

HILLTOP™

Issue #15 Fall/Winter 2018/19



**Hello
Honeyhill™**

**New Face
Familiar Face**

**Operation
Ripen**

BETTER



Operation
FLAVOR

Find out why your pears should be
Rushing Rivers® from your Stemilt Rep.



Stemilt
RUSHING RIVERS®
—THE BEST PEAR LOCALES IN THE WORLD—

From the Editor



Hello from Wenatchee! In the last issue of Hilltop, our new distribution center, The Fresh Cube, was opening. It became operational during cherry season and is now working well in getting our new crop of apples and pears onto a truck and heading towards your stores.

We're excited about the quality of the 2018 apple and pear crop, and fruit sizing is expected to be grander this year. This is not the biggest crop in our industry history, but one that is still ripe with promotion opportunities for you to build your categories.

In this issue of Hilltop, you'll read about Honeyhill™, our brand for premium Honeycrisp apples. You can read about the second year in our Operation Flavor journey to enhance your pear categories, and our continued focus on wellness through our employee health clinics.

I hope that you have a great fall and winter season and I look forward to chiming in on next year's cherry crop in our spring/summer issue. Until then, thank you for your unwavering support of Stemilt and our World Famous Fruits.

Onward,

West Mathison
President
Stemilt Growers

HILLTOP

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Hilltop is a bi-annual publication dedicated to fresh fruit growing, packing, marketing, and merchandising.

Subscriptions: Free to qualified subscribers around the world.

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Cover Shot



Mike Taylor in the middle of pear harvest this fall.

DING!



NOW WE'RE COOKIN'

THANKS TO TODAY'S ONLY TRUE CULINARY APPLE

The apple category is changing, but cooking with apples is still in style. Stemilt is home for the best apple to use in the kitchen. Heat up your apple sales with Piñata®.



*Tropical
Twist*

2 CLASSIC APPLE FLAVORS WITH A

HILLTOP



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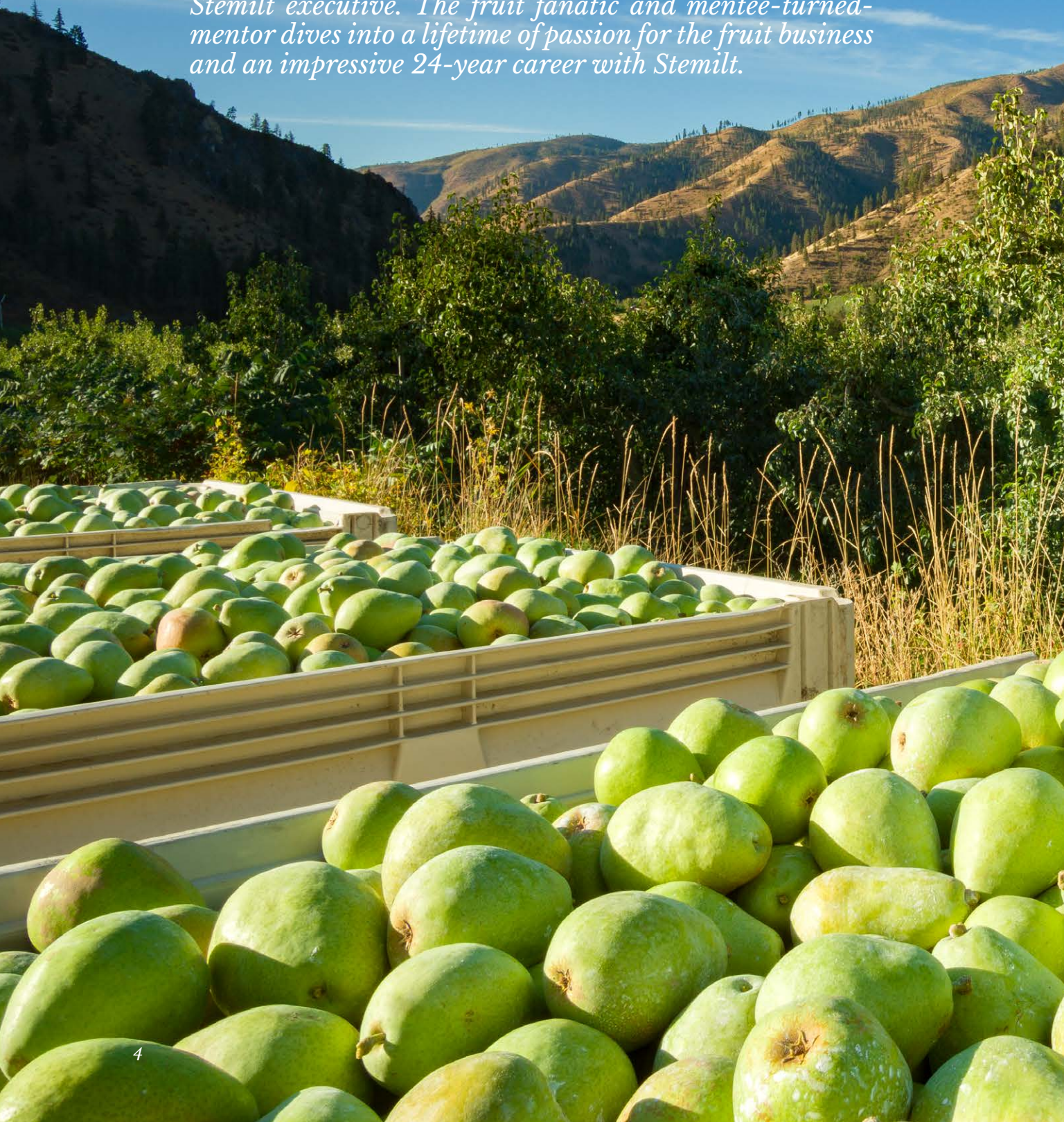


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By Brianna Shales

Familiar Face: Mike Taylor

A college dream to grow and sell fruit turned reality for this Stemilt executive. The fruit fanatic and mentee-turned-mentor dives into a lifetime of passion for the fruit business and an impressive 24-year career with Stemilt.





Mike in 2018 pear harvest, Entiat River Valley

Brianna: I must start this interview by congratulating you on your recent 24-year anniversary milestone at Stemilt. Tell readers how you got your start in the fruit business.

Mike: I grew up working in my family's fruit orchards in Yakima, WA and spent most of my summers working on the farm. I loved to drive tractor but was often tasked with irrigation work. The most exciting promotion for me was to run a harvest crew. A young man named Cowboy literally showed me the ropes and by age 14, I was running a small orchard of cannery pears. Harvest was done before school started and my Dad allowed me to keep the (albeit small) profits I made.

I always knew I'd be in this business and the idea of staying in central Washington was appealing to me. I love to snowski and since there is less orchard activity in the winter, this was a good fit for me. I attended University of Washington and throughout school, my dream was very clear: I wanted to be a fruit sales manager and run 100 acres of farm.

Brianna: Your career is centered on numbers, but that's not what you studied in college. Explain that for readers.

Mike: It's true, I have an English degree. Communication is natural for me and I'm far better with the spoken word than details. I've grown to know and enjoy numbers but I think my true talent is in communication and finding win-wins to make things go well with people.

Brianna: Did you land back in the fruit business after college?

Mike: Yes, my first job out of college was in Yakima. With a degree in hand, I thought I'd be at a high-level position right away but instead they handed me a broom to sweep out a controlled atmosphere (CA) room! Working every job – from receiving to sorting and much in between – was key in developing my knowledge of this complex business.

Brianna: Why did you make the move to Wenatchee and how did you get your start at Stemilt?

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Communication is natural for me and I'm far better with spoken words than details. I love finding win-wins to make things go well for people.

Mike: In the early 90s, I was personally ready for change and moved to Wenatchee. I showed up at Stemilt unemployed and talked with Doug Hunter (sales) and Tom Mathison (Stemilt founder). They decided to give me a shot. At the time, Stemilt was moving away from using brokers and selling and telling their own story through sales and marketing. On August 3, 1994, I started (along with Wendy Everhart) as a sales assistant. I was fortunate to be mentored by Doug Hunter, who taught me a lot about fruit but more about people and how much your integrity matters. Stemilt was on the cutting edge as the first company to have PLU stickers on varietal apples. There were a lot people attracted to Stemilt and I had a chance to work with retail and serve longtime Stemilt customers from the beginning.

Brianna: What was a day at work like back then?

Mike: I learned something new every day, not only from my mentors and colleagues, but also from our gracious and supportive customers. It was a fast-paced and active environment with lots of time spent on the phone. Every day was exciting.



