

The Sweet Spot: What Retailers Should Know about Consumers to Drive More Melon Sales



Melons are a seemingly beloved, versatile fruit. They're found in salads, beverages, and in all kinds of cuisine—from sweet to savory. They can be chopped, blended, shaved, sliced, balled, and grilled.

Robinson Fresh conducted a survey with U.S. consumers to learn about who is buying melons and the varieties they select, and to gain insight into factors that impact their purchase decisions.

Who is buying melons?

Across demographics, consumers are buying melons. But it's households with children that are much more likely to make melon purchases.

And it's no surprise: Melons taste good, smell good, look good, and do good—providing a healthy dose of vitamins A and C, potassium, and water content—which makes them a nutritious family favorite.

Which melon varieties are they buying?

Most consumers—more than 4 out of 5—buy **watermelon** at a frequency that is evenly split between regular and periodic purchases.

Cantaloupe is also a highly-purchased variety, but with a purchase pattern that is more periodic than regular.

Only 60% of consumers purchase **honeydew**.

Fresh picks: A melon overview

Watermelon



Tiger-striped, green skin with red, porous flesh that is typically seedless. Sweet and refreshing.

Cantaloupe



Netted, greenish-tan skin with fragrant, orange flesh. Sugary and savory with a musky overtone.

Honeydew



Smooth, pale yellow-green skin with a pastel-green flesh. Velvety smooth and sweet.

Mini seedless watermelon



Smaller and rounder than watermelon—and sans seeds. Refreshingly sweet.

Athena



Coarsely netted, orangey-tan skin with firm, orange flesh that closely resembles a cantaloupe. Higher sugar content and larger than a cantaloupe.

Mini seedless watermelon and Athena trail behind, with 51% and 20% of consumers purchasing those varieties, respectively. Notably, and perhaps relatedly, more than one-third of consumers weren't familiar with Athena melons.



What impacts consumers' decisions to purchase watermelon?

A deep understanding of purchasing behaviors, preferences, and motivations can help retailers develop consumer-driven, consumer-aligned strategies that drive more sales.

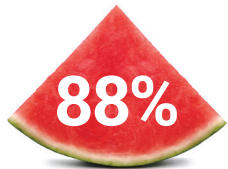
Of the 81% of consumers who purchase watermelon, 70% enter stores with plans to buy the fruit. What else does—or doesn't—impact consumers' decisions to purchase watermelon?



70% of consumers favor whole watermelon



85% impulse buy from displays in typical locations



88% impulse buy during promotions



90% impulse buy during what they assume is peak season

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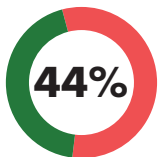
ways to drive impulse sales of watermelon

1. Offer consumers options—whole, halved, and fresh-cut—to meet their needs
2. Make an impact with a strong display in an expected, high-traffic spot
3. When supply is abundant, offer special promotions
4. Tout watermelon peak seasons throughout the year—not only during the summer months

Melon must-haves: What else do consumers want in a melon?

YEAR ROUND AVAILABILITY

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports 70% of annual watermelon volume ships May through August.



44% purchase melons in ALL SEASONS

Younger demographics increasingly view watermelons as an “all seasons” fruit.

GROWN LOCALLY

Melons are commercially grown in 44 U.S. states. 88% of consumers said that being locally grown is an important factor in their purchase decision.



25% said that “local” refers to the state they live in

Local melons are viewed as being higher quality and having a better shelf life. Plus, consumers like supporting growers and businesses near them.





How can retailers increase melon sales?

Only 14% of consumers buy melons weekly, and 87% of all consumers who purchase melons buy one at a time. Based on consumer feedback, there are several opportunities for retailers to encourage consumers to purchase melons more frequently and in greater quantities.

Fresh promotions

Nearly two-thirds of consumers said that a promotion of two melons for a set price (for example, a 2/\$6 offer) would entice the purchase of an additional melon. Allowing consumers to mix and match melons in this promotion—like mini seedless and cantaloupe—can offer an additional degree of appeal to encourage impulse purchases.

Timing is important, too. Eighty percent of consumers who purchase watermelon have done so with a specific holiday, like the Fourth of July, or other occasion, like a family picnic, in mind. In these circumstances, most consumers aren't price-shopping: 85% said they buy watermelon at their regular store, with only 15% saying they will shop around for the best price.

