

Final Report
Grant #791N0200097

Increasing Michigan Fruit Purchases by Restaurateurs

Submitted by:

Michigan Apple Association

Amount Reimbursement Requested: \$30,000

Denise Donohue, Executive Director

13750 S. Sedona Parkway, Suite 3

Lansing, MI 48906

Ph: (517) 669-8353

Fax: (517) 669-9506

EIN: 20-2269497

E-Mail: Denise@MichiganApples.com



**MICHIGAN APPLE
ASSOCIATION**

Project Title

Increasing Michigan Fruit Purchases by Restaurateurs

Project Summary

The National Restaurant Show (NRA) is a high-profile opportunity to reach thousands of chefs, public and private sector menu planners and restaurant owners and encourage them to use a wide variety of Michigan fruit. Michigan apples, cherries, blueberries and peaches are a critical component to Michigan's fruit processing industry, and by combining resources in creating an innovative, multi-commodity exhibit. The show has an untapped promotional synergy of using those fruits in all types of food dishes.

By utilizing space in the Michigan Pavilion (organized and sponsored by the Michigan Department of Agriculture), we were able to showcase a comprehensive presentation of Michigan fruit desserts and other dishes. Attending NRA in Spring 2009, Michigan Apple Committee (MAC) had a successful first experience and sampled three types of processed apple items for foodservice markets. Michigan Apple Association (MAA) noticed that the handful of booths that really engaged the buyers featured demonstration and narration.

While this project could have been done individually with apples, every Michigan fruit wins from a more broad presentation. Hiring distinguished chefs to attract visitors to the booth was important, as the ability to cook and engage passers-by simultaneously are specialized skills.

Project Approach

The overall goal of this project was to collectively showcase and increase awareness of the four leading fruits grown in Michigan, processed in Michigan and sold in the foodservice sector at the nation's largest restaurant show. With this grant, Michigan Apple Association (MAA) developed synergy and excitement by promoting four major Michigan processed fruits: Apples, blueberries, cherries and peaches in one trade show booth while showcasing Michigan as a one-stop destination for locally-grown fruit. The booth was at the National Restaurant Show (NRA) in Chicago May 22-25, 2010. It is the US's leading restaurant show attracting large numbers of restaurateurs conveniently located near Michigan.

MAA arranged for a series of professional chefs to cook on-site, demonstrating unique ways to include Michigan processed fruits in desserts, appetizers, entrees and cocktails. The triple-booth space helped maximize exposure in Spring 2010 to the show's estimated 57,000 attendees, representing various segments of the restaurant and food-service industries.

The entertaining demonstrations conducted by the talented cooks attracted passers-by to watch the cooking techniques as well as sample the delicious recipes. MAA also distributed fresh-cut apples, which allowed for staff to engage in further conversation with the attendees. Each of the stakeholders in this grant provided the necessary Michigan fruit product for their demonstrations as well as display product for the booth. Each group was invited to attend the NRA Show and talk with the restaurateurs/potential buyers.

The NRA fruit booth featured the following chefs and recipes:

- “Aussie” Personal Chef Paul Penney – Cherry Chili, Peach Ice Cream, Blueberry Posset & Chicken w/Apples
- TV Personality & Chef Eric Villegas – Michigan Fudge Nachos with Michigan Fruit
- Award-Winning Bakery Owner Linda Hundt – Michigan Fruit Pies
- College Professor & Chef “Nick” – Michigan Apple Carmel Tempura, Great Lakes Flambe with Cherries
- Grower Patrice Hartman – Blueberry Sliders, Lemon & Blueberry Orzo Pasta & Fruit Salsas
- Chicago Restaurant Mixologist Charles Joly – Cocktails featuring Michigan fruits and fruit products



In advance of the show, a postcard was designed and printed with grant funds, then mailed to a database of restaurants and other foodservice companies encouraging people to stop by our booth. Postcards touted the chefs and live cooking demonstrations that would include everything from savory meals to cocktails.

The partners also agreed to give-away an Apple iPad® as an incentive to collect names and data from all restaurateurs who visited the booth. This was a big draw to the booth and allowed fruit

representatives even more opportunity to converse with potential buyers.

Goals & Outcomes Achieved

At the NRA show, MAA staff utilized a lead retrieval system to gain access to a list of interested chefs, restaurants, buyers, etc. Nearly 750 potential buyers had MAA scan their badges, and registered for the iPad®. Following the show, MAA emailed a survey twice to all the individuals about their future fruit buying habits. (The survey was sent twice because the response rate was very low. Only 49 restaurateurs responded.) The lead retrieval system only allows emails to be sent directly from their system. This can make the email appear to be “spam” and it’s likely that many of the buyers did not even see the email survey due to this system limitation.

Of those responding:

- 33 percent said they purchase Michigan fruit whenever possible.
- 67 percent said they will either continue to purchase the same amount of Michigan fruit or purchase more in the coming year.
- 58 percent said they would prefer to purchase Michigan fruit.
- 63 percent said that the chef demonstrations inspired them to use and cook with Michigan fruit.

