

The Art Of Produce Labeling And Bag Printing

'They're like a billboard in the fridge or pantry.'

Years ago, when most produce was sold from bulk bins, labeling and packaging rarely were associated with fresh fruits and vegetables. Today's produce departments demonstrate the creative and effective ways that produce labels and packaging are helping to sell more fruits and vegetables.

"Nielsen data shows fixed-weight packaged produce accounts for more than half of produce sales," observes Kristin Yerecic Scott, marketing director, Yerecic Label, New Kensington, PA. "Packaged produce allows the grower to communicate more information to the customer from point of purchase through final portion consumption. Labels and packages offer the longest lasting marketing; they're like a billboard in the fridge or pantry."

The Food Marketing Institute's Power of Produce 2019 notes that packaged and branded produce, organics, greenhouse, and value-added all are growing, and shoppers demand being able to see the items in the package.

A recent survey by **Culinary Visions**, Chicago, similarly found value in produce visibility. "When determining freshness, 85 percent of consumers we polled believe transparent packaging is moderately or extremely important," says Sharon Olson, executive director. "This can be significant in produce departments, where packaging that allows consumers to see the fruits or vegetables can help sell one brand over another."

The Packaging Process

"Produce is a competitive market," says Lisa Hansen, executive vice president of marketing and communications company McDill Associates, Soquel, CA. "Effective packaging communicates your position and the factors that differentiate you from the competition — not just freshness but also flavor, function and format. Messaging should be clear, concise, compelling and unique, and designed in a way that strengthens and markets your brand. Your brands need to do their job well. Physically, consider how the package will fit and support the product without being too snug or tight.

"For labels, make sure your files are clean and crisp, and work closely with your printer to get the most out of the printing process. Then set up your team with print-ready templates and a brand-style guide." Hansen also encourages fun, seasonal, thematic packaging such as spring graphics or a red "ribbon" for the winter holidays.

Labeling and packaging require careful planning. "Many factors need to be considered, including where a product is being sold, costs, environmental impact, handling, and, of course, the consumer," advises Glenn Sagon, chief executive at brand strategy specialist Sagon-Phior, Los Angeles. "Then look at your brand in comparison to competitors in terms of colors, graphics, logos and proof points. If you can, test a new label or package for usability, recognizability and ability to reach your target customer. It also is important to develop a relationship with key retailers since you need retailer buy-in for securing shelf space."

Sagon adds that produce packaging and labeling need to clearly communicate what's inside. "Storytelling is remarkably important because it reveals information that differentiates one product from another. Talking about a locally grown farm, for example, matters to certain shoppers. Color is extremely important. For example, yellow lettering is highly visible and induces appetite, while green connotes fresh, safe, environmentally friendly and possibly organic."

Aaron Fox, executive vice president, Fox Packaging, McAllen, TX, notes the package development process begins with a vision, along with the reality of bag and label dimensions. "Once the design is complete, that vision gets sent to our art department to adjust the client's existing art to the style of its bag. The final rendering is sent to the client for approval, and then plates are created for printing the label. The label goes into production, undergoes conversion, and is shipped to the packing location."