LOCAL VS LOCAL

SPEECH FOR

DAWN GRAY

Hello everyone!! It’s great to be here and to have the opportunity to speak with all of you about our “favorite” subject, and it’s no accident that this wonderful show is grown and shown right here in the BIG APPLE!! I want to thank \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the NYC Produce Show and Conference for inviting me to speak with all of you today. I’d like to also acknowledge the staff of the show for doing such a great job in planning the details and logistics that make this event so special. (**If there are any people in particular you would like to acknowledge, do so here**) I’d also like to take a moment to recognize \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, who \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

(**SLIDE 1 DAWN GRAY**) For those of you who may not know, I have been involved in the produce industry for, well; let’s just say, “more than a few” harvests, and I have worked in the business in a variety of capacities. I have had the privilege of working for market leaders all over the world. Many of you know me through my work with Sunkist, or \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**Name 2 or 3 of the diverse and international companies you’ve worked for)** and every job was an opportunity to meet new people and learn more and more about this very vital field. It has been an adventure and a great privilege to really discover what makes all of us tick, and now it’s time to see how we can all learn to support each other and our unique positions and functions within this world of growth, nourishment and encouragement. It is time for the produce industry to find its place in our new age of connectivity and networking!

If you’re sitting in this room, you have a “passion for produce,” in some way, shape or form, and it is my intention to get a productive and meaningful conversation going to inspire each one of you. From grower to retailer, we have more in common than this industry. We’re all consumers. We all eat; we all ingest the fruits… and veggies of our collective labor. Sometimes even **we** tend to take our food and its sources for granted. Today we will explore the ways in which we, in the modern world we live in, can forge exciting and modern connections between all of us while honoring an industry and the products that literally keep us alive. The power to be harvested through the interconnection and communication that can be leveraged using the new technology is limitless and can be a boost and a boon for every phase of our industry. I really think that the possibility to grow the visibility and success of all participants is an opportunity that is waiting to be tapped into. Social media provides a myriad of ways to connect and it’s time to stir the pot and initiate the next wave in social connectivity right here in the wonderful world of produce…. but more about that in a little while!!

(**SLIDE 2 -OUTER SPACE**) “If a tree falls in the forest and no one is around to hear it, does it still make a sound?” Philosopher George Berkeley posed that question back in 1710. (**SLIDE 3- IF A TREE FALLS**) Some of us ask ourselves that question every day, only we might say, If I grow a pepper, or a tomato, or a potato, and it goes from market to consumer as an anonymous portion of the fiber of our lives, do **WE** still exist? Are local growers and farmers throughout the world functioning in an anonymous abyss? Fruits and vegetables wind up on dinner plates and sandwiches and all sorts of nourishing meals and snacks throughout the world, yet their provenance remains, for the most part, anonymous. Of course we have our “rock stars”. From Sunkist citrus to New Zealand kiwis and Idaho potatoes, produce begins to raise its profile. In a perfect world, we would all be as famous as an Ocean Spray cranberry, but there is so much room and opportunity in between for all of us to reveal ourselves, develop our personal signatures and build our selves as recognizable “brands.”

There is an opportunity for all to be discovered and to share a place on the radar of produce departments throughout the world. There are growers in remote areas of far off places like Chile and New Zealand, whose survival depends on exporting their goods around the world. It is no less valid for these unique farmers to create and promote an identity as it is for those in North America who can do the same. The mandate we have is simple: How do we connect the dots and weave the threads that will establish a proud and viable global network of growers, retailers and consumers? We’re here today to explore how to make that network happen. Today, we advance the question of Local vs. Locale. Imagine that each one of you represents a dot on a world map, and we’re about to begin the examination and work together to explore how to identify those dots and we’ll explore ways in which to bring each one into the light of the new age of produce.