Mike on the packing line circa 2004

Brianna: How did your role evolve into your executive position today?

Mike: Stemilt was growing fast and after 5 years at the sales desk, I was promoted to Director of Sales. Shortly after, we created a Marketing department, and I earned the role of VP of Sales and Marketing. Committing to marketing was daunting for me, and I was thrilled to bring my customer and friend, Roger Pepperl, to lead that area of the business. That was a huge boost for Stemilt, and myself, as that launch took our sales team to another level. I've remained in this role ever since and enjoy being around a great team of people and helping them grow deeper and stronger.

Brianna: You are also a grower of Stemilt fruits. How did you get involved in the growing side of the business?

Mike: It stemmed from my childhood and clear vision in college, and the Mathison's family entrepreneurial spirit. They supported me fully to do both, and the ability to walk in the shoes of a grower but as a sales executive has been incredible. It's increased my involvement and commitment to the business as well as my economic understanding.

Our family orchards are grown in districts, with apples in the Columbia Basin, cherries in Yakima, and pears in the Wenatchee and Entiat River Valleys. We grow today's top varieties and organic as well. We have a great team that works hard to deliver World Famous Fruit quality.

“

Stepping into the 'farmer' role was a dream come true. It increased my involvement in the business and economic understanding.

Brianna: What does an average day look like for you?

Mike: I wake up at 5AM and try to not look at my phone until I'm ready and eating breakfast. I'm a person of routine and enjoy the same poached egg and banana breakfast each day. I get to the office at 7AM and review prior day sales and get a sense from the team how markets are going. We have executive huddles three days a week, and lots of cross-departmental meetings. I love immersing myself in the market. I can always count on Roger stopping by my office before 8AM to share wisdom. I exercise at lunch to work off the sugar from the extraordinary amount of fruit I eat all day. Some weeks I'm lucky to go visit customers to see retail in action and understand the dynamics they face and how we can work together to grow sales.

Brianna: You've seen the world while working at Stemilt. What are your most memorable trips?

Mike: Any trip with Tom Mathison was memorable and we went everywhere together. He really invested in me and helped me understand the culture and story of Stemilt. Eva Lauve and I went to Venezuela together and that was an interesting environment. I had a great trip Europe with Dave Martin, and another to China and Taiwan with Bill Young and Jill Douglas. One that truly sticks out is a recent trip to India. It was incredible to see the growth of this populated and dynamic country.



Mike and his father, Mike Sr. at their Riverstone Orchards in Leavenworth, WA circa 2007

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The Stemilt culture is incredible. Working for a family committed to its team members and with strong values and humility makes for a great work environment.



Brianna: What's your favorite part of the job? What are the biggest challenges you face, and how do you work through them?

Mike: I love to see a successful promotion go through to completion and exceed expectations on both sides. The biggest challenge is understanding the specific crop dynamics each year and correctly communicating that to modify retail plans to those realities. We overcome this by working hard to balance supply and demand with data and clear communications. I love that part, it's truly my wheelhouse.

Brianna: What is the first thing you look at when you enter a produce department?

Mike: I look for the location of the department in the store, as they aren't all the same. I'm interested in the products featured on the front table and what's on promotion. Then, I look at the apple and pear sections. It's interesting to look at assortment, what they do on organics, and how retailers are positioning these products. I love saying hi to the produce manager; this person truly sets the tone for the store.

Brianna: What are you most excited about when it comes to Stemilt 5 years from now?

Mike: The changing dynamics of our 'menu' of products and services. I'm excited to see that grow and evolve. We have many great new apples coming, including Rave®, Cosmic Crisp™, Sweetango®, and Pink Lady®. It will be exciting to see the advancement of modern packaging. Mostly, however, I'm excited to see the development of young people and how they'll contribute to continue the great culture at Stemilt.

Brianna: How would you describe the Stemilt culture?

Mike: In one word: incredible. Working for a family that is so committed to its team members is extraordinary. As an employee here, I've never been asked to do something that they wouldn't stand with me on. When big things go wrong, they are always able to receive those challenges with grace and will move on quickly with improvements in mind. It's the epitome of a team environment with strong values and humility that makes the Stemilt difference.

Brianna: Who are your role models and why?

Mike: Doug Hunter, Tom Mathison, Bill and Jeanette Evans, Kyle Mathison, and Roger Pepperl. It's been rewarding to know and learn from these people, and I now feel a calling to mentor young people going forward. I learned the business from emulating Tom and others and I look forward to helping sales people carry that on.

Brianna: Tell readers what you do when you aren't working the phones in sales.

Mike: I have a big family with three kids and three grandchildren. We love the outdoors and have a cabin in Idaho that we visit often. I'm a huge UW Husky fan and go to football games in the fall. I love to waterski, snowski and am an avid reader of non-fiction books.

Brianna: For the final question, what is your favorite Stemilt fruit and why?

Mike: Those that know me would tell you this is not an easy one to answer. I spend a lot of time around all kinds of fruit and I truly eat and enjoy far beyond what is normal for people. If I had to choose, it would be dark-sweet cherries and specifically, top quality Bings and Skeenas.



Mike live on CNBC India during his 2018 trip



Mike with his wife, Tiffany, during a 2018 trip to India.



Mike accepting a Stemilt grower award alongside West Mathison (far left) and his orchard manager, Mike Jurgens (center).

By Brianna Shales

New Face: Katie Harmon

The creative communicator has brought new energy to Stemilt's social channels, blog, and more. Get to know the newest face of our Marketing team.





Brianna: Tell readers more about yourself.

Katie: I grew up in Wenatchee and any person that does knows Stemilt and the impact the tree fruit world has on our community. After graduating high school, I went to Eastern Washington University in Cheney, WA but found myself spending most of my time at Washington State University (Go Cougs!). I transferred there my sophomore year and looked at a few degrees before landing on English as a major. I've always loved writing and enjoyed the experience of telling stories. Choosing to go a route that I enjoyed helped me know that I made a great decision!

I met my husband in college. We went to high school together but he was a couple of years older and we didn't run in the same crowd. We returned to Wenatchee after graduating because he had secured a job here. We love the valley and it's nice to live close to our family.

Brianna: How did you come to join the Stemilt team?

Katie: After graduating college, I started working at the local newspaper on their digital team. Unfortunately, it didn't pay very well, and I soon found myself working at an engineering company, but not writing as much as I wanted to. When I saw the Marketing & Communications Coordinator job opening at Stemilt, I was thrilled. The ag industry has always interested me and I felt the job description matched my skills perfectly. I'm so glad to be here. It's been a fast (almost) two years where I've learned something new every day, while also fulfilling my passion for writing and telling the incredible stories of our founding family and fruits.

Brianna: What does an average day look like for you?

Katie: I start my day by checking Stemilt's social media channels and answering any comments or messages. It's fun to relay any consumer feedback to our teams. Then, I'll move onto a project that we are working on. It might be interviewing someone for a press release or Hilltop article, writing a blog post, or designing marketing presentations and digital communications. I also manage the tradeshow we participate in throughout the year. An average day is rare in the marketing world, and that is by far one of my favorite things about the job.

Brianna: What aspects of your role are you enjoying most?

Katie: I love that I get to be creative, and in different ways. I get to use creativity through words for articles and blog posts, but also creativity with visuals through designing newsletters, sales sheets, and more. There isn't an aspect that I don't enjoy doing.

Brianna: As a 'new face' at Stemilt, what has been the biggest challenge you've faced?

Katie: Learning the industry! I am a fast-paced thinker and want to have the answer and know everything now. But you just can't learn everything about the fruit world overnight. I try to be a sponge every day to hopefully shorten the time of this steep learning curve. I already know more about fruit than I ever thought I would!

Brianna: What excites you when thinking of the future, both professionally and personally?

Katie: Personally, I just welcomed my first child and my husband and I are thrilled to embark on this parenting journey and start our family. At work, I'm excited to see where Stemilt goes. We are always thinking ahead and that's fun to be part of. I love that our company grows food for people. Not many can say that and what a special job and responsibility that is. I am also excited to see what new varieties come on next.

Brianna: What would readers find you doing in your spare time?

Katie: I love to run and enjoy doing yoga because it helps me slow myself down. My husband and I enjoy cooking on the weekends while listening to music. We take our dogs hiking and to the river often. Anything that gets us outside and enjoying the beautiful place we call home.

Brianna: Who are some of your role models and why?

Katie: At work, it's my mentors, Roger Pepperl (Marketing Director) and Brianna Shales (Communications Manager). Both have quickly accepted my fast and fiery personality and helped me tap into my strengths but also build upon weaknesses. The leadership skills and industry knowledge have been invaluable to me.

