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By Michael Barker

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Record sales of AVA berries

Scottish brand's new marketing approach during the pandemic pays off with nearly five million punnets sold



Jilly McCord with AVA berries

Scottish berry brand AVA has reported its strongest seasonal sales to date after the launch of a new influencer and experiential marketing campaign shortly after lockdown was introduced.

So far this year, almost 4.7 million punnets of AVA strawberries have been sold across the UK, according to brand owner Angus Soft Fruits, an increase of over two million compared to this time last season.

Like others, the brand was forced to abandon planned marketing activity earlier this year as coronavirus put the UK into lockdown. Changing up its approach, AVA instead adopted targeted PR, digital advertising and partnerships with key influencers, including Scottish kilted yoga instructor Finlay Wilson and MasterChef 2019 finalist Jilly McCord.

Jill Witheyman, marketing manager at AVA Berries, said: "When lockdown started, we had to completely rip

up our summer 2020 marketing campaign and start again. We knew this was going to be a difficult time, not just for the British public but for our growers as well, so we had to get this campaign right.

"Looking at emerging trends, we focused our campaign on three core theme: spreading some summer cheer; looking after your mental and physical health at home, and enjoying moments of luxury while in lockdown."

Sales of strawberries across the board are up 15.8 per cent, according to data recently released by British Summer Fruits. "We know that sales of strawberries have been strong across the board this year and that this has contributed to our sales growth," Witheyman added. "However, it is clear that we've found a formula that has resonated with people during lockdown and has been crucial to helping deliver this incredible growth."

AVA Berries also launched a new partnership with McQueens Dairies to deliver thousands of punnets of AVA strawberries to households across Scotland during what would have been the start of the Wimbledon fortnight, and Witheyman described the activity as a "resounding success" that led to sales rising 59 per cent during the fortnight.

"We're in peak strawberry season now so we won't be able to judge the full success of the campaign until the end of the season, but we're on track for a record-breaking year. Our marketing is going to shift as lockdown eases and more people venture out of their homes, and we'll be focusing more on recipe and meal suggestions to make your AVA strawberries last longer, while also showcasing their sustainability, from plant to punnet."

<http://www.fruitnet.com/americafruit/article/1474/parts-of-san-diego-quarantined-as-psyllid-count-mounts>

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