(**SLIDE 4-I DON’T KNOW…**) “I don’t know what I don’t know.” That’s a favorite expression of someone I know, and it applies to this industry and how it is perceived. So many of our colleagues are anonymous and that no longer has to be the case in a world so influenced by technology. The tree that falls in the forest does make a noise and whether or not the public has discovered your brand does not mean you don’t exist. Of course there are remote rural parts of this earth that are barely touched by modern life, but if the product can get out to retailers halfway around the world, then there is no reason why connection would not be possible. People are no longer limited by their GPS quadrants. As an example, the person who doesn’t know what she doesn’t know was in a remote village in China a couple of years ago. She was in a garment factory, in what appeared to be very primitive conditions. Dirt floors. No heat. Almost no light in order to conserve energy. And then, as if by magic, the ping of an iPhone was heard. And the world revealed just how small it really is!! Steve Jobs took his products and his company, ironically named for an essential piece of produce, a simple, basic, delicious-actually Macintosh, apple, and changed the world. He showed us just how small our world really is. He and his colleagues showed us how to connect and it’s now our turn to make the world even smaller and more interesting.

Technology has become much more egalitarian and present throughout the world, and as such, social media has done an astounding job in forging networks and relationships at every level of personal and business life. An article ran in the New York Times in their column called “Bits.” (**SLIDE 5- FACEBOOK USERS**) It stated that in 2010, Facebook started the year with 350 million users worldwide and ended the year with 625 million. And that was in 2010!! More current sources estimate the Facebook population is over 800 million as of early 2012, and the 2010 article stated that 70% of Facebook’s user base was located outside of the United States. The same article tells us that over 350 BILLION pieces of content were shared over the network, and other Times data shows that at that time, 175 million people were on Twitter. And considering that all of this was going on even before Instagram, Pinterest and Linked In picked up speed, the growth of social networking is THE phenomenon of our time and guess what? People are talking about their lives, their friends, their families, work, and… FOOD! The proliferation of tweets and posts about food is astounding. Take a look at the interactions on your personal pages and for those of you who have a Facebook presence for your businesses, consider how geometrically your exposure and outreach has grown in the past few months or years. Don’t limit your point of view by only looking through “professional goggles.” People are talking and pinning and tweeting about food all of the time! People –and by people, I mean the public-the consumers, are interested in the conversation and they want to be engaged. I heard of a man from Long Island who posted the following on his wall. He said, “Much of LI, especially the towns around me, do not have the fruit and vegetable markets that we had while we were growing up in Brooklyn, mostly Korean and Russian.... but we do have a supermarket, that is 80% Korean products with a large produce section...things I can't get anywhere, like Chinese Cabbage, similar to baby bok choy...on the weekends, they set up tables and you can have your lunch there (**SLIDE 6- JUST DID A RUN…**).........just did a run for fruits and veggies….”

The conversation has already started, and it’s time for all of us to be on board. Restaurants, chefs, cooks, specialty shops, grocery stores-basically everyone is talking about food. The nature of the new social media and technology is that new and fresh content is needed on a regular basis. The more you connect, the more you will be connected to consumers who are interested in your products. It’s a win-win-win situation, but currently, that pepper is falling in the forest and no one hears it, and because people don’t know what they don’t know, they don’t know **YOU**-the local grower, and in many cases, they don’t have access to their food retailers in a social atmosphere either. No matter where you are, you can be connected. There are some large retailers in this industry whose impact is not yet resounding in this arena… you know who you are (**HS-FYI-search Fresh Direct on Facebook-I just checked and there are only a little over 1300 likes-I find that astounding and clearly a “growth opportunity.” I don’t like to single anyone out, so I don’t know how you want to handle this. I also checked for Citarella, Zabars, Fairway, Todaro Brothers, Grace’s Marketplace-which basically has NOTHING-I’m really shocked!!)**

Consider the proliferation of iPhones and smartphones and netbooks. Our means of connectivity are growing more and more accessible and convenient. The next time you’re on a bus or a train, take a look at how many people are online. They literally have the world at their fingertips. They have the ability to be connected on a 24/7 basis-or should I say they have the means to be connected to **YOU** on a 24/7 basis. My friend told me of an incident a few weeks ago. She was standing in front of her Russian bakery in Los Angeles, and connecting to her Chinese counterpart, in Hong Kong, having a conversation on Face Time on her iPhone! She was talking about garment production, but she could also have been connecting to someone in Ecuador discussing bananas! What I am trying to reinforce is that the means of connection exist, so we may as well explore them more fully.

In an article on the website Statista, a partner of Dow Jones, the global sales forecast for smartphones in 2013 is 801 million units. (**SLIDE 7-STATISTA**) For 2016, the forecast predicts that global sales will be over 1 billion. That’s a lot of opportunity to connect!! New content is always needed and appreciated, so we may as well make it something interesting!!! Also consider that it really does not take that much extra time to establish a presence and get your identity and product recognized. The more you tweet, the smaller the world gets!

