



Watermelon Update

NATIONAL WATERMELON PROMOTION BOARD



2024 Retail Merchandising Contest

Winning Entries Highlight Creativity & Consumer Engagement

NWPB has named the winners of its annual Retail Merchandising Contest, which drew over 140 entries from retail chains, independent retailers, and commissaries across the U.S. and Canada. Now in its 16th year, the contest encouraged retailers to spotlight watermelon's health benefits, value, and versatility through creative displays and marketing. New this year, the contest ran June through August, aiming to capture the excitement of early summer watermelon demand.

Judging criteria included category visibility, point-of-sale materials, visual merchandising, messaging nutritional benefits, recipes, selection education, and use of print, online and digital platforms. Contestants demonstrated a wide range of tactics, from engaging in-store displays and take home materials to social posts sharing watermelon recipes, nutrition tips and fun facts.

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Contest Continued

This year's Grand Prize winner, **Gelson's Market #23 in La Canada, CA**, made a triumphant return to the winner's circle after previously earning an Honorable Mention in last year's contest. Gelson's elevated their efforts this year, impressing judges with their creative displays and consumer education initiatives including in-store sampling events, social media recipe videos and selection and nutrition education, earning them the top prize.

"This year's entries were exceptionally innovative, showing watermelon's health benefits and versatility through various media," said Juliemar Rosado, Director of Retail and International Marketing at NWPB. "The winners stood out for their consumer education focus, with displays highlighting watermelon selection, recipe ideas and happiness. Whole, mini and fresh-cut watermelons were also featured to appeal to a wider range of shoppers."

In addition to the Grand Prize, **Wegmans Food Markets in Rochester, NY** took second place, and **Schnuck Markets in St. Louis, MO** secured third. Due to the remarkable quality of submissions this year, the NWPB awarded an additional Honorable Mention, recognizing a total of four retailers for their outstanding efforts:

- Harps – Heber Springs, AR
- Riverside Market #1135 – Montrose, MI
- Tops Friendly Markets – Dunkirk, NY
- United Grocery Outlet – Knoxville, TN

"The team at Gelson's #23 would like to express our gratitude for the opportunity to showcase the talent we have at Gelson's Market," said Thot Phommasasy, Produce Manager at Gelson's Market #23. "We take great pride in creating impactful displays that excite our customers. Gelson's La Canada is proud to have won the Grand Prize this year in [NWPB's] Retail Merchandising Contest. A special thank you goes out to Catrice Taylor, Produce Clerk for her dedication, hard work, and merchandising skills. Thank you Catrice, for helping La Canada Gelson's become this year's winner!"



More than \$10,000 in cash and prizes will be awarded to the winners. Gelson's Market #23 will receive \$5,000 as the Grand Prize winner, Wegmans will take home \$2,500 for second place, and Schnuck Markets will receive \$1,000 for third. Each of the Honorable Mention winners will be awarded \$500 for their exceptional displays.

For a complete list of winning displays, including images, visit the [NWPB Retail Contest Winners](#) page at watermelon.org. For additional information, contact Juliemar Rosado at jrosado@watermelon.org.

Congratulations to the Appointed Board Members!

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the appointment of **12 members** to the National Watermelon Promotion Board on November 22, 2024. The appointees will serve three-year terms beginning Jan. 1, 2025, and ending Dec. 31, 2027.

The appointed members are:

- Kyle Pless, Cordele, Georgia (District 2 Producer)
- Lee Wroten, Cordele, Georgia (District 2 Producer)
- Bailey Leger, Cordele, Georgia (District 2 Handler)
- Michael Hamil, Thomasville, Georgia (District 2 Handler)
- Tony Moore, Turkey, North Carolina (District 3 Producer)
- Patrick Stewart, Ringling, Oklahoma (District 3 Producer)
- Matt Moore, Dalhart, Texas (District 3 Handler)
- Matt Solana, Autryville, North Carolina (District 3 Handler)
- John Lapide, Edinburg, Texas (Importer Member)
- Isaac Lopez, Nogales, Arizona (Importer Member)
- Michael LeMieux, Longwood, Florida (Importer Member)
- Christian Murillo, Nogales, Arizona (Importer Member)



These new members will bring valuable insights and leadership to our organization. If you are interested in **nominating a candidate or learning more about the board roles, please contact NWPB** at info@watermelon.org. Your participation is essential to maintaining strong leadership and advancing our mission.