Brianna: Last question and always my favorite to ask people at Stemilt. What is your favorite Stemilt fruit and why?

Katie: SweeTango® apples. The why is simple – they are absolutely amazing!

“
The ag industry has always interested me and I felt the job description matched my skills perfectly.”



Katie managing Stemilt's virtual reality experience during her first PMA Fresh Summit in 2017.

Apple Butter Hummus

PREP TIME: 25 minutes
COOK TIME: 8 hours
TOTAL TIME: 8 hours 25 minutes
LEVEL: Easy

Makes 8-10 servings

A delightfully sweet version of your favorite snack dip!

Ingredients

3 pounds of sauce apples (like Braeburn, Fuji, or McIntosh)
½ cup + 2 Tbsp brown sugar (separated)
1 tsp + ⅛ tsp cinnamon
⅛ tsp nutmeg
1 15-oz can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
Juice from one small lemon
1 Tbsp olive oil

Directions

1. Peel and core the apples. Slice into pieces. Place in a slow cooker along with ½ cup brown sugar and 1 tsp cinnamon. Toss well. Cook on low for six hours until the apples are soft.
2. Transfer to a food processor or blender and puree. Pour back into the slow cooker and cook for 2 more hours until the mixture has thickened to your liking. Makes about 2 cups of apple butter.
3. To make the hummus, add the apple butter, chickpeas, lemon juice, olive oil, 2 Tbsp brown sugar and ⅛ tsp cinnamon to a food processor or blender. Blend until smooth. Garnish with a sprinkle of brown sugar and cinnamon.
4. Serve with apple slices, pretzels, or crackers.



For more recipes, visit stemilt.com/recipes



By Katie Harmon

Hello There, Honeyhill™

*Say hello to Honeyhill™ Incredible Honeycrisp Apples!
Only the best of the best will make the cut.*



Before you dive right in and start reading, let's take a second and think about this: what are your thoughts on Honeycrisp apples?

Do you share the same opinion as many other apple lovers around the world and find the Honeycrisp among your top five picks? Or do you find the apple is a little too sweet and you tend to fall towards the tart side? If you're the former, then Stemilt has some good news for you and I can say it in one short word: Honeyhill™.

Honeyhill™, you ask? You bet. Hello Honeyhill™ Incredible Honeycrisp Apples.

Earlier this year, Stemilt rolled out its newest branded program to extend its World Famous Honeycrisp apple season, and specifically those with high qualities.

The mission of Honeyhill™ is clear: help retailers showcase the best tasting Honeycrisp apples from season start in the fall all the way through the mid-summer months. Stemilt has high standards in place to ensure Honeyhill™ Honeycrisp apples are consistently high-color and high-quality to drive consumer purchases and differentiation for retailers.



"Honeyhill™ Incredible Honeycrisp Apples are not your everyday Honeycrisp apple," states Pepperl. "Only premium, high-color varieties will be packed under the Honeyhill™ brand. These pieces of fruit are picked from trees at optimal maturity with high coloring, out of this world flavor and a crunch you just can't believe."

Not long ago, the Honeycrisp season ran from September through April, but increased volumes, new strains and increased storability now allows Stemilt to provide premium Honeycrisp apples into the warm days of summer.

Fruit color is a wide variance for Honeycrisp at retail, and one attribute Stemilt wanted to solve with this premium program. Royal, a new high-color strain of Honeycrisp, has been extensively planted by Stemilt and makes up the majority of late-season Honeyhill™ packs.



“The Royal Honeycrisp is a beautiful strain with great color and finish,” said Pepperl. “Its real advantage is that our teams can pick full-colored fruit at the right starch levels that allow it to store well in our controlled atmosphere rooms. When we pull these apples out at a later date to pack, the starches have converted to sugars with good acids. Stemilt can deliver that amazing fall flavor that Honeycrisp fans love in the spring and summer months.”

Stemilt plants Royal Honeycrisp in only the most pristine orchard locations like Mattawa, Washington. Mattawa comes with nutrient-rich soils, an abundance of fresh water resources and plenty of sunshine to produce an incredible Honeycrisp apple. Growers will use windscreens and shade cloth to protect the fruit. When harvest rolls around, each apple is hand-picked, stem clipped and placed – not dumped – into the bin for gentle handling.

“Our teams work hard to ensure that the variety is well-taken care of and comes off the tree at the perfect time,” states Pepperl. “Our orchard and field staff monitor the fruit closely as the harvest window approaches. When the window does open, they have all the data they need to make the decision to start picking.”

Stemilt’s marketing team designed the branding and packaging for Honeyhill™ Incredible Honeycrisp Apples. Retailers receive the branded box when purchasing either standard or euro cartons. The standard cartons are made from a varnished box, helping retailers set up very eye-catching displays in high-traffic areas.



“
Our teams work hard to ensure that Honeycrisp is well-taken care of and comes off the tree at the perfect time.”



“The packaging was designed to help retailers differentiate their Honeycrisp program as premium,” states Pepperl. “The packaging is bold, fun and stimulating, making it a great tool for building your produce department displays.”

Retailers can also get World Famous Honeycrisp apples organically. The variety is packed under Stemilt’s Artisan Organics™ label. Stemilt’s Artisan Organics™ program has been around since 1989, giving Stemilt an upper hand in the organic industry.

“Organic is a growing category, and a high-flavor variety like Honeycrisp is a great way to build organic category sales,” states Pepperl. “We’re excited about our leadership position with Honeycrisp, and especially our Honeyhill™ program. Only top grade varieties will make it under the Honeyhill™ brand which will please Honeycrisp fans and continue to elevate the apple category.”



By Katie Harmon

Did You Know: Night Harvest

To make most of the quick apple season, there is rarely an hour wasted during harvest including the one's many of us use to catch some ZZZ's.

No, that is not a UFO.

If you are driving by an apple orchard in central Washington state in the middle of the night and there is a bright, glaring light shining from the trees – don't call your local media news outlet to report a UFO sighting – it's only Stemilt's night harvest crew.

To harvest apples before cold weather strikes, many hours of the day are relied on, including the hours after your bedtime. While you are catching some ZZZ's, Stemilt crews utilize the cool weather and quiet surroundings to pick apples through the night. Scott Driscoll, Quincy area orchard manager at Stemilt Ag Services, has watched nighttime harvest take place for years and finds it one of the most successful picking times for workers.

"Many of our crews throughout our orchards will work through the night to get apples off the trees before the weather takes a turn," states Driscoll. "We use bright LED lights that shine nearly 100 yards making it really easy for our pickers to see the apples within the tree."

Those bright LED lights are attached to raised, motorized platforms that help team members pick apples more efficiently. The height advantage allows people to pick apples from multiple areas of the tree, while the platform takes the ladder away from the equation, ultimately making the picking process easier.

So how does it work? A team of four will strap into a safety harness on a raised platform and control the speed of the platform, moving as slow or as fast as they need. With two pickers on each side, the team can establish an appropriate speed for their picking skill set and move through a line of trees quickly and thoroughly.

And based on the setting of the orchard, most apple varieties can be picked at night by platform, however Driscoll finds the most success in picking red varieties like Rave®, SweeTango®, Fuji and Pink Lady®.

"Just the way the LED lights shine on red varieties make them so much easier to pick at night than other bi-colored varieties. They just pop against the green leaves of the trees," states Driscoll.

The combination of the red varieties and new technology has been proven beneficial for Stemilt over the years allowing them to increase time spent picking at night. Stemilt has been using platforms during harvest since 2007 and owns nearly 60 platforms today. The technology allows Stemilt to keep expanding apple acreage and harvest fruit at optimal maturity and qualities.

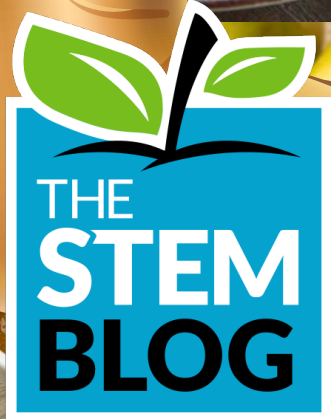
"Night harvest is critical to our ability at Stemilt to get apples picked from the tree at the right maturity and with consistent, high-quality eating qualities," said Driscoll. "The technology to harvest from platforms makes working at night easy, safe, and effective."



By Katie Harmon

It's a Blogiversary!

Stemilt's The Stem blog is celebrating its five-year anniversary. Learn more about how far things have come since 2013!



Can you remember what 2013 was like for you? Did you remember that 2013 was the year that there was a power outage at Superbowl XLVII which delayed the second half of the game? It was also the year Prince George (the future king) was born and the millennial term “selfie” was officially added to the dictionary.