Consider the effectiveness of marketing your brand, your product, your retail establishment, your logistics company-anything you do, and how its growth would be influenced with the ability to reach so many more people. Remember-we live in a digital age. We are not limited by our local constraints. We don’t have to be limited to actual neighbors sharing our philosophy and ideas. Who knows where the conversation might take any one of us? With considered and planned outreach, who knows what paths will be forged? As an example, I don’t know how many of you play online games, but I know of people who, through their participation, have connected with people from all over the world. Those people now have contacts in Sweden, Thailand, India, and Italy, to give you an example. Whether or not they are in constant communication is irrelevant. The connection has been established. The information can flow. We’ve touched on the potential for connection on Facebook. (**SLIDE 8-SOCIAL NETWORKING PLATFORMS**) Don’t forget, there are Pinterest, Instagram, Youtube, Tumbler, and so many more vehicles ready to act as the conduits to the building of your brand. For those of you with an already recognizable name, the opportunity is to dig deeper and to reveal and plumb even greater depths of connection to your colleagues and customers.

(**SLIDE 9-CIRCLE OF COMMERCE**) Think about the potential of the “Circle of Commerce” that will be created as you build your brand/connect to people/connect to retailer, connect to consumer, and so on. We live in the era of “The Personal Brand.” Andy Warhol predicted it in 1968 when he said, (**SLIDE 10-IN THE FUTURE**) “In the future, everyone will be world famous for 15 minutes.” Well, Andy was almost spot on, however, I think the result has morphed with time and technology. We all want to be special. We all want our unique voice to be heard. The future is now. The world really is our stage and we all have access to the platform. There is no need to be limited by geography in order to develop your image and your sphere of influence.

Also remember that building a micro brand in the produce industry is not really a new concept. (**SLIDE 11-LABELS**) Consider years ago, around the turn of the 20th century and onward, how beautiful, funny, charming labels were placed on fruit and vegetable crates, allowing them to act as colorful messengers to entice all those who saw them. To this day, many of the brands and labels have withstood the test of time and are as vibrant and tasty today as the produce they promoted generations ago. In the world of ephemera, these forms of branding are still highly prized and collected as a means to connect with the history and uniqueness of our industry. The history and trajectory of these crate labels is a clear illustration of the circle of commerce that can be maintained today. Those labels connected grower to retailer to consumer and provided a road map, albeit quaint, of how we can all be connected in this day and age.

The more that people have access to information, the more they want to know. I know that when I am online, the possibilities to be bombarded with endless bits and bytes of information are limitless. What I do know, and I am sure you’ll all agree, is that I want **new** information. I don’t want to see the same stories repeated. I want to see new stories. I want to know more, and I appreciate seeing interesting posts from commercial venues interspersed with my colleagues pictures of pets, weather and, yes, meals. I love seeing stores and manufacturers post interesting tidbits and special offers-especially when they’re legitimate!! Compelling stories and photos pique my curiosity and many times, I dig for more information. I also think that is the standard and many people do express interest. Think of the times you’ve posted articles or pieces of news or fascinating pictures… and then the conversation begins. This sort of interaction promotes communication on many levels.

The produce industry seems to be at the precipice of the last frontier of communication and establishing meaningful connections through social media, but that’s the **GOOD NEWS**!! There is endless room to grow and connect!!

You all have interesting stories and some of you have begun the process to reach out to the public in unique and compelling ways. (**SLIDE 12-POSITIONING GOLD KIWIS**) I remember when I was in New Zealand; the growers of gold kiwi faced the challenge of how to distinguish and position their brand and product to increase visibility to both retailers and the consumer. In order to do that, we had to shorten the gap between the fruit and the mouth. We knew that if people could just taste the goodness and identify that refreshing bite with our brand, sales would increase. We devised a marketing plan to facilitate this vision. And it was simple. We offered people a gold kiwi-just to taste and compare, as they bought other kiwis. The consumer didn’t know what they didn’t know until we showed them alternatives.

