

# HILLTOP™

Issue #13 Fall/Winter 2017/18



**OPERATION  
FLAVOR**

**FACE TO FACE  
TODD GEORGE**

**ARTISAN ORGANICS™  
FLAVOR SURGE**



**FIND OUT WHY  
YOU HAVE TO DO BUSINESS  
WITH US!**



Operation  
**FLAVOR**

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## FROM THE EDITOR

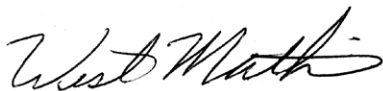


Happy fall! Here at Stemilt, it's a busy time as we harvest, receive, and pack apples and pears, and continue the construction of our high-tech distribution center which will open in 2018 at our Olds Station facility in Wenatchee.

We have a range of stories from around the company to share in this edition of Hilltop, including a profile of yet another world famous Stemilt team member, Todd George, as part of our Face-to-Face series. You'll learn how Piñata® apples are evolving into a nearly year-round variety, as well as the modern flavor growth that's happening now within our Artisan Organics® apple program. We also share the new mission we are on when it comes to our Rushing Rivers™ pears, an exciting change designed to make your pear category stronger.

Enjoy the pages that follow! I hope that you have a great fall and winter season, and from all of us at Stemilt, thank you for your continued support of our world famous fruits.

Onward,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "West Mathison".

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



Rave™ harvest moment.



# Stemilt<sup>®</sup> ARTISAN<sup>™</sup> organics<sup>™</sup>

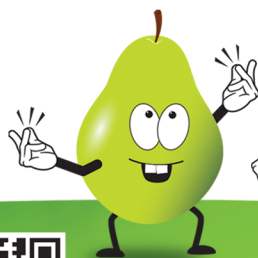
Your Largest Produce Shopper Loves Our  
**3 lb. ORGANIC**  
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Organic  
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# HILLTOP

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By Katie Harmon

# FACE TO FACE

## with Todd George

Tall in stature, but humble and genuine in demeanor, I had the opportunity to chat with Vice President of Production, Todd George, about his many years at Stemilt and learn how he keeps his team and our production lines (and, literally, just about everything else) running smoothly.

**Katie:** Did you always know you wanted to be involved with fruit?

**Todd:** I have always known that I have wanted to be a part of the industry. I grew up on a small apple farm. Most of my family had orchards (and many still do), so I originally wanted to become an orchardist and grow apples. During high school and college, I worked in the warehouses, segregation rooms, ran dumpers, and drove forklifts, so I haven't strayed far from the industry. When I went to Washington State University, I obtained a degree in Business Marketing with a minor in Agriculture. I wanted to buy an orchard, but to do that I needed a job, which ultimately led to the business side of the fruit industry.

**Katie:** So, how did you get to the position of VP of Production today?

**Todd:** I started with Stemilt in 2001 in export sales where I handled multiple accounts. After about a year of doing that, Stemilt created a position called Logistics Director, which I took over in 2002. With this position came overseeing multiple facets within the company including scheduling, distribution, and inventory management. This eventually expanded into overseeing procurement for production supplies and quality control, which ultimately led into the position of VP of Production.

**Katie:** Wow, that is a lot to oversee! How did Stemilt decide to distribute all of those departments under your position?

**Todd:** I had a lot of previous commercial experience and knew how to interact with the customer. I worked at Dovex for 10 years prior to working at Stemilt, so I knew the trade side well. I also had a background in production, so these areas just naturally evolved and positioned themselves under my sector. Stemilt was in a rapid growth phase from 2002 to 2010, so the business needed more people, which means more management and complexity. We were expanding in organics and varieties, so our product mix was getting bigger, which means everything required more

attention. We turned from a warehouse that packed and sold fruit to a business that sold the fruit and then packed it based on demand.

**Katie:** Now you are VP of Production. What does a day in your life work look like?

**Todd:** Most of my days require a lot of coordination. I check in with multiple departments, which includes sales, scheduling, production, and quality control to make sure everything is on course. I need to know what's going on at each packing line, including what is being packed, what's not being packed, how it's being packed and when. I also need to be aware of our customers and what the demand is that day and ensure we are fulfilling those orders. I make sure that the trucks are getting loaded and the fruit is meeting specification. Eventually you begin to get a sense of what's going right, so you don't have to worry too much about an area if another department is in a dilemma. Every day is different, so I need to take it by day-to-day.

**Katie:** In the production world, does cherry season tend to be more complicated than apples and pears?

**Todd:** Cherry season is definitely more complicated than apples and pears as you never really know what you are going to get. I would consider myself as the gatekeeper during cherry season on the supply chain side. Cherry season requires multiple daily meetings, knowing the fruit flow, ensuring high quality fruit is being packed, and outbound and production capacities are met.

**Katie:** I'm sure that Stemilt's new Distribution Center is an exciting change for your area. Can you expand on that?

**Todd:** It's an exciting addition that's coming to Stemilt, and will shape much of what we do each day in production. The next year will be a big growth year for us as the DC comes online.



**Katie:** What do you find most rewarding about your job?

**Todd:** The most rewarding part I find about my job is when there are good results and the people are happy. It is always rewarding to hear that the grower received a good return and that the customers were happy with the quality of fruit. Another rewarding part of my job is when Stemilt's teams and crews are happy. When the team is happy to come to work, they can rely on a good team atmosphere, have a steady schedule and they know what their jobs are. That's a great environment to be a part of. People are a big part of the reward and when they are treated fairly, respected and are in a stable work environment - it makes it all worth it.



**Katie:** And the challenges? What are those like?

**Todd:** One of the biggest challenges I face is finding the sweet spot when there is a natural tension between maximizing the result of the grower and meeting the expectation of the customer, all while simultaneously trying to get the job done at Stemilt. There are a lot of parts to juggle to make sure we can overcome a challenge like this one.

