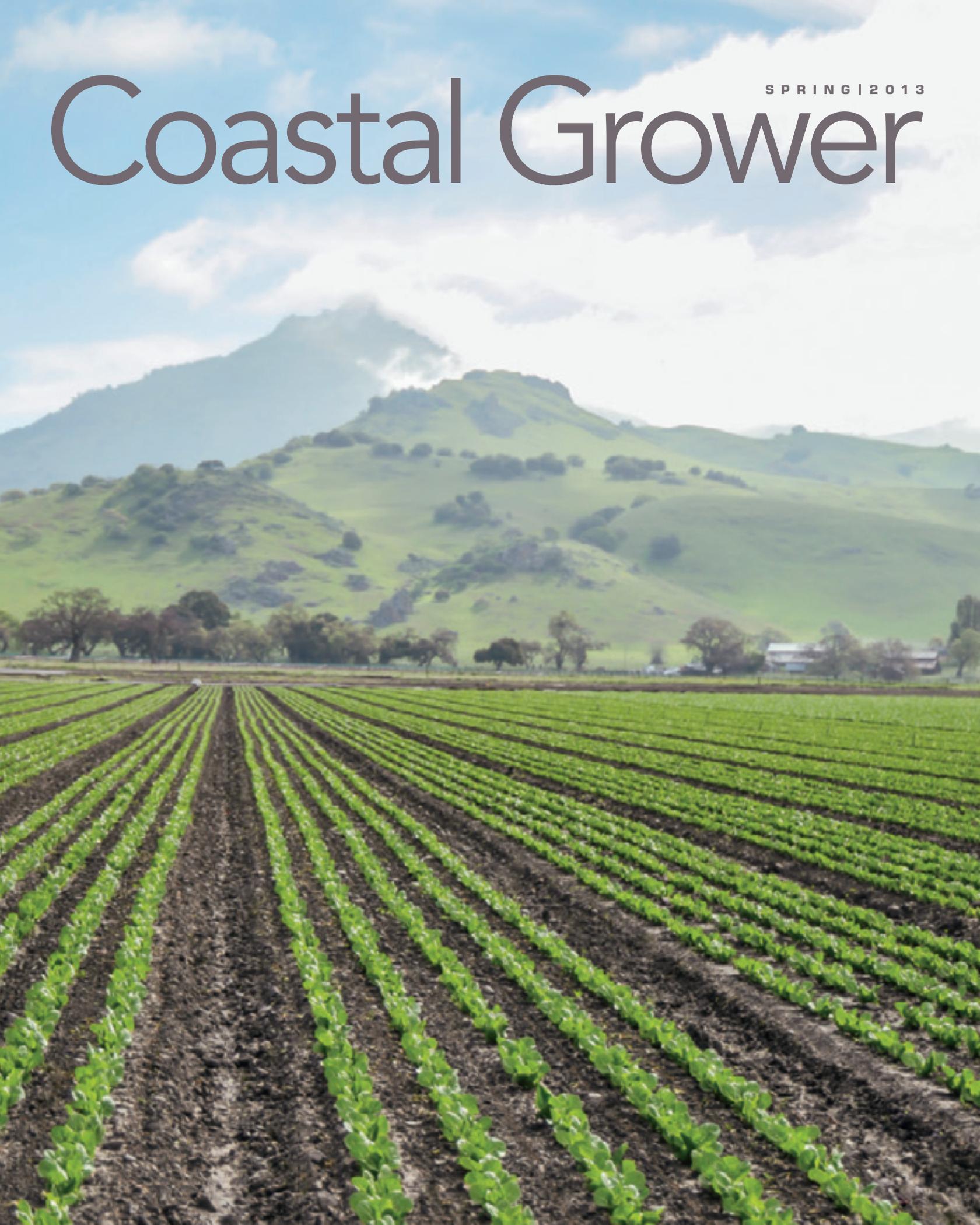


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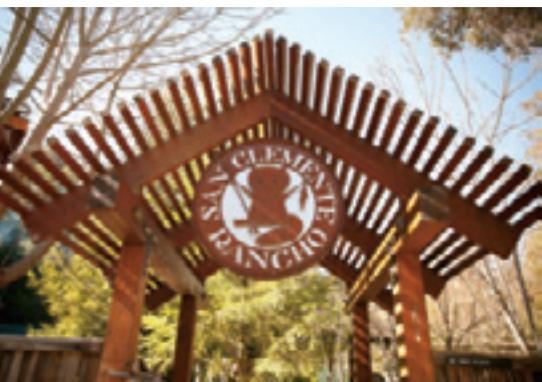
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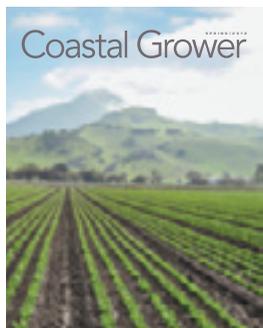
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By Melody Young



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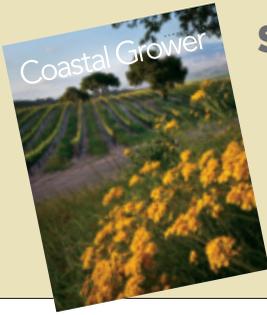
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Food Fight

An unforgettable scene from one of my favorite movies is when John Belushi starts the food fight in the cafeteria of Faber College in the classic film: *Animal House*. I must confess: my freshman year at college a group of students thought it would be fun to start our own food fight—fun until the staff blocked the doors and made us clean up the mess.

There's another food fight brewing and it's not in the cafeteria—it's on Capitol Hill. While the halls of the Senate and Congress may be decorated with polished marble and shined alabaster don't be fooled. This food fight is getting downright messy.

It started a few years ago when the USDA's Food Guide Pyramid was replaced with MyPlate. Commodity groups fought to get their "share" of the plate, and the fruit and vegetable industry won a major victory when half the plate was designated ours.

Now a different type of food fight is brewing via the 2012 Farm Bill's Federal Food Assistance Program, which encompasses the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Snacking Program. It appears lobbying groups from the canned, frozen and dried fruit and vegetable industries are urging lawmakers to open the program to "all forms" of fruits and vegetables. Organizations from the Canned Food Alliance (a group of steel manufacturers) to the American Fruit and Vegetable Processors and Growers Coalition claim all forms provide adequate nutrition to children and "the concept of protecting fresh produce from processed fruit and vegetable competition is absurd."