To drive incremental sales, offer promotions that encourage consumers to purchase more than one melon at a time, and spread those promotions throughout the year.



Fresh appeal

Impulse purchases of watermelon are largely impacted by the way they are displayed. Consumers preferred displays that feature half-cut melons. When they get a sneak peek at the vibrant color and juicy texture of at least one melon, they are likely to assume that all of the melons in the display are of the same quality. This can be especially impactful in the winter months.

Neatly stacked melons convey careful, gentle placement, which translates to non-bruised, pristine fruit. To consumers, a clean, full display means there are plenty of high quality melons to choose from—not just those that have been picked over and left behind.

Fresh ideas for sweeter sales

1. Entice more purchases with the right promotions, at the right time
2. Use clean, appealing displays that showcase cut fruit to highlight interior color and texture
3. Help consumers feel confident about the quality of melons in store
4. Excite consumers using terms like “peak season” in signage and include ideas for using melons in new recipes and in more meals throughout the year

Fresh confidence

Only about half of consumers who purchase melons expressed having confidence in choosing a ripe one. Interestingly, though melons are typically one of the least expensive fresh produce items per pound, consumers are much less likely to buy them on a whim if they aren't comfortable selecting a “good” melon—one that is ripe, juicy, flavorful, or has the right texture.

To build their confidence, retailers can educate consumers on how to select melons. For example, a melon that feels heavy for its size is likelier to be brimming with juice. A watermelon with a creamy-yellow splotch on its belly is at the peak of ripeness. The spot is where the melon sat on the ground as it ripened in the sun. If the spot is white or pale green, it may have been picked too soon and not be as ripe.

However, consumer confidence doesn't begin and end in the store—it starts in the field. It's the responsibility of all parties involved in the fresh supply chain to help ensure that excellent-quality fruit is shipped into stores. If best practices and proper steps are taken all the way through the supply chain, consumers won't have to wonder about the quality of the melons provided.



Grow consumer confidence

Start with the seed

The quality of melons correlates to the quality of the seeds and the land from which they grow, as well as the harvesting methods used. For example, even though a watermelon is bulky and can be awkward to move, care should be taken to avoid bruising the fruit, which could negatively impact its appearance and texture.



Maintain the fresh supply chain

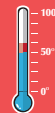
Transporting fresh, high quality produce demands proactive planning, quick turnaround, and expertise in temperature controlled shipping, because temperature can greatly influence the quality of many fresh produce items—including melons. While there are stringent processes in place to help ensure proper temperature management during transit, many distribution centers (DCs) are kept even cooler as a method to preserve shelf life. However, when melons experience a fluctuation in temperature as they move from truck to DC and then truck to store, flavor can change.

Keep it neat

Proper store execution—like a clean, orderly, and full display—helps consumers feel confident about the quality of the melons.

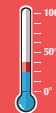
Ideal temperatures for melons in transit and storage:

Watermelon and mini watermelon



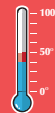
50-60°F

Cantaloupe



36-41°F

Honeydew



45-50°F

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

About 50% of consumers lack confidence in selecting a ripe melon of any type

Consumers are much less likely to buy melons on a whim if they aren't comfortable selecting a "good" one

40% will still eat a below-quality melon to avoid food waste; 19% will throw it away

About Robinson Fresh

Robinson Fresh brings you fresh food and smart logistics solutions. As a division of C.H. Robinson, a top global third party logistics provider, Robinson Fresh provides year round supply with global to local cold chain expertise and services, as well as world-class account management and impactful category insights. This all fuels our innovative supply chain solutions, from seed to shelf.

About MelonUp!®

MelonUp!® melon growers around the world know what it takes to grow the most flavorful fruit, measuring sweetness and texture in the field before picking. Set your store apart by offering MelonUp!® melons—labeled with eye-catching, high-impact graphics your customers will be sure to recognize as a standard for consistent quality and taste. That's what we consider a very sweet business.



Let's talk fresh

To discuss Robinson Fresh's capabilities, please reach out to **855-350-0014**
For more information, visit robinsonfresh.com or blog.robinsonfresh.com

