

SUMMER IS IN FOR A WILDEKLAWER ‘SWEET SURPRISE’

Red, Orange and Yellow Seedless Watermelons launched in SA by Wildeklawer

Fruit lovers are in for a real treat this summer with the launch of “Sweet Surprise” from growers, Wildeklawer. South Africa’s favourite refreshing fruit, the watermelon – with its origins traced back thousands of years ago to the Kalahari Desert - is now available in a seedless variety that comes with the unique kick of three brilliant colour variants – traditional red, orange and yellow seedless watermelons. Summer meal times will never look or taste the same again!

“While seedless watermelons have been around for some 50 years and enjoy huge popularity around the world, large scale marketing of the colour variants in orange and yellow is a world first, pioneered right here in South Africa,” says Louis de Kock, owner of Wildeklawer and also title holder of National Farmer of the Year for 2006.

The first breakthrough in seedless watermelons was made in the 1950s in Japan however issues around the quality and taste of the fruit required ongoing refinement. By the 1980s intensive research and development resulted in substantial plant and fruit quality improvements and watermelon took off in the US, followed by countries such as Australia and Spain where seedless watermelons now constitute about 80% of the market.

“Starke Ayres, a leading seed supplier in South Africa has conducted intensive trials on varieties suitable for South African growing conditions and markets. In partnership with Wildeklawer, a huge amount of work has been done to deliver a product with suitable cultivation practicalities as well as taste and texture qualities that would find favour with South African consumers,” explains Louis.

“Initial trials and small commercial plantings of the red seedless variety have been done over the last few years to test market reaction which has been extremely positive. Now finally, on the eve of 2010 South Africa’s producers, retailers and consumers can look forward to one of the most exciting fresh produce launches and take pride in the fact that the orange and yellow colour variant is a unique, home grown breakthrough that is ‘crops’ ahead of countries around the world.

“Seedless watermelons are finally becoming more sought after as people realise the benefits of seedless fruit including improved texture as the fruit is crispier, improved flavour, brix (sweetness) and brilliant colours as well as a longer shelf-life. These benefits are due to the absence of mature seeds in the fruit and therefore a reduction in ethylene, the senescence hormone that watermelons are highly sensitive to. The seedless cultivars in our Wildecklawer range are of exceptional quality and the best in world,” concludes Louis.

“Sweet Surprise” will be officially launched to the media and retailers during November and immediately thereafter will be available to consumers throughout the country.

Putting the ‘seedless wonder’ through its paces at the CT and JHB launches will be two of South Africa’s top Chefs. And if you thought that the only way to eat watermelon was in bite sized, chilled chunks, think again! Stunning creations such as watermelon smoothies, sorbets, salads, entrees, soups and sauces are on the menu with top chefs including Andrew Atkinson (MichelAngelo in Sandton) and Rudi Liebenberg (Mount Nelson in CT).

About Wildecklawer

About 20 years ago, Louis de Kock turned his back on an academic career – he was lecturing in agricultural engineering at the University of Pretoria – and returned to the Northern Cape to start the Wildecklawer farm, on the banks of the Vaal River, near Barkly-West. With him went his lawyer wife, Cora, and together they’ve built Wildecklawer into South Africa’s biggest single producer of onions for the domestic market, as well as a significant onion exporter. In season, Wildecklawer packs more than 2.4 million onions a day onsite. Wildecklawer is also a significant potato producer and is one of the country’s biggest growers of wheat, butternut and the cucumber family including gems and pumpkin which was introduced in the 2005 season and is steadily rising in its contribution to the farm. But ‘the Wildecklawer Way’ has less to do with quantity and much more to do with quality.

'Sweet Surprise' Seedless Watermelon Launch – Nov 2009



Wildeklawer has been developed over the years to become one of the biggest vegetable farms in South Africa, and this is just the beginning in terms of the enormous growth potential that this farm holds. Nestled just outside the town of Kimberly, it would seem appropriate that this diamond in South Africa's food basket should find its home in the diamond capital of the world.

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