

Produce Powerhouse Freshens Up At Sunrise

*How A Leading Avocado Aficionado Found A Ripe Opportunity
With A New Third Party Logistics Partnership*

Index Fresh, Inc., a seasoned and sage organization that specializes in the import, ripening and distribution of avocados, supplies retailers and foodservice professionals with popular fruit at specified ripeness. Building their foundation on quality, innovation and consistency, Index Fresh is a grower, packer and shipper that has stood the test of time by operating under the “it’s not just produce ... it’s a promise” mindset.

Taking root in Southern California nearly 100 years ago, Index Fresh has maintained an ongoing commitment to providing top quality produce and to growing their thriving business. One of the first grower-owned distributors in Orange County, Index Fresh began their foray into fruit with lemons and oranges in 1914. Some thirty years later in 1950, the company acquired its then-sister cooperative, the United Growers Association, and expanded into avocado distribution without looking back.

Today, Index Fresh inhabits a certified, state-of-the-art packing and cooling facility that they built from the ground up. Headquartered in Bloomington, California, the avocado grower, packer and distributor remains a grower-oriented corporation and reflects as much in its sourcing capabilities. Primary sourcing regions are California, Mexico and Chile with ancillary growers in Peru and Canada ... making them one of the industry’s strongest and most trusted contributors. Also adding to that reputation is the Index Fresh company culture – dedicated and service-oriented, they are known as reliable. “At Index we’ve established ourselves among customers as a sourcing partner that adheres to the idea of ‘if you need it, we’ll find it,’” says John Dmytriw, Director of Sales, Index Fresh, Inc.

Let's Get Ready to Ripen

A specialized mainstay of business for Index Fresh, Inc. is ripening. Offering five stages of ripeness, which are predominantly targeted to retail and foodservice, allows for a variance of needs from different customers. Different levels of ripeness cater to a range of needs. At one end of the spectrum, the desired product may be ordered under-ripe because it is planned to sit and ripen naturally once delivered. On the flip side of the coin, foodservice and retailers may order fully ripened produce so that upon possession, kitchens and customers can use it immediately.

Care of avocados, including ripening, is an integral and sensitive component of Index Fresh's success. For example, the process for ripening a banana cannot be used for ripening an avocado. Different amounts of heat and ethylene are produced, altering the ripeness and quality of the avocado. Origin and age also play into how much and how quickly produce will ripen. "This is not a one-stop shop kind of process... it's something you really have to care about doing right," shares John Dmytriw. "Although not delicate, it's definitely something that we consider like babysitting a small child – you don't take your eyes off of it."

Growing Pains

Before joining forces with Sunrise Logistics Inc., a full service provider of logistics services that specializes in delivering supply chain solutions - Index Fresh worked with a partner who was capable of assisting with ripening, yet didn't provide many of the other core basics that the avocado aficionado desired in a long-term transportation partner. "We did do ripening with our old partner but I think a lot of things were lost in translation. We had problems with items as simple as fruit being delivered to the correct specification." With that miscommunication, it became difficult for Dmytriw and his team to make timely decisions. Realizing this, Index Fresh was motivated to find a new third party logistics partner that was on the same wavelength.

Reaching out to Four Seasons Produce, Inc., a well-known industry name, for suggestions is what brought Sunrise Logistics to Index Fresh's attention for the first time. "They rolled out the red carpet from that first minute we showed up to see their facilities," remembers Dmytriw. "From the first moment, Sunrise has only ever asked three things of us: 'what can we do to help?', 'what do you need us to do?' and 'when do you need us to do it?' Needless to say, we were very impressed."

The Age of the Avocado

As Index Fresh's new third party logistics partner, Sunrise Logistics is responsible for three important areas of work including ripening, cooling and logistics/delivery of products to end-customers. Dmytriw notes "those are the three services that Sunrise provides to us at a highly competitive cost."

Perhaps the most important of these tasks is Sunrise Logistics' role in ripening. Previously equipped with state-of-the-art ripening rooms, Sunrise was at the ready and prepared with staff for any produce, including avocados, that needed to ripen further. "Initially, we sent our ripening team out there for one week to work with them on what our specifications were so that there would be a very clear understanding of our procedures and theirs," says Dmytriw. Index Fresh ripening teams now have weekly discussions with Sunrise Logistics' ripening team regarding individual orders going through this process. Index's West Coast team also works on a daily basis with Sunrise in the scheduling and delivery of customer orders. Enthusiastic, Dmytriw points out that when all is said and done, "we absolutely work together with Sunrise Logistics as one cohesive team."

Of significant value to Index Fresh as well is the litany of reports provided by Sunrise, as their third party logistics partner. "They give us, like clockwork, multiple and very valuable reports," tells Dmytriw. Index Fresh receives reports on current inventories, deliveries, shipment statuses and pre-conditioned products from Sunrise Logistics on a daily basis. Preemptive logistical problem

reports are also provided so that the produce-ripening company is aware of forecasted roadblocks and may reroute to ensure promised customer deliveries.

“When we first started working with them,” says Dmytriw, “even the president and owner [David Hollinger] took the initiative to go and say ‘thank you for the business’. I think that that strong leadership and those strong methods that he brings filters all the way down to the people that are driving their trucks and pulling orders.”

Results of Sunrise’s Work

“Everyone has, within our building, the strongest of work ethics and I think that’s why we partner so well with Sunrise Logistics,” says Dmytriw. Since switching third party logistics partners and teaming up with Sunrise Logistics, Index Fresh has seen their day-to-day operations change for the better. Citing more efficiency, it’s apparent that the avocado expert is capitalizing on not having to spend extraneous time requesting information from their partner. “Sunrise is so good about reporting back to us and working with us in the communication department,” says Dmytriw. “We’ve picked up immeasurable amounts of efficiency due to this change in partners.”

About Sunrise Logistics

Sunrise Logistics, Inc., based in Ephrata, PA, is a full service provider of logistics services specializing in delivering customized supply chain solutions. As a member of the Four Seasons family of companies, exceptional partnerships are a critical pillar of the Sunrise Logistics foundation. Value-added services such as climate controlled storage areas, consolidation and forward distribution, reliable temperature controlled transportation services, inventory management, forecasting and more make Sunrise Logistics the ideal supply chain partner. Rooted in service and integrity the Sunrise Logistics team has a long history of in-depth experience and takes pride in building strong partnerships. For more information on the company, visit www.SunriseLogisticsInc.com.