**Katie:** So, what keeps you motivated and overcoming those challenges?

**Todd:** What keeps me motivated is when we execute a plan well. It is great when people move with the plan and when the plan changes, everyone shifts and continues to do their parts all while the fruit is handled correctly, the packing goes well, and that plan goes through to completion. Not only is it motivating for me, it is motivating for everyone because the result is good, the results for the grower are good, and the team feels successful.

**Katie:** Who has been influential in your career?

**Todd:** There are many great people here at Stemilt, but a few stick out in my mind: Mike Taylor (VP of Marketing & Sales), Tom Mathison (Founder of Stemilt), Kyle Mathison (Owner and Fourth Generation Grower), and Dennis Howell (Director of Planning). They are people who think differently than I do. They all give

great feedback and they are passionate about the business. I don't like group think, so I like when somebody has a completely different viewpoint than I do. Dennis is a great example of that. He will come up with something completely different than what I had thought which helps me see things in a new light.

**Katie:** Why do you like working at Stemilt?

**Todd:** I like the people, the atmosphere, the culture, the passion for business. It is still a fruit warehouse. It hasn't turned into a corporate business. We are still growers, packers and shippers of tree fruit and we continue to focus on that each day.

**Katie:** When you aren't making sure everything is operating smoothly, what do you do in your spare time?

**Todd:** Right now, we are really into the RV. We still have a son in high school, so we aren't done raising kids yet, but we have been spending a lot of time planning and taking trips in the RV. Last year we took a road trip down to New Mexico. We are also season ticket holders to Washington State University Cougar football games, so we travel down to the games every year in the RV.

**Katie:** And last but not least, what is your favorite Stemilt fruit?

**Todd:** SweetTango® apples, they are the best!



Todd George (back, far left) is pictured with a few of his career role models, Tom Mathison, Mike Taylor, and Kyle Mathison, in his early days at Stemilt.

By Brianna Shales

## DID YOU KNOW?

This year, Stemilt brought a new signature apple variety, Rave™, into our collection. This Honeycrisp-MonArk cross is outrageously juicy with a refreshing snappy zing and the earliest apple to harvest in Washington State which gives us a jumpstart on apple season! Obviously, introducing a new variety is very exciting but it's also a lengthy process and comes with lots of questions about how a new apple comes to be. In this DID YOU KNOW, we'll share how an apple like Rave™ is born.

Johnny Appleseed might be disappointed to learn that a new apple tree is not grown from a seed today, but rather an existing tree and rootstock (or root system) that a grower selects for a particular orchard site. That's because fruit trees cannot be reproduced true to their original. If you think of it in terms of humans, it's exactly why the same two people won't have two children that look the exact same (unless they are the rare identical twins). So, if a new apple doesn't come from a seed, how is it born? In most cases, a new apple variety is the result of fruit breeding, a practice that has been in place for decades.

Today's apple breeders rely on a traditional method of cross-pollination to produce a new variety with better qualities or unique characteristics. Breeders identify the traits they want in a new variety, and then find parent apple varieties with those characteristics that might give them the new cultivar they are after. In the case of Rave™ (or the MN55 cultivar), those parent apples were Honeycrisp and MonArk, an early ripening variety from Arkansas.

Fruit trees are flowering plants and reproduce through pollination. To create a new variety, breeders harvest pollen from the flowers of the male parent and then brush the male parent pollen onto the female parent's flowers. The pollen moves down the stigma of the flower and hopefully, fertilization occurs.

Apple breeders make thousands of crosses every year. After the tree produces its first fruits, the apple is reviewed for its taste and other qualities and that determines whether or not it makes it to the next round of testing, or if it's discarded. Very few new apples make it onto the next round of testing, which includes additional plantings, tests, and eventually, testing the apple in a commercial orchard environment. For Rave™, this process from birth to first arrival in stores took 20 years!

Once a new star apple is discovered, grafting is used to reproduce trees, and this variety. Growers graft the variety (essentially a twig with a bud on it) of the fruit they want to grow onto their chosen rootstock, and feed and water the tree until it begins to grow. The first two years after planting are all about growing the tree, and by year three, it's time to harvest the first fruits and introduce a new apple to delight shoppers.



Rave is a trademark owned by the regents of the University of Minnesota, and is licensed under agreement for use in connection with fresh apples of the MN55 cultivar that meet the Rave™ brand standards of quality.





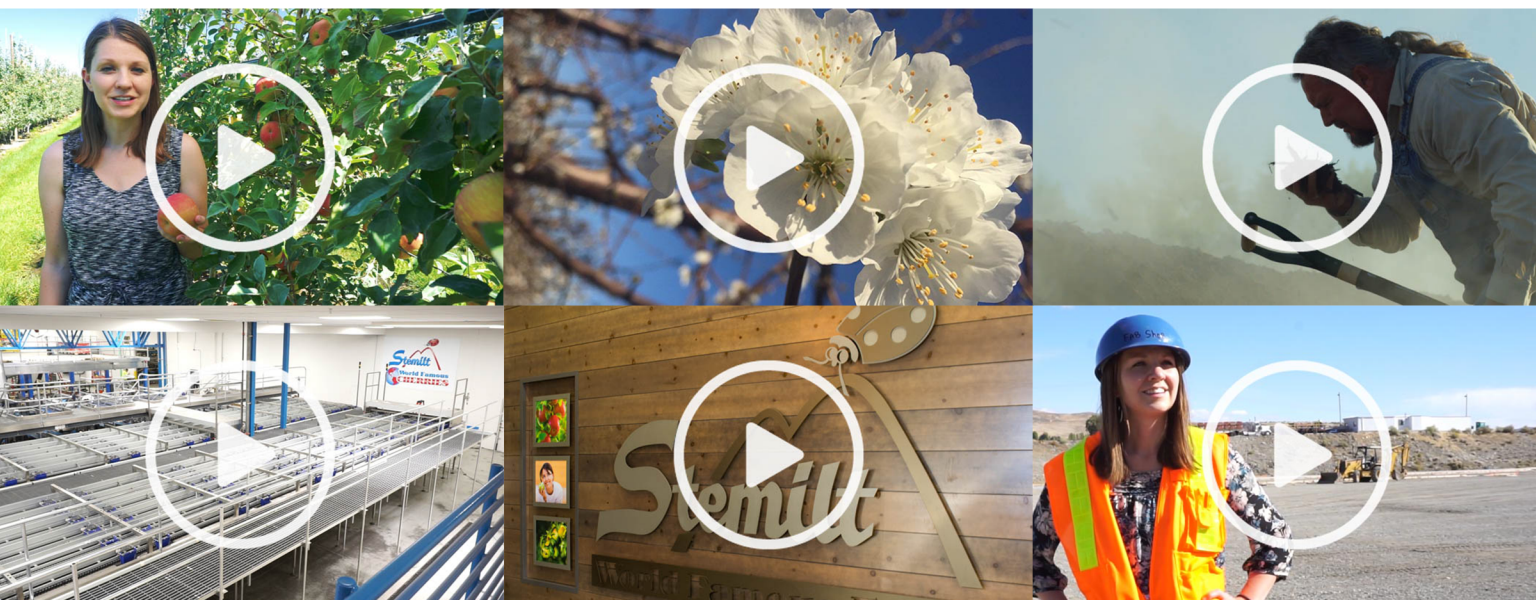


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All in just :36 seconds.

[stemilt.com/subscribe](http://stemilt.com/subscribe)



That's World Famous!

By Katie Harmon

# Taste the Tropical Apple Year-Round

It used to warm up produce departments primarily in the winter, but now Piñata®, a Stemilt signature variety, will heat up apple displays and be available for shoppers to enjoy nearly year-round.







Stemilt's dream became a reality in the 2017 season, when they were able to extend the availability of one of their proprietary varieties, the Piñata® apple, to nearly 10 months out of the year. Piñata®, an apple that hit the market almost a decade ago, has matured into a variety that shoppers will get used to seeing in their routine trips to the grocery store. Stemilt partnered with Frusan in Chile and Patagonia Organics in Argentina who grow Piñata® for Stemilt to distribute the apple during Washington State's winter months. Supplies from these two southern hemisphere farms includes both conventional and organic and will help extend the apple's availability.

"Partnering with organizations like Frusan and Patagonia means great things for our U.S. consumers," states Stemilt marketing director, Roger Pepper. "Bringing in fruit from a global market will not only make the start the season smoother, overall, it will make it longer – meaning more of this popular variety will be in the market place year round."

Piñata® is a fan favorite due to its high Brix (sugar) level, crisp and juicy crunch, and tropical twist flavor. In 2016 alone, the Piñata® was featured in more than 6,000 supermarkets, with popularity growing tremendously among families due to its high sugar and high acid levels.



“Retailers can benefit from Piñata® substantially in many areas,” states Pepperl. “Not only can they promote to these consumers that have children, they can also benefit from the organic crowd and apple lover’s crowd due to the multiple packaging options that Stemilt offers and the great flavor of Piñata®.”

Stemilt offers packaging for every purpose for the Piñata® variety. Retailers can purchase the standard carton, standard euro, or 8/5# pouch bags – a pouch bag specifically designed for all apple lovers. Retailers can also take advantage of the Lil Snappers® 9/3# pouch which offers kid-sized fruit in both conventional and organic. And thanks to the extended availability, retailers can capitalize on multiple key times during the year including January’s New Year or “back-to-school 2” time for Lil Snappers® packaging and holidays to encourage 8/5# Apple Lover’s bags. Retailers will also benefit from the organic option as it will give the organic consumer base another apple variety to choose from.

“All of these packaging types offer something different,” states Pepperl. “When retailers begin establishing their plans for produce departments for 2018, they should include both the conventional and organic Piñata® variety in their line up.”

## A Piñata® Package for All







The Piñata® was originally founded when three heirloom apples – the Golden Delicious, Cox's Orange Pippin, and Duchess of Oldenburg – were crossed in Germany in the 1970s. Piñata® is a beautiful red, yellow-orange apple that is extremely crisp and juicy. They have a classic apple flavor with a tropical twist and are great for snacking, baking and cooking. The apple was released commercially throughout Europe in 1996 and the Piñata® made its way to the U.S. in 2004 when the founding Stemilt family, the Mathisons, purchased the rights to grow and market the fruit. Since released in 2009, Piñata® has become a leading variety.

"When we began Piñata® almost a decade ago, there weren't many varieties that were managed like the Piñata® is," states Pepperl. "But over that time, Stemilt has put a great deal of time and effort into ensuring that the Piñata® is a crowd-pleaser... and it's paying off."

Currently, the U.S. buys up to 1/3 of the Chilean and Argentina crop. Bringing in the fruit from two countries who have opposite growing seasons than Washington State has lengthened Piñata®'s availability to make it a readily found apple variety in produce departments around the country.

"Piñata® is the next mature variety that consumers can rely on," states Pepperl. "So the next time consumers head to the grocery store, they can count on seeing and purchasing Piñata® for the next several grocery store visits."





By Brianna Shales

## Artisan Organics™ Apples: A Flavor Surge

“My Grandfather would be amazed  
by the organic apple flavors we grow today.”





Those words from Stemilt director of sales Tate Mathison signal the change that has arrived for his family's company and its long-time Artisan Organics™ program. A surge of organic apple volume in the modern flavors that shoppers are excited about has Stemilt equally excited to see Artisan Organics™ apples reach new heights this season and beyond.