Texas Watermelon Association Convention

At the recent Texas Watermelon Association Convention in McAllen, TX, attendees had the opportunity to hear updates from the NWPB, where **Vice President Chris Dyer shared an overview of the Board's latest initiatives, including current promotional efforts and upcoming projects designed to support the watermelon industry**. Additionally, Industry Analyst Jason Hanselman presented on key market trends and factors impacting the watermelon market, offering valuable analysis to help guide industry strategies.



Industry Spotlight – Get to Know Rich Chastain

Company: Melon 1

Time in the Industry: 40 years in the industry. I started working full-time at the farm when I could drive.

Time on the Board: I've served on the board 4 terms, and a total of 12 years.

What's your favorite thing about the Watermelon Industry? The relationships you make with other growers all over the country.



What's your favorite item on your bucket list? I would like to see my company ship over 20,000 loads of watermelon per year, before I retire.

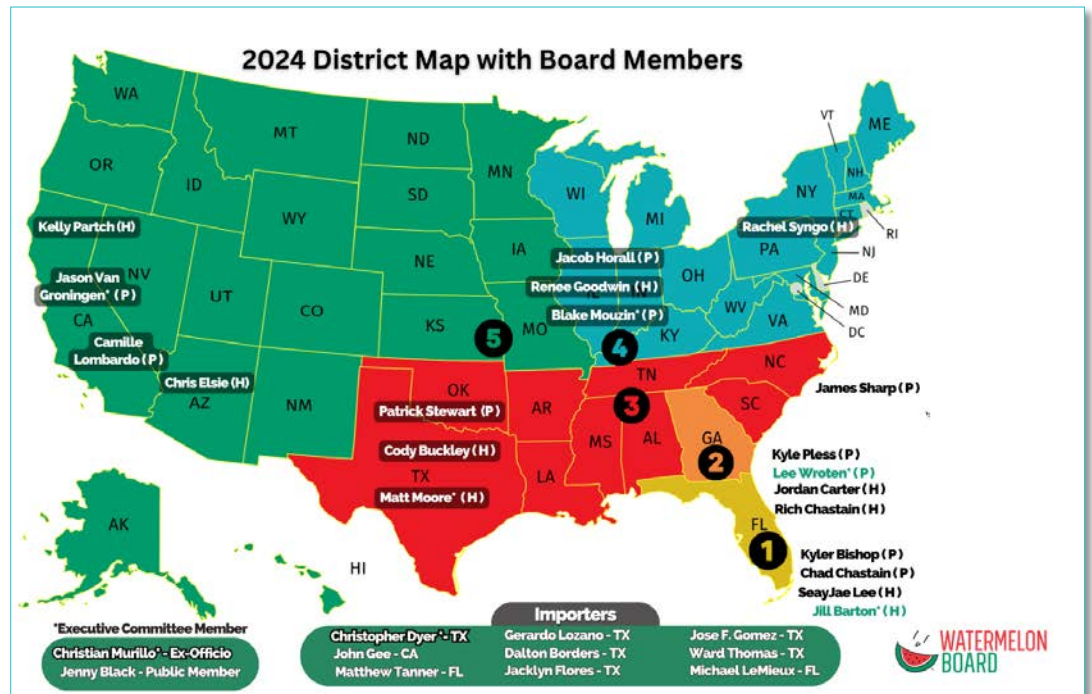


Thank You for Your Service & Support!

