

Robinson Fresh is trialing an innovative new packaging for avocados that provides four pieces of fruit in different stages of ripeness.

The Happy Chameleon Daily 'Dos include four 70-count avocados to be used by consumers over several days at the ideal ripeness and when they need them, a company representative said.

Michael Castagnetto, VP of Global Sourcing at Robinson Fresh, told FreshFruitPortal.com the avocados are packed in a proprietary tray that is lined with a film that absorbs ethylene, naturally delaying the ripening process.

"In an effort to provide innovative and convenient products to customers, Robinson Fresh entered into an exclusive agreement with Chantler Packaging," he said.



Through the agreement, the C.H. Robinson division will employ Chantler's PrimePro technology in its Daily 'Dos Stay Fresh packaging. Castagnetto says it can "extend shelf life by 21 percent or more compared to bulk ripened fruit".

He explained there were two pieces to managing this puzzle - a packaging unit with avocados in different ripening stages and management of ethylene levels.

"The result is that avocados are ripened to the following stages so they are ready to eat within 0-5 days of purchase," he said.

There is one ready-to-eat avocado, two that will be ready in two or three days, and one green avocado to be ready in four to five days.

"Holding these avocados in the stages most beneficial to consumers for as long as possible," Castagnetto said.

A solution to a major avocado challenge

The idea for the new packaging came from looking at trends in the produce industry and examining the buying habits of frequent avocado shoppers.

"We sought to solve some of the inherent challenges with this increasingly popular commodity— the biggest being that consumers often don't have an avocado at the right stage of ripeness when they want to use it," he said.

"We do this by identifying barriers to purchase, gathering input from customers, as well as examining shopper and grower insights. That's the benefit of working with Robinson Fresh, we have a team of dedicated and responsive professionals who go the extra mile to solve customers' toughest fresh supply chain challenges."

The Daily 'Dos are being tested in the Northeastern U.S., and may open up to other regions, pending a successful test.

Promotions and pairings drive avocado sales

Castagnetto went on to say that the consumption of avocados continues to increase. Two-thirds of all shoppers report buying them, and 60% of buyers purchase routinely according to a recent Robinson Fresh survey.

When it comes to merchandising avocados, it's important to give shoppers options to provide usage ideas and drive impulse purchases.

"Tropical commodities are big impulse buys—but shoppers need to see them prominently displayed with recipe ideas in order to drive purchase," he said.

"Bulk, packaged (such as the Daily Dos), and value-added items can be cross-merchandised together in high-traffic areas to give shoppers a variety of meal solution ideas.

"Pairing avocados with tomatoes, onions, garlic, limes, jalapeños, and even non-produce items can help lift overall sales."

Promotions are another key driver of avocado sales. Thirty-eight percent of retail avocado sales occur on ad, and the most commonly promoted price is four for US\$5.

"While nearly 90% of retail banners promote avocados during the Super Bowl and Cinco de Mayo, the average retailer only promotes them 19 weeks a year, while best-in-class retailers place avocados on ad twice that amount," Castagnetto said.

"With promotion strategies and consumption rates in mind, we have designed the Daily 'Dos to be priced attractively at retail to align with these promotional strategies."