Of course, growth in organics isn't limited to apples. According to the Organic Produce Network, organic fresh produce experienced \$1.25 billion dollars in sales in the first two quarters of 2017, a figure that was up 8 percent over the same timeframe the prior year. Organic fruit experienced double the growth that organic vegetables did, with sales up 12.3 percent year-over-year of the typically sweeter flavored produce choice. Berries, apples, and bananas make up the top three fruits in the produce department organically.

A booming economy, an emerging millennial demographic, and more mouths to feed are a few of the drivers behind this organic boom. For Stemilt, the decision to transition more apple acreage to organic was based around its vision for all of its fruits.

"We strive to grow apples with flavors that delight people, and part of delighting people is growing what they want to buy. Shoppers want more organic options. Shoppers want flavorful varieties. Our climate in central Washington is well-suited for growing apples organically, and even though organic farming comes with its share of challenges, it's another way for us to continue delighting shoppers and provide them with what we call a 'world famous' experience," said Mathison.





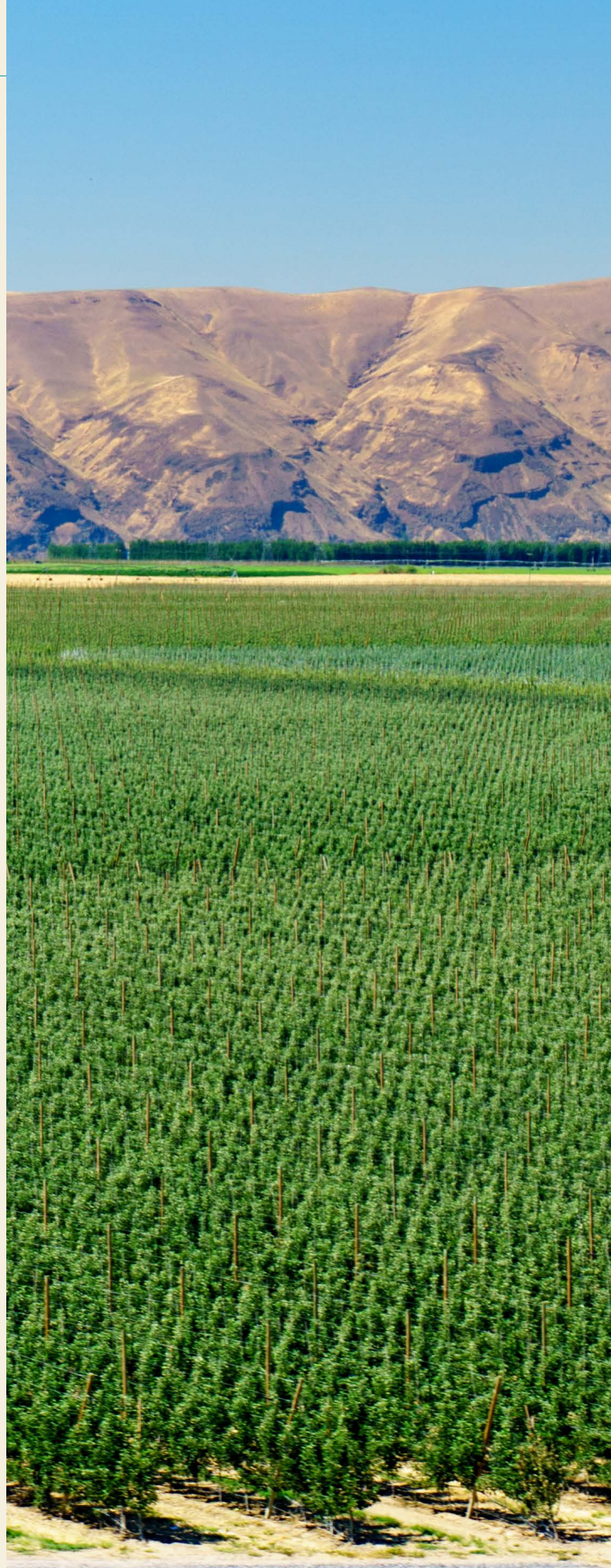


Stemilt's organic journey began back in 1989, when Tom Mathison (the company's late founder), transitioned a large number of apples – primarily Golden Delicious – to organic production.

"That was a big deal back then, and we're lucky that he had those pioneering ways. He gave us a leading edge on organics, and we haven't wavered from that commitment since," said Mathison.

While organics were once reserved for natural markets and specialty shops, they are now mainstream with a prominent place in produce departments and throughout the supermarket. Shoppers are seeking organics, but they aren't looking for yesterday's flavors. They want today's.

"That's the notable difference in Artisan Organics® today versus when my grandfather first started growing apples organically. We're growing varieties that weren't even born back in 1989, and looking ahead to see what shoppers are going to want organically years from now," said Mathison.







“

We're growing varieties that weren't even born back in 1989, and looking ahead to see what shoppers are going to want organically years from now.

In 2017 alone, Stemilt has experienced steep growth in organic apples and 30 percent of the company's total apples are now grown and certified organic. That percentage will increase significantly in the years to come, but perhaps more exciting than the sheer volume growth, is the varietal mix of apples that Stemilt is focused on growing organically.

Organic Honeycrisp volumes will more than double by 2020. Organic Piñata® apples will triple. And organic Pink Lady®, Sweetango®, Gala and Fuji are all on accelerated growth curves.

“I guess you could say, these aren't your grandfather's apples that we are growing organically,” Mathison said with a laugh. “Artisan Organics™ has entered a new chapter with the mix of apples available now. Shoppers are not only going to be delighted because organic apples will be easier to find and for more months out of the year, but also that they come in their favorite flavors,” said Mathison.

Not your grandfather's apples, indeed.



# SLOW-COOKER APPLE BOURBON PULLED PORK

PREP TIME: 20 minutes

COOK TIME: 8 hours

TOTAL TIME: 8 hours 20 minutes

LEVEL: Easy

Makes 6 sandwiches

THIS SWEET AND SAVORY BBQ IS A FAMILY FAVORITE.  
THE APPLES GIVE THIS THE PERFECT KICK!

