



Produce Profile: NW-GROWN MELON



WHEN ARE NORTHWEST-GROWN MELONS AVAILABLE?

Generally speaking, the first cantaloupe, watermelon and honeydew usually begin harvest around July 1st, with specialty melons following a couple of weeks after that. Each year is different, and in the case of the 2022 season, a milder spring and early summer have pushed back crops by about two weeks. Expect to be in full melon mode by August with promotable supply through Labor Day weekend and into September.

WHERE ARE MELONS GROWN IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST?

Melons love the hot days and cooler nights of the arid regions of eastern Washington and Oregon.

WHICH NORTHWEST-GROWN SPECIALTY MELON VARIETIES ARE AVAILABLE FROM OGC?

In addition to standard favorites like watermelon, mini watermelon, cantaloupe and green honeydew, we are proud to provide the following specialty melon varieties: Canary, Charentais, Galia, Orange Honeydew, Piel de Sapo, Snow Leopard, Tuscan and various specialty watermelon.

WHO GROWS MELONS FOR OGC?

Alan Schreiber of Agricultural Development Group – Alan Schreiber grows organic melons along with 300 other varieties of crops just outside of Eltopia, Washington. More than a farmer, Alan is also a professor who established the Agricultural Development Group to continue his research and exploration of emerging varieties.

Walchli Farms – Known for their super sweet cantaloupes and watermelons, many shoppers know to ask for Walchli by name! Family-owned for over 60 years, Walchli Farms credits the sandy soil and heat of Hermiston, Oregon for their high-quality, delicious crop!

Big Sage Organics – Second-generation farmer Isaac Jahns grows 30 acres of diversified organic crops in Othello, Washington. In addition to mixed melons (Galia, cantaloupe and honeydew), Isaac has recently expanded into specialty watermelons, as well!

HOW TO TELL IF A MELON IS RIPE

Some shoppers think it's the thump. Others swear it's the sniff that ensures they'll bring home the perfect melon. For cantaloupes, honeydew and many specialty melons, pressing on the blossom end of the melon to check if there's some give and inspecting the color of the rind to ensure it appears ripe are also reliable methods. Thumping on a watermelon and listening for a deep hollow sound is a good indicator of ripeness.

In the produce department, frequently tasting and sampling melon supplies will make sure staff are informed on what is eating great, inspiring recommendations and happy eaters!



MERCHANDISING TIPS

- Offer cut and wrapped melons for sale. Seeing juicy flesh saturated in color will entice eaters and inspire sales on both cut and whole fruit.
- Utilize color breaks, placing solid-color fruit adjacent to striped varieties to help each type stand out. With melons, skin texture can also be used as a differentiator in displays. From the smooth skin and bright yellow hue of Canary melon to the netted tan cantaloupe, there are many colors and textures to play with in the produce department!
- Emphasize organic and “Northwest-grown” with signage, using the POP provided to help educate eaters about different varietal characteristics.
- Consider retail pricing on whole fruit to attract volume sales and a focus on building margin dollars rather than a set percent. Whether by the each or by the pound, taking a slightly lower margin percent on uncut fruit can drive sales by finding the right price point for your customers.
- Use signage and/or social media channels to highlight specialty melons in addition to standard favorites.
- Find multiple locations for melons. A big bin of watermelon at the entry to the produce department will get shoppers interested, and additional placement of specialty melons alongside other seasonal fruit or near registers is sure to drive impulse sales and seal the deal.
- Back to sampling? Melons are fantastic for either passive sampling or active demos. Follow safe handling practices (available in the NW Melon Toolkit) and tempt eaters to purchase by offering tastes of delicious sweet melon!

