

# NOTES

## Discussions of Branding and Marketing

### Hazelnut Grower's Conference

La Crosse, Wisconsin

March 5, 2022

During the conference there was a presentation on the work of the Hazelnut Branding Project and the team leading the effort. That was combined with a presentation on branding and marketing and how they are intertwined.

Following those presentations (and after a dinner break) there was a lengthy focus group session where the participants, having been divided into small groups of less than ten people rotated through three "stations". At each station they were asked to discuss a set of questions and a facilitator took notes on large flip charts. Photographs of the flipcharts are available online.

Here is an overview of the stations and the questions.

#### Knowledge

- What do home consumers need to know about hazelnuts?
- What do they need to know about Midwest-grown hazelnuts?
- What do chefs and food manufacturers need to know?

#### Branding

- What EXCITES you about successfully branding Midwest-grown hazelnuts?
- What SCARES you about successfully branding Midwest-grown hazelnuts?
- What QUESTIONS do you have about marketing and branding?

#### Story

- What makes Midwest-grown hazelnuts special?
- Why are hazelnuts important to YOU?
- What do you hope CONSUMERS will feel is important about Midwest-grown hazelnuts?

The remainder of this document is a verbatim transcription of the flipcharts. Notes from different stations were compiled together. The notes combine responses from different groups, thus, there is duplication of different ideas.

---

#### Knowledge

- Midwest nuts are tastier, healthier
- Health benefits, taste great
- Multi use (oil, meal, nuts, flour substitute)
- Variety
- Hazels are sustainable because of the perennality – no tilling, inputs
- \*LOCAL\*
- Get consumers to farms – tour – consumers don't know what they look like
- Stories: "they grow in the wild", "picked them as a kid"
- Options for farmers to diversify – land & income
- Seed (nut) to table events – connecting chefs w/farmers
- Restaurants - connect to local, "wisconsin foodie"

- Get celebs to do a story
- Additional questions in one group:
  - > How did you get started in hazels?
  - > Are Midwest hazels "healthier" because of healthy soil?
  - > Soil content makes it taste better?
- High protein, high energy
- Environmentally friendly – low fertilizer, no replanting, helps small farmers, inter-cropping, wind break, long term, 25 year rotation
- Tastes good – better than peanuts!
- If you like deluxe, hazelnuts are for you
- Supports family farms & rural communities

**KNOWLEDGE** (continued)

- Native – local – ethical – sustainable
- Premium quality (premium price)
- Emerging industry that's growing
- Scaling up (mfgers)
- Water consumption (drought tolerant)
- Healthy
- Lots of ways to use them (versatility)
- Recipe ideas (both)
- Skin care
- High in vitamin E
- Pig feed (finishing)
- Hazelnuts exist
- How to use oil & flour
- Can and are grown in midwest
- Differ from Oregon
- Processed here
- Ecological benefits
- Diversify farms
- Vitamin E, tannins
- Shell exfoliation
- Less water use
- How they are different than almonds
- Gluten free flour
- Where does organic fit in?
- Allergies (tree nut)
- Bitterness?
- Flavor profile
- Sell by variety? Trademark?
- Co-branding (maple & hazel, cran & hazel)
- Chefs/Manufacturers
- Consistent supply
- Size grades
- Small size is good!
- Taste - what makes them unique
- Nutrition facts
- Availability – where they're produced - local
- High quality – consumers need to know
- Oil can be used for many different things
- Anything essentially olive oil's used for
- Cosmetic/skin treatment uses
- How to use gluten-free flour
- Use as toppings/garnish
- Smaller nut produced, but sweeter
- Nutritional info – high in omega 3, heart healthy
- Compare to almonds/walnuts
- Health benefits (European research)
- Compare to european hazelnuts
- Compare hazelnut oil to olive oil
- Cooking benefits (lower smoke point)
- Direct consumption
- FLAVOR
- Topical applications (sunblock?)
- Where to purchase
- Recipes
- Midwest grown
- Native-based cross with European nuts
- Why costs different
- History of hazelnuts in US vs Europe
- Different species
- Bush vs tree
- How it adds value to food products (mfgr)
- Where are hazelnuts being grown (premium for local source)
- How grown – organic vs conventional
- What's our story?
- Positive environmental impact
- Be able to identify the nut in a lineup
- Healthy & tasty
- Environmentally friendly
- High protein content
- Great omega 6 fatty acid content
- Potent flavor – don't need a lot for impact
- roast/toast low & slow for flavor boost
- Can be used as whole, ground, flour, oil – versatile
- Long shelf life but freeze to maximize
- Good for folks with diabetes & heart disease
- Gluten free
- High energy, no sugar, corn syrup
- filling/satisfying
- Use shells for traction/deicing, weed control, mulch
- Don't overheat oil to retain flavor

## BRANDING

- Hazelnuts are new, ecologically friendly, old, native, belong on this landscape
- An alternative to corn/beans
- Passionate growers
- Fat & protein on a tree (eat less meat)
- Health benefits
- Skin care benefits
- By-products (grit in soap, mulch)
- Local (low CO2 for distribution)
- Regenerative ag. is taking organic to the next level
- As a long-lived perennial, hazels can be multi-generational, can build a legacy
- Carbon sequestration, windbreaks, shelterbelt, inter-cropping
- A new ingredient, flavor!
- Question: How hazels compare nutritionally with chestnuts?
- Created demand ----> Expand acreage ----> increased ecological benefits
- Creates a preference for midwest hazelnuts
- Hazelnuts :) / soybeans :(

