



PENNSYLVANIA VEGETABLE MARKETING & RESEARCH PROGRAM

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Fresh Ideas

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The Pennsylvania Vegetable Marketing and Research Program is a state-wide marketing order established by a grower referendum, governed by a grower board and funded by grower assessments.

The Program's sole purpose is to serve the vegetable growers of Pennsylvania by promoting Pennsylvania-grown vegetables and funding practical vegetable production research.

PA PRODUCE MONTH CELEBRATED

The Vegetable Marketing and Research Program conducted its 15th annual celebration of August as Pennsylvania Produce Month this season. The campaign is designed to focus extra attention on Pennsylvania vegetables at the height of the season, equipping farmers with promotional tools and resources, while educating the consumer about PA produce and encouraging them to support their local farmers.



This year, we again collaborated with Kitchen Table Consultants to help direct our promotions and build upon our past successes. The 2020 campaign had to be altered slightly due to COVID-19 but the continued momentum from 2019, paired with the public relations efforts of 2020, proved to be critical in amassing buzz amongst the digital/virtual foodie communities. While the objectives and impacts are summarized in the pages that follow, it deserves mentioning that the Digital

Cookbook and "How To" videos and graphics were some of the most well-received content that's been produced for the campaign and the program. This can in part be attributed to the marketing initiatives that have been thoughtfully refined over time, as well as the loyal and engaged audiences that have been built through careful and consistent management. Both of these - the loyal audience and brand awareness - will serve as valuable assets that can benefit the Program's initiatives for years to come.

HOW TO USE EGGPLANT

Check your way through the bounty that Pennsylvania has to offer. Share your story with others - tag #paveggies.

GRILL

Generously salt once sliced and coat in olive oil with your other favorite herbs and spices.

STUFF

Scop them into boats or slice them long and thin to roll them up with a filling inside.

PUREE OR MASH

Baba goush is a dish that can be made using just eggplant, tahini, olive oil, lemon juice, garlic and salt.

BREAD

Similar to a cutlet recipe, there's nothing like sliced eggplant in a Parmesan and bread crumb coating.

STEW OR CURRY

Cube and simmer with other veggies in a spiced tomato base broth for a simply delicious comfort food.

MORE TIPS, TRICKS & RECIPES: PAVEGGIES.ORG



PA PRODUCE MONTH *(continued from page 1)*

Marketing Plan

A 5 Year Marketing Plan, consisting of 3 detailed years and 2 high level, is currently being finalized and will serve as a critical tool for clarifying what marketing initiatives best aid in accomplishing the Program's goals. More importantly it will outline a roadmap for personnel to consistently and thoughtfully manage those marketing initiatives with long term profitability in mind. The final iteration of this plan will be presented to the Board on November 16.

Brand Video

Since part of the Program's success rides on relationships cultivated with fellow businesses and brands in the industry, it is important that there is a brand asset for evergreen education of the Program's purpose and mission. The Brand Video created this year, available at paveggies.org, and the Program's Facebook and YouTube, can serve as an evergreen tool, particularly valuable in pitching to advertisers, partners, and sponsors, as well as consumers, who need to know what they're investing in. The brand video was also placed as the Facebook Cover video for ongoing exposure and immediate branding toward Facebook Page visitors. There were two versions created, with one consisting of a direct call to action. This version was crafted with consumer marketing in mind and could be developed into a "spend \$10" campaign or slogan with the right support.

Farmer Webinar

The Farmer Webinar has been a long-awaited idea conceptualized for the sole purpose of fulfilling an important part of the Program's mission to provide Pennsylvania growers with marketing and research tools. This particular tool was intended to equip growers with a marketing skill that they could retain throughout the lifetime of their business to aid in boosting sales. The webinar was recorded and added to paveggies.org, along with written instructions, a copy of the slide deck used during the presentation, plus tools and sample assets that correspond to the webinar.

Other Resources

Additional resources were created, such as POP materials, marketing instructions, graphics, and more, and marketing activities were performed, such as the distribution and proper placement of all the resources, in order to maintain marketing integrity for the Program through 2020.

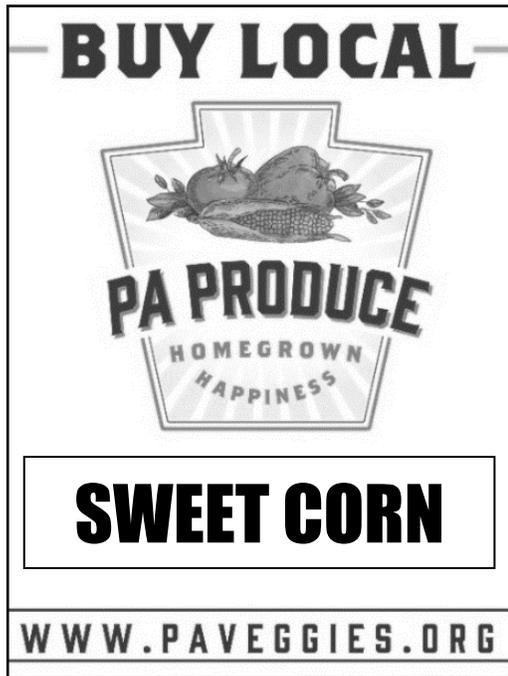
As we bore witness to this year, the holistic approach of meeting the needs of consumers and the growers, as well as recognizing how healthy brand awareness and audience loyalty is a benefit that can be passed on to the farmers, and will be especially important for the proper execution of the marketing strategy over the next 3 to 5 years, as the plan outlines.

