roots thrive when combined with marinated mushrooms, tomato or pasta salads. While my seeds make a lovely tea, as a whole I provide vitamin A, potassium, and calcium. Used as a bitter herb during Passover, you will find me in many a stuffing for Thanksgiving dinner.

**Last Quiz Answer: DANDILION**



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