It was also a big year for Stemilt’s marketing team because that’s when the company’s voice came to life via the launch of The Stem blog. Now, five years later, The Stem is hitting strides and producing content for fruit fans all around the world.

“The Stem’s creation allowed Stemilt’s personality to really come to life,” states Brianna Shales, communications manager at Stemilt. “It gave Stemilt a prominent voice in the industry and we are now able to communicate with a diverse group of consumers located in all areas of the world.”

The Stem blog features content about various topics including recipes, health and nutrition topics and tips, fruit hacks, and farming information. The blog features six writers – three from Stemilt and three well-known food and lifestyle bloggers. Each author offer a unique voice and perspective to inspire fruit fans to enjoy more apples, pears, cherries, and stone fruits.

Stemilt’s Kitchen Council is a team of three bloggers that focuses on recipe creation and tips around using Stemilt fruits. Allie Roomberg, founder of Baking A Moment, focuses on creating delicious desserts; Meg van der Kruijk is the creative spirit behind This Mess Is Ours and loves to make recipes her whole family loves; and Kaleigh McMordie is a registered dietitian that offers health and nutrition advice and recipes.

“Our Kitchen Council group is made up of dynamic voices that speak to each key audience that Stemilt works to engage with,” states Shales. “They are influencers that help us reach more people and offer a fun take on fruit in order to inspire people to include more servings in their daily diet.”

Three of Stemilt’s own employees also contribute to the blog – Tate Mathison, Katie Harmon and Shales herself. Both Shales and Harmon offer recipes and other fruit related hacks while Mathison provides farming knowledge. Shales

finds writing for the blog a fun, creative outlet that allows Stemilt’s personality to shine.

“Writing for the blog is another fun aspect of our jobs,” says Shales. “Allowing our own voices to come out helps supports Stemilt’s mission to offer as much transparency and authenticity behind our products as possible. We do this to build trust within consumers, so that they see us as the authority on our fruits. Trust builds brand loyalty, and that’s our ultimate goal in consumer outreach.”

The Stem was one of Stemilt’s first tools to communicate directly with the consumer, before social media took off in a big way for businesses around the country. Today, it is not only used to communicate with the consumer, answer questions and share fruit knowledge, but it is also a way to work with the trade side as well.

“The trade will visit the blog just as often as the consumer side will,” states Shales. “Sometimes they are looking for information that consumers also look for, making it a great tool to have in our communication arsenal for both sets of audiences.”

“

The Stem’s creation allowed Stemilt’s personality to really come to life, it gave Stemilt a prominent voice in the industry and we are now able to communicate with a diverse group of consumers located in all areas of the world.

So how does The Stem determine their topics? The team uses a variety of tools to help determine what questions consumers need answered, what's trending around apples, pears, cherries and summer fruit, and what kind of health and nutrition facts are people seeking. The content Stemill's team has produced over the last five years is written with a purpose.

"The Stem has produced hundreds of posts over the years and every single one has been created to answer a trending consumer question or topic," states Shales. "Our team works hard to ensure that The Stem is THE place to come to when consumers need answers about fruit."

Consumers generally find The Stem through organic search on the web or the company's social media platforms – Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest and Instagram.

So what's to come in the next five years? Video, says Shales and lots of it. With nearly 90 percent of consumers saying video can help make buying decisions, video will become more common within blog and social media posts.

"As the digital consumer continues to evolve, we must evolve with them," says Shales. "And that means more video. Creating and sharing more video will be crucial in our marketing strategies – we need to give the consumer what they want, when they want it and we are all busy people, so it must be short and easy to digest."

While Shales and her team continue to build for the future, she still is in disbelief about how far the blog has come. "It's inspiring to watch The Stem grow from the ground up," states Shales. "I have thoroughly enjoyed watching The Stem come into a life of its own and I am ecstatic about where the world of digital marketing is taking us in the next five years. The Stem has proven to be the go-to source for many fruit lovers around the world and we expect those numbers to grow as the digital world grows too."



Stats

Bloggers: 6

Number of Blog Posts: 289

Top Performing Blog Post (highest traffic):

- 1) [6 Tips for Selecting the Perfect Apple](#)
- 2) [How to Ripen Pears](#)
- 3) [7 Secrets of Rainier Cherries](#)

of Subscribers: 4,173

- [Blog views account for a 1/4 of total pageviews on the website](#)
- [More than half a million unique visitors](#)
- [Visitors spend more than 3+ minutes on the blog during each visit](#)

What's inspiring for our Stemill writers?



Brianna: "Every morning while I blow dry my hair, I like to tune into my favorite blogs and read what their topics are that day – all things from food to lifestyle. I like learning about other's perspectives."



Katie: "I love that I work for a company that grows food that promotes a healthy lifestyle. Knowing I can share tips and help people become their healthiest selves helps inspire my writing."



Tate: "Watching my dad farm while I grew up only made me more passionate about the business. Although I'm in the office most days, I love the days when I can sneak out onto the farm and get my hands dirty – that's when I feel most at home."





THE FRESH CUBE By The Numbers

Distribution Area

1045 LED lighting fixtures



Saving 1,078,802 KWH if we didn't use LED lighting

ASRS Area

275 LED lighting fixtures



The annual reduction of electricity could power 111 homes throughout the year!

Entire Facility

The Fresh Cube used 19,437 cubic yards of concrete.



And when it comes to steel we used more than 2,744 tons to build our newest facility.

By Katie Harmon

Intent Marketing: It's Common Sense

It may sound like a fancy marketing term, but it's a marketing strategy that is changing industry practices around the world.



Intent-based marketing. It's a word you might hear tossed around by your marketing team. For you, it may not sound like much. For them, it is the word that is changing tomorrow's marketing strategies across the globe.

So, what is it? Let's take a look at podcasts for example. The rising popularity of digital audio is organized in a way that is segmented to a specific listener. For example, I am a big listener of health and nutrition podcasts. When I am in the mood to try a new series about trending health topics, there is a section that is dedicated solely to health and nutrition making it easier to discover new podcast options and give me the chance to learn more about a series I haven't had the chance to learn about before. As simple and as common sense as that may seem, that is what intent-based marketing is – marketing the right product to the right person. But hey, isn't that every marketer's goal? It should be.

When it comes to successful marketers, like Stemilt's marketing director Roger Pepperl, marketing segmentation isn't just throwing your product out there and hoping that the right consumer stumbles across it – it takes time to perfect the art of distributing and promoting the right product to the right consumer, which Pepperl has been working on for years.

"To be successful at intent marketing, it is not about marketing one product to every consumer out there and then crossing your fingers that it works," states Pepperl. "When you market to everyone, you are marketing to no one – which is why intent marketing is important."

With several industries implementing intent-based marketing, it should come as no surprise that your friends at Stemilt Growers are doing the same thing, specifically with their Lil Snappers® brand. Lil Snappers® kid-size fruit was launched in 2011 by Stemilt's marketing team to help market its smaller fruit.

Stemilt didn't start growing small fruit in 2011; it had been part of the product mix since the beginning because fruit doesn't grow equally in size on trees! But 2011 was when shoppers started recognizing small-sized fruits and the power they had in packing kids' lunches and snacks. That's because of Lil Snappers® and the creation of a brand that markets intent to parents.

"Lil Snappers® is the perfect brand to demonstrate the success of intent-based marketing," states Pepperl. "It has changed the consumer's perception of apples, especially for parent consumers, as we are marketing specifically to them and to the people that they must feed: their kids."

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Stemilt packs apples, pears and organics under the Lil Snappers® kid-size fruit brand. The brand is designed to offer parents an easy grab-and-go option in a convenient resealable bag. The bag is designed with bright, bold colors that pop when they open the refrigerator.

“Every aspect of the bag is designed with kids in mind,” states Pepperl. “To promote and encourage healthy eating, we made the bag fun and kid-friendly, so it is recognizable and will make kids reach for a piece of fruit.”

Stemilt offers Lil Snappers® kid-size fruit both organically and conventionally. Most Lil Snappers® bags come in 3lb purchase sizes which offers a family between nine to eleven pieces of fruit per bag. That is more than enough fruit for a family with two children to have an apple or pear in their lunch every day of the week.

“By carrying 3lb bags, we are encouraging the consumption of produce all while helping the retailer keep up their volumes and sales dollars,” states Pepperl. “That is a win-win in our books for all parties involved.”

