

It seems everyone is rebranding these days. With a new logo here, a packaging twist there, new product lines and social media endeavors, these exercises can respond to changes within a company or its customers. In the case of Frieda's Specialty Produce's new 'inspire.taste.love' it's the latter, appealing to a younger demographic.

"We want to be playful, fun and engaging," said CEO Karen Caplan, who certainly fits the bill.

On the exhibition floor of the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) Fresh Summit in Atlanta, www.freshfruitportal.com had to compete with a steady stream of people who wanted the [documentary](#) star's attention.

The company, founded by her mother Frieda Caplan, already has renown within the produce industry and has had its fair share of TV time over the course of decades, but now the group is taking a fresh approach with the public.

"I think every company has to look at their audience for their products. Who's the shopper?" she asked.

"The shopper used to be 35-55, but we know now that the shopper looking for our product range is probably younger - a Millennial or Generation X.


CEO Karen Caplan

"We took a look at our packaging and it was very baby boomer, so we thought it was time to take a look at how could our products and the packaging resonate better with the shopper we need to be going after."

To do this, Frieda's worked closely with consultancy Edmundson Martin.

"This was a 9-10 month branding exercise; it was very long to go through and do consumer insights with shoppers, to find out what resonated with them, what the messaging was, taking the time to get to know our culture, the fun," Caplan said.

"We want to engage the shopper - we call them culinary enthusiasts. We want to inspire them with recipes and with content on our website.

"We don't crowd the label with all kinds of information because you know as well as I do, everyone carries a phone around and if they want information they just look it up."

While Frieda's has introduced some 200 produce items to U.S. shores, bringing new tastes to the American consumer's palate is not always easy. In the process, Caplan has learned the importance of taste, education about products and test marketing.

✘ "I think it's important to look at a little bit of a longer horizon; when you only look at a season or a year you're not taking into account the fact that we don't have the answers when we start the season.

"It usually takes a couple of years and then you can determine whether it's successful.

"We are in the second year of a test of a proprietary [small yellow] potato variety that's high in flavor."

She pointed to the Stokes purple sweet potato as an "unbelievable" success story now going strong domestically after four years, combined with a more recent export deal.

"In particular we are exporting the Stokes purple sweet potatoes to England but not under our label. We are partnering with a packer there and they private label for their customers - it's been a really interesting venture."

From the cutting reel

When asked about the recent documentary ['Fear No Fruit'](#), Caplan said there was one bit of historical footage she wished the film had included.

"My mother was on David Letterman in 1987 and there was this clip of her feeding him passion fruit. 'See if this turns you on', is what she said."

Unfortunately, Letterman wouldn't give the filmmaker permission to include the clip because it was from his days at network NBC where he worked before moving to CBS.

"95% of the time he doesn't give permission to use them [clips from NBC].

"She fed him a horn melon and he said 'that's damn near inedible'. Our sales went through the roof.

"In the very end he sees an oyster mushroom, so he picks it up, puts it in his mouth and goes, 'oh, it's okay if I eat this right', and my mom goes, 'I guess we'll see won't we'. Then he cuts to commercial and spits it out."



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