## Ingredients

- 1 cup ketchup
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
- 3/4 cup bourbon
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 cup dark brown sugar
- 1 tbsp smoked paprika
- 1/4 tsp cayenne pepper
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- 1/2 tsp ground black pepper
- 1 cup water
- 1 large sweet onion, sliced
- 2 medium Gala apples, peeled, cored and thinly sliced
- 2 1/5 pounds pork tenderloin
- Buns for serving

## Directions

In a small saucepan over medium-high heat, combine the ketchup, vinegar, bourbon, Worcestershire, sugar, paprika, cayenne, salt and pepper. Bring the mixture to a boil and immediately reduce the heat to medium. Simmer for 10 minutes, stirring frequently.

Remove the saucepan from the heat and add the water. Whisk to combine. Set it aside to cool while you prep the slow-cooker.

In a slow-cooker, place the sliced onions on the bottom and top with the sliced apples and the pork tenderloin. Pour the sauce over the tenderloin and cover. Cook on the low setting for 8 hours.

Place the tenderloin on a dish and using two forks, shred the meat into small pieces. Return the meat back into the slow-cooker with the sauce or into a serving dish. Serve with buns.

## Nutritional Information (based on 6 servings):

Per Serving: Calories 304; Fat 3g; Protein 26g; Carbohydrates 32g; Fiber 2g; Sugar 27g; Sodium 551mg.

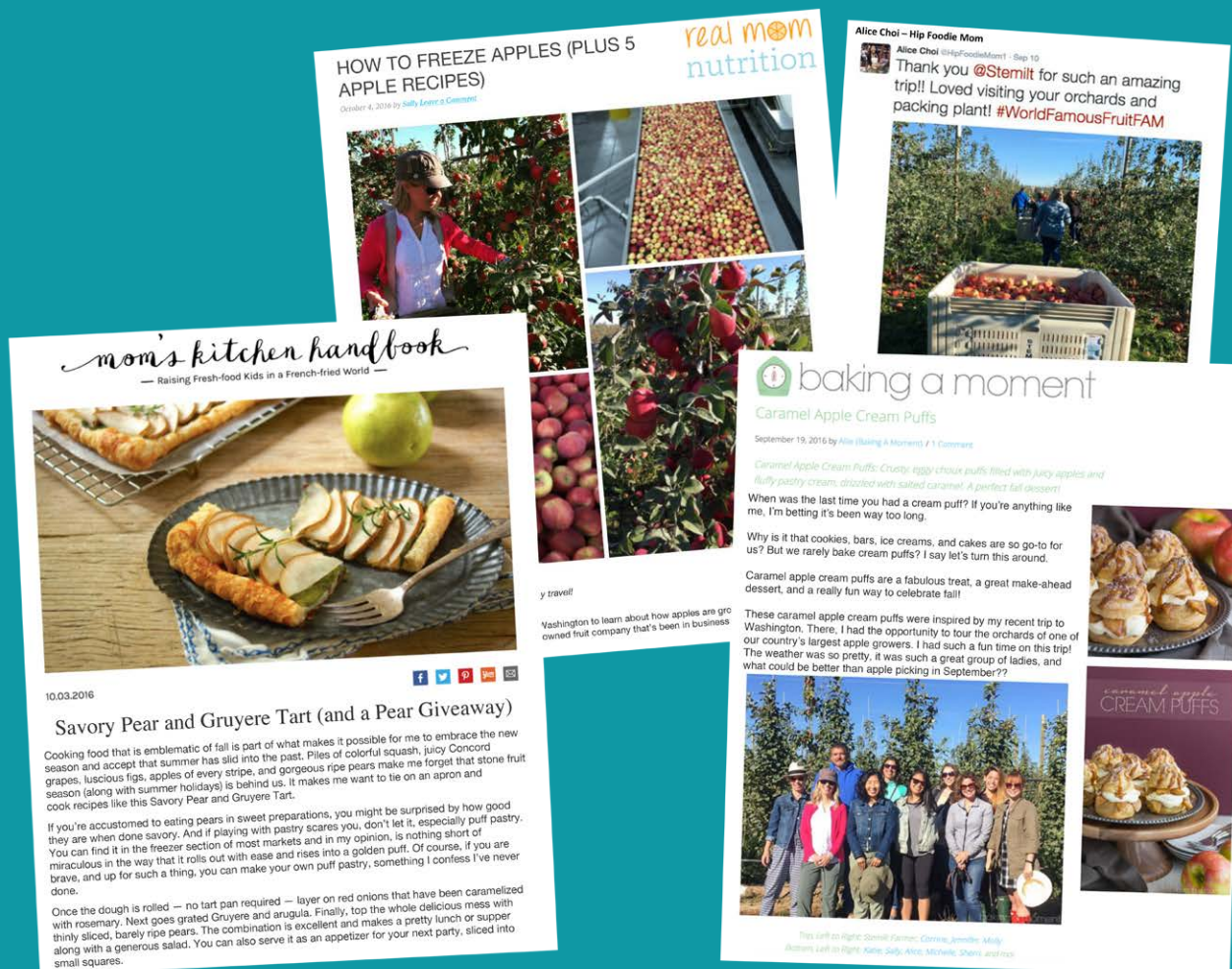




By Katie Harmon

# Influence Building

We can thank John Travolta for the white bell bottomed leisure suit and Marie Osmond for introducing perms in the 1970s. We have MJ and Madonna to thank for defining (and then redefining) fashion in the 1980s – and no, the zippered-bedecked red leather jacket and leather corset dresses are not missed. And when the 90's rolled around, we have Fresh Prince to thank for making dungarees known and the Spice Girls, for well, just being the Spice Girls.





