



California avocado grower Andy Sheaffer and his sons, Augie and Eli, kneel next to new plantings. The new plantings help to show diversity in the grove shots captured throughout the shoots, and closeups of the father and his sons help spotlight the authenticity that the campaign aims to share.

Behind the Scenes: In-Season Grower Photography and Videography

In August, industry trade magazine Produce Business honored the California Avocado Commission's "What's Inside a California Avocado?" campaign in its prestigious "2024 Marketing Excellence Awards." One key reason: the campaign's stunning visuals of California avocado groves and the stories of the growers behind them.

Capturing this storytelling is due not only in large part to the meticulous planning from CAC and its agency partners, but the tremendous cooperation of California avocado growers who opened their groves and offered their valuable time and resources. It was no simple feat to bring this campaign to life. Here's a behind-the-scenes look at how the Commission and its partners captured the in-season grower photography and videography.

A Tour of California's Avocado Groves

From February through July, the CAC team, in collaboration with their consumer marketing agency Curious Plot, traveled across California avocado growing regions to capture images for this and next year's advertising campaigns. Visiting six avocado groves, the team worked closely with growers to create compelling video and photography for the "What's Inside a California Avocado?" campaign.

The photography and videography shoots began in February with:

- Jaime and Ricardo Serrato at Jackson Ranch in Escondido
- Maureen Lamb Cottingham, John Lamb, David Lamb and Robert Lamb at Camlam Farms Inc. in Camarillo

In May, the team visited Michael Craviotto, his family and employees at their grove in Moorpark.

By July, the Commission worked with:

- Daryn Miller's family at Villa Pacifica Ranch in Cayucos
- Hayden McIntyre at Morro Ranch in Morro Bay
- Andy Sheaffer and his sons, Augie and Eli, at his grove in Ventura County

CAC team members Terry Splane, Zac Benedict, David Cruz and Lori Small played key roles in the project, alongside the Rockwell Morrow and Curious Plot teams.

Capturing the California Difference

Based on consumer research, the Commission recognized early in the year that highlighting local and sustainable growing practices would have the most impact on consumers. To do so, CAC needed to highlight growers using fresh, authentic visuals. With that in mind, they prioritized visiting groves that represented diverse regions and offered visually striking settings.

Before filming, team members scouted each location, assessing which parts of the groves would provide the best opportunities for photography and videography. Once they finalized the locations for the shoots, the team spent one full day at each site, bringing together a crew of up to 10 people. This included a producer, still photographers, art directors, food stylists, lighting specialists, video camera operators and a director of photography.

Ahead of the shoot, the team:

- Worked with the growers on all logistics: dates and times, who could be on site and who was willing to be in the shoot
- Ordered crates of fruit that would be on set for cutting open i.e., the "hero" fruit of the shoots
- Created a detailed pre-production document shared with the growers. It included the campaign objectives, mood boards, shot lists and logistical overview



The video crew wore special stabilizer backpacks to capture beautiful smooth shots of grove details.

How the Shoots Unfolded

Each day was different, some beginning in the early hours of the morning while others took the crew to sunset. The crew started the shoots by meeting with the growers and conducting a review of the planned shooting locations. Each shooting location was carefully selected to craft a mix of stories and highlight diverse aspects of the groves. As the video crew set up, a drone operator captured breathtaking vistas from high above these groves, highlighting the beauty of the avocado farms from overhead as well as scouting for any additional shooting opportunities.

Once the ideal spots were identified, the team got to work. Throughout the day, they staged various shots of growers walking through their groves, interacting with their families and crews, and inspecting and harvesting the fruit. Using a predetermined shot list, the video crew captured a balance of the growers in action, as well as b-roll (supplemental video) and behind-the-scenes footage from different angles to edit together in post-production.

Throughout the day, the crew was meticulous with logistical details, careful to avoid shooting logos and labels, ensuring release forms were signed by anyone featured in the footage and moving power cables, lighting and cameras throughout the grove.

By the end of each day, the crew had collected a wealth of content, including still images and video footage, that would bring the California growers and their fruit to life.



California avocado grower Daryn Miller and CAC Vice President of Marketing Terry Splane are captured in discussion. To help soften the direct sunlight, the crew set up overhead diffusion screens.



Growers Daryn Miller and Jim Miller were captured walking the groves. The crew directed them to walk back and forth, talk casually and joke around to capture their natural chemistry on camera.

From the Groves to Consumers

Post-shoot, all photos and videos were reviewed and labeled. The team then selected the most compelling shots to carefully edit into the campaign videos and visuals.

The February photography and videography content formed the foundation of the California avocado core advertising campaign, which launched April 1 and ran throughout the summer. In addition, the July content played a significant role in next year's advertising campaign.

The photography and videography session with the Craviotto family in May followed a different path due to urgent retail needs. A retail customer required specific grower images for an event and consumer promotion, and the timeline was tight. In response, the Commission quickly organized a smaller scale shoot with just one photographer and one CAC representative. The images from that day have already seen extensive use in marketing communications outside the core campaign.

Why This Effort Matters for Growers

These photography and videography efforts help consumers connect with California avocado growers in an authentic way, encouraging awareness and preference for California-grown avocados. By reminding shoppers that California avocados are locally grown and sustainably farmed, the campaign strengthens consumer loyalty and builds long-term demand.

“We are incredibly grateful to all the California avocado growers, their families and employees for being a crucial part of this promotion,” said Terry Splane, vice president of marketing, CAC. “The growers are the heart of the brand, and they are what truly sets California avocados – and the ‘What’s Inside a California Avocado?’ campaign – apart.” 🥑