

Yellow, brown and green bring variety to tomatoes

By Lance Jungmeyer
Special to The Packer

While much of California's tomato industry is devoted to mainstays such as mature-green tomatoes, vine-ripes and romas, a few companies are testing the waters for more unique varieties.

DiMare Newman, Newman, Calif., has been developing the market for its vine-ripe yellow tomato, said Jeff Dolan, field operations manager.

"The yellows are a large-size, round tomato, with a lower-acid flavor," Dolan said, adding that the variety commands a small but consistent market, typically to retail customers.

With its trademark Rosso Bruno

tomato, Dulcinea Farms LLC, Ladera Ranch, Calif., is taking the patient route to growth, said Monique McLaws, marketing manager.

Because the Rosso Bruno is a greenish-brown tomato, Dulcinea targets retailers who are willing to promote the item for its unique qualities.

"It's a tomato that requires a lot of education to the consumer," McLaws said. "The color has a consumer barrier, where most consumers will look for a beautiful, red round tomato."

The tomato is sold in a loose, bulk pack.

"That allows retailers to tailor the display to their store's volume. Some retailers have success with

specialty and heirloom tomatoes. That sort of packaging works in this scenario," she said.

Because it's a developing market, harvest is controlled to limit volumes, she said. Harvest should last through late November, and possibly into mid-December.

Distribution has been predominately to the West Coast, but that is starting to change, she said. "Now, we're starting to see an opportunistic approach to spread distribution to other regions, including Florida."

The Rosso Bruno is Dulcinea's only tomato on the market, but the company continues to look for specialty tomato varieties that might complement what retailers are looking for, she said.