These results, if they may be extrapolated to the 750 visitors to the Michigan fruit booth, show that two-thirds are predisposed to buy Michigan fruit. As usual, the challenge will be converting the leads into actual purchases and connecting new recipe knowledge and enthusiasm with existing products available to processors.

To that end, MAA did provide the names of potential buyers to Michigan fruit processors and the partnering commodity groups immediately following the show so the actual sales organizations (rather than commodity groups) could proceed to turn the leads into actual sales.

MAA – as well as partner commodity groups – also now has a mailing list of 750 bakers and restaurateurs, highly concentrated in the Upper Midwest, with whom it can share recipes and health information. This will keep the Michigan apple, in the minds of restaurant bakers and restaurant operators.

As a second measure of effectiveness, MAA polled the processors after the show to determine if any sale opportunities resulted. Unfortunately, the processors in our state were unable to trace any actual sales back to the lead retrieval list or the booth at the show. Attributing the sales to a specific action - such as a supplying trade show leads - is difficult, at best.

Prior to the show, MAA discussed the possibility of a “Show Buy” ticket that could be distributed at the show to potential costumers and allow processors a chance to offer special deals to potential customers. This was another sales tool MAA thought could benefit the Michigan fruit processors. Unfortunately, none of the processors believed it was a good fit at the time and MAA did not pursue it.

Both questionnaires and the incentive program were developed by the project participants. The program was shaped with the processed fruit industry in mind to increase future sales.

Beneficiaries

The beneficiaries of this project were the Michigan apple, blueberry, cherry and peach industries. All potential leads garnered from the show were passed on to each of these groups to send out to the fruit processors in their industries.

Individual fruit processors are unwilling to share their private sales information with us and we are unable to determine, or divulge, whether any sales were garnered from the show.

Peaches and to a lesser extent blueberry, especially benefited by this project. Having no trade association to organize, fund or execute such a promotional effort, the Michigan peach and blueberry processors and growers had major visibility at the largest restaurant show.

Lessons Learned

The development of this project and implementation of the show provided many learnings for our organization. The sheer volume of logistics involved with the implementation of a chef demonstration was overwhelming at times. Coordinating with each of the groups with their chefs allowed our group to gain a better understanding of those commodities which helped us at the show level.

Each of the groups was invited to attend the show and help out in the booth. Some groups took advantage of that offer more than others. MAA had contingency plans in place so that the booth was fully staffed at all times.

This program was a definite benefit to the Michigan processed fruit industry. Taken all of the things learned at the NRA 2010 and will use that knowledge to better showcase processed apples in the future including at NRA 2012. MAA's presentation at NRA 2011 will reflect the much-larger NRA 2010 booth.

Financial Activity

NRA 2010 Show Expenses	
Category	Expenses
Booth Rental	\$5,100.00
Booth Furnishings	\$4,468.14
Refrigeration/Cooking Equipment	\$4,032.45
Electrical	\$1,661.00
Lead Retrieval System	\$552.55
AV Equipment	\$758.20
Food	\$4,127.30
Shipping of Materials	\$495.50
Badges	\$160.00
Hotel Room Expenses	
Chef Hotel	\$2,395.10
Booth Staff Hotel	\$6,215.87
Chef Fees	
Eric Villegas	\$500.00
William Nicklosovich	\$720.00
Linda Hundt	\$813.69
Paul Penney	\$1,325.09
Charles Joly	\$1,038.00
Product (apple & peach)	\$1,310.00
Travel	\$135.00
Banners for Booth	\$1,889.00
Postcard for Mailings	\$449.22
iPad	\$528.94
Booth Decorations	\$562.33
Total Expenses	\$39,237.38

It should be noted that the booth rental expenses (reflected in MAA's original budget) were lower than originally projected, due to a free booth space extended by Michigan Bean Commission through a separate Specialty Crop Block Grant.

On the other hand, booth furnishings - notably refrigeration/cooking and the food costs – exceeded original expectations. The McCormick Place (the NRA venue) requirements concerning food samples were unexpectedly complex: All ingredients for the fruit/chefs had to be purchased through the show supplier at much-higher prices than at a local grocery store. The only food items MAA was allowed to bring were the Michigan fruit products.

The budgeted amount for the show was \$30,000 with a match from Michigan Apple Committee (MAC) of \$5,000. The expenses of the show exceeded \$35,000 by \$4,237.38. The total match spent was nearly doubled, and was fully covered by MAC.

Total Reimbursement Amount Requested - \$30,000

Contact Person

Denise Donohue, MAA, (517) 669-8353, Denise@MichiganApples.com



MICHIGAN APPLE ASSOCIATION

Invoice

Date	Invoice #
1/31/2011	21

Bill To
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE P.O. BOX 30017 LANSING, MI 48909

Description	Amount
2009 Specialty Crop Block Grant - NRA Show 2010	30,000.00
Total \$30,000.00	

13750 S. Sedona Parkway, Ste. 3,
Lansing, MI 48906
(517) 669-8353