

Melon marketers eye value-oriented shoppers

By Jim Offner
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“Eating experience” remains an operative phrase across the produce industry where retail strategies are concerned.

But, given the sagging economy, price is becoming an increasing factor, sources said.

Central American Produce, Pompano Beach, Fla., plans to combine elements of taste and value this season with its off-shore fruit.

“We’re just providing a great-eating melon for retail, and we’re looking for some opportunities to do some in-store demos, so the consumers know how good they are and to increase,” said Michael Warren, president.

Getting consumers to notice an array of melons also is a trick of the trade, said Ed Odron, owner of Odron Produce Marketing & Consulting, Stockton, Calif.

That’s not simply a matter of setting out a couple of shelves of product, Odron said.

“You need to go with an end cap, and you need to tie in some

other tropical items and make a theme out of it.,” he said.

One idea, Odron added, is to build a tropical display, with melons as a centerpiece.

It’s imperative to bring value to price-conscious consumers, said Monique McLaws, marketing manager for Ladera Ranch, Calif.-based Dulcinea Farms LLC.

“We found consumers really shopped the circulars and, when there was a value place from the retailers, our product moved extremely well,” she said.

The recession began to bear down on shoppers in earnest during the peak of last year’s imported melon deal, and consumers were shopping for price across the board in produce, said John McGuigan, Dulcinea’s vice president of sales and marketing.

Promoting high-quality product can do more than boost sales — it can change the perception of the category as more than just a seasonal item, said Allison Moore, communications manager for the Nogales, Ariz.-based Fresh Produce Association of the Americas.

