

5 top five picks

1 SNOW

Snow storms are heavily impacting the national market in two ways, demand and transportation.

2 CELERY

Supplies from Oxnard and the Yuma areas are getting back to more normal levels.

3 LEMONS

Prices are high but at least have leveled out, demand has curtailed rising higher prices.

4 LETTUCE

The greatest concern with growers right now is the lack of demand.

5 PEPPERS - COLORED

February tends to be one of the better months for supplies, quality and pricing.



SNOW STORMS

The Midwest and the Eastern seaboard into New England have been blasted with two very strong snow storms, dumping up to a few feet of snow in large regions of the country. These regions do not have any agricultural production, but the storms impact national retail demand and transportation. Most consumers are more concerned about staying safe and warm, not about buying Iceberg at the store. Trucks loaded with produce can't get to destinations, and when they do, they are several days late. This causes a back-up in ordering from East Coast supplies, and dampens purchasing demand across the board. All in all, we tend to see softer markets in conditions like this.

FreshPress a quick glance at the top produce items for quality and market conditions.

BERRIES STRAWBERRIES

Two weeks of rain has put a damper on Valentine's retail promotions.

And growers are expecting

even more rain. Most growers in Southern California are sending a lot of product to the processing plants. Growers basically stripped the plants of all fruit, trying to prompt the plants to produce more blossoms, and eventually more fruit. Stem-berry supplies are very limited this year. Mexican growers are trying to keep up with overwhelming and sudden demand, but production numbers quickly went down. Rains in Mexico have reduced their production by almost half of normal. As expected with California berries,



(continued on next page)

Reality Check

VEGETABLE	Quality			Price		
	HIGH	AVG	LOW	HIGH	AVG	LOW
Asparagus		✓				✓
Beans		✓		✓		
Broccoli	✓					✓
Cabbage		✓		✓		
Cauliflower	✓					✓
Celery	✓				✓	
Cucumbers		✓		✓		
Lettuce – Iceberg	✓					✓
– Leaf	✓					✓
– Romaine	✓					✓
– Spring Mix	✓			✓		
Onions – Red		✓		✓		
Onions – Yellow		✓		✓		
Peppers – Green		✓		✓		
Peppers – Red	✓			✓		
Potatoes – Russet	✓					✓
Squash – Yellow			✓	✓		
Squash – Zucchini	✓					✓
Tomato – Cherry	✓			✓		
– Grape	✓			✓		
– Mature Green	✓			✓		
– Roma	✓				✓	
– Vine-Ripe	✓				✓	
FRUIT						
Avocado – Calif.		✓				✓
Avocado – Imports	✓					✓
Berries		✓		✓		
Grapes		✓			✓	
Kiwifruit		✓		✓		
Lemons	✓			✓		
Limes		✓		✓		
Melon – Cantaloupe		✓		✓		
Melon – Honeydew		✓		✓		
Melon – Watermelon		✓		✓		
Oranges	✓				✓	
Pineapple	✓				✓	
Strawberries		✓		✓		

we are seeing a lot of "white shoulder" in the cartons, far more than normal for this time of year. We were seeing good supplies from Florida, but are now hitting a significant supply gap due to the early January freeze.

CELERY

Supplies from Oxnard and the Yuma area are back to more normal levels, following rain over the past several weeks. Prices have once again back to more normal levels for this time of year. Quality has been excellent on all sizing. We are still concerned about upcoming fields developing some pithy characteristics as a result of the rains. Of course, Florida is not helping very much with supplies due to the January freeze.

CITRUS LEMON

Harvest activity continues in both District II and District III, from Oxnard to Yuma.



The desert, District III, should be ending their shipping season sometime in March. District I, the San Joaquin Valley, is just starting up with their harvest season. We are still seeing very tight supplies for smaller size Lemons. Prices are high but at least have plateaued out, mainly because demand has somewhat curtailed those rising higher prices. Once we start seeing summer demand take off, usually by May, that will once again cause prices to rise.

GRAPES

Ships are arriving in Philadelphia and Long Beach from Chile on a routine basis now. However the snow in the East is really limiting the off-loading of product. That will shut down some shipments for a few days. We don't know how much strain that will put on supplies already in the distribution system. That may depend on how many retailers have Grapes in ads and promotions over the next week or so. We are seeing Green, Red and Black Seedless, although Black Seedless supplies are still quite limited. You will notice pretty good flavor and sugar content, but berry sizes are on the small side, especially with the Red Seedless. As we move through February, this will become the peak of the season. Harvest activity is now in the main vineyards of Chile just south of Santiago.

Sysco

News that is as fresh as our produce

Please Distribute to: Executive Chef, General Manager, Kitchen Manager, Purchasing Manager, F&B Manager

LETTUCE ICEBERG

The biggest concern with growers is the lack of national demand. Snow storms in the East are causing retail and foodservice buyers to halt their normal order patterns. Production and quality in Yuma have been very good. We have seen some pink ribs in some product. It's common for oversaturated lettuce to get some pink on the ribs. This will find its way into fresh-cut packs as well.

MELONS WATERMELON

The growing region in Mexico is changing to more southern areas. This increase in distance means an increase in transportation costs. Many of the fields we have toured have had significant damage from rain. Many growers we talk with say they have lost about half of their crop. Supplies are much tighter than normal, and quality is only fair.

PEPPERS RED & GOLD

Because of the great markets for green Bells in the East, many fields in Mexico that were scheduled for colored bell production, are being harvested early, in the green immature state. This may help fill demand for Green Bells, but this schedule change will certainly impact colored Bell supplies late in the season. There are hot-house Bells available from several growing regions, but hot-house prices are always higher than field-grown prices.

TOMATOES

Florida supplies will be virtually nil through the rest of the Winter. Mexican Tomatoes are making the trip to the East Coast to help fill the supply gaps. Prices for regular slicing Tomatoes are more than double of what they were a year ago. Florida growers tell us that we should expect to see volatile markets right into their Spring acreage, sometime in mid-April. Remember that when markets get like this, quality will become an issue. Most growers and shippers have initiated "Act of God" clauses for contract supplies. We are seeing very normal supplies and quality from the main Mexican fields in Culiacan, but they cannot handle the full national demand.

Brix A percentage of soluble solids in fruits are almost 100% sugar, therefore refractometers are widely used to check maturity in fruits. The number will be % of solids as sucrose.

Honeydew and Cantaloupe are all averaging about

10.6% - 10.8%



Brix Scale
Low: 8-10% | Avg: 11-13% | High: 14-17%

Tasty

BLOOD ORANGES



Bright Color

Bright Flavor