And with every trend, came a trendsetter – a concept that is not too distant from the modern day influencer, a group that Stemilt has honed in on for the last several years. In today's world, these influencers have an abundance of resources such as social media, blogs and news outlets to help spread the word about new products, otherwise known as word-of-mouth marketing. Word-of-mouth marketing is ideal for merchandisers around the world. In a recent survey conducted by Nielsen, 84 percent of global respondents across 58 countries concluded that word-of-mouth recommendations from friends and family is still the most influential source of trustworthy information, which is what makes influencer building so valuable.



**84%** of consumers  
in **58** countries  
say  
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recommendations  
from friends   
 and family  
are most   
**trustworthy**

-Nielsen

For many years now, Stemilt has been building its influencer foundation through various sources, including the creation of Stemilt's Kitchen Council, using curated boxes and planning special events around branding programs. Stemilt's team uses these assets to connect with consumers and build up various brands. These types of influencing methods have opened up paths for Stemilt to learn what the next big thing is in terms of flavors, fruits, and future brands.

“

There are more channels now than ever, and we feel strongly that social influence is a way to naturally get people engaged with our brands.

“It’s been said over and over, but we have to market our products differently in today’s digital age than was done in the past. There are more channels now than ever, and we feel strongly that social influence is a way to naturally get people engaged with our brands,” said Brianna Shales, Stemilt communications manager.

Stemilt uses a team called the Kitchen Council to help connect with multiple demographics that includes busy moms, cooking enthusiasts, retirees and foodies. Through these three Kitchen Council members, Sally Kuzemchak, Jennifer Farley, and Allie Roomberg, Stemilt can learn how their fruit is perceived by different audiences. Kitchen Council members will use Stemilt fruit and create recipes and blogs posts and then distribute content by utilizing social channels like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Another way Stemilt is building influence is through curated boxes of its freshest fruits.



#### Kaylee Pauley/Lemons and Basil

[@lemonsandbasil](#)/Facebook – 1,142 Followers

[@lemonsandbasil](#)/Instagram – 729 Followers

[@lemonsandbasil](#)/Twitter – 298 Followers



#### Lemons and Basil

August 23 at 7:17am · 🌍

Just received my first shipment from Stemilt Growers - talk about beautiful presentation and preservation! And these Rave apples might just be the best I've ever tasted - sweet, crisp, and juicy with the perfect amount of tartness, so good! #raveapples #lemonsandbasil #freshfruit #apples Stemilt



👍 Like    💬 Comment



“When subscription services for clothing and other items started up, we thought we could easily expand this to reach social influencers, including bloggers. Getting our fresh fruits into hands of those with a large following has been a great avenue for building our brands. Plus, we get to see how real people use our products, which is always fun,” said Shales.

Special events is another channel of influencer building that Stemilt takes advantage of. During these events, Stemilt takes the chance to highlight a certain product or brand and teach attendees about the unique characteristics. For example, Stemilt held a special dinner to introduce Rave™ apples to the Big Apple where multiple food media outlets were given the chance to taste the new variety throughout the

three-course dinner. The apple was featured in multiple fresh application dishes that helped highlight the flavor and texture of the new variety. This event also gave attendees the chance to talk with Stemilt personally to learn more about Rave™.

Each of these channels have allowed Stemilt to build brands and come in contact with people that may have not heard of Stemilt before. Not only is Stemilt growing its market one consumer at a time, it's setting trends in the tree fruit world.



Subscribe to our blog for fresh recipes and ideas about fruit.

#### LATEST BLOG POSTS

- Pears & Your Health: What You Need to Know
- Cold Farro Salad With Apple and Sweet Potato
- Simple Peach Nice Cream for Hot Summer Days
- How To Peel a Peach + Peach Salsa Recipe
- Meet the Rave Apple



## COLD FARRO SALAD WITH APPLE AND SWEET POTATO



There's a classic Seinfeld episode in which all Elaine wants is a "big salad." I can relate. I frequently pull together a main dish salad for lunch or dinner and recommend them to anyone trying to get more veggies into their life. But a "big salad" isn't a good solution if you're hungry again an hour later and rummaging through the cabinets. That's why as a dietitian, I always recommend adding ingredients to green salads that contain three key satisfying nutrients: protein, fiber and fat. This hearty fall salad's got all three.

One of my favorite ways to adding staying power to salads is to toss greens with whole grains. Farro is my go-to grain lately for salads because it's nutty, chewy, and substantial, and it's rich in both protein and fiber. A hearty fall veggie like sweet potatoes adds even more fiber and a gorgeous autumn color. I used slices of the new brand of apple from Stemilt called Rave™, which are extra-juicy and ideal for snacking or adding to salads. Walnuts and olive oil offer a dose of filling and heart-healthy fats.

Serve this cold farro salad in a large serving bowl or pack it up as healthy lunches for the whole week: Just layer the ingredients, ending with the greens on top, in 1-quart glass jars, and pack the dressing separately in a leak-proof container.

By Brianna Shales

# Operation FLAVOR

Leading up to the start of the pear season, team members from Stemilt and its pear partners, Peshastin Hi-Up, decided to embark on a bold mission for pears that focuses on the fruit's flavor throughout the supply chain. Dubbed Operation Flavor, Stemilt and Hi-Up have already started this ongoing journey for pears in an effort to begin pulling pears off the edge of the cliff.





What cliff you might wonder?

A decade of category decline has pears standing at the edge of a proverbial cliff. Following the past – and likely the rest of the pack – would be a move over the edge, and most definitely in the wrong direction. But, making a sharp turn back and forming a new path would be a step towards a brighter future for this nutrient-rich, and flavorful fruit.

With a long-time passion for pears, it's no wonder why Stemilt's Rushing Rivers™ pears are heading in the run-from-the-cliff direction.