(**SLIDE 13- BC HOT HOUSE MEET THE GROWERS**)There is a group of growers where I come from called BC Hot House. It’s a collective of produce growers who, way back in 1973, saw the potential in pooling their resources and working together as a cooperative to bring delicious and nutritious produce to the consumer’s table. The website introduces us to their members. The interesting thing about their website is that we learn that the produce does not automatically and magically appear in the supermarket or local farmer’s market. There are actual human beings who spend their lives, skills and passion in order to bring this produce to the market. Thanks to the section on the website called, “Meet the Growers,” we learn about the people like the Atwals, the Vandermeulens, Cheema and sons, and the Evergrow farm. Information like this works to complete the circle and form the foundation. It’s possible for everyone in this industry to build the bridges of connection, the end result of which can only yield more visibility and identity for all.

With all of the potential information out there, just waiting to be harnessed, the question arises: How about establishing a social platform for the produce and food industries? Imagine a site called “FRUITBOX” or “THE CRATE?” It would be a place for all to check in, find support, new ways of marketing, and it would create the destination for the food consuming public… and that would be EVERYONE, to be able to go and learn about and connect to the products, services and retailers who best serve each one’s needs. Let’s not forget that Facebook started as a means for college students to connect, and now 800 million plus users later…need I say more?

Also consider the reality that the consumer no longer is a “one stop shopper.”

A little over a month ago, I wrote an article that appeared on the website Global Fruit (**SLIDE 14-SCREEN SHOT OF GLOBAL FRUIT ARTICLE**). The title was, “**shop, click, cook…will online be the new green grocer?”** I discussed that consumers are increasingly comfortable shopping online for food and beverages. Nielsen surveys report that there has been a 44% increase over the past two years in this category. Clearly, produce must be involved and can and will contribute to the steady rise in online grocery shopping. (**SLIDE 15-AMAZON FRESH, FRESH DIRECT**) I cited the case of Amazon Fresh, an initiative that began in 2007. It currently serves 78 zip codes in the Seattle area, making around 8,000 deliveries a week, an iPhone app was introduced in May of this year, and expansion plans are targeting California for future growth. Amazon Fresh is growing by leaps and bounds, and most of the country hasn’t even heard of it yet! We can also look to sites like Peapod and, of course, the wonderful Fresh Direct, to see just how much potential there is to online grocery shopping. Sites like these give the consumer options. Show of hands…how many of you in this room have an iPhone, iPad, or Android phone? How many of you live in the New York metropolitan area? And now, how many of you who use Fresh Direct have downloaded the app to your device? In this era, you don’t even have to order from a computer anymore! You can place your order while commuting to work on the train or the bus! Can it get easier? I remember when I lived in Seattle, in a 4th floor walk up, during the days of HomeGrocer.com, I was more than thankful to order my groceries online, have them walked up those 4 flights of stairs, and delivered to my home while I was working interminable hours in this globally demanding industry.

There are so many benefits to this category of retail. People, who might otherwise have insurmountable challenges due to physical issues, time constraints, or logistics, are served. People are employed. Product is sold. Commerce is advanced. And the other vital point is that, in this day and age of farm to fork, online shopping and connection provide the perfect opportunity to converse. With food safety being a concern to all, having the online connection allows the dissemination of information and comments between grower, retailer and the consumer. If wars can be waged and won on Twitter, think about how fast information can spread about the next great discovery in produce!!

There are other options and presences at our fingertips, all with the growing capabilities to make our relationship to knowing about and purchasing food, as simple as possible. In addition to the “cyber grocers” like Amazon Fresh and Fresh Direct, throughout our country, locally and “locale-ly,” there are sites that enable our needs and wishes; all of which I am sure, would welcome broader and deeper connections to the consumer. Sites like seamless.com and other menu-based options facilitate restaurant ordering. There are food truck websites like RoamingHunger.com in Los Angeles that help connect and promote daily locations for that city’s food truck populace. I bet most of those trucks use fruits and veggies!! Wouldn’t that be a great place to connect! And no discussion would be complete without a nod to Chipotle, the company that does what it can to promote fresh, sustainable food at egalitarian prices. In an article on fastcompany.com, about the 50 most innovative companies in 2012, Chipotle ranked #34. The article quotes Mark Crumpacker, CMO, who said; “Chipotle is undertaking ambitious projects such as working with farmers to breed almost-lost heritage chickens that can roam on pastures instead of being confined to crates. (**SLIDE 16 CHIPOTLE/NIMAN RANCH**) "Every time you open up two Chipotle restaurants, we add another naturally raised pig farmer into this farmers’ cooperative called Niman Ranch Pork Company. When we started, there were 50 to 60 of these farmers. Now there are between 600 and 700." Chipotle identifies Niman ranch pork-why not open the conversation about the peppers and onions, avocados and rice they also use? It doesn’t matter if the produce is sourced locally or globally. They’re all valid, essential components to our daily sustenance and it’s time to learn about and connect to the people and brands that keep all of us alive. We have a captive audience and now the mandate is to CAPTIVATE them!