We extend our **sincere gratitude to the following board members** whose terms will conclude on December 31, 2024:

- Rich Chastain
- John Gee
- Cody Buckley
- Dalton Borders
- James Sharp
- Jordan Carter
- Jose Gomez
- Ward Thomas

Their dedication and contributions have been invaluable to our organization.



Key Shopper Behaviors Drive Growth of Watermelon Category

The U.S. **watermelon category has experienced strong growth over the last year, with households across the country making an estimated \$2.7 billion in fresh watermelon purchases.** According to a recent shopper segmentation study conducted by the National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB), an increase in annual watermelon purchases was driven by higher household penetration and spend within key shopper segments.

The shopper segmentation study, which examined shopper behaviors and purchase trends based on consumer panel data, showed that over 3 million new U.S. households purchased watermelon in 2024 boosting U.S. household penetration to 72%. On average, shoppers made five watermelon purchase trips during the year, spending \$5.83 per trip for an estimated annual household spend of \$28.94.

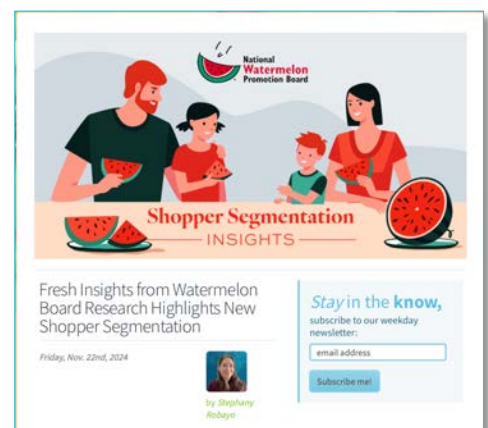
Based on their annual spend, watermelon buyers were divided into three segments: Light, Medium, and Heavy. The Heavy segment represented 25% of watermelon households, and accounted for 63% of total category purchase dollars in 2024. This segment contributed \$97 million of the incremental purchases, highlighting their role as the primary drivers of category growth.

The study identified several actionable opportunities for continued category growth:

- **Increase Shopping Frequency:** Encouraging households to make one additional watermelon purchase trip per year could bring over \$550 million into the watermelon category.
- **Expand Household Penetration:** A 1% increase in household penetration, from 72% to 73%, could generate an additional \$38 million in incremental sales.
- **Target Heavy Shoppers:** Developing marketing strategies focused on engaging with the Heavy watermelon shopper segment could further boost spending and repeat purchases.

The findings from the shopper segmentation study provide a strategic roadmap for driving continued growth in the watermelon category. By leveraging these insights and targeting the heavy shopper segments, the industry can unlock opportunities for sustained category growth.

These findings, combined with earlier consumer research, offer a comprehensive understanding of watermelon buyer demographics, characteristics, and purchasing behaviors. This enables retailers and producers to effectively target key consumer groups and maximize sales opportunities. Access the full study and learn how the National Watermelon Promotion Board is working to drive sales of fresh watermelon at <https://www.watermelon.org/audiences/industry/research/retail-research/>.



“Wintermelon” Toolkit: Free Assets for Winter Watermelon Promotions

Don't forget the Board offers a variety of **free resources** to support your winter watermelon marketing initiatives! With the “Wintermelon” toolkit, retailers, media, and industry partners can access curated assets designed to promote watermelon all year long.

Available resources include:

- A lively lifestyle “sizzle reel” video
- Seasonal “Wintermelon” graphics and logos
- Ready-to-use social media posts
- Lifestyle images featuring people, kitchen prep, and grazing boards
- Festive recipes like the Watermelon Mule
- Holiday-themed carvings, such as Christmas tree and snowman designs
- Health and nutrition messaging highlighting watermelon's benefits



These assets have been organized in an easy-to-navigate format and can be found at www.watermelon.org/wintermelon. Download and incorporate them into your winter campaigns to help keep watermelon top of mind for consumers during the colder months. All materials are free to use, so visit the toolkit page today and get started!