### • Excited

- > Generally excited about success in branding
- > Fun being on the ground floor of something new, something we can pass on to the next generation
- > Make more money! Make a living
- > New flavors, new ideas, new recipes, better flavor
- > More sustainably grown, & local
- > Creating something new,
- > Presenting the product in a way that makes it “soar”
- > Education (of opportunities, product itself)
- > Starting on a blank slate, unlocking potential
- > Presenting a product we’re proud of
- > Becoming a name that’s widely recognized
- > Being part of it from “the ground up”, the potential – finding its “spot”
- > Interested in a Wisconsin product “pride”
- > The pride of producing the product,
- > Local/being involved
- > Exposure in large venues - sports game snacks
- > Sustainability of crop
- > Seeing that widespread
- > Raising awareness
- > 10% CAGR: maybe the floor could be even higher
- > More selling opportunity, more security
- > Local market/global market
- > Community

### • Scary:

- > Being the first
- > Not sure there will be a market
- > Risk of inadequate market or supply
- > Being taken over by a big corporation
- > Inadequate supply for demand
- > Staying up with demand to avoid disappointment,
- > Drop in unit price if huge acreages planted
- > Scary to not have enough crop,
- > Don’t brand all as organic (limited mgmt options)
- > Do so well we can’t meet demand, supply vs demand
- > A lot of room for failure, being so successful we can’t meet demand
- > Becoming the new commodity crop/mono
- > Corporations getting involved - mono
- > “Commodification” could lead to loss of family farm
- > Tension between small farms & large acres
- > Undersupply, allergies, food safety
- > Too old to start on such a longterm project
- > Local economics and jobs
- > exporting vs importing
- > More economic security - make a living
- > Proud - sell to the world, sell to neighbors
- > Reaching ecological sustainability
- > Continued supply/demand problems
- > Artificial market inflation (when subsidized)
- > Our crowd taken over by big companies,
- > Big contracts leads to stable prices which could be to their advantage and our disadvantage
- > Equipment costs increasing,
- > Takes LOTS of small growers hanging together well
- > Automation is scary; this is a legitimate worry - we’ve seen this happen – lessons to be learned from dairy industry

### • Questions:

- > How do we know that food is the right product to market vs skin care, etc?
- > Other products to market (shells, husks).
- > Who is doing the marketing? Who for?
- > Will there be focus groups after brand is developed to come back to this group for feedback?
- > Where does all of this lead to?
- > How do farmers work together?

### • Questions about **ingredient branding**:

- > Who owns/controls the brand?
- > Who can use it?
- > Is it membership restricted?
- > How will quality be policed?

## STORY

- Collaboration, viability, sustainable, perennial, endangered family farms
- Intentionally viable on SMALL scale - co-op model - small family growers
- Economic growth for local economies, scalable. Intercropping – integration
- Native plants – limited inputs needed
- Resilient
- Long term
- WI Ginseng – American
- Why?
- Environment
- Economy
- Regional food stability
- Healthy – diet & environment
- TASTE – this is the foundation
- Niche
- Sense of place
- Regenerative, climate friendly
- Healthy – feels good – physical, emotional
- Local – community-driven, involved, human interest, midwest market
- Nutrition
- Building familiarity for all aspects
- Slow growth as an asset
- Intention
- Can't "flood the market"
- Small scale
- Network with other small industries
- Value of midwest, small growers
- Scarcity
- Diverse uses
- Cosmetics
- Value-added = \$\$\$
- Stories from other countries with high consumption
- Not exotic – part of a normal diet
- Indigenous growers?
- History
- Recipes, medicine
- Bring indigenous growers & history to the table
- Culture
- Small family farms
- Local
- Native plant
- Wildlife of all types - birds – getting the crop before the wildlife does – it's that good
- Connection to nature
- Got to be connected to the land
- Shared with wildlife
- Sustainable
- Comparison with industrial farms - visible difference
- Change the perception of farms – beautiful, clean
- Why?
- Great place to be outside
- Farm diversification
- Longevity
- Sustainable
- Farmer run & controlled
- Independence
- Safety
- Low or no inputs required (fertilizer, etc)
- Limited waste – use the whole crop
- Niche
- Resilient
- FAMILY
- Committed, passionate, risk vs reward – not in it for money
- Small farms – Story - connection
- Excited about potential
- Cooperation
- Collaboration
- HOPE – legacy – future
- Transition from reaction to big ag to consumer focused
- How will we define the midwest?
- MIDWEST grown hazelnut
- Polyculture & environmentally friendly
- Fewer inputs
- Fresh and TASTY
- Locally grown – short supply chain
- Northern/local alternative to olive oil
- Native to this region
- Great as ingredient – not just as a whole nut
- Don't need irrigation
- Superfood – treating themselves well
- First commercially produced nut in midwest
- Diversity (growers, landscape, consumption, outlets for use – flour, feed)
- Large & small growers
- Different preparations of hazelnuts (growing)