As I stated in my article, “Savvy conventional retailers are paying attention and will need to develop a deeper connection with their shoppers, embrace the digital world, accept multi-channel shopping as the new normal and innovate like never before.” People are no longer content to settle for one arena in which to make their purchases-of anything. The consumer is savvy enough to know that Store “A” has the best prices and selection of deli, store “B” has a great variety of veggies, and market “C” provides the best poultry and fruits. Today’s shopper is working harder and longer hours for less compensation. They want quality, value and assurance. There is an expression that says, “Ride the horse in the direction it is going.” I urge all of you to consider the ways in which each one of you, no matter where you are and what your position in the circle of commerce of this industry, to be a part of this conversation. (**SLIDE 17-IMAGE OF THE NEW BROOKLYN VEGGIE RETAILER**) Remember the Facebook post I mentioned about the Long Island man who yearned for the fruit and vegetable markets back in Brooklyn. Take a look at the Instagram picture posted by a woman who just about keeled over with joy upon discovering that her beloved Satsuma’s were back in stock in her local Whole Foods (**SLIDE 18 SOUP AND SATSUMAS-FOOD ON FB**) and think of how your voice will be heard in the global dialogue. And speaking of that, I’d like to take a few minutes to see if anyone has any question so far…. (**Take about 5 minutes of questions/comments**)

So now let’s figure out…How do we make these connections? Think about the successful campaigns and brands that YOU find enticing. Think about what means of authentic expression you would want to represent your product and the passion and devotion you bring to your crops. For retailers, think about what makes you eager to shop. Think about the collaborations we see in other areas of retail. Then think of the way you can highlight your partnerships with growers and wholesalers to create excitement in your stores and online. It’s no accident that Andy Warhol immortalized the Campbell’s soup can (**SLIDE 19- SOUP CANS**). How many of you saw Target’s homage to the 50th Anniversary of Campbell’s tomato soup? Thanks to Target, Campbell’s got a new and fresh 15 minutes!! But whose tomatoes did they use? Ahh!!! THAT’s the next question!! And speaking of Target, they do a brilliant job of focusing on and promoting industry collaboration. For several years they have been featuring designers in its clothing and home departments, introducing each brand to a whole new audience. This naturally acts to raise the profile of both collaborators while providing excitement for the consumer. Target has done two seasons of collaborations bringing local retailers to the national platform, and most recently, (**SLIDE 20 TARGET/NEIMAN**) in fact this past weekend, Target and Neiman Marcus launched a joint gift shop featuring the works of 24 nationally and internationally known designers, thanks to the efforts of the Council of Fashion Designers of America. If you ask me, this entire concept is an inspiration!!! Think about it-who will be YOUR partners in collaboration?

Building a brand and bringing its identity to recognition is as easy as a tweet or a posting. It just has to be reinforced and repeated. Establish the identity. Exhibit the identity across platforms-in stores, online, in print, and see what happens. You know this. But I would like to mention one thing. As the world morphs towards communication through social platforms, think about the traditional ways business had been done and the new ways it can be done. For years, retailers have had their weekly circulars. They were either mailed or inserted into newspapers. Are you still reaching as many consumers through these means, or is it time to take a look at more modern alternative means of sharing value through social media? How many of you are sharing no clip coupons weekly on Facebook? How many of you are promoting growers and their products on Twitter? Once again, I invite you to ride the horse in the direction it is going. Also, how can all of us promote product and identity with a more “sexy” or modern approach? Think of those crate labels-some of them were fairly provocative (**SLIDE 21- SOME RACY CRATE LABELS-IF YOU THINK IT’S OKAY TO SHOW THEM**).

