

Flexibility Is Key:

CAC Marketing Plan Adjusted for Lifestyle and Market Conditions

As the country headed into California avocado season and the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic began to alter the lifestyle of consumers, the California Avocado Commission (CAC) took swift, decisive actions to adjust its marketing plans accordingly. Media spend, messaging, custom content and the timing of advertising and public relations campaigns were altered to better reflect COVID-19-related lifestyle changes, including those that resulted from safer-at-home orders.

The first marketing action CAC took was to adjust its consumer messaging and tone to focus on being a helpful resource, including sharing content concerning how to wash and handle California avocados. With the majority of consumers now preparing meals at home, CAC's social messaging pivoted to content focused on California avocado usage ideas and recipes that are easy to make at home and do not require a lot of ingredients. Cognizant that consumers were making less-frequent shopping trips, CAC also shared a blog post and video demonstrating best practices to freeze avocados so consumers would be less concerned about food waste.

The Commission also began to assess the changing environments of Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest, where CAC maintains accounts to engage consumers online. Facebook and Twitter became resources for COVID-19 news, and resulting conversations were often negative in tone. Understanding that those negative conversations can make their way over to the Commission's paid posts that have exposure to larger audiences, CAC decreased this season's marketing budget for both social networks. The budgets for Pinterest and Instagram were prioritized as these platforms continued to showcase uplifting, educational and lifestyle-focused content suited to the California avocado brand. Pinterest served as the primary social channel for the Commission as the en-



Drew Bardana's custom recipe illustrations will be featured on Eater's site via a custom California avocado recipe hub.

vironment remained very recipe-focused and positive. Special Instagram Stories, a short-form video sharing method, also were developed to showcase quick and easy (but delicious) California avocado recipe demonstrations featuring CAC chef Jason Hernandez from CAC's Foodservice team.

Facebook and Twitter paid posts will remain paused until later in the

summer once the Commission has determined they can again be executed safely without negative implications to California avocado growers, California avocados and ultimately the brand. Organic posts not requiring a paid spend have continued on all platforms to reach existing followers. The Commission will continue to monitor the social platforms and determine the timing of social posts and themes based on consumers' changing habits and the content focus of each channel.

With fewer people leaving their homes, CAC shifted away from its planned outdoor advertising and re-allocated media to digital video on Hulu, Condé Nast and YouTube. The Commission plans to resume outdoor placements in Los Angeles, San Diego and San Francisco during late summer.

The Commission maintained its partnerships with its custom content partners, adjusting messaging as needed. Refinery 29 shifted from the planned "Road Trip" themed custom feature to a plan exclusively focused on pre-roll video and hard-working media. Because photography studios, not considered "essential businesses", were not available for use, Eater revised its recipe hub to feature California avocado-themed custom illustrations alongside California avocado-centric recipes. The Commission also plans to provide Tastemade with custom recipe videos, with shoots tentatively scheduled for May or June. Eater's custom recipe hub is slated to launch in June and Tastemade's recipe videos will most likely launch in July.

The Commission had well-developed plans in place for a variety of innovative events and activities showcasing California



Chef Jordan Kahn developed unique and beautiful California avocado courses including this Sorrel Curd, Powdered California Avocado Cream and Spruce.

avocados to targeted influencers and consumers, but quickly found creative new ways to connect with its targets when stay-at-home orders led to event cancellations and postponements. CAC adjusted its plans and showcased an “at home” angle that engaged the targeted influencers and media members scheduled to attend the California Avocado Month media event at renowned Vespertine restaurant in Los Angeles. With the event cancelled, the Commission instead arranged for the delivery of unique California avocado-centric meals created by Chef Jordan Kahn (named “best new chef” in 2017 by *Food & Wine* magazine) to the homes of key L.A. media and influencers. Branded California avocado items also were delivered, and influencers were encouraged to share their love for their home-state fruit on their social channels.

When social distancing guidelines eliminated the possibility of hosting an in-person California avocado grove tour, CAC swiftly began constructing plans to host a virtual tour showcasing the unique story of California avocados. The video tour will highlight the rich history of California avocados, detail the comprehensive grove-to-table journey of the fruit and celebrate the fruit’s culinary and cultural impact. The 8 to 10-minute documentary-style video will take a more informational slant and feature storylines from those who play an integral role in the fruit’s cultivation.

The Pebble Beach Food and Wine Festival was postponed until the fall and the Commission will reevaluate its sponsorship for the event as more information becomes available.

Keeping in mind consumers’ new imperative to create meals at home, the Commission also shared easy-to-prepare California avocado recipes as well as the most popular California avocado recipe search trends and useful food preservation tips with media members. The Commission was able to continue its blogger advocate and The Scoop blogger partnerships as planned, showcasing California avocado recipes and preparation tips.



Chef Jordan Kahn, owner and executive chef of Vespertine created an eight-course California Avocado-themed meal that was delivered to top-tier media and influencers to generate excitement for California Avocado Month.



Cara Cifelli of Cara’s Kitchen reinterpreted a comforting classic – Loaded Baked Potato with California Avocado “Sour Cream,” Broccoli and Cheddar Cheese.

The Commission’s nimble adjustment of its social content, media plans and public relations activities ensured CAC marketing funds were used prudently and effectively on media channels that have seen the most growth and impressions during COVID-19. By seeking new ways to engage with consumers and providing them with recipes and storage methods that suit their new stay-at-home reality, the Commission successfully highlighted the availability and versatility of the fruit during peak season. Overall, the media plan across the entirety of the season is slated to garner 421 million impressions. The Commission will continue to track impressions, clicks, video views and engagements and adjust its plans as needed to maintain flexible campaigns that drive awareness of premium California avocados. 🥑