In a way it's a compliment. Obviously the fresh produce industry is getting the ear of lawmakers and making progress towards advancing fresh produce programs in our nation's schools. In a way it's expected. After all, these lobbying groups are paid to keep market access for their products. It's their tactics that concern me.

Not only are they saying the fresh industry is looking for protectionism, they claim fresh produce is more expensive, could be less nutritious, requires prepping for

serving that schools aren't capable of and, yes, have a "...history of causing foodborne disease outbreaks."

I'm always up for a fair fight but attacking the safety of fresh produce is a low blow and shows how far they will go to reach their goal. Some rhetoric claims that twice the number of school children could be fed nutritious snacks if the schools used frozen, canned or dried forms. They claim their product versions are easier to store, available year-round and have a longer shelf life.

I claim even if fresh produce is more expensive the government has the money to pay for it and should put the right priorities in place to make sure kids have access to our bounty's finest, freshest and most nutritious. I claim the fresh produce industry has a supply chain more than capable of getting fresh produce to any school in America and into the hands of children. I claim we all know the difference you experience when biting into a fresh peach versus using a fork to pick canned peach slices out of syrup.

The fresh produce industry doesn't ask a lot of our government. We are unsubsidized and under researched. Everyone deserves access to fresh produce—particularly our children—regardless of income or geography. It's a shame the frozen, canned and dried fruit and vegetable industries are using bare-knuckle tactics while trying to grab all of the school foodservice market.

Biting into a fresh apple is not the same as eating apple sauce. It's unjust to claim that low-income students should have the latter because of cost and convenience. The FRESH Fruit and Vegetable Snacking Program is just one of many in the Farm Bill and is an ideal vehicle to teach children about where their food comes from while providing a fresh experience.