To the retailers, think about your establishments as specialty stores or three-dimensional magazines, using the identities and brands of your growers to create interest and conversation within your contexts. Whether online or in store, remember that people want to know and learn. What is the back-story behind Meyer lemons? Tell me more about Marcona almonds. We treasure heirloom tomatoes and Vidalia onions. WHO GREW THEM? The profile of kale is being raised by the minute. If I daresay, I believe it has become the “IT” vegetable of 2012!! I, Jane Q. Consumer, want to know about where my kale comes from and why it’s so good for me!

I’ll say it again. “I don’t know what I don’t know” is no longer an option. There is a tremendous opportunity for all of us to benefit through connection and there are means of support for the smaller brand to do so. (**SLIDE 22- KICKSTARTER AND KIVA**) Consider the support available through micro-loan sites such as Kickstarter and Kiva.org. For those of you who may not be familiar with Kiva.org, the website simply states their mission: “We are a non-profit organization with a mission to connect people through lending to alleviate poverty. Leveraging the Internet and a worldwide network of microfinance institutions, Kiva lets individuals lend as little as $25 to help **create opportunity** around the world.” Imagine the impact of me passing along his simple bit of information. To those of you who can afford to open a Kiva account for $25.00, you have the power to support people either locally or on the other side of the world, to achieve their goals. Kiva’s tag line is, “Loans that change lives.” To those of you who are growers, or know growers or farmers who need support, this could be vital and essential information to support them through their issues to become self-sufficient. No matter what the end result, this demonstrates the potential and the power of connection and initiating the conversation. Think about how you and your colleagues can support and be supported by Kiva.org. On another note, there is Kickstarter. Kickstarter is considered the largest platform to fund creative projects, and they do have “food-centric” projects. Currently there are 148 food related projects open for funding and some of those projects range from Ten Acre Organics to the Herb Wheel. Windowfarms of Brooklyn raised 514% of the capital it targeted, or more than $250,000!!! Jump in to this conversation and see how both your business and Kickstarter participation grows!! Once again, all are win-win-win situations! Another option to find resources in order to build your brand and raise the grower’s profile is to consider the bartering system. In an article on 20somethingfinance.com, there was information on the benefits of bartering. Let’s face it. Growers have a barter-able commodity. All it takes is resourcefulness and ingenuity to help to establish and promote one’s brand and to get that product to the public.

Also consider the people, products and brands that have succeeded in establishing a recognizable profile. Google the “Perishable Pundit” and see what you get. I got over 67,000 hits! Jim Prevor has made himself known throughout the industry. The biography on his website tells us, “Most recently, Mr. Prevor has led an effort to utilize the Internet and modern information technologies to advance the interests of the fresh foods industry. As part of this initiative, he launched *Jim Prevor’s Perishable Pundit,* which quickly became the industry’s most important forum for the discussion and analysis of issues relevant to the trade.” Hmmm…Sounds like he can be the Poster boy for today’s talk!! (**Wait for the laugh**)

And back to Ocean Spray. (**SLIDE 23-MEET OUR GROWERS**) Honestly-and no offense to any other cranberry growers in the audience, but I have had people ask me, “Dawn, are there REALLY cranberry growers besides Ocean Spray?” This company does a great job of promoting and marketing its products. They have a comprehensive and informative website that includes the profiles of their growers, like the Detlefsen family of Wisconsin, and there are other growers around the country featured prominently on the website as well. Ocean Spray also maintains a healthy presence on Facebook, with almost 812,000 likes. That creates a lot of potential for sharing ideas and connecting!

Also, let’s not forget the BAA Code. This is a website sponsored by Icebreaker Merino wool and encourages the sharing of information, sustainability and history of the New Zealand merino sheep. It’s a fun and informative means of tracing and sharing what goes into the products we buy.

And speaking of sharing information, are there any other questions or comments up to this point? (**Take about 5 minutes of sharing**).

