Sunsweet Growers: Market Innovation Keeps Prunes Relevant to New Generation of Consumers

At nearly 100 years, Sunsweet Growers, Inc. can't be accused of being outdated. As it nears its centennial celebration, the grower-owned company is a model of modernity and product innovation.

Formed in 1917 as the California Prune and Apricot Growers Association, Sunsweet quickly emerged as the brand in which to market the fruit grown by its California growers. Today, Sunsweet is the world's largest marketer of dried fruit and its products can be found on the shelves of grocery stores across the globe.

With enviable brand recognition by 85 percent of American households, Sunsweet Growers has made prunes the most innovative and dynamic segment of the dried fruit category. The company has built a diverse product portfolio, opening a broader and younger demographic of consumers.

A prime example of Sunsweet's market innovation is Sunsweet Ones, individually wrapped prunes sold in attractive 7 ounce canisters and 12 ounce value packs. Prior to the introduction of Ones, US prune sales had been in steady decline. When Ones were released, total US retail prune sales grew for the first time in years, with Ones accounting for the majority of that market growth. An incredible 35 percent of Ones consumers are between the ages of 25 and 44.

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Other Sunsweet innovations in recent years include PlumSmart, a juice made from fresh prune plums that now accounts for 16 percent of the US prune juice market; PlumSweets, dark chocolate covered prune bites that are the top US selling chocolate coated dried fruit product, and; Plum Amazins, diced prunes targeted at both snack and ingredient markets.

Morrison & Company is proud to have served Sunsweet during our entire 10 year history. Our work has included several feasibility studies and business plans (including plans and studies for each of the breakthrough products described above); interim finance and accounting assignments; business line valuation; equity analysis; benchmarking; and grant applications.

For delicious recipes, a list of products, and tips for a healthy lifestyle supported by California prunes and other dried fruit, visit www.sunsweet.com.