"The pear category contribution to the total produce department dropped 0.08% in just one year's time, and is currently at an all-time low of under 1 percent. You might wonder why we share statistics like this, but it's because we believe that a full supply-chain look at pears and renewed focus on ensuring that flavor comes first for this fruit will help reverse this downward trend, and have shoppers enjoying pears again," said Roger Pepperl, Stemilt marketing director.

The vision of Operation Flavor is to once again delight shoppers with the best tasting pears. To do that, Stemilt will work to create more transparency between its team and the retailer's team through the introduction of Pear Pilots and Pear Promoters at both levels. A Pear Pilot is a leader in a certain area that can enact change, while a Pear Promoter is a true believer in pears that goes above and beyond to implement flavor and quality standards.

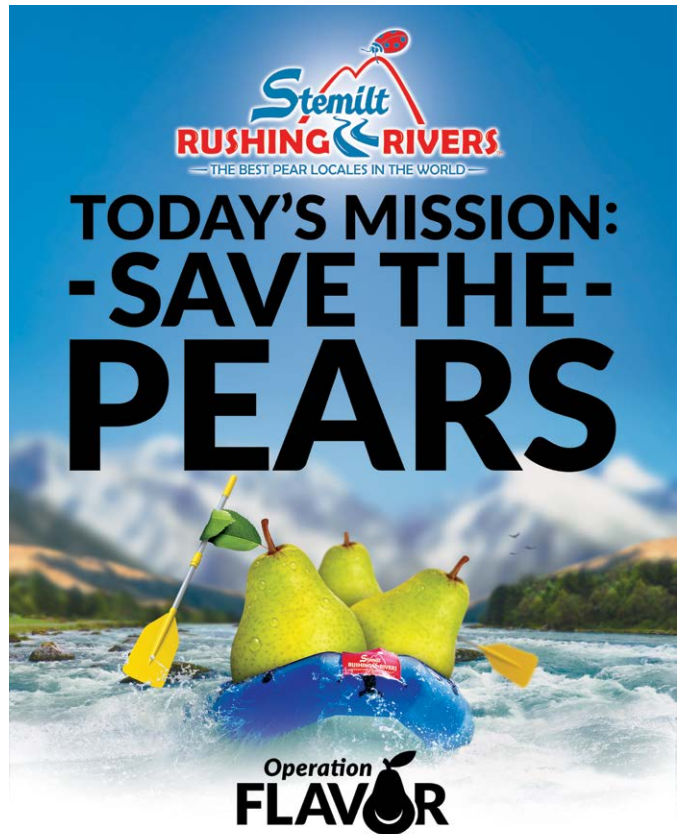
Though it may sound like a pipe dream right now, Stemilt and Hi-Up's pilots and promoters are already hard at work ensuring flavor is front and center for pears.

"A new crop always gives you a fresh start, and the start of this season's harvest was when Operation Flavor went into full effect. We aren't looking back now, only forward," said Pepperl.



Stemilt's Rushing Rivers™ pears already have a lot going for them. They come from the Wenatchee and Entiat River Valleys, which is considered the best real estate in the world for pears. It's here where hands-on multi-generational growers from Stemilt and Hi-Up focus on harvesting pears at the optimal pressures that will result in high flavored fruits. After harvest, there are rigorous cooling practices, an overcapacity in packing for the industry's best packaging flexibility, and packaging that's engineered for a successful RipeRite® pear ripening program.

"Our Rushing Rivers™ pears have always had a phenomenal story to tell, and committed growers and production teams behind them. We've embarked on Operation Flavor to fine-tune all these things we are doing right, and locate new theories to test throughout the supply chain that will help us ensure flavor comes first for pears," said Pepperl.







As the Operation Flavor journey gets underway, Stemilt is excited about the addition of two new ThermalTech TarpLess® ripening rooms at its Olds Station facility in Wenatchee. The extra deep rooms will carry out the company's RipeRite® ready-to-eat pear program in hopes of delivering both consistency and flavor to produce departments. Two dedicated pear ripeners are among the new Operation Flavor Pear Pilots, and they will be looking at ways to fine-tune the RipeRite® process throughout the season.

Stemilt is eager to help retail Pear Pilots and Promoters begin transforming pears in produce departments, as that part of the supply chain matters most because it's where shoppers see and purchase pears.

"Operation Flavor is a journey towards a better pear experience. It's going to be a lot of heavy lifting, but is a must in order to get the pear category moving in a positive direction, and most importantly, make sure people are enjoying lots of Rushing Rivers™ pears," said Pepperl.





# PROGRESS UPDATE

Distribution Center at Olds





The first phase of Stemilt's new distribution center at its Olds Station facility in Wenatchee, WA is up and running. At the start of pear season, 11 controlled atmosphere (CA) rooms and two, state-of-the-art Thermal Tech TarpLess® ripening rooms were opened. The next, and largest phase, is anticipated to open in 2018 and will feature Swiss Log's automated storage and retrieval system for high-tech order fulfillment.



## ROASTED PEAR & BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

PREP TIME: 10 minutes  
COOK TIME: 40 minutes  
TOTAL TIME: 50 minutes  
LEVEL: Moderate

Makes 6 cups

A SWEET AND SAVORY BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP RECIPE TO WARM UP  
WITH DURING THE FALL AND WINTER MONTHS

### Ingredients

- 4 cups pears, d'Anjou or Bartlett variety
- 4 cups diced peeled and seeded butternut squash
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup diced red onion
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 32 ounces broth (chicken or vegetable broth)

### Directions

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Place pears, squash and onion on a large sheet pan and drizzle with olive oil; season with salt and pepper. Toss gently to combine, then spread out into one layer on sheet pan. Roast in oven for 35 to 40 minutes.

Remove from oven to cool. Place pear-squash-onion mixture into food processor fitted with blade and add broth, just to cover. Process until smooth, then transfer to stock pot. Add remainder of broth and mix through; season with additional salt and pepper, to taste. Simmer soup gently for about 15 minutes and serve.







