

The Freshness Pro-Fessionals

Barb Galasso

A Bright Smile and Incredible Ear

“The bright good morning voice who’s heard but never seen...” Harry Chapin might have been singing about a radio disc jockey but his words could just as easily describe Barb Galasso. On the phone and at the front counter Bausha is everyone’s portal to Consumers Produce.

“I’m third generation produce,” she declares proudly. “My grandfather started down here in the Strip District in the early 1900’s driving a horse and wagon delivering produce. My dad, everybody called him Baby Joe, started when he was 13 and worked for several companies mostly driving a truck, but always hauling produce. I started down here three weeks after I turned 18, right out of high school.”

Barb says her dad didn’t want her to get into the produce business because he felt it was too hard a life, but she was looking for a job and the position was open at Descalzi’s. Until the company closed sixteen years later, she learned the produce business first hand answering phones and doing office work. When the Descalzi’s hung it up Barb found herself looking for work. She was off a total of one day before coming to Consumers Produce.

It wasn’t a simple switch to The Freshness Professionals. There were computers to learn and another Barb in the office, which created some confusion. As for the computer, “it took two or three weeks but I learned it,” she says, but the name was a little trickier. Finally she was tagged as Bausha and it stuck.

It only takes a couple of calls to Consumers Produce before you realize Bausha’s uncanny ability to recognize voices which she says is ironic. “This is the ear I answer the phone with and I’m actually hard of hearing in this ear.” Well not completely, she concedes, but perhaps that makes her listen closer. Whatever the secret it works. “I know a lot of people because I’ve been talking to them for thirty years.” While she may recognize her callers 99% of the time she says at least once a day she finds herself baffled. “If I’m not sure I ask who’s calling, and they’ll go, it’s me!”

It is that familiarity that Bausha loves about her job. Her co-workers are like family and she says, “I get to meet so many interesting people. A lot of the people I work with or talk to, our fathers worked together. You never know who’s going to walk through the front door. Gee it may be the Mayor, or one of the Councilmen, or a Senator coming in to meet with Alan. I meet practically everyone that comes in here because they have to come through me.”

A Bloomfield native from full Italian parents, Barb now lives on the North Side with her mother, Lena, who is 82 years young. Bausha’s affection for her mom glimmers in her eyes as she proudly talks about how Lena still does laundry, cooks, and cleans, and is a joy to be around.

In fact it’s clear that Barb Galasso is firmly centered on her family. While one of her brothers has passed away, the other is what she describes as “a typical Pittsburgh steel worker.” “My nieces and nephews are grown but I have five of the most adorable great nieces and nephews that consume a lot of my time. I just adore them and I take them everywhere. When they want anything they call Aunt Barb.”

While her family may hold her heart, her passion is painted black and gold. Get Bausha talking about the Steelers and you will be amazed. This is no passing interest, she can talk X’s and O’s, contracts and prospects, with the best of them. This fall if you’re looking for a good post game analysis, give her a call. She’ll be right there at the front desk waiting with her “bright good morning voice.”

Fresh Herbs!

Expanding to Meet Your Needs
Now Available from Consumers Produce

Fresh Herbs and Ready to Eat Vegetables

Herbs:

Arugula
Basil
Basil-Opal
Bay Leaves
Chervil
Chives
Cilantro
Dill
Marjoram
Mint
Oregano
Parsley
Poultry Mix
Rosemary

Rosemary Skewers
Sage
Savory
Sorrel
Tarragon
Thyme
Thyme-Lemon

Baby Lettuce

Heads:

Red Oakleaf
Red Romaine
Red Bibb
Bambino
Green Romaine

Green Bibb
Lollo Rosso
Frisee

Specialty Items:

Edible Flowers
Holland Peppers
Belgium Endive
Dry Shallots
Fresh Hawaiian Ginger
Baby Spinach
Papayas
Radicchio
Snow Peas
Water Cress

Ready to
Eat Vegetables!