That is something worth fighting for.



Contributors



ABBY TAYLOR-SILVA

Abby is Vice President of Policy and Communications at the Grower-Shipper Association of Central California. Her family farmed in Monterey County for over 50 years. She is a graduate of UC Davis. She is Past President of the Central Coast Ag Task Force, Past President of California Women for Agriculture's Salinas Valley Chapter, Food Safety Director to statewide California Women for Agriculture, past Board Member for Central Coast Young Farmers and Ranchers, a member of the Rotary Club of Salinas and the UC Davis Salinas Valley Alumni Chapter. She lives in Salinas with her husband and daughters.



BURTON ANDERSON

Burton is an author and historian whose works include "The Salinas Valley: A History of America's Salad Bowl," "California Rodeo Salinas: 100 Years of History," and numerous other articles and studies. A contributing member of the Monterey County Historical Society, Anderson also is a speaker on topics related to the environment, culture and world agriculture. Burton is also a member of the Board of Governors at the University of California, Berkeley, College of Natural Resources (formerly the College of Agriculture).



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David is Executive Director of the Grower-Shipper Association Foundation, whose mission is providing the public with factual and educational information about the agricultural industry. He is active in fund raising with the Christy Bonetti Children With Cancer Fund through the Rhett Bell Foundation. Dave is a certified sports official, and can be yelled at on many different football, baseball and softball fields throughout the Central Coast. Dave and his wife, Ellen, a nursing supervisor and South County native, live at the end of Corral de Tierra Road in Salinas, CA.



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JESS BROWN

Jess serves as Executive Director of the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau and the educational organization, Agri-Culture. His community activities include past-president of the Cultural Council of Santa Cruz County, Monterey Museum of Art, Cabrillo College Foundation and Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County. Jess served as chairman of Goodwill Industries for Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Luis Obispo counties. He also served as commissioner of the Santa Cruz County Parks and Recreation Department. Currently, Jess serves on the board for Leadership Santa Cruz County, Santa Cruz Area Chamber of Commerce and chair of the Tannery Arts Center.



JON D. ALEXANDER

Before joining Western Growers, Jon worked in private practice focusing primarily in litigation and bankruptcy. Jon provides legal counsel to Western Growers' corporate entities and senior management. Jon's litigation experience includes representation of clients at the state, bankruptcy, and federal court level. Jon earned his B.S. in 1999 and his J.D. in 2003 from the University of Idaho. He is admitted to practice before the Supreme Court of California, State courts of California, and the Central and Northern District Courts of California.



DEBRA COUCH

Prior to opening Debra C, owner Debra Couch worked in the retail industry for fifteen years and opened her first store in Beverly Hills in 1982. The original 350 square foot space is now a 3,000 square foot fashion heaven in the heart of Beverly Hill's shopping mecca. She also has a 4,200 square foot store in The Crossroads Shopping Center in Carmel. Debra is an active advocate for a variety of special needs in her local communities and volunteers through presenting fashion shows and other philanthropic events for nonprofit organizations.



ELIZABETH WELDEN-SMITH

Elizabeth joined the National Steinbeck Center in 2011 as Curator of Education and Public Programs. She received her Master's in Museum Studies from the Australian National University and her Bachelor of Arts in European History and Film Studies from Mills College in Oakland, California. She has worked with international museums including the National Gallery of Australia, the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum, Smithsonian, and the National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian. Elizabeth has also worked for the Sydney-based cultural nonprofit, International Cultural Exchange, on community pride building programs for Sydney's Western suburbs.



GINA NUCCI

As Director of Healthy Culinary Innovation at Mann Packing Company, Gina manages product development and marketing for the foodservice division which includes culinary outreach and menu development. Gina sits on the United Fresh Fresh-Cut board of directors and participates in fundraising for Produce Marketing Association's Foundation for Industry Talent. Locally, Gina is President of Healthy Eating Lifestyle Principles board of directors, and volunteers for the American Heart Association's Go Red for Women Campaign. She graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture with concentrations in Nutritional Sciences and Dietetics from the University of Arizona.