Produce Month Press Event Becomes a Digital Cookbook

As a pivot from in-person event appearances, the idea for the Digital Cookbook was to create a collaborative and informative product that offers value in a few ways: 1) to end consumers via recipes and educational content; 2) to contributors as a platform for them to showcase their talents; and 3) to farmers by promoting PA produce. The cookbook and its individual content pieces, similar to a lot of the assets created this year, can be repurposed for many years to come. For example, recipes can be repurposed as individual blog posts to ensure the website is updated regularly. The How To videos created for the cookbook have already been added to the Farmer Toolkit and the PA Veggies Facebook so they can serve as promotional tools individually and for Pennsylvania vegetables as a whole. Recognition of PA Veggies as an authoritative brand skyrocketed after the release of the Cookbook, especially in the social media community. PA Veggies' Instagram has been experiencing steady Followerer growth, consistent tagging of the @paveggies account, and more use of the #paveggies hashtag than ever before. The Cookbook also garnered the most press recognition and even ignited the ability for a few short videos to be produced for [Around the Alleghenies' Your Health Matters Series](#), of ABC23.

NEW POINT OF PURCHASE MATERIALS INTRODUCED

Continuing the effort begun last year to update the Program's point-of-purchase materials with the "PA Produce" brand and style, we printed new versions of our "How to Use" information cards and added six new crops – broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kohlrabi and sweet potatoes. The "Fun and Healthy Facts" student activity cards were also updated to the new style and reprinted. Finally, in response to repeated grower requests, the Program produced large and small dry-erase price paddles once again – this time with the "PA Produce" logo. These projects were all made possible with a matching grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.



The Program will continue to ship point-of-purchase items to growers through the fall although we do ask that all orders be submitted by January 31, 2021.

Supplies of banners, roadside signs, price cards, price paddles, clip-on price cards, price stickers, brochures, "Fun and Healthy Facts" activity cards and how-to-use information cards are all in stock and ready to ship. Point-of-purchase materials were shipped to about 240 growers across the state so far this year.

Growers receive a credit equal to half of their assessment payment (up to a maximum of \$25) to order point-of-purchase items from the Program at no additional cost. Order forms are available on the PAVeggies.org website or by calling 717-694-3596.

DIRECTORIES MAINTAINED

The four searchable Directories launched last fall on the Program's PAVeggies.org website – Farms & Markets, CSAs, Wholesale Growers and Produce Auctions – are up and running and being updated as we receive requests for updates. Let us know if you are not listed and want to be listed.

PLEASE GIVE US YOUR EMAIL

If you use email, PLEASE include your email address on your Assessment Statement Form or email us at pvmrp@embarqmail.com. The Program is planning to do more of its communications to growers by email which saves the Program greatly in postage and printing costs.

FARMERS MARKET NUTRITION PROGRAM

Growers who want to accept the Farmer's Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) checks from senior citizens and WIC program recipients MUST be registered with the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program first. If you are not registered, prepare for next season by calling the FMNP office at 717-787-2940.

Impact of PA Veggies Social Media

Historically, there has not been much budget allocated to maintain social media but it does still serve as an important platform in distributing the Program's content and managing public relations. Takeovers and re-posting were both enlisted again to assist in the upkeep of the Program's most active social media platform, Instagram. Cross-posting techniques were utilized to ensure Facebook remained active as well. While both platforms continue to experience steady growth in followers, they also have both not been fully tapped for their marketing potential. From July 27, 2020 to October 27, 2020, we observed the following Facebook and Instagram statistics:

Facebook

15,243 reached
742 engaged
112 new likes/follows
609 video views
21,424 impressions
354 Facebook discussions that mentioned "PA Veggies"

Instagram

522 new follows (since end of Oct. 2019)
58,961 impressions
51,709 reached (last 6 months; posted 167 less times than 2019)
5,509 likes
171 posts (~6 months)

YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED

As stated in the Program's Mission Statement (top of page 1), the Program's sole purpose is to serve Pennsylvania vegetable growers. To do that effectively, we need your input on a regular basis. While growers are welcome to communicate their needs at anytime to the Program by phone (717-694-3596), email (pvmrp@embarqmail.com) or regular mail (2301 North Cameron Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110), each fall we conduct our **Annual Grower Survey**.

Please fill out the enclosed survey to help the Program's Board meet your marketing and research needs for 2021. We especially need your response for the first question for our Specialty Crop Block Grant to help evaluate the effects of our grant activities.

Each comment submitted by growers is typed up for the Board members to review. The November 9 virtual meeting will be devoted to the annual election of officers, review of the research pre-proposals for 2021 and general business. The November 16 virtual meeting will cover 2021 promotional plans and general business. All meetings of the Board are public meetings in which growers are welcome to participate. Any questions how to participate in the virtual meetings or about the Program should be referred to William Troxell at 717-694-3596 or pvmrp@embarqmail.com.



MID-ATLANTIC CONVENTION GOES VIRTUAL FEB. 8 TO 11

The 2021 Mid-Atlantic Fruit and Vegetable Convention will be going virtual this year due to the pandemic. The four-day virtual event will include an industry trade show. Several of the researchers whose projects are funded by the Program will be speaking in the educational sessions so it is a good opportunity for growers to hear them speak. Plan to attend the educational sessions - pesticide credits will be available. Information is available at www.mafvc.org or 717-694-3596.

CONSIDER JOINING THE PA PREFERRED PROGRAM

Growers who are part of the PA Preferred program are eligible to receive point-of-purchase materials from the Department of Agriculture. For information on becoming a member of the PA Preferred program, contact Sherry Smith, PA Preferred Program Coordinator, at 717-787-6901 or go to www.papreferred.com.