The company offers several different apple varieties, including: Braeburn, Fuji, Gala, Granny Smith, Honeycrisp, Piñata®, Pink Lady® and Red Delicious. There is also a wide selection of pears, including: Bartlett, Bosc, Concorde, d’Anjou, Red Pears and Tosca. An entire line of organic fruit is available for key apple and pear varieties.

“By offering such a wide variety of apples and pears, the retailer can keep a good mix of varieties in store to offer options to consumers while still increasing sales,” says Pepperl. “This wide variety mix also appeals to the consumer who primarily shops organic.”

Intent marketing to the organic shopper doesn’t alter Stemilt’s strategy. The company continues to market a kids focus to the organic shopper, but the Artisan Organics™ label is featured to clearly communicate the product as organic to the shopper.

“We are only making the segmentation of our organic products more obvious to the organic shopper,” states Pepperl. “Organic shoppers want the same products as the conventional shopper – they just want the organic option.”

Stemilt has been growing organically since 1989 when Stemilt founder, Tom Mathison, transitioned a large number of apple acreage to organic. Today, Tom’s grandson, Tate Mathison, sales director for Stemilt, is continuing to grow their organics program, Artisan Organics™ including a focus on sharing kid-favorite apples like Piñata®, Pink Lady® and Honeycrisp in Artisan Organics™ Lil Snappers® packs.

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It has changed the consumer's perception of apples, especially for parent consumers, as we are marketing specifically to them and to the people that has their interest: their kids.

With distribution of Lil Snappers® growing each year, (including a growth of nearly 22% from the 2016 to 2017 seasons) Stemilt's intent-based marketing is paying off and it's obvious in the increasing demand for their kid-intent product. Pepperl strongly believes intent marketing is only going to get stronger and more precise, making now the time to learn how to do it right.

"We have been working on segmentation and intent marketing for years and it is now fully coming into the light today," states Pepperl. "It takes knowing what your consumer wants, when they want it and we are doing that with our Lil Snappers® kid-size fruit."



Pear Prosciutto and Brie Panini

PREP TIME: 5 minutes
COOK TIME: 10 minutes
TOTAL TIME: 15 minutes
LEVEL: Easy

Makes 2 servings

Buttery Brie with sweet pears, salty prosciutto and spicy Dijon mustard make this panini incredibly delicious! Makes a special lunch or wonderful alongside a bowl of soup or a light salad for dinner.

Ingredients:

4 slices hearty whole grain bread
1 tbsp Dijon mustard
6 slices thinly sliced prosciutto
6 slices brie cheese
1/2 medium Bartlett pear, cored and thinly sliced
1 tbsp butter, softened

Directions

1. Preheat a grill pan or panini press to medium-high heat.
2. Assemble the sandwiches by spreading some mustard on one side of bread and layering 3 slices of prosciutto, 3 slices of brie and pear slices for each sandwich. Top with the second slice of bread. Butter the outer sides of the sandwiches.
3. Place the sandwiches on the heated grill pan or panini press. Continue cooking until golden brown and the cheese has melted. Serve immediately.

Nutritional Information (per serving)

Calories: 595, Protein (g): 41, Fat (g): 34, Carbohydrates (g): 38, Dietary Fiber (g): 6, Sodium (mg): 2358, Sugars (g): 8

For more recipes, visit stemilt.com/recipes



By Brianna Shales

Operation Ripen

Stemilt's Operation Flavor promise to reinvigorate the pear category is honing in on what MATTERS most, a ripening program that delivers ready-to-eat pears that delight consumers.



Maturity
Airflow
Time
Temperature
Ethylene
Relative Humidity

When it comes to pear ripening, this acronym is what **MATTERS** most to Rob Blakey, Stemilt's research and development manager. Align these six necessary components of ripening and the result will be flavor-first pears destined to delight consumers.

Blakey joined Stemilt in 2017, bringing with him a PhD and vast experience in avocado ripening. No one can ignore the avocado industry's ripening success story. Worldwide, their focus has been on delivering fruits that are conditioned or even ripe and ready to eat at store level, every time. Consistent eating quality and telling consumers what a good avocado tasted like were the game changers for consumer acceptance of avocados, and have helped grow avocado sales considerably.

While pears and avocados are certainly different fruits, Blakey finds the components that go into ripening these two fruits to be quite similar. His knowledge of those components is helping Stemilt fine-tune its protocol for pear ripening through its RipeRite® program for Anjou and Red d'Anjou pears.

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We aim to deliver flavorful pears and do so consistently, all while making it as convenient for the supply chain as possible.

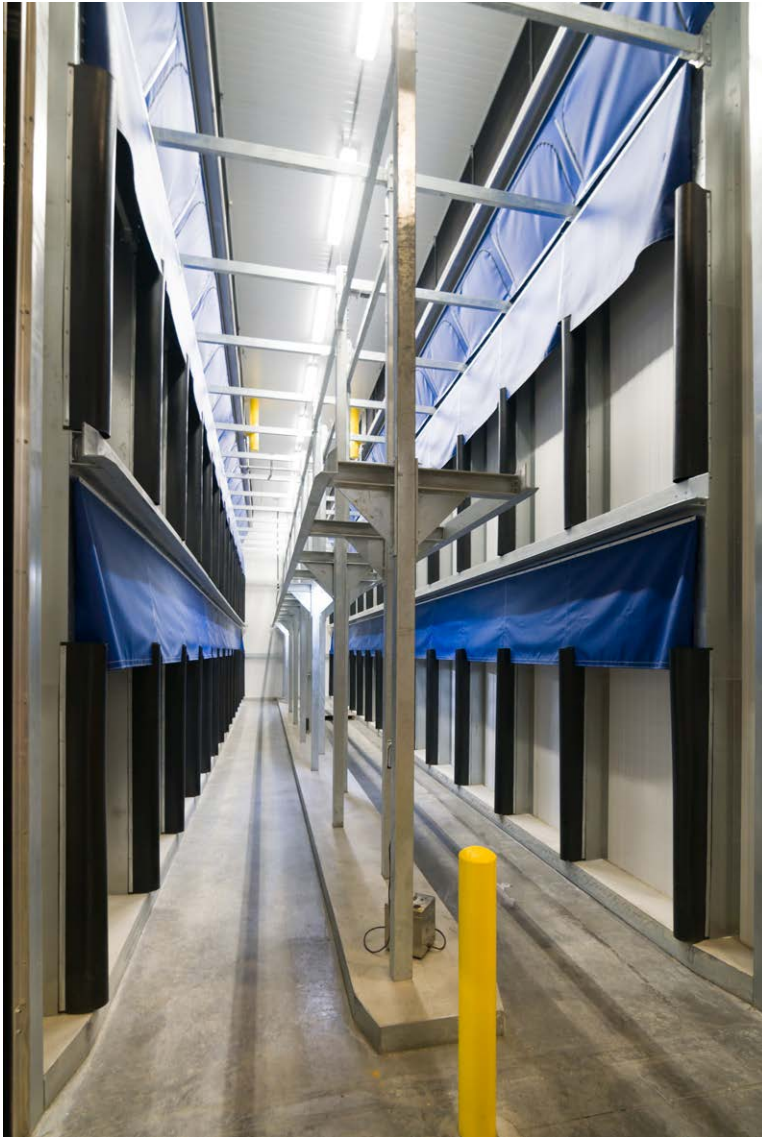


“Ripening pears is rooted in science,” said Blakey. “You must understand the fruit and the customer it’s going to and adjust protocol accordingly to deliver fruit with the right maturity. We aim to deliver flavorful pears and do so consistently, all while making it as convenient for the supply chain as possible. We have the right technology with new ripening rooms in place, so now it’s about dialing in our process.”

Stemilt unveiled two ThermalTech Tarpless® ripening rooms for pears at its Fresh Cube distribution center in fall 2017. The rooms feature the latest ripening technology and controls. They also are extra deep so Stemilt can ripen more pears at one time, and all in a 36-hour turnaround time.

“There are a variety of methods for ripening pears, but we believe the best way to deliver flavor and consistency is by ripening pears in these state-of-the-art rooms,” said Blakey. “They allow our teams to have more control over the ripening process which helps in delivering flavor and uniformity.”

In the last year, Stemilt's R&D team has increased its quality control testing of ripened pears and now more than two-thirds of Anjou pears go through 'flavor' tests. The tests are just as they sound; they look at fruit firmness, texture, juiciness, and flavor along with data about the fruit itself to find out which fruits eat best, and develop ideas of why they were better. The data collected supports the importance of carrying ripened fruits at retail and informs the ripening process of pear lots in the future.



The work of Stemilt's R&D team on pears is just one part of the company's Operation Flavor promise, which takes a 360-degree approach to improve pear flavor throughout the supply chain. Operation Flavor began in 2017 to reset the perception and reality pears had in the marketplace.

