



## Something new under the Valley sun: Marketing a table grape

- *Delano growers start marketing what they say is a new table grape*
- *Tie marketing to pro basketball*

Two families of grape growers in the Central Valley have partnered with the National Basketball Association to introduce consumers to what they say is a new variety of table grapes.

The Campbell and Middleton families, owners of Blanc Vineyards in Bakersfield, have entered the company into a multi-year licensing deal with the NBA that will see official league and team logos on packaging for its newest varieties, including the “Pristine,” at supermarkets and in big box stores nationwide starting this month.

The Pristine, a large, crispy, green seedless grape, is the flagship proprietary variety grape of Blanc Vineyards. The growers claim it is the best green variety globally. It’s the result of more than 20 years of cultivation, they say.

Sounding more like wine tasters, the growers say the grape “has a crisp snappy texture coupled with a taste that starts off with a sweet vanilla streak and ends with a zesty Granny Smith apple finish.”

They are grown to retain firmness and fresh taste well after harvest.

“Green grapes are natural, healthy snack food. To most consumers, they're all the same, but they're really not, which is why we believe the NBA partnership makes sense,” says Jack Campbell, co-owner of Blanc Vineyards. “The NBA does an unbelievable job of highlighting their athletes, and we are applying the same strategy to the grape industry.”

He says the growers think that by putting consumers' favorite sport- or team-logo on our packaging, they will be able to instantly differentiate their products with a familiar and trusted name. “That gives us a huge advantage at points of purchase and again for return sales,” Mr. Campbell says.

The NBA licensing agreement isn't the first for the Campbells. Since 2015 the family has entered into licensing agreements with a variety of firms such as the Walt Disney Company to reach new customers.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture grapes represent a \$6 billion crop in the U.S. with more than seven million tons produced each year between 2015 and 2018, mostly in California.

Blanc Vineyards is a joint venture between Four Star Fruit Inc. and Delano Farms Inc. that began in 2010 in Delano, after growing grapes in Kern County for decades. This partnership gives both companies exclusive rights to grow and distribute Pristine variety grapes. The companies sell grapes from May to January and ship a combined 20 million boxes annually.