USAEDC

NWPB's Juliemar Rosado attended the United States Agricultural Export Development Council (USAEDC)'s annual conference on November 20-21. The meeting consisted of a robust program agenda around global agricultural topics. Some of the topics included **2024 ag and trade outlook, global programs update and update from FAS Administrator Whitley**. USAEDC also hosted a “Back to Roots” reception where NWPB was able to network with other MAP program cooperators as well as USDA marketing specialists in the global programs.

Individuals with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations and or alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, LEP, etc.) should contact: Juliemar Rosado at jrosado@watermelon.org within three days of event. The National Watermelon Promotion Board is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



NWA Nook: Five Things You Can't Miss at National Watermelon Convention; Hotel & Registration are Now Open!

Mark your calendars for February 19-22 and start planning your trip to Austin, Texas, for the 2025 National Watermelon Convention. Secure your spot today and get ready for a memorable event filled with networking, learning, and fun. From boots to buckles to watermelons, here are five highlights you won't want to miss:

- **Opening Day Events:** Start the convention with the Arnold Mack Memorial Golf Tournament and the President's Welcome Reception. These signature events set the tone for a fantastic week of connection and celebration.
- **Honky Tonk Night:** Kick off Thursday night at Punch Bowl Social with entertainment, great food, and plenty of fun—a perfect way to connect with fellow industry pros.
- **Queen Competition:** Celebrate tradition as contestants compete for the title of National Watermelon Queen, showcasing grace and poise.
- **The Auction:** Bid on unique items, exclusive watermelon merchandise, and one-of-a-kind experiences—all while supporting the industry.
- **Educational Sessions:** Learn about key topics like audits, food safety, and regulatory updates to stay ahead in the industry.



This convention is more than an event—it's a chance to connect with your watermelon family. Strengthen ties, share experiences, and celebrate the community that makes this industry special. Don't wait—book your travel and join us in Austin for an unforgettable convention!



Wakefern July Hydration Event


This year, NWPB partnered with Wakefern as one of the participating items for their July Hydration events. Included, watermelon ran in the front page of the circular with a special call out for the “Well Everyday” items. There was also a landing page, social media carousel, in-store signage with nutrition facts, demos and learning sessions for kids and customers for the participating items. Additionally, Wakefern supported the event with oversized and secondary displays, ads and social media call outs for the entire month. There were also several satellite programs for employees and kids that took place during the promotional time period. Stickers and posters were sent out and several of NWPB's recipes were demonstrated at these events. In total, the event resulted in a **1.3% click-thru rate and over 760,000 impressions!**



Mexico Emerging Markets Program Webinar

The National Watermelon Promotion Board (NWPB) is dedicated to fostering the growth of U.S. watermelon exports by leveraging strategic opportunities in international markets. With a focus on promoting the freshness, quality, and health benefits of U.S. watermelons, the NWPB collaborates with trade partners to strengthen its global presence. Key markets with high demand for premium produce represent significant potential for expanding market share. By addressing seasonal opportunities, building consumer awareness, and supporting trade relationships, the NWPB aims to ensure U.S. watermelons remain a sought-after choice worldwide.




Recently, NWPB held a virtual webinar highlighting the results of an in-depth market assessment designed to expand U.S. watermelon exports to Mexico. **This valuable report provides actionable insights for producers, shippers, and traders, addressing challenges, regulatory requirements, and market preferences.** Discover how this roadmap can enhance the U.S. watermelon export strategy and help track performance metrics for sustainable growth. [You can view the webinar here.](#) 

The National Watermelon Promotion Board does not endorse any companies listed across any research study results; it is provided for your information. The Board is not responsible for any transaction between parties. NWPB is an equal opportunity employer.

If you have any questions, please reach out to Juliemar Rosado at jrosado@watermelon.org.