"The pear category's contribution to overall produce department sales dropped over the last decade to less than 1 percent of total produce dollars today," said Roger Pepperl, Stemilt marketing director. "While there are many factors that go into a decline, it was clear that our industry hasn't done a great job of delivering flavor consistently to consumers. Operation Flavor is Stemilt's promise to reverse the downward trend of pears by creating small changes throughout the supply chain to get people to fall in love with pears again."

In addition to ripening, Stemilt's internal team of Pear Pilots work on small changes in every area that could impact pear flavor, including harvest maturity standards, post-harvest cooling protocol, storage regimes, packaging and more.

"It's a journey, but we don't want to leave any stone unturned," said Pepperl. "Pears are incredible fruits from both a flavor and nutrition standpoint. If we can deliver flavor-first Rushing Rivers® pears to stores time and again, we will reunite shoppers with pears, and boost category sales right along with it. Doing that creates a win for the retailer, a win for our growers, and most importantly, a win for the consumer."



By Katie Harmon

In Depth Technology: Greefa GeoSort

Take a dive into Stemilt's electronic sorter and learn one of the many reasons why the company is thrilled with its capabilities.



Four years ago, Stemilt unveiled a piece of technology that changed its apple packing game forever: the Greefa Geosort apple sizer. Today, the green machine continues to hum strongly to its everyday tune, sizing and grading apples using impressive electronic external defect and internal quality sorting technology.

The advanced technology of Greefa's Geosort made the decision to purchase the machine an easy one for Stemilt's production team, however there was one feature that truly hit it out of the park for the World Famous grower-packer-shipper; how gentle it handles fruit.

Gentleness is a sought-after quality in the fruit world and applies to every step in growing World Famous fruit. From placing the tree into the ground to picking and eventually packing, handling fruit gently is key in providing a desirable eating experience for consumers.

Don Reeves, Productions Manager for Stemilt, strongly believes that the handling portion has not only helped provide a more desirable eating experience for consumers but also raised the bar for World Famous standards.

"Bruising is always a challenge when packing apples, especially among new, thin-skinned varieties like Honeycrisp," states Reeves. "Greefa's super gentle handling system is designed for today's modern varieties and has handled those varieties really well."

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Reeves explain that the handling is all in the "let-down" of the fruit. Older technologies were not equipped to handle modern, more sensitive varieties which could cause bruising when the fruit was released into its designated packing lanes. Greefa's process, however, differs as it essentially cushions the apple's drop by using a flap to eliminate the blow of the fall. When the apple falls on the flap, the flap will gently release the fruit onto the belt below eliminating hard drops and bruising.

"The machine handles all varieties really well, so we aren't concerned when we pack more sensitive varieties like Golden Delicious or Honeycrisp," states Reeves. "When we first installed it, it was really exciting to see how well those sensitive varieties were handled and how the bruising rate dropped quickly."

Stemilt purchased and installed the machine in 2014. Besides the gentle handling, Greefa has also proven worthy thanks to its advanced electronic, or optic sizing, and defect sorting technology that reduced manual sorting and human error. So, how does the machine work? The apples move through the Greefa sizer technology and a camera snaps roughly 70 photos in less than a second that will analyze its internal and external qualities. The images are analyzed by computer software that will accurately sort the fruit based on size, color, internal and external qualities, and defects. Apples that don't meet standards are rerouted to a secondary sizer for additional sorting, while apples that do meet standards continue down the line to be packed. Greefa has 79 drop points that allow Stemilt great packing flexibility. It operates with speed yet provides the gentleness that apples need.

"Overall, we are really pleased with the Greefa technology," states Reeves. "With more and more Honeycrisp cross varieties making their debut, Stemilt is in a great position having this technology well-integrated into our packing processes. It's one more step that gets us to our World Famous destination."



Fall/Winter Apple Guide



Piñata®

Season: Conventionally and organically available November to July

Color: Stripy red over yellow-orange background

Taste: Crisp and juicy with classic apple flavors and a tropical twist

Parentage: Golden Delicious X Cox's Orange Pippin X Duchess of Oldenburg

Fun Fact: Piñata® got its name by combining the apples two given names Pinova & Sonata to make Piñata®!



Honeycrisp

Season: September – July with organic wrapping up in June

Color: Blushed scarlet over yellow

Taste: Ultra sweet like freshly pressed apple cider

Strain to Know About: Royal Honeycrisp

Parentage: Keepsake X MNI627

Fun Fact: Honeycrisp apples were discovered in 1960, but it was only in 2017 when they discovered Honeycrisp's true parentage!



Fuji

Season: Year-Round, with organic available from September to July

Color: Varies from red blush to red stripes over yellow background

Taste: Sugary-sweet like candy

Strain to Know About: Aztec Fuji

Parentage: Red Delicious X Virginia Ralls Janet

Fun Fact: Stemilt grows a Fuji strain called Aztec Fuji that comes with a deep red coloring and desired starch reserves to help us deliver fantastic Fuji's year-round!



Pink Lady®

Season: October – August, with organic wrapping up in June

Color: Bright pink over a yellow background

Taste: Sweet-tart and firm apple with dense flesh

Parentage: Golden Delicious X Lady Williams

Fun Fact: The trees that produce Pink Lady® apples are the first to bloom each spring, but the last to harvest!



Gala

Season: Year-Round, with organic available from September to July

Color: Round with red skin that covers a yellow background

Taste: Mildly sweet with vanilla-like floral aroma

Parentage: Golden Delicious X Kidd's Orange Red

Fun Fact: The Royal Gala strain was named to honor Queen Elizabeth II after she praised the apple during a visit to New Zealand.



Golden Delicious

Season: Year-Round, with organic available from September to July

Color: Yellow, sometimes with a slight pink blush

Taste: Silky sweet with a crisp bite and thin skin

Parentage: Unknown, but linked to Golden Reinette and Grimes Golden

Fun Fact: The Golden Delicious was Tom Mathison's (Stemilt's late founder) favorite apple.



Granny Smith

Season: Year-Round, with organic available from September to July

Color: Green with a slight pink blush

Taste: Tart like a lemon

Experience: A firm, medium grain flesh that will make your mouth water

Parentage: Unknown, but linked to Rome Beauty and French Crab Apple

Fun Fact: Sydney, Australia holds an annual Granny Smith Festival to celebrate the apple



Red Delicious

Season: Year-Round, with organic available from September to July

Color: Deep Crimson Red

Taste: Mildly sweet with a few notes of acid

Experience: Crisp bite

Parentage: Unknown

Fun Fact: The red color of Red Delicious make it a high antioxidant apple and nutritious choice for smoothies or juice!



Jonagold

Season: September - January for conventional and organic

Color: Crimson stripes over a yellow-green background

Taste: Aromatic with honey-like flavor a slight tangy aftertaste

Parentage: Golden Delicious X Jonathan

Fun Fact: Jonagold is considered a triploid variety, meaning it needs two pollenizers to bear a crop.



Braeburn

Season: September - June, with organic available from September to April

Color: Yellow-green background with reddish tones

Taste: Spicy-sweet with a hint of nutmeg and cinnamon

Parentage: Unknown, but linked to Lady Hamilton and Granny Smith.

