

PRESS RELEASE

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Expanding Opportunity in Heirloom Tomatoes from Guatemala

For immediate release: August 2019 – As the tomato category continues to proliferate, buyers are discovering reliable, high quality heirloom tomatoes from Guatemala. Several Guatemala Produce Trade Association (GPTA) members are marketing heirloom tomatoes to help retail and foodservice customers increase the flavor and excitement of their tomato offerings year-round.

Southern Specialties has been involved in heirloom tomatoes from Guatemala for about 5 years: “We were introduced to a greenhouse grower interested in producing an heirloom tomato, on a year-round basis, that offered quality beyond what was available in the marketplace,” says Charlie Eagle, Southern’s Vice President Business Development. “We challenged him with that task and today are proud to market Southern Selects heirloom tomatoes, Southern Selects baby heirloom tomatoes and Southern Selects yellow beefsteak tomatoes in a single layer pack. It started as a boutique program that has experienced year-over-year growth since inception among both retail and foodservice.”

Crystal Valley Foods of Miami, FL, has worked closely with a growing partner for over 3 years as well. “We tested over 40 varieties in a dedicated greenhouse to come up with the baby heirlooms that had the best flavor and shelf life to use in our mix,” says Katiana Valdes, Marketing Director. “The climate in the region allows for high quality, flavorful tomatoes to be grown year-round in Guatemala.”

Guatemala’s heirloom program offers a variety of pack options with true heirloom tomatoes. “Southern showcases a variety of multiple-colored true baby heirlooms in various size clamshells that add excellent flavor and excitement to the plate,” says Eagle. “Our heirloom tomato pack is a single layer of premium larger heirloom tomatoes featuring approximately 4 varieties in each pack. Our yellow beefsteak tomatoes have gorgeous yellow color and a mild low-acid flavor.”

Crystal Valley currently offers its baby heirloom tomatoes in a 1-pint clamshell. “Within the next couple of months we will also have Crystal Valley branded premium heirloom tomatoes from Guatemala available in a 10-pound single layer case,” says Valdes.

Heirloom tomatoes from Guatemala are available on a year-round basis. Growers and their U.S. importers assure the highest quality standards for the product. “Our grower partner is one of the food safety pioneers in Guatemalan agriculture,” says Crystal Valley’s Valdes. “In addition to maintaining rigid quality and food safety programs, they also regularly visit operations in the U.S., Canada, and Europe to keep abreast of advances in greenhouse agriculture techniques that impact tomato quality and flavor.”

With consumers responding passionately to the tomato category, Eagle reports such “specialty” heirloom products are no longer just boutique items. “When we first started, our customer base was solely high-end restaurants through foodservice distributors,” he says. “That is no longer the case. Today’s consumer seeks out heirloom tomatoes and thus we have a broad customer base including all types of retail chains and foodservice purveyors.”

For more information, please visit the Guatemala Produce Trade Association website: www.GuatemalaProduceTradeAssociation.com

Photos:

SouthernSelects_YellowTomato.jpg

SouthernSelects_BabyHeirlooms.jpg

CrystalValley_BabyHeirloom1.jpg

CrystalValley_BabyHeirloom2.jpg

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