



Flavor Extract Manufacturers Association

The modern flavoring industry is closely tied to the historical spice trade.

ALL IN GOOD TASTE

How the search for flavor changed agriculture

By SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN
Capital Press

LYNDEN, Wash. — Fourth-generation farmer Jon Maberry and his family grow raspberries in Lynden, Wash., near Canada's border, where Dutch-style windmills grace the skyline and farmland fans wide.

At summer harvest, raspberries will dangle from green canes like rubies. But they won't all be beautiful, Maberry says. Some will collapse, get squished or crumble. The supermarkets won't want them.

They will go to a place where ugly fruits and vegetables go, alongside curvy cucumbers, knobby carrots and cat-faced strawberries.

It's not the trash heap or compost pile. Maberry said his family has discovered a "secondary market," a company that buys their fresh-picked produce.

The company, Salem, Ore.-based Kerr Concentrates, turns fruits and vegetables into juices, purees,

concentrates, essences, distillates and custom blends for food and beverage brands.

"We buy the ugly fruit," said Mark Becker, vice president and general manager of Kerr Concentrates. "Not moldy. Not spoiled. Just not pretty."

Maberry said he hasn't dumped good fruit since his family's business, Maberry and Maberry Berry Associates, started working with Kerr 25 years ago.

"From a flavor standpoint," said Maberry, "they're probably taking some of the best fruit I've got that just doesn't meet visual standards."

Kerr makes most of its products in its own processing facilities, and it sends some material on to flavor houses, where it is transformed into a myriad of flavorings.

Maberry and Kerr are just two stars in the great constellation called the flavoring industry, worth \$25 billion globally in 2019, according to the Museum of Food and Drink. Big flavor houses, like those that invented Cool Ranch Doritos and Honey Nut Cheerios, dominate the industry. But as consumer preferences change, farms constitute a growing niche in the flavor sector.

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Cucumbers

Kerr Concentrates



Courtesy of Hedy Kulka

Hedy Kulka, principal flavorist at McCormick & Company, smells a lab sample.



Cranberries at harvest time.

Bussmann Cranberries

Farms race to comply with temporary worker housing, sanitation rule

Oregon OSHA announced provisions April 29

By GEORGE PLAVEN
Capital Press

GERVAIS, Ore. — With just a month to go before the start of cherry harvest, Molly McCargar at Pearmine Farms is preparing for a rush of seasonal workers to help pick the labor-intensive crop.

But as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread across Oregon — as of May 6, there were 2,839 cases

and 113 deaths statewide — McCargar and other farmers must now contend with new regulations intended to limit outbreaks in agricultural fields, orchards and labor camps.

Oregon OSHA, the state's Occupational Health and Safety Administration, issued a temporary rule April 29 that, among other provisions, requires farms to provide more portable toilets and handwashing stations for workers while keeping beds 6 feet

apart in housing units.

However, a survey conducted by the Oregon Farm Bureau indicates the rule could displace thousands of workers from on-farm housing and cost farmers thousands of dollars more to meet all conditions.

The rule goes into effect May 11, giving farms less than two weeks to comply. Employers have until June 1 to rent or purchase additional bathroom and wash facilities.

Pearmine Farms, located in the Mid-Willamette Valley about 12 miles north of Salem, grows roughly

900 acres of fresh cherries, sweet corn, squash, cauliflower and grass seed. Between 45-60 seasonal workers typically show up for cherry harvest in June, mostly coming from California.

McCargar, a fourth-generation family farmer, said the rule could cut their housing occupancy in half, allowing fewer beds per unit.

"We all want to do what's best for our crews and employees," McCargar said. "If all 50 or 60 show up, and I can only house 24, then I don't know what I'm going to do."

Each option comes at a cost. McCargar said she could rent trailers or motel rooms to house the displaced workers, running up a bill of about \$31,000-\$32,000 for four weeks' stay. Building new permanent housing could cost well over \$100,000 per unit.

Or, she could simply turn away workers and lose some of her crop. "I think every farm is going to have a different approach," McCargar said.

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Western U.S. meat plants transforming operations to stay open

By SIERRA DAWN MCCLAIN
Capital Press

A week after President Trump ordered meat processing plants to stay open during COVID-19, the industry continues to stumble through plant closures, production losses and outbreaks.

As of May 5, according to health data, there have been at least 10,800 positive cases tied to meatpacking facilities nationwide, 45 worker deaths (0.4%) and 38 plant closures.

Farms and consumers are feeling the hit. According to the National Pork Producers Council, hogs are being culled. Derrell Peel, extension livestock marketing specialist at Oklahoma State University, said beef production last week was only 60% of normal. And Wendy's, known for its slogan "Where's the beef?," can't seem to answer that question. Finan-



Darron Cummings

A Tyson Fresh Meats plant employee leaves the plant, last month in Logansport, Ind.

cial firm Stephens Inc. found one in five Wendy's restaurants is out of beef.

But in the West, most meat processors have managed to stay open or reopen.

Health authorities say those plants quickest to work with health professionals and agencies have had the most success.

Tyson Foods

Tuesday, Tyson Foods, the world's second-largest meat processor, announced it would resume limited operations for its meat-packing plant in Walla Walla County, Wash. The plant had closed temporarily April 23 after 247 employees, or 18% of its workforce, tested positive for COVID-19, according to Walla Walla County.

Two of these workers died, according to funeral home records.

A circulating petition from Change.org has more than 5,000 signatures to stop the plant from reopening. Health officials say the plant has sufficient measures in place to reopen. But when the first round of infections hit, officials say, Tyson was not ready.

"It took about a week before we were notified of a case there," said Meghan DeBolt, director of Walla

Walla County Department of Community Health. "By that time, it was too late."

The health department worked with Tyson to mass screen and test employees.

DeBolt said Tyson, with plants across the U.S., was not up-to-date with Washington's standards. The USDA and Washington State Department of Labor and Industries (L&I), which were supposed to monitor the plants, DeBolt said, didn't swing into action until "the last minute." And the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) didn't release meat plant guidelines until April 26.

Now, with better infrastructure in place, DeBolt said she is more hopeful about the future.

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