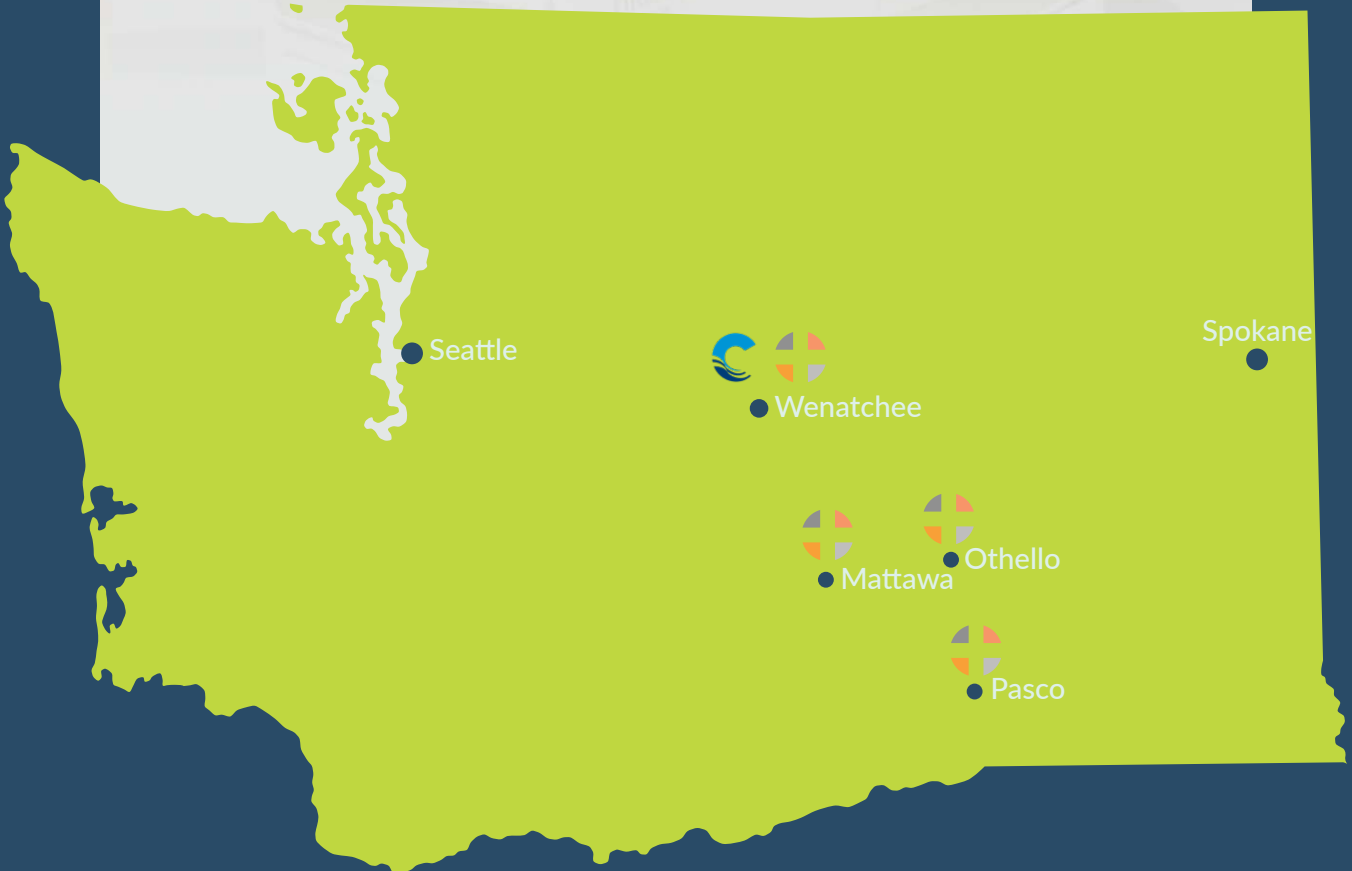
Fun Fact: Braeburn apples hold their shape and don't release a lot of juice making it a great apple for pies and tarts!



By Brianna Shales

Growing Wellness

Fruit isn't the only thing Stemilt is focused on growing. The company is committed to wellness, and growing the number of health clinics it has available to provide team members and their dependents with access to free, quality healthcare.



When the Stemilt Family Clinic opened its doors in 2015, it was hard for Stemilt employees to believe the new benefit the company was offering. A fully staffed clinic to provide primary health care services to employees and their dependents for free. No co-pay. No insurance plan needed. No out-of-pocket expenses for labs or other services. Even a prescription you might need is filled for free, and ready soon after your appointment.

“It took some time to explain to our teams that the services the clinic was offering were for real,” said David Millheisler, Stemilt’s vice president of finance and accounting. “It’s an incredible benefit of working here, and we’re pleased by the number of employees and their dependents utilizing the clinics for their primary health care needs.”

The Stemilt Family Clinic, operated by Confluence Health, is one-of-a-kind but follows a path towards promoting wellness that Stemilt started on in 2010 when it opened an employee health clinic at its Olds Station facility. Today, that clinic continues to operate through a partnership with AnovaWorks. Its primary focus is on occupational health with a physician’s assistant manning the clinic five days a week.

“Our focus on wellness stems from the Mathison family’s (owners of Stemilt) desire to have a team of healthy, happy people,” said Millheisler. “Health care and the costs associated with it can be a huge burden, so much that someone may avoid it until a problem becomes severe. These clinics eliminate the burden for our team members and assist our local hospitals who are overwhelmed by emergency care. They are improving lives.”

This summer, Stemilt opened three additional AnovaWorks clinics to serve its geographically diverse orchard teams. The three clinics – located in Pasco, WA, Mattawa, WA, and Othello, WA – cover Stemilt’s five orchard operating areas. The Pasco clinic is open five days a week with a physician’s assistant leading the care team. The Mattawa and Othello clinics share a registered nurse with consistent days and operating hours so that team members get the same convenience as other clinic locations.

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Our focus on wellness stems from the Mathison family’s (owners of Stemilt) desire to have a team of healthy, happy people, these clinics are improving lives.

Stemilt partnered with AnovaWorks for its on-site orchard clinics because of their vast experience in providing care in the field. AnovaWorks focuses primarily on occupational health and works with 13 different employers with 24 on-site clinics. The new clinics located at Stemilt’s orchards provide primary care to employees and their dependents.

“The orchard clinics are still in their infancy, but our team is excited about making this great benefit more convenient for our team members and their families,” said Robin Graham, assistant general manager of Stemilt Ag Services.

As Stemilt’s clinic locations have grown in number, so too has the company’s knowledge of the realities of health care today. The company has found that convenient locations and a zero-cost model for care and prescriptions are important offerings to employees. More than half of Stemilt Family Clinic patients are those with insurance who could seek care elsewhere but assumingly opt for the clinic because of its proximity to work and zero out-of-pocket costs. Additionally, the clinic maintains a 99 percent fill rate on prescriptions, compared to third-party pharmacies standard of 50 percent.

“There are many positives the clinics have brought for our company, including lower health care costs,” said Millheisler. “But the biggest benefit to us in offering this care to our employees and their families is seeing how it helps them personally live healthier lives.”



Stemilt Creek Winery

We love our Wine Club Members!

Wine Club

Jan and Kyle Mathison reserve the very best of their wines and hospitality for the members of Stemilt Creek Winery Wine Club. Join us as a wine club member and celebrate the joy of fine wine, good friends, and passion for life! As a member for our wine club you receive the following:

- A generous 30% Savings on each Wine Club Release
- 6 bottles of wine shipped 2 times per year (Spring and Fall Wine Club Release)
- 20% off case purchases throughout the year
- 10% off wine purchases throughout the year
- Only wine club members can order from our Library Selection Wines
- Wine Club Members get first rights on available new releases
- Monthly Newsletter
- Invitation to Wine Club Party for Fall Release
- To sign up for the Stemilt Creek Winery Wine club contact:

winery@stemiltcreekwinery.com*

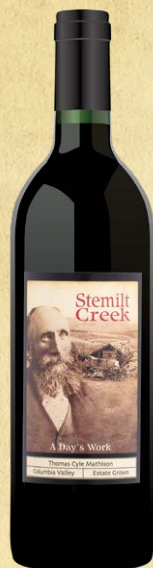
*Due to Shipping Laws, not all states are open for shipping wine.
Please contact us at winery@stemiltcreekwinery.com for availability in your state.



Pioneer Spirit

It is with great pride that we honor the pioneers who came before us through our wines at Stemilt Creek Winery. Our site-specific wines are harvested near the land planted in the late 1800's by homestead pioneer, Thomas Cyle Mathison. Jan Mathison, our winemaker, lovingly crafts the wines using grapes that Kyle Mathison grows on the same land that his family has cultivated for over a century. The winemaking style tends to build the wine with brawny tannins to shoulder earthy flavors evident in the unique terrain of Stemilt Hill, including the use of Kyle's World Famous Compost. Collectively, Stemilt Creek wines exude brawny characteristics consistently in a coherent full-bodied and lasting flavor much like the intriguing story of the Mathison family legacy.





Pink Lady



Kasseri



Pink Lady apples are zippy with a dense skin, tart flavor, and effervescent finish.

Kasseri is slightly tart with subtle sweetness and olive-like flavor.

A Day's Work – Honors Scottish Pioneer, Thomas Cyle Mathison – A Day's Work's flavor, structure, and finish can be summed up in the powerful story behind homestead pioneer, Thomas Cyle Mathison. Seizing opportunity to own land, he declared in a strong Scottish accent, "That I cometh to this land with nothing but a days work in me hans." These mighty hands dug ditches, mined for gold, and ultimately planted the seeds for the one of the largest fruit companies in the world. His robust spirit harmonizes with the boldness of this Bordeaux style blend with sturdy structure and a black cherry finish!



d'Anjou



Brie



D'Anjou pears are juicy with a sweet brisk flavor and hint of citrus.

