



Centralized packing continues to be a game changer for Sonora grape producer

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Nogales, AZ- In recent seasons, Divine Flavor and its growing locations at Grupo ALTA have been converting all their operations into centralized packing facilities. As the company has grown into one of the largest suppliers of Mexican table grapes, these additions to their infrastructure have immediately contributed to their ability to pack multiple presentations for various clients at the same time. After several seasons of operating under the centralized packing structure, the company feels the greatest attributes relate to the filtering of quality problems and having proper packing temperatures once the grapes are harvested from the fields.

“At the beginning, one of the biggest advantages of having a centralized packing facility was that we could package any presentation and give our customers a guarantee regarding the specifications and weights”, said Carlos Bon, Vice President of Sales, Divine Flavor.

“After several seasons of using a centralized facility for our grapes, we greatly recognize two very important factors; one being a bit more obvious- when everything is filtered through one central location, this allows our quality control teams to have the eyes and direct supervision of every box being packed. Secondly, we are able to operate faster throughout the entire process, and one of the greatest advantages having a central packing shed gives our operation the ability of removing the grapes from the intense heat and have the fruit go into the pre-cooled rooms immediately.”

During the Sonora, Mexico grape season, temperatures average around 105-110 degrees once the end of May and first days June begin Carlos explains.

“When the fruit comes into the packing facility, the pre-cooling process starts right away and gradual stages”, said Bon.

“By the time the grapes are packed, they’ve already reached a temperature of around 55 degrees, improving the condition of the fruit dramatically.”

Carlos also mentions this year has been a challenging for many Mexican grape growers due to labor issue but also due to the popular demand of special packs at the retail level.

“Thankfully we have not had any issues regarding the lack of labor but we’re seeing our competitors are having a tougher time and we know this because we are being asked to pack more special or fixed weights packs from customers who don’t usually ask us to pack for them. These special presentations require more time and when there’s labor issues or you’re operating at less than full capacity, growers can’t afford to risk time so for us, this has been an opportunity to take on that challenge and having a centralized packing facility allows us to do it with ease.”

In 2019, one of Divine Flavor/Grupo ALTA’s largest grape growing fields, Pozo Manuel, in the region of Pesqueira, Sonora, opened its brand-new packing facility and became one of the largest of its kind for packing table grapes, a concept and model which has been applied to all the Grupo ALTA locations. The facility, occupying more than 6,500 square meters and 10 packing lines with the latest modern features, was designed to incorporate the best processes for a grape grower’s table grape season.



It was mentioned each packing line is equipped with large monitors which display all the packing specifications per presentation being packed. This inclusion, along with having quality supervisors stationed at each packing line, has significantly contributed to Grupo ALTA's goal of achieving better quality and improved conditioning across the board.

Bon also noted another important factor of having a centralized packing facility is how it has improved morale and productivity amongst the workers. "The new packing facility at Pozo Manuel and our other grape locations are air conditioned, well-lit, and music is played for the workers to create a fun and stress-free environment", said Bon.

"This facility is the first of its kind when it comes to table grapes, and we feel this commitment to innovation and infrastructure supports our vision of providing the best fruits to our customers."

Carlos continued to mention the packing crews even have competitions within the production lines to see who packs the fastest while maintaining accuracy.

"The packing supervisors are constantly looking for ways to bring out the best results, not only with the product, but with the employees as well", says Bon.

Divine Flavor/Grupo ALTA will be entering the peak production of their grape program coming from the Guaymas, La Costa, and Pesqueira region before moving into the later part of the Sonoran deal in Caborca. The company will start seeing its first shipments of Jellyberries in the next few days.

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