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WATERMELONS

Dulcinea aggressively promoting specialty melons

By TAD THOMPSON

"I believe we are the most aggressive" watermelon company in promoting product, said Keith Kato, senior vice president of sales and marketing for Dulcinea Farms LLC in Ladera Ranch, CA.

Among the company's offerings are "PureHeart" personalized seedless watermelons, which have "a higher Brix level — a consistent average of 12 Brix or greater — than traditional watermelons. The PureHeart has a very thin rind, measuring between one-eighth-of-an-inch to one-quarter-of-an-inch. The fruit is "also very juicy and has a crisp texture and a deep crimson red color. The deep crimson color inherently has a higher carotenoid level, including lycopene."

Mr. Kato added, "Over the past five years, Dulcinea is

proud to be a leader and help grow this category. I strongly believe that mini-watermelons will continue to grow and be a sustainable segment in the watermelon category."

In the melon category, the firm also markets two specialty cantaloupes, the "Tuscan style" and the "Sweet 'n Crisp" Asian-style.

Targeting specific markets this year, Dulcinea will be promoting its brand through print and radio advertising, as well as point-of-sale retail promotions, which include in-store audio advertising. The firm's promotions include "everything from specific, retailer-driven promotions to creating our own promotions." He said that Dulcinea uses different promotional vehicles "to keep it



Dulcinea's 'PureHeart' personalized seedless watermelons.

fresh" in consumers' minds.

"If you have the right product," combined with promotion, "you will have repeat sales and increased demand."

Dulcinea is a grower-shipper-marketer that is a wholly owned subsidiary of Syngenta, a seed company. A Dulcinea press release more eloquently describes Syngenta as a "world-

leading agribusiness committed to sustainable agriculture through innovative research and technology, which develops the patented seeds that produce our unique produce."

Also, according to the firm, Dulcinea Farms "started in 2003 in response to the overwhelming lack of quality produce and valued brands available to the consumer. Until this point, produce companies developed produce geared to the needs and specifications of growers, which generally meant breeding products more resistant to insects with brighter colors, longer shelf life and with higher yields per acre. Unfortunately, this type of breeding yields fruits and vegetables that lose the qualities most important to consumers ... specifically taste and freshness."

Dulcinea Farms starts "with

determining the needs and wants of consumers, and then develops the products to meet them ... products with the taste, size, shape and color that provide the ultimate produce-eating experience. We've replaced the typical produce supply chain with a fully integrated produce value chain in which we grow, market and sell our consumer-directed products nationwide."

Dulcinea Farms is "expanding production and distribution in response to our customers' requests for reducing food miles and supporting locally grown programs. This year, we expanded our programs in the South, Southeast, East and Midwest, which provides us with a great opportunity to reach our customers faster and reduce the distance of food miles. Supporting locally grown programs helps reduce natural resource consumptions (carbon footprint); helps strengthen communities and farming organizations. In addition, these local programs will provide the freshest produce in season."