



Sweet Palermo peppers changing perceptions

With Sweet Palermo peppers reaching commercial volumes in Oceania this spring, the major challenge is changing consumers' perceptions of the pointed peppers.

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Rijk Zwaan Australia's James Bertram tells Produce Plus about the Dutch vegetable seed specialist's plans to produce its Sweet Palermo peppers in Australia and New Zealand, with commercial availability expected across Oceania this spring. While the sweet, pointed pepper comes in a bright red shade for now, yellow and orange varieties are on the horizon as well.

Is Rijk Zwaan working with any particular growers or partners to develop Sweet Palermo, or focusing on any specific growing regions?

James Bertram: At present, the main production of Sweet Palermo in Oceania will come from greenhouse crops. These have a long season, and in some cases we have growers who are able to stagger planting dates of crops meaning that there is the potential for 52-week supply from within the region.

Are you working on any promotional or marketing campaigns for the Sweet Palermo pepper in Oceania?

JB: Rijk Zwaan has developed a range of ideas to help support promotional activities for Sweet Palermo and we make these available to the growers to use within their own promotional and marketing activities. At Rijk Zwaan, we know the fantastic flavour of Sweet Palermo first hand, but we want consumers to be able to identify that at a glance, and for our growers to see a benefit from that recognition as well.

What have been some of the major challenges in developing the Sweet Palermo in Oceania?

JB: True; it hasn't been completely trouble free to develop Sweet Palermo in Oceania.

New Zealand already has a few of growers who do a great job growing Palermo RZ, the variety that started it all, however, Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus (TSWV) has complicated growing Palermo RZ in Australia, and it is currently grown only in areas that are free of TSWV. Varieties in the pipeline feature additional resistances to offer more Australian growers the opportunity to deliver this fantastic product to the market in Australia on a larger scale.

The other problem has been initial consumer perceptions of pointed peppers; a lot of consumers see a pointed pepper and immediately think that it is hot, but that's not always the case!



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The Sweet Palermo varieties have a fantastic flavour that is sweet, aromatic, complex and a little bit spicy, but not hot at all. Luckily, one taste is enough to change people's minds and we have dedicated growers who have been developing these sweet pointed peppers and helping to inform consumers. As a result, the message is really breaking through.

How much potential do you see for the Sweet Palermo pepper to take off in Australia and New Zealand and why is this?

JB: Sweet Palermo can be used in many different styles and methods of cooking. It's great as a raw ingredient either on its own as a snack, with dips or in salads. When cooked it develops even more flavour and sweetness so it is brilliant grilled, on the BBQ, stir fried, or as an ingredient in casseroles and sauces.

Sweet Palermo can introduce consumers to a new experience in capsicums and peppers, and as a result we believe it will grow the overall market, rather than just eating into the market of blocky peppers, meaning that the potential for Sweet Palermo in Oceania and South East Asia is great.

(picture 01) Rijk Zwaan's Sweet Palermo peppers are versatile enough to be used cooked or raw
(picture 02) Commercial availability in New Zealand and Australia is expected this spring



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surprisingly
sweet
pepper



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