


Committed to fresh and local: Here sets its sights on being the first national local brand

 foodnavigator-usa.com/Article/2018/01/26/Committed-to-fresh-and-local-Here-sets-its-sights-on-being-the-first-national-local-brand

Here is led by Nate Laurell (CEO) and Megan Klein (president), and offers a range of cold-pressed juice, dips and spreads, and salad dressing made with as many local ingredients as they can pack into them.

The juices and dips undergo high pressure processing (HPP), and have a shelf-life of 60 days, Klein told FoodNavigator-USA, while the shelf-life on the salad dressings are six months. They could distribute and sell them further afield than the Midwest, she said, but Here is, *“dedicated to becoming the first national local brand”*.

The five year plan has the company recreating the model in the northeast, the west coast, and the south east, with the same model of sourcing ingredients from those regions.

“We believe there is room for this. Retailers need and want to get more local products in their stores and our brand is resonating with consumers,” said Klein.

Demand for local

Consumer demand for local is definitely on the rise, with consumers viewing local producers and small farmers as having more integrity, according to Hartman Group. Consumer trust is bolstered by the shorter commodity chains, smaller scales of production and proximity to the sources, and local products are viewed as being more authentic and fresher.

Additional data from Packaged Facts put sales of local foods in the US in 2014 at \$12 billion – or 2% of the total national retail sales of foods and beverages. However, the growth in local foods was predicted to outpace total food and beverage sales, with local food sales forecast to hit \$20 billion in 2019.

A National Consumer Survey of US adults conducted by Packaged Facts in November 2014 found that 53% of respondents specially sought out locally grown or locally produced foods, with 19% “strongly” agreeing and 34% “somewhat” agreeing. In addition, almost half the respondents agree they were willing to pay up to 10% more for locally grown or produced foods, and almost one in three said they were willing to pay up to 25% more. A third of consumers also claim to consciously purchase locally grown or locally produced foods at least once a week.

Here as a brand is less than one year old, but Klein and Laurell's commitment to local food goes back much further. Both were involved in FarmedHere, a commercial-scale hydroponic farm in Bedford Park, near Chicago's Midway airport. When that closed its doors in early 2017, the parent company Here Holdings shifted its focus and resources to juices, salad dressings and dips.

"Our goal is to put local in more areas of the store," Klein told us. "Farmers need additional outlets for their produce."

Most of the local ingredients the company uses are from Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan. Ingredients, such as apples, wheatgrass, and basil are available year-round in the Midwest, while ingredients like beets are available for most of the year.

A quick glance of the label reveals some non-Midwestern ingredients like pineapple and orange, which Klein says are used to give consumers a variety of juices and to enhance the flavors of the products. *"Every product supports local farmers,"* she said.

The company has built up a small but impressive list of retail partners, including Marianos, Whole Foods, Treasure Island, and more recently Jewel-Osco, as well as independent retailers and outlets like Eataly and Ipsento Coffee.

Who's buying? Perhaps unsurprisingly the main consumers purchasing Here products are people in their 30s and 40s, and includes single people and people with kids, she said. *"The dips are really interesting for kids, because there are more veggies in there than hummus."*

To hear more from Klein and Laurell, please watch the video below: