



Ippolito International

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

Q: Talk about Ippolito's Brussels sprout program.

Butch Corda: We are North America's largest producer of fresh Brussels sprouts. The most recent data shows us producing approximately 30 percent of the tonnage of California product and 40 percent of Mexican.

→ Butch Corda, general manager of **Ippolito International**, says Brussels sprout stalks are a fun item that is enjoying increased popularity, especially during the holidays.

Our growing season is year-round. The Salinas, Calif. season runs late June through December, and Mexico runs November through June, and each year we continue to expand our program with increased plantings overall. We have a strong 12-month program with promotional opportunities throughout the year.

We offer a full spectrum of Brussels

sprout packs: 1-pound vexars, clamshells and microwaveable bags, 2- and 3-pound retail/club packs, 25# bulk loose (both iced and iceless) and 9-count stalks. The stalks are a fun item that is enjoying increased popularity, especially during the holidays. They can be stored in the refrigerator and people can "harvest" sprouts when they want to cook some, or the whole stalk can be roasted and used as a striking quasi centerpiece.

Q: How is the Brussels sprout market shaping up for the fall and how does Ippolito gear up to meet the increased demand?

As we approach the fall season with peak demand Thanksgiving through Christmas, our plantings are looking good. We should have good quality and sufficient volume. This year we have added packing lines, which has doubled our capacity. We also begin harvest mechanically in the fall, allowing us to harvest more product with less people. Like most shippers in our area, we have been facing a labor shortage so being able to use a mechanized harvest will greatly help with that challenge. With the mechanized harvest and our doubled packing capability, we are able to harvest, pack and ship product the same day to maximize freshness.

Q: What is new on the horizon?

This fall we will also be offering new pouch packs of Brussels sprouts. The product line will include a steam-in-the-bag pack, which is a great convenience item. We will have a shredded pack; sprouts are delicious raw in salads and this pack will encourage consumers to try them in new and different applications. We will also have a trimmed and cut product for even faster cooking, and a petite size as well. We are also developing a brand new website which will feature dozens of Brussels sprout recipes and preparation tips. We also recently

updated our Queen Victoria and Coast King labels to reflect a more contemporary feel that looks great on our packaging.

Q: Ippolito International is a relatively new company, correct?

Ron Mondo, Ippolito's grower/owner, grew up in a farming family and has been growing Brussels sprouts for more than 20 years. What began 10 years ago as a relatively small Brussels sprout and leek grower/shipper with a two person sales staff has increased its volume tenfold, with a sales staff of a dozen people. Ron has built the company into a major factor in the western vegetable business. In addition to Brussels sprouts, Ippolito International produces iceberg lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, leaf lettuces, romaine hearts, green onions, spinach, artichokes, asparagus, anise and a full array of mixed items. We grow and ship out of Salinas, Calif., and Yuma, Ariz., seasonally.

Our team is made up of a highly experienced group of individuals who take personal pride in the job they do. And while our volume increases annually, we have a culture that makes working with us feel like you are dealing with a small company. We are able to quickly respond to requests and issues as they come up. We have a continuous supply of product year-round and are happy to work with private labeling, contracts or whatever our customers need. ♦