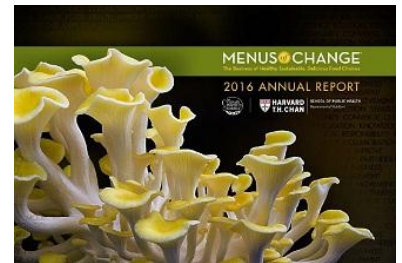


MENUS CHANGE®

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Marketing Spotlight: Produce Marketing Association Meets Entertainment Resources and Marketing Association

What will it take to sell consumers on fruits and veggies? Fresh Takes!



When it comes to selling food to American consumers, fruits and vegetables don't get the lion's share of the marketing budgets. That's a problem, because Americans on average aren't eating nearly enough fruits and vegetables compared to the daily recommended level (see [page 30](#)). But an unprecedented new partnership is betting on the potential of a powerful tactic in Hollywood: product placement. Last fall, the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) announced a new strategic alliance with the Entertainment Resource & Marketing Association (ERMA) to increase the

appearance of fresh produce on television shows, movies, and online entertainment. PMA is the leading trade association for all segments of the global produce industry, and ERMA is an association of entertainment marketing professionals who work with production studios. They have a track record of growing demand for products by making them ubiquitous on-screen. The idea behind their new joint program "Fresh Takes" is to weave in more air time for fresh produce items so that Americans subconsciously start to associate these items as normal, as part of everyday life.

People watch an average of four hours of television per day; that's just the screen time for TV, which becomes much greater when you add entertainment consumed online. Product placement is a tried and true strategy, from cars to designer sunglasses, but until now, the snack and soda companies have been the ones mostly taking advantage on the food side. Now, for what appears to be the first time in the history of Hollywood, fresh, non-branded fruits and vegetables will start to get written into the plots of popular TV shows: For instance, when the Dunphy family from "Modern Family" is eating out at a restaurant, they might order pizza with

mushrooms and green peppers instead of sausage and extra cheese; or when they go out for ice cream they might order it with fresh berries on top. Produce items will also start to appear more on sets and in the background of shows and movies: Again in “Modern Family”, Phil and Claire Dunphy might have an argument in the produce aisle of the grocery store, while pushing a cart full of fresh produce; or more generally, two characters might have a conversation in a kitchen with a large bowl of fruit sitting on the counter.

With the program tagline “We supply the produce. You supply the set,” PMA, through its members, makes non-branded fresh produce items available to motion picture companies, TV studios, and online entertainment producers to use at no charge. Given PMA’s philosophy of “More Matters,” Fresh Takes could build on existing product placement—say, when a cereal company is already paying to be in a scene, Fresh Takes can nudge directors to have the character add bananas. There are also opportunities for what waiters do on screen, adds Kathy Means, vice president of industry relations for PMA. A script could have waiters asking diners if they want to add a salad to their entree, she says, or when mentioning the evening’s specials, they could be reading those that make plant-centric dishes sound the most irresistible. “How [characters] order, those throw-away lines could have a huge impact on somebody at home,” Means says.

Importantly, though, Fresh Takes does not involve a health message. Means says, “We want this to be reflective of how people are. We know that when January comes and everyone tries to make radical change it lasts two weeks; if they’re lucky, to the Super Bowl. So instead of making it be this medicine message, just make it part of what people are already doing. When they order a hamburger, make sure they say ‘with lettuce and tomato and onion’ on it.” Much of the program involves building new relationships with Hollywood’s writing teams. It’s important to make these insertions as natural as possible, fitting with the personas and habits that popular television and movie characters are already known for. The last thing Fresh Takes leaders want is viewers thinking, “But Jay hates to cook, he would never do that!”

This innovative approach to increasing fruit and vegetable consumption in the United States has huge potential because humans relate and identify with the characters we watch on TV.

This is especially true for children. While Fresh Takes is targeting all consumers, special opportunities exist for marketing “F&V” to children, so studios like Universal, Fox, and especially Disney offer some of the most promising potential collaborations. For adults, the goal is to make it culturally normal to frequently consume fresh fruits and vegetables; for children and teenagers, it’s about that plus the cool factor.

“When popular characters choose produce from the store, the fridge, or the restaurant menu as part of their everyday interactions, viewers will identify with that as the right way to eat,” said ERMA President Michael Schrager in the press release. “By identifying shows with school age characters we hope we can help move today’s youth to a healthier lifestyle and lessen the incidence of problems such as childhood obesity.”



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