Peak Season Media Monitoring

Monitoring the consumer media headlines for watermelon is part of the Watermelon Board's measurement of how watermelon is being talked about, with what frequency, and how much inspiration, education and awareness is being shared by media about watermelon and its key benefits and message points. This year, more than **30 BILLION impressions** were tracked, a 172% increase over last year. [Check out our media monitoring recap video here.](#) 

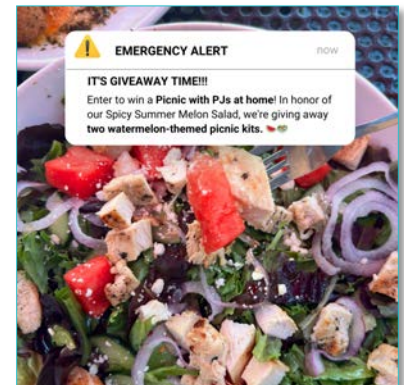
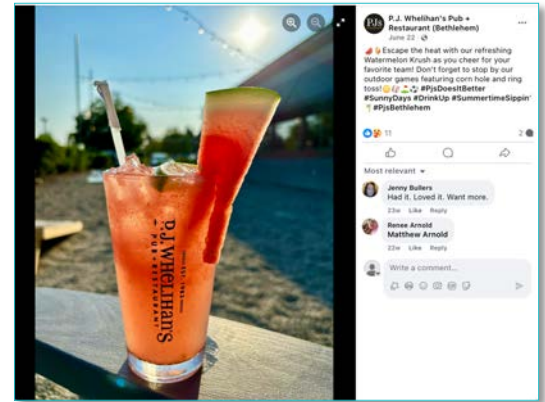



Board Drives Awareness and Sales in Foodservice with P.J. Whelihan's Partnership

The Board has been hard at work bringing **more watermelon to menus across the foodservice industry, leveraging media, events, and collaborations with operators**. One of the partnerships this year was with P.J. Whelihan's, a chain with nearly 30 locations across the Mid-Atlantic. The collaboration was first sparked at the Kinetic 12 event in 2023, where the two teamed up to showcase watermelon-inspired menu items, including the refreshing *Watermelon Crush* cocktail and the vibrant *Spicy Watermelon Salad*.

The NWPB's foodservice goal is clear: to increase watermelon's presence on foodservice menus, while also amplifying its appeal to consumers. P.J. Whelihan's became a key partner in this initiative, promoting watermelon-focused dishes throughout the summer months, from June to September. The campaign included a mix of social media promotions, email blasts, in-store signage, and even a watermelon giveaway. This broad-reaching approach helped ensure that the message reached a wide audience both in-restaurant and online.

The results speak for themselves: the *Spicy Watermelon Salad* became the restaurant's top-selling seasonal salad to date. This success shows the power of well-executed partnerships and creative marketing in driving consumer interest and boosting sales. As the NWPB continues to work with foodservice operators across the country, this partnership with P.J. Whelihan's offers a great example of how to bring more watermelon into the spotlight - and utilize it on two places on the menu. Through innovative promotions and targeted campaigns, watermelon is becoming a must-have ingredient in restaurants!



Get the Marine Corps
Marathon Team
Watermelon
experience by [viewing
the video here!](#) 



Influencer Holiday Highlight

Watermelon Board partner Mackenzie of Cheerful Choices reposted her popular Watermelon Christmas Tree Reel, highlighting watermelon's year round availability and versatility - a fun activity and holiday centerpiece!



Watermelon on the Menu



Branchwater, an American restaurant based in Cumming, GA, is currently offering a Spicy Tuna Poke that is mixed with fresh watermelon, cilantro and citrus ponzu.



NWPB Connections

New York Produce Show - New York, NY - December 10 - 12

Illiana Watermelon Association Convention - French Lick, IN - January 16 - 19

South Carolina Watermelon Association Convention - Hilton Head, SC - January 16 - 19

Georgia Watermelon Association Convention - Braselton, GA - January 24 - 26

Western Watermelon Association Convention - Las Vegas NV - January 24 - 26