Brie is rich and creamy cheese with a slight sweetness that contrasts the earthy flavor of the edible rind.

Boss Lady – AJ Mathison – Spectacular spice balances with a mouthful of black-strap molasses which is held up by a mineral note resembling flint – this wine is dazzling. Full of electricity and pizzazz, it dances across the tongue for a long, satisfying finish sure to leave a lasting impression. Don't let all the fun fool you. AJ Mathison, known as Boss Lady, had a fiery fortitude and passion for family and the land. There is a serious side to this 2nd vintage of "Boss Lady" with sturdy tannins, toasted oak, and full flavor finish. Enjoy a sip and let your taste buds tango.



Honeycrisp



Provolone



Honeycrisp is juicy with a refreshing sweetness similar to fresh apple cider. Just like the name implies, Honeycrisp apples are crisp with a unique skin that fractures cleanly with each bite.

Provolone is a tangy cheese that grows sharper as it ages; occasional smoky taste.

Caring Passion – TK Mathison – Passionate. Caring. Focused. Anyone who ever met TK instantly recognized his genuine personality. He introduced himself with confident honesty and finesse – never hiding a thing – he never had to. He knew who he was. His crew and their families knew he cared about them as much as the work and the land. This 2nd vintage of "Caring Passion" resembles that trait, introducing itself with pure Merlot characteristics: soft tannins, ripe red cherry, coffee bean, and cassis with a hint of vanilla oak backing up the fruit. Just what a Merlot should be – comfortable – just like TK. Sit with it a while and enjoy.

By Brianna Shales

Brand Power in Produce

Brands are on the rise in the product department. Find out how you can leverage brands to drive produce sales.

First it was the cereal and chip aisles and now it's your produce department.

Produce growers are taking a note from center store and showcasing their brands in a bigger way than ever before. Pouch bag grapes, clamshells for berries and cherry tomatoes, and even PLU stickers on apples, brands are arriving in droves in the produce department and changing the way consumers shop for fresh fruits and vegetables.

According to Nielsen Fresh Facts data released in 2017, branded produce items have driven produce sales growth over the past five years, far outpacing the growth of private label produce. Unbranded produce is on the decline.

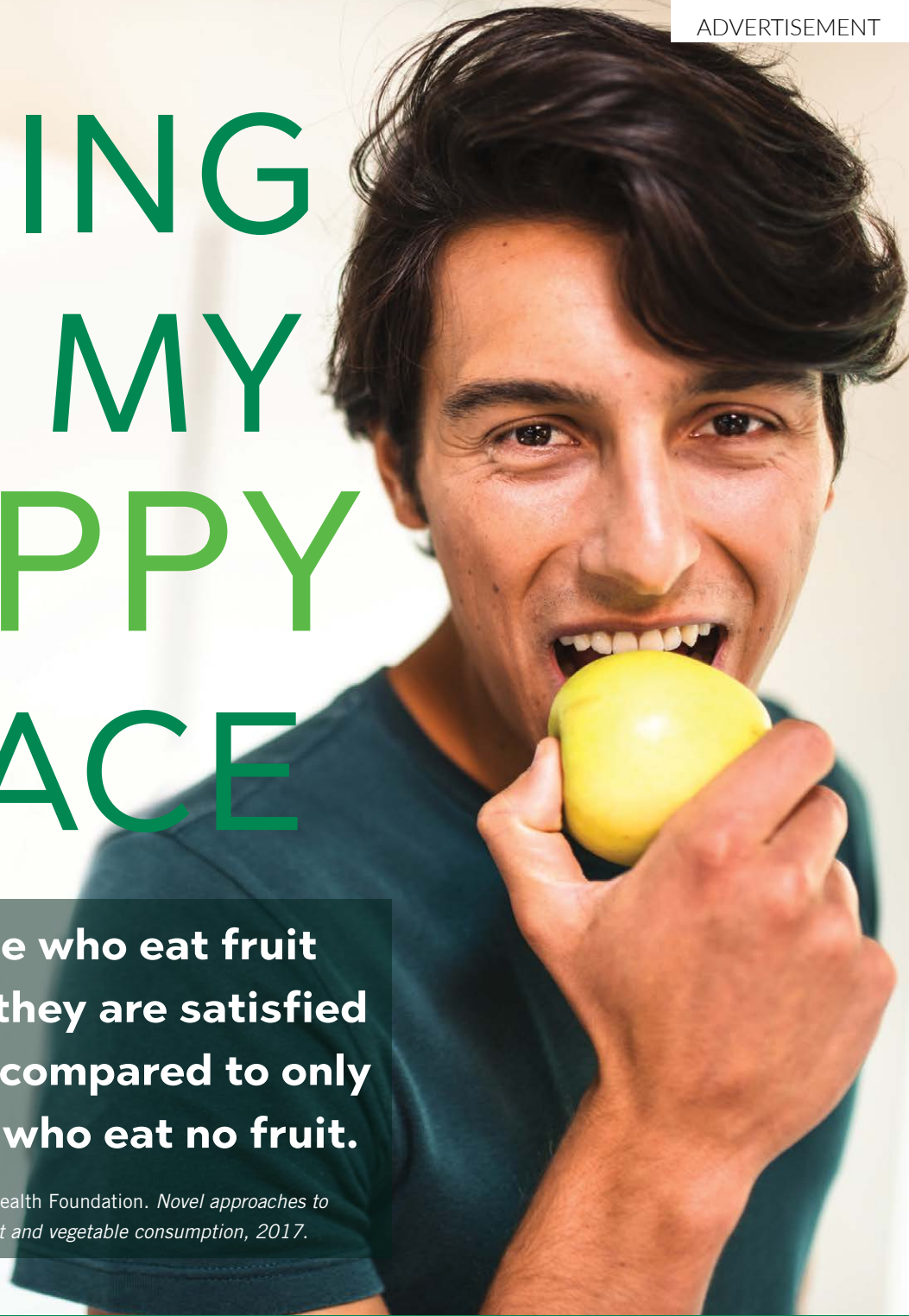
Brands now account for 38.5 percent of total produce department dollar share, a figure that grew nearly 8 percent between 2012-2016. Branded fruits grew at a faster rate than branded vegetables and branded produce overall. Fruits trailed only the produce snack segment in brand growth.

How can you leverage the power of brands in your produce department? We're sharing 3 easy tips for you to make the most out of the brands in your stores:

- 1) Use brands to market intent to consumer segments:** Stemilt believes in this so much, we have a whole article dedicated to intent-based marketing in this magazine. Here's the short version: brands can help you market intended use of a produce item to a select audience which will help you sell more than you otherwise would. Giving parents a snack or lunchtime solution with a kid-size fruit brand like Lil Snappers® can elevate your apple sales simply because they see the product in a different light than they once did. You're not just selling small apples, you are selling apples in the right portion size for kids.
- 2) Tap into the brands' resources:** When a produce grower has ownership over a brand, it's going to provide more resources to building out its fan base. Connect with your produce supplier to find out how they are supporting their brand that you are carrying in store. Work with them to market to your shoppers to create joint awareness for the product available at your store.
- 3) Brands have stories.** Tell them to build authenticity with your shoppers. Shoppers are demanding transparency. They want to know who grew their food and what that company is all about. Every brand has a special story behind it, and one worth sharing (whether it's on POS signage, in print and digital ads, or via your social media channels). Take the example of telling the story of the unique locales where Rushing Rivers® pears call home. You can build authenticity and trust with your shoppers by sharing these locales with them and how you're sourcing pears from renowned locations that parallel what the Napa Valley is for wine grapes. Authenticity builds trust and drives a person's decision to purchase from your produce department.



GOING TO MY HAPPY PLACE



76% of people who eat fruit every day say they are satisfied with their life, compared to only 33% of people who eat no fruit.

SOURCE: Produce for Better Health Foundation. Novel approaches to measuring and promoting fruit and vegetable consumption, 2017.

Together we can increase fruit and vegetable consumption.

Learn how at PBHFoundation.org



 @FruitsAndVeggiesMoreMatters

 FruitsAndVeggiesMoreMatters

 @Fruits_Veggies  fvmorematters

Parting Shot

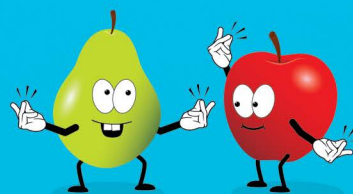
2018 pear harvest in the Entiat River Valley.

LOVED



PARENTS? KIDS?

We're not sure who loves this leading brand of kid-sized apples and pears more.





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stemilt.com/blog