By Brianna Shales

# Beneficial Beauty

Drive along the edges of Stemilt's Capstone Orchard in Mattawa, Washington and you'll soon approach a stunning visual display: thousands of wildflowers plank rows of apple trees as part of an intentional effort to attract and harbor beneficial insects into orchards that may soon start the 3-year transition process to organic production.





Not only is it a beautiful sight to see, it's also a sustainable and year-round approach to pest management, as well as a way to attract honeybees needed for pollenization each spring.

According to Brent Huck, area manager at Stemilt Ag Services in the Mattawa region, planting wildflower borders is happening more and more as the company prepares to transition more apple orchards to organic. Some wildflowers are found as native plants at Stemilt orchards, while new apple grounds like Capstone must be planted intentionally in order to reap the benefits that wildflowers provide.

"It seems a bit too simple, but these perennial flowers are becoming a key part of preparing an orchard for organic production. They attract and harbor beneficial insects and bees in order to help us naturally keep pest populations at bay. It's not only effective for organic farming, but also quite the visual display," said Huck.

Cosmos, lavender, sunflowers and more can be found in bloom from the first signs of spring all the way into the dormant season. As one flower fizzles, another blooms, allowing for the constant presence of predatory insects that orchardists hope to see near the fruits they are growing.

**Stemilt's Wildflower Mix includes 27 different flowers, including these:**

African Daisy  
Baby's Breath  
Black-eyed Susan  
California Poppy  
Chinese Forget-me-not  
Cosmos  
Flanders Poppy  
Garden Thyme  
Lemon Mint  
Purple Coneflower  
Siberian Wildflower  
Sweet William  
Wild Lupine





“We see a flurry of predator insects near these wildflowers. Lacewing, predatory wasps, and praying mantis to name a few. Ladybugs are absolutely veracious here. Bringing beneficial insects in naturally via wildflowers not only builds a diverse pest defense line, but also helps reduce our farming costs, as we often have to purchase beneficial insects and then release them into the orchards at a set time,” said Huck.

Currently, three large 20-foot edges spanning two miles total are lined with wildflowers at Capstone Orchards, and more plantings are in the works. Because the orchards they line may go organic, Stemilt has two, semi-retired team members that pull weeds by hand and care for the wildflower rows.

The use of wildflowers in orchards is a shining example of integrated pest management (IPM) practices in the works. IPM was one of the first major initiatives of Stemilt’s sustainability program, called Responsible Choice®, back in 1989 when founder Tom Mathison launched the program. That was also the year that he converted a large number of acres to organic production and added the ladybug to Stemilt’s logo to signify the company’s commitment to environmental sustainability.

Nearly 30 years later, the focus on beneficial insects continues at Stemilt, and it’s more











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## LOOK WHO'S WRITING



ALLIE  
ROOMBERG



BRIANNA  
SHALES



JENNIFER  
FARLEY



KATIE  
HARMON



SALLY  
KUZEMCHAK



TATE  
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Subscribe to our blog for fresh  
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## SCENIC STOP

Organic Pink Lady® Brand apples at harvest





# 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](mailto:winery@stemiltcreekwinery.com)\*

\*Due to Shipping Laws, not all states are open for shipping wine.

Please contact us at [winery@stemiltcreekwinery.com](mailto: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 wine-making 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.

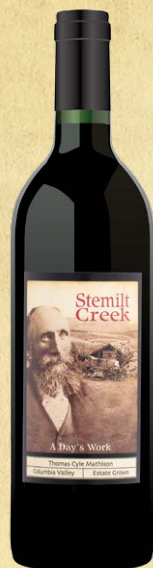


[www.stemiltcreekwinery.com](http://www.stemiltcreekwinery.com)



# PAIR<sup>OL</sup>OGY™

*the art of pairing*



**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.

# MEET GENERATION Z

Generation Y, better known by the nomenclature Millennial, has been at the center of any marketing conversation for retail brands for several years now. Now, there's a new generation making noise. Generation Z spans birth years 1995-2010, and will represent 40% of consumers by 2020. Some of its oldest members are in early adulthood already and starting to become regular shoppers. So, what does the produce retailer need to know about connecting with Gen Z? Read on to find out.

**Gen Z was born into world fueled by technology – they have high expectations for speed.** Unlike Millennials who likely recall dial-up Internet, Gen Z grew up with technology being fast and easily accessible. That means they will have high expectations for speed and customer service when shopping. If speed isn't part of their experience at a given location, they will probably turn to their Smartphone to find another option.


**Gen Z demands authenticity from brands.** They want to know who the companies they are buying from are. They care about your values, and what makes you unique. They love brands that give back. All of this means storytelling continues to be essential for any brand, and very impactful for a produce department handling fresh foods grown by people.

**Gen Z will always be looking for something new.** Their vast experience with technology makes them curious and constantly seeking new trends. For produce retailers, that means gaining their interest by knowing not only what fresh foods they want to eat today, but tomorrow too. For those of us growing apples, this excitement-over-new-flavors comes at a great time with new apples like Sweetango®, Rave™ and Cosmic Crisp™ coming out as this group emerges as primary shoppers.

**Gen Z loves finding the unique.** This social bunch is constantly snapping photos/videos and sharing, but not necessarily of the same things generations before them have. They want to find something unique to share, because doing that makes them unique. How do you use this information in a produce department? Start by thinking out-of-the-box when building a new fruit display or sign. Is it a unique, eye-catcher? If so, go for it.

**GEN Z****GEN Y****GEN X****GEN Z**



A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a large quantity of small, light-brown, oval-shaped seeds. The hand is positioned over a mound of dark, rich, crumbly soil. Several seeds have already fallen onto the soil surface. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor garden setting.

PBH Donors . . . Sowing the seeds  
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## PARTING SHOT

Rave™ apple harvest





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