As we learn to connect and build our unique identities within the context of new technology and social media, it is urgent that we also touch upon the issues of sustainability-sustainability of self, product, organization and connection to each other. The simple definition of “sustain” is “To strengthen or support physically or mentally.” We have come to be familiar with the modern definition, one that supports respect for and strengthening of the environment, but in order to do that, we have to know how to respect and preserve all resources. In the discussion of “Local vs. Locale,” the question of sustainability naturally arises. We all know of the “locavore” movement in the food industry. Restaurants and of course, local farmers’ markets are increasingly featuring locally sourced products in order to limit transit and handling times and to extend the life of the product once it hits the hands and shelves of the consumer. (**SLIDE 24-TENDER GREENS**) Tender Greens is a great example of a socially conscious organization with sustainability, value and respect as its mantra. In an article in Restaurant News, co-founder Erik Oberholtzer remembers, that he “wrote a contract to partner with Scarborough Farms in Oxnard, California. “’I had a relationship with them from the past and knew they were small enough to assure quality but big enough to provide a consistent supply,’ he says. To support the partnership, Oberholtzer gave the farm equity in Tender Greens, which is on course to grow to 30 stores in the next 10 years. ‘We are now Scarborough’s largest customer,’ he adds. ‘We get preference on ingredients and if there is a shortage, we get the produce first.’ The produce served at Tender Greens is organically grown but not necessarily certified, since certification is expensive for small farms. ‘Sourcing everything from California protects us against fluctuating exchange rates and shipping costs,’ he notes. ‘We also commit to a certain volume and contract set prices.’” Tender Greens also states that, “In addition to a strong sense of environmental responsibility, Tender Greens restaurants are dedicated to enriching the urban communities that support us. Through select charity events, civic programs and involvement in communal affairs, we fulfill our sense of duty to our neighbors.” Tender Greens offers delicious, well-balanced and affordable meals (their salads and hot plates are currently no more than $11.50) while respecting the environment, supporting their partners, and establishing a road map for sustainability within the communities they serve. They are well on their way to their target-they currently have 9 restaurants and constantly seek to expand their trajectory and philosophy. They make a concerted effort to keep the conversation alive between themselves and their clientele. Talk about a win-win-win situation!

Tender Greens advocates the locavore trend wherever possible, but that does not mean that produce sourced from around the world is no less relevant. It’s all about freshness, awareness, communication, and making educated and healthful choices. Internationally sourced produce is still a vital part of the “salad of life,” and it is up to all growers, cooperatives, retailers and logistics suppliers to advocate in the most environmentally and socially responsible way. Do your research, consider the options and make the choices that support sustainability. Of course, throughout the process, also continue to consider that establishing your presence online is a great and socially responsible way to insure that you have the opportunity to be heard.

No talk about food would be complete without an acknowledgement to all of the advances being made right here in New York with regard to laws involving fast food, urban farming, and respecting and considering the health of the populace. About the Foodworks initiative, in 2011, Mark Izeman said, “New York has enormous potential to become a national leader in providing sustainable, local food, and these bills are a good first step in reforming our food system.  At the same time, as we testified, ultimately the city will need to put in place concrete purchasing targets for buying regional food and define what constitutes "sustainable" food (just because it is local doesn't necessarily mean it is healthy or better for the environment).” Initiatives like this and attention to the issues of the health and well being of the general public urgently need to be addressed throughout the country and even the world, and at the core of the resolution has to be the ability to communicate about and share the concepts and fresh products offered by the produce industry.

(**If you feel it’s necessary, open the floor to another short round of questions or comments**). If there is anyone who would like to share any new thoughts or questions, let’s take a few minutes now….

I think it’s apparent that in this day and age, there is no reason for any grower or participant in the produce industry to remain in the dark. It is up to each one of us to self-identify- to discover your voice, reach out to people and to build your own unique presence online. Whether local or not, you have a message that is worth hearing and people will be interested. (**SLIDE 25- REMEMBER**) Remember-“IF YOU GROW IT, AND TWEET ABOUT IT, THEY WILL COME, THEY WILL EAT, AND IT WILL BE TASTY!” Familiarize yourselves with the platforms that work best for you to connect to your retailers and your public. Think of what interests you and reach out in turn. Develop interesting liaisons between growers, retailers and the consumer. What do you have to lose? The networks have been established to provide the paths to build essential relationships and now it is your turn to make the connections. This is an exciting time for commerce. The possibilities are endless. Think of the ways that the “big boys” like Sunkist reach out to their user base and take that as inspiration to build your platforms. (**Please add more details as necessary about Sunkist in this portion**).

It’s been a real honor and a privilege to be able to share these thoughts with you today. I hope that some of you have developed a new perspective on the possibilities for your businesses and collaborators, and I look forward to learning of your progress and seeing your growth online. I thank you all!!