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Mr. Greens drives the Miami culinary scene

BY ELIZABETH LOUISE HATT | NOVEMBER 27, 2018

Anyone who has passed through Miami has likely experienced Mr. Greens Produce. The foodservice produce provider delivers a wide-range of fresh foods to countless restaurants, hotels and country clubs across Miami and the surrounding region, playing a key role in the booming dining scene.

According to the Liberty City, FL-based supplier's sales manager, Nick Politis, the culinary landscape in Miami has changed significantly over the last five to 10 years. "A lot of chefs from around the world are opening restaurants to cater