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USPB Launches Spud Nation™ Food Truck Venture



Innovative Marketing Program Unveiled at POTATO EXPO 2016

LAS VEGAS (January 13, 2016)—The United States Potato Board (USPB) just launched its first Spud Nation™ Food Truck at POTATO EXPO 2016. This foray deeper into experiential marketing is an entirely new, proactive and aggressive demand-building approach for potatoes. USPB President and CEO Blair Richardson unveiled the Spud Nation Food Truck at the conclusion of the “If You Can See It, You Can Be It” luncheon keynote address, amid an entertaining curtain drop before excited EXPO attendees. Afterwards, industry members eagerly gathered around the truck, dubbed “Bettie,” for walk-through inspections, “kicking the tires” and learning more about this new USPB foodservice venture.

After the unveil, Richardson explained why food trucks will provide valuable demand building opportunities for the U.S. potato industry. “By 2017, food trucks will be a \$2.7 billion market according to the National Restaurant Association,” he said. “Currently food trucks are only reaching about 50 percent of the U.S. population, but it’s one of the fastest growing market segments in foodservice, and several sources reveal there are huge opportunities for the future. Seventy-one percent of Americans polled in a recent survey indicated they are comfortable buying meals from food trucks. We need to be a leader and trend setter in this rapidly changing environment.”

NEW MARKETING PROGRAM

Spud Nation food trucks are part of the new marketing and education programs to be launched by the USPB in 2016. The state of the art food trucks are owned by the 2,500 farming families involved in the potato industry. This means the USPB will control how potatoes are used and presented and the messages used. Food trucks are dynamic “billboards” showcasing the food they create and taking it to consumers where they live and play.

Static billboard advertising in major markets, like Denver, CO, can run as high as \$12,000 per month. Spud Nation food trucks are much more than mobile advertising, though. This venture enables the USPB to do new things, such as partnering with other industry groups in unveiling and rotating innovative new product launches. Spud Nation will have direct contact and actual consumer interaction at many levels. The USPB will have data on new, exclusively featured products, to share with the industry.

This food truck enterprise will enable the USPB to carry its message to market and leverage the messaging and health benefits of potatoes which have been gathered over many years of research. It will be a small, yet extremely visible and growing part of the USPB marketing programs that is scalable. Spud Nation will provide a direct, experiential marketing channel for engaging consumers with globally inspired potato dishes they have never seen or considered before.

VIBRANT DINER TARGET

Food trucks appeal to consumers who are called “Vibrant Diners.” From USPB research, this target is a grouping which falls within the “Adventurous Diners” and “Live to Eat” market segments. This food truck target consumer trends heavily toward millennials who are male, and they are important because they influence other consumers. This is how trends often begin in the food world. This generation’s age range is 18-34, so they tend to be younger. Vibrant Diners live in higher income households with annual income averaging \$70,000. In education, 52 percent have college or advanced degrees, and 57% are employed full or part-time.

Vibrant Diners are adventurous eaters who favor potatoes. They have 5.2 average weekly potato meal occasions, while the general population eats potatoes 4.1 times a week. They are frequent diners who often eat on the run. They prefer fresh foods over frozen or canned alternatives, but they are on the lookout for quick and easy meal options.

In their dining experiences, Vibrant Diners are looking for variety and adventure. Food truck menu offerings fulfill this need with potato dishes drawn from the Board's programs in 23 countries around the world. They enjoy different types of food and seek variety in everyday life. They choose tasteful food options, caring more about indulging food cravings over making healthy mealtime selections.

SPUD NATION OBJECTIVES

Spud Nation will have an objective to average \$250,000 in total revenues per truck. The best food trucks produce \$500,000-\$750,000 in total revenues, so there is definite potential to earn above \$250,000 per truck. Spud Nation trucks will launch with 9 menu items made with a vast array of U.S. potato products. Log on to www.spudnation.org to learn more about the Spud Nation Food Truck.

For more information on the USBP's mission to "Strengthen Demand for U.S. Potatoes" by creating positive change in the industry through innovative and inspiring approaches, please visit www.uspotatoes.com. In an effort to enhance diversity of the Board, USDA encourages women, younger growers, minorities, and people with disabilities to seek positions on the board.

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