

WASHINGTON STATE POTATO COMMISSION
THE NUTRITION ADVANTAGE PROGRAM - 1989-90

by
Evans Food Group, Evans/Kraft, Inc.
Seattle, Washington

The Nutrition Advantage Program has created greater awareness in all areas of promotion and public relations over the last year. The following activities showcase success stories on the highest nutrient dense potatoes on earth - Washington State potatoes.

Throughout the 1989-90 season, Evans Food Group continued to promote Washington State potatoes as the potatoes with the nutritional advantage. A fourth year nutritional study conducted by the National Food Laboratories indicates that Washington State potatoes continue to be higher in nutrients than the average U.S. potato.

In order to communicate this message, communication efforts were focused in the areas of foodservice promotions and public relations and consumer food public relations.

FOODSERVICE PUBLIC RELATIONS/PROMOTIONS

In the area of foodservice public relations, the commission reached its target audiences through publicity, promotions, print materials and special events. Special features were placed in numerous trade publications. These features centered on the many restaurants, schools, and noncommercial operators serving Washington State potatoes. These placements netted a healthy return on investment when compared with the cost of obtaining comparable exposure through the more conventional means of print advertising.

Print materials were created to support the entire foodservice program. A new "How to Sell Washington State Potatoes" kit cover was used to house all the merchandising materials used during distributor and operator promotions. A new distributor specification sheet was also developed to further educate the distributor sales representative on the quality and consistency of Washington State potatoes. All materials were made available to distributors, restaurant operators, schools and other end-users as promotional support and educational tools.

Foodservice end-users and growers of Washington State potatoes also received Washington State potato news through the "Hot Potato" newsletter. This publication targeted the purchase decision makers in each audience: distributors, schools, and restaurant operators.

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The "Hot Potato" continues to prove as a successful method of communicating the nutrition advantage message.

Training Table Program - School Food Service

School food service programs across the nation were encouraged to participate in training table promotions for student athletes. The training table concept encourages students to choose healthy foods on the menu, high in carbohydrate and other important nutrients for stamina. Special potato topping recipes that are low in fat were developed to complement Washington State potatoes. These recipes were also used for world class athletes at the Boston Marathon and Big Sur Marathon this year.

Distributor Promotions

Foodservice distributors play a key role in the promotional efforts made by the Commission.

Distributor sales representatives were encouraged to promote Washington State potatoes to their customers as a tie-in to the Boston Marathon. Promotions scheduled were with nationally-recognized distributors listed in the top 50 in foodservice distribution.

Charlotte Marathon	PYA/Monarch
Philadelphia Distance Run	Woodhaven Foods
Boston Marathon	Hallsmith/Sysco

Preliminary results from this year indicate an increase in product movement to the customer as a result of the promotions. All promotions were introduced by Commission representatives and Evans Food Group at scheduled sales meetings.

Distributor Video

A special distributor video was produced involving Commissioners, distributors and operators to educate and inform distributors on the benefits of Washington State potatoes. This video has been successfully used by distributors nationwide in training seminars and sales meetings.

Special Events

The Washington State Potato Commission maintains a high profile in the foodservice industry by attending numerous special foodservice events throughout the year. Participation in the following events increases opportunities for publicity placements and promotions:

- International Foodservice Editorial Council Conference
- National Restaurant Show and Editor's Buffet
- Western Restaurant Show
- Society for Foodservice Management

Produce Marketing Association Foodservice Conference
American School Food Service Association Industry Seminar & Convention
Chain Operators' Exchange

Export

The Washington potato industry is recognized internationally among foodservice operators and retailers in export markets such as Hong Kong and Singapore.

The Washington State Potato Commission was represented at this year's U.S. Solo Show in Hong Kong, March 21-23, 1990. Commission representatives met directly with foodservice operators, distributors and editors to increase market share and maintain a positive presence among the industry.

Washington potatoes were sampled with a traditional Eastern topping and Western topping. Many requests were received on potato bars and where Washington potatoes can be purchased.

A market visit to Singapore enabled Commission representatives to assess distributor and operator needs. The government of Singapore is currently supporting nutritional programs targeted to citizens of Singapore. These programs provide excellent tie-in opportunities for Washington potatoes' nutritional advantage.

CONSUMER PUBLIC RELATIONS

The consumer food public relations efforts centered around publicity through print media, electronic media and involvement in special events.

In order to promote Washington State potatoes to consumers as a versatile and nutritious food source, the Commission placed a full color feature page in a number of newspapers across the country. This full color page features healthful recipe ideas.

A special brochure was produced to tie-in the nutritional advantage to runners. "Nancy Clark's Guide to Carbing Up" includes pre and post race nutrition tips and recipes for the runners. This brochure was well received at this year's Boston Marathon, Big Sur Marathon and Bloomsday Run.

The annual meeting of Home Economists in Business brings together eight hundred of the top nutrition educators and key home economics marketing people in the country.

The Nutrition Advantage/Marathon program continues to be very successful in promoting the nutritional value of Washington State potatoes. This program centers around the following markets and their foot races:

Philadelphia, PA.	Philadelphia Distance Run
Charlotte, NC	Charlotte-Observer Marathon
Boston, MA	Boston Marathon
Big Sur Marathon	Carmel, CA
Bloomsday Run	Spokane, WA

In all markets, the Commission sponsors a Carb Up dinner the night before the race. In Boston alone, over 9,400 Washington State potatoes were served to 7,000 runners - a record attendance! Prior to the Big Sur Marathon, runners had the choice of dining at one of eleven area restaurants serving Washington State potatoes.

Commission representatives were available to distribute nutritional information, recipes, buttons and Carby T-shirts at race exposition sites.

Nancy Clark, R.D., was interviewed by television and radio crews at the Boston Marathon this year. Washington State potatoes were also the "Official Carbohydrate of the Boston Marathon."

Tremendous media attention was given to Boston's Carb Up Dinner this year. The three local television affiliates as well as Pro Serve, a national sports cable network, attended the dinner to cover pre-race festivities. This was the most media attention given to the Carb Up Dinner since the Commission has been a sponsor.

Brad Hawthorne, course record holder and three time winner of the Big Sur Marathon, was interviewed by the media before and after the race. As he crossed the finish line (in first place, ahead of the pack by ten minutes!) he mentioned to television crews that it must have been those Washington potatoes he ate the night before!