JULIANNE LEAVY

Julianne is a practicing Marriage and Family Therapist and Executive Director of Harmony At Home. Julianne grew up in Big Sur, went to San Diego State University and returned home in 1992. She completed her Master's in Clinical Psychology at John F. Kennedy University in San Jose in 1996. She has been a practicing therapist in Carmel for 16 years. Julianne and her brother Mike founded Harmony At Home, a non-profit organization in 2004. She resides in Carmel Valley with her husband and son.



KAREN NARDOZZA

In addition to her role as managing editor of Coastal Grower, Karen owns Moxxy Marketing, a small but mighty full-service marketing agency in Salinas providing brand development, website design, marketing strategy, advertising, graphic design, PR and event management. Karen's industry experience ranges from agriculture to professional services, technology, food and beverage, nonprofit and more. Karen is active in the Salinas Valley community. She is a member of the Rotary Club of Salinas and serves on the boards for the Grower-Shipper Association Foundation and Salinas Valley Half Marathon, of which she is also the founder. www.getmoxxy.com



LAURIE DANIEL

A resident of the Santa Cruz Mountains, Laurie has been a journalist for more than 30 years. Although she grew up in wine-deprived surroundings in the Midwest, she quickly developed an interest in wine after she moved to California. Her weekly wine column is published in several newspapers, including the San Jose Mercury News, and her work has appeared in magazines such as Food & Wine, Wine Country Living, Wines & Vines, Drinks, and Wine Enthusiast. She is a frequent judge at wine competitions in the U.S. and abroad.

Contributors



LUIS ALVAREZ

When Luis founded Alvarez Technology Group in 2001 he envisioned creating a professional information technology services firm that would cater to the specific needs of small- and mid-sized companies, affordably providing the same IT support for which Fortune 100 companies pay a premium. The company is now recognized as the premier IT leader on the Central Coast. Luis has a B.S. in Information Technology and M.B.A. from the University of Phoenix, and is a retired non-commissioned officer of the U.S. Air Force where he spent his career working in the field of Intelligence.



MELODY YOUNG

Melody, a lifestyle consultant and owner of MY DESIGNS, provides custom tailored home, personal, and professional services to meet each clients' unique needs. With many years' experience as a designer and organizer, Melody acts as the liaison between her clients' real world and their perfect world. Services include home design, organization and event planning, as well as custom gifts and accessories, and concierge services. She is a member of the National Association of Professional Organizers and donates time to various charities in Monterey County.



RAY GILMER

At United Fresh, Ray provides communications counsel on behalf of members, including recall and other crisis situations. Ray's background includes work in television news as a reporter or producer, where he contributed to a few crises as part of the job. Additionally, Ray has served as public affairs director for Florida Fruit & Vegetable Association, and as national media relations director for a major public relations agency, where his client list included Monsanto, Ralston Purina and Farm Credit Bank. Other experience includes directing U.S. marketing programs for BASF Crop Protection and BASF Crop Science.



STEPHANIE BOUQUET

Stephanie is a registered dietitian and owner of SB Nutrition Consulting. She holds a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Nutritional Science from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and Cal State University, Northridge. Since 1993, Stephanie has practiced in the field of nutrition with specialized board certifications in weight management, diabetes and sports nutrition. She offers individualized nutrition consultations, group style classes, athletic team presentations and wellness coaching services. As a native of Salinas, Stephanie returned to the area to raise her own family. www.sbnutrition.net.



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TONYA ANTLE

Tonya dedicated her thirty-year career to produce. She grew up on her family's table grape and citrus farm in Delano, California. At the peak of her career, she was Vice President of Organic Sales for Earthbound Farm and recognized as a true trailblazer for the organic produce segment. Today, she mentors future produce marketers as Adjunct Professor at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. Tonya volunteers for several boards including the Community Foundation for Monterey County where she is chairing a \$1.5 million endowment campaign for the Women's Fund.