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Pavilions hosts locally grown event

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George Jackson, owner of Kingsburg Orchards, Kingsburg, Calif., invites Tracy Balsz (left) and her daughter Gabby of Beverly Hills, Calif., to sample tree fruit his company produces during a locally grown promotion at the Pavilions supermarket in West Hollywood, Calif., on July 24.

WEST HOLLYWOOD, Calif. " A large portion of the fruits and vegetables that Southern California Vons and Pavilions stores sell is homegrown, and Rick Cruz wants the world " or at least the immediate vicinity " to know about it.

Cruz, manager of division operations for the Vons/Pavilions division of Pleasanton, Calif.-based Safeway Inc., has been scheduling locally grown events this summer at several of the chain (TM)s locations.

On July 24, he spotlighted Pavilions (TM) flagship store in West Hollywood.

Cruz invited George Jackson, owner of Kingsburg Orchards, Kingsburg, Calif., and representatives of Tutti Frutti Farms Organic Produce, Lompoc, Calif., which grows heirloom tomatoes, and *Dulcinea Farms* LLC, Ladera Ranch, Calif., which grows miniature watermelons, to appear at the store.

The growers met with shoppers, offered samples and answered questions about their products.

The local angle was top of mind for many of the shoppers who chatted with Jackson about the apple pears, pluots, apricots, white- and yellow-flesh peaches, cherries and apples on display.

"(Shoppers) want to know where they (TM)re grown " if they (TM)re locally grown or grown in another country, " he said.

In California, Safeway considers items grown in-state as local.

Vons has offered local produce for a long time, Cruz said, but the company has only been seriously promoting it for the past couple of years.

Signs designate locally grown fruit in the produce department, and banners outside the store, where several booths and tables were set up July 24, made it plain that locally grown is important at Vons and Pavilions stores.

"A lot of consumers are not aware that a lot of the produce that you see in our grocery stores is locally grown, " he said. "This is part of our way of letting consumers know. "

So far this summer, the stores have hosted four events, and Cruz expects to have two or three more this season.

Tags:local,merchandising,organics,retail

Commodities:Organic Fruits

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