



CAC and Chef Hugh Acheson with retailers from Save Mart and Lucky (Northern California)

CAC Showcases Premium California Avocados at PMA Fresh Summit 2015

Record-breaking east coast based attendance of 19,332 industry professionals, including 1,060 exhibiting companies from 63 countries and more than 3,380 buyers, made the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) Fresh Summit 2015 an outstanding venue for the California Avocado Commission (CAC) to network with retailers and industry leaders. At the event, which was held in Atlanta at the Georgia World Congress Center, CAC showcased the premium California avocado brand, the value of California avocados at retail and the Commission's leadership role in the industry.

Retail representatives from Ahold, BJ's, Costco, Fresh & Easy, Giant Eagle, Hannaford, Harris Teeter, H.E.B., Kroger, Military Commissaries, Mollie Stone's, Roche Bros., Safeway, Save-Mart, Stater Bros., Wakefern, Walmart, Wegman's, Whole Foods and more met with CAC staff to discuss California avocado performance in their stores, receive 2016 crop projections, review research and category sales data and learn about the season's upcoming marketing programs.

The event location led the Commission to partner with renowned Atlanta-based Chef Hugh Acheson, who fused southern cuisine with premium California avocados to cre-

ate irresistible dishes for booth visitors to sample. Acheson's aromatic California avocado recipes attracted large crowds to CAC's Fresh Summit booth. Representatives from CAC's key customers were treated to samples of Chef Acheson's New York Strip with Crisp Black Eyed Peas, Kale, California Avocado and Preserved Lemon Vinaigrette on Saturday, California Avocado, Poached Shrimp, Grapefruit, Orange, Endive and Chives on Sunday, and Charred Scallion and Apple Guacamole on both days. On Sunday CAC also hosted an invitation-only brunch in the booth featuring a variety of California avocado breakfast dishes. The brunch encouraged targeted retailers, California avocado stakeholders and industry VIPs to engage with CAC representatives.

Hugh Acheson is chef/partner of the Athens, GA restaurants 5 & 10 and The National, Empire State South restaurant in Atlanta and The Florence in Savannah. Acheson competed in Bravo TV's Top Chef Masters Season 3 and currently stars on the popular television show as a Top Chef judge. Acheson is a James Beard award winner for Best Chef Southeast, was named a Best New Chef by Food & Wine Magazine and is an award-winning cookbook author. In his

most recent book, *The BROAD FORK: Recipes for the Wide World of Vegetables and Fruits*, Acheson mentions California avocados.

At Fresh Summit CAC sponsored the Produce for Better Health Foundation Supermarket Registered Dietitian (SRD) tour. The SRD participants visited the Commission's booth and met with popular Atlanta-based registered dietitian and CAC spokesperson, Carolyn O'Neil. The SRDs learned more about California avocados and ways to promote them in retail stores, in their consumer communications and through the media. CAC hosted a social media contest for the SRDs at the event, resulting in 13 unique entries and numerous tweets about California avocados with the event hashtag: #freshsummit. In doing so, the SRDs helped elevate CAC's expo presence and positioned CAC as a go-to resource for SRDs and Twitter participants at the Fresh Summit.

CAC utilized a variety of social media platforms during the PMA Fresh Summit 2015 to engage with industry and media representatives as well as California avocado fans far beyond the event. These social media activities resulted in more than



Renowned RD Carolyn O'Neil educates SRDs about California avocados



CAC Chairman Doug O'Hara, Tom Bellamore, Jan Delyser and Bryan Silbermann (PMA CEO) with Big Bird

133,000 impressions and nearly 1,400 engagements such as marking a post as a “favorite,” retweeting a CAC tweet or adding comments to Facebook and Twitter posts.

The expo marked the Commission’s first Periscope event — a live broadcast for Twitter users. CAC’s Periscope highlighted Chef Acheson preparing plates of the day’s featured California avocado recipe at the CAC booth. Acheson generated a lot of interest among social media users. CAC received more than 130 views of the Periscope and nearly three hours of total content was watched.

The Commission’s most popular tweet centered on its participation in the PMA Fresh Summit Sensory contest. CAC’s Georgia Peach, California Avocado and Chicken Flatbread Sandwich recipe was selected as one of 10 finalists in the contest, which was judged by a panel of retailers and local children. The recipe was featured at a reception following the contest.

CAC’s social media presence at the Fresh Summit not only generated substantial interest among industry insiders but also helped build recognition for the California avocado brand in the larger social media sphere. According to Fresh Plaza, a well-known industry trade publication, the event hashtag #freshsummit became a trending topic on Twitter during the expo. Trending topics are considered to be the most popular and talked-about topic based on real-time rankings measuring what people are talking about on Twitter across the globe.

PMA’s Fresh Summit also provided numerous opportunities for the Commission to engage with trade media representatives and generate interest in the upcoming California avocado season and future marketing initiatives. Jan DeLyser, vice president of marketing, was interviewed by AndNowUKnow and Produce Retailer at the PMA Fresh Summit. In addition, CAC President Tom Bellamore and DeLyser participated in a joint interview with Ag Net.

Other Fresh Summit highlights included the presentation of the Produce Business Marketing Excellence Award to CAC for its 2014 Wake up to Breakfast marketing campaign and meetings with growers, handlers and others. Bellamore and Ken Melban, CAC vice president of industry affairs, had the opportunity to meet with industry stakeholders and other avocado association leaders to discuss topics of con-



Chef Hugh Acheson prepping a California avocado creative recipe for CAC’s key retailers

cern to the industry.

In addition to being an excellent venue for meetings and networking, Fresh Summit has an educational component that includes workshops and general sessions with keynote speakers. One session highlight was a video from First Lady Michelle Obama thanking the industry for its efforts to inspire children to eat healthier. At this year’s State of the Industry Address, PMA CEO Bryan Silbermann and PMA President Cathy Burns reflected on initiatives to improve fresh produce marketing around the world, with a significant focus on creating new ways to help consumers eat more fruits and vegetables. 🥑