Ready to Eat:

Broccoli Florets
Cauliflower Florets
Broccoli – Cauliflower
Medley
Broccoli – Cauliflower-
Carrot Medley
Vegetable Tray



One Fresh Stop!

Order before 10am and you’ll have it tomorrow.

Pittsburgh, PA 15222-4405

One 21st Street



Freshnews



NEWS FROM THE FRESHNESS PROFESSIONALS

Spring 2001

Tempting Tomato Time

It’s that time of year. You can almost smell the burgers sizzling on the grill. And of course no self-respecting hamburger would dare cross the threshold of your lips without a juicy slice of fresh tomato. Without a doubt on burgers, in salads, or just as a snack, this is tomato season.

Of course the tomato has to be just right and The Freshness Professionals are geared up to deliver them just the way you want your tomatoes. It’s been over a year since we turned on the juice in our tomato sorting and packing center and any way you slice it, we’re ready to deliver.

Nestled comfortably within our climate controlled warehouse our state-of-the-art sorting equipment, under the watchful eye of the most experienced produce professionals in the business, can separate tomatoes into an almost unlimited number of size and color variations. From tints of green and needing some ripening time, to eating ready red, from petite to plump, Consumers Produce can select and package tomatoes to your specifications.

Freshness Professional Ron Casertano says it’s all about making sure our customers get exactly what they need when they need it. “Tomatoes have gotten to be a difficult thing for a lot of customers because they don’t have the ability to do in house labor and customer demands are such that they want every tomato in the box to be the same color and usable. We have the ability to give the customer a usable box of fruit, that has a 100% even color in the box and that enables them to get the best return for their money.”

Over the past year you’ve told us you need more variety in boxing and packaging and we’ve responded. No longer do you need to order more product than you can use. While we’ll be happy to fill a full box to your specifications, Freshness Professional Rex Felton says, “We’ve also got two layer hand packed boxes. Tomatoes of uniform size packaged in a box that’s configured for two layers of small or large tomatoes. We can pack 40-counts, 50-counts, or 60-counts depending on the size.”



Packaged to order.

Fresh Herbs! Get Your Fresh Herbs Here!



Overnight Fresh

Remember the days of thirty-one cents a gallon gas? Unfortunately those days are in the history books along with nickel cokes. Today we have to think more about where and how much we drive and Consumers Produce is taking steps to reduce your drive for all your produce needs.

“We’re striving to be a broader source of supply for our customers,” says Freshness Professional Rex Felton as he outlines the new line of items you can now get from Consumers Produce.

From fresh herbs to packaged fresh vegetable blends, The Freshness Professionals are striving to be your only stop for the best products available. Felton says the list of items includes those “out of the produce mainstream” but the products have applications for our retail and food service customers.

Through a special relationship Consumers Produce has established with a large herb supplier, The Freshness Professionals can deliver whatever you need within 24 hours. (Orders received before 10am are air shipped overnight and available the next morning.)

And herbs are just the beginning. Need a medley of broccoli, cauliflower, and carrots? Ready to use broccoli or cauliflower florets? How about a vegetable stir-fry combination? Or a veggie tray with dip? The Freshness Professionals now offer it all - and fresh!

Pre-packaged in both food service and retail sizes with the cold chain maintained by Consumers Produce’s fully climate controlled warehouse, our newest lines of products offer a minimum shelf life of 15 days.

Inside Freshnews

New Food Safety Standards • Barb Galasso • Grape Tomatoes

Above and Beyond Taking Food Safety To A New Level

No one said it was necessary, required, or legally mandated. But Consumers Produce has taken the unprecedented step of instituting a food safety initiative unmatched in the region’s produce industry. It’s a system based on the HACCP - Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points - system of food safety which is required for food processors.

“Alan (Consumers Produce President Alan Siger) decided since we are one of the few produce warehouses on the terminal market that actually keeps the cold chain intact, we want to take it a step further with a food safety compliance policy,” says Consumers Produce Operations Director Tom Sisko.

From the time products arrive on trucks at the Consumers Produce warehouse they go through a scrutinizing series of checks and documentation. Starting with the cleanliness of the truck and its temperature, to making sure the warehouse is kept free of contaminants, clean, and properly cooled, The Freshness Professionals monitor quality and sanitary control until the products are in the hands of our customers.

Sisko says on the tomato line, “We are repacking tomatoes from one box to another or into retail packs. We want to make sure the stations where they are being packed are sanitary.” Since we began the new

tomato repacking line, the tomatoes have been hand checked and then gone through a water and chlorine bath. The new food safety standards take the sanitation to an even higher level and document each step.

From tomatoes to endive and strawberries, whatever the produce, the emphasis is on cleanliness and safety. “Throughout the warehouse, and even in the trucks, we are trying to eliminate anything that might contaminate the product.” And Sisko adds, “There are very few wholesale produce companies that have a program like this in place.”

The Freshness Professionals called on the expertise of a food safety engineer to do regular audits of the entire operation. From the tomato line, to the banana rooms, to the display room and warehouse, he has identified the critical points to be monitored and controlled. “These are the things we are constantly watching and documenting,” Sisko says.

“We do not have to have a HACCP type program since we are not processing produce but we want to show our customers that we’re here to service them in a way that takes safety to a higher standard. We want to make sure everything is as clean as possible.”



Spring 2001

A publication of Consumers Produce
Editor : John Shumway



Coming Soon!
New and Improved!
consumersproduce.com

Visions Of Baskets Danced In Their Heads

The Freshness Professionals now know how those folks on that television commercial feel who opened a new website and were flooded with demand. Bob Nichel says they expected the holiday baskets to be popular, “We geared up for it and it came.” That might just be the understatement of the year! Came, and came, and came might be more appropriate with more than seventeen thousand baskets handpacked and sold during the holiday.

“It puts you in the Christmas spirit,” Vivian Merkerson said as she carefully stacked the fruit in Excel baskets just days before the holiday. While they were the smallest, Excels turned out to be the most popular of the baskets followed by the Queen. But even the King size baskets were in demand tripling 1999 sales long before Christmas.



Carefully hand arranged



Assembly line of holiday cheer.

Working around the clock, Vivian and her co-workers carefully selected and arranged the fruit in appealing arrays. “We took nothing but the freshest fruit coming into our facility,” says Nichel. “As it came in that morning we’d pull it and then hand inspect it before it was packed to make sure there were no blemishes.”

Because the baskets were maintained in optimal temperatures before leaving Consumers Produce the baskets were able to provide retailers a shelf life of a week or more. That proved to be more than enough time as florist and retail stores found the baskets in demand.

While the folks on that TV commercial weren’t able to meet their customers demand The Freshness Professionals did meet the Holiday Basket demand and are already looking ahead to this year’s holiday. Nichel says there’s no question, “We’re going to need more room.”



Tempting Tomatoes (continued from Page 1)

Consumers Produce is also ready to meet your aftermarket packaging needs. Carefully selected fruit packaged in three, four or six tomatoes are available shrink-wrapped for retail sales. We can even personalize the labeling to meet your needs.

Not only do you get a product packaged the way you want it, Casertano says these are tomatoes that will last longer. “I think the one thing that people underestimate most is how fragile they are. A variance in temperature of five degrees one way or another can have a great effect on ‘em. We absolutely maintain correct temperatures. That not only extends the shelf life, it also gives us the ability to control the color of the fruit. Color is relative to temperature and if a customer needs a particular color on a specific day we have complete control of the ripening temperature and we can meet their needs.”

So whether it’s green or plump red and ready-to-eat, give The Freshness Professionals a call today (281-0622) and we’ll have your order waiting for you tomorrow.



Fresh Herbs! (continued from Page 1)

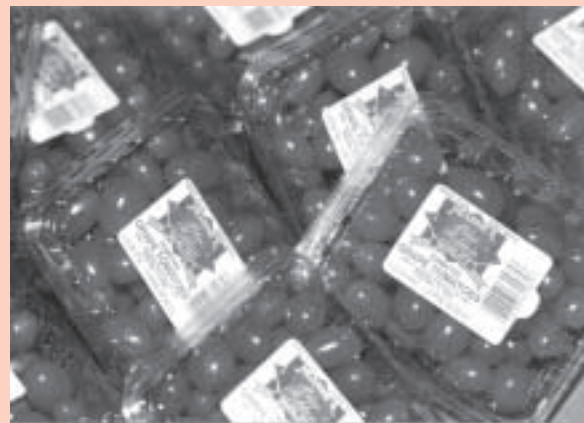
“Food service operators can sell them to their caterers, and retailers are finding this is what their customers want,” says Felton. “It’s a sign of the times. People are looking for a good quality product, but with convenience added to it and we’re meeting that need.”



Ready to eat.

It’s A Grape! No, It’s A Tomato!

Grape Tomatoes, Cherry Berries, whatever their name, if you haven’t tried them you are missing out! “It’s the best thing since sliced bread,” says Ron Casertano who will anxiously feed a couple to anyone who hasn’t given Grape Tomatoes a try.



So Sweet!

Grape Tomatoes grow in bunches like grapes and have a shape reminiscent of their namesakes. But the flavor is that of a very

Produce’s food service customers want only Grape Tomatoes these days.



sweet tomato. It’s a flavor customers are demanding and willing to pay a bit more to get.

During their first two years on the market, produce companies struggled to get people to try the oddly shaped tomatoes. Now suddenly Consumers Produce is seeing a real demand for Grape Tomatoes. With seeds coming into this country from China, Japan and Israel, tomato producers are rushing to try and meet the demand. In fact Casertano says most of Consumers

Editors Corner

Tree House Tomatoes

It was one of those hot summer days, when there is just enough breeze blowing to make shady spots bearable. I don’t remember how old I was, six, maybe seven or eight. These were the days when the playing started with sunup and usually ended with a nocturnal neighborhood game of hide-n-seek, or the catching of lightning bugs in a washed out mayonnaise jar.

Our yard backed up to a farmer’s fields. The twin fields of corn were separated by a row of soaring trees. Planted well before the turn of the last century they reached so high they seemed to brush the clouds. Their trunks were huge and could easily handle the boards we nailed into the bark in crude ladders up their sides. In a corner tree on branches the size of our legs we built our tree house (which we preferred to call a fort).

It was from our Oak Tree perch that we first spotted it. Growing wild along the tree row that separated the houses of our street from the farmers field it appeared to be a sprawling green plant with small red Christmas tree ornaments hanging from its branches.

My best friend Kevin and I decided to check it out and with the surefooted confidence of youth we were on the ground in moments. When we got close to the huge vine we realized they were tiny tomatoes. Many were fully ripe, birds had ravaged some, and others were in their earliest stages of green. Memory

fails me now as to exactly what happened next but I’m sure there was a dare involved. I do remember putting the first one in my mouth and the gush of juice with the first bite. Man was that a lot of juice, and my white T-shirt was proof. But the flavor was great and we happily went through about a half dozen each very quickly.

Resourceful as we were, we realized these little tomatoes would also make great ammunition for sling shots, or just for throwing. Have you ever seen a cherry tomato fired from a slingshot impact a tree trunk? Oh what a sight! It seems to me there was also something about a neighborhood girl and a favorite blouse...but there seems to be posterior discomfort associated with that memory so we’ll just let it be.

That was my first introduction to Cherry Tomatoes and to this day I enjoy their size and flavor on salads. In fact until recently they were my favorite salad tomatoes, but then Ron Casertano introduced me to Grape Tomatoes. Boy are they sweet, and already I’ve got an entire family of converts. I cannot, however, tell you how well they do in a slingshot. Maybe in the interest of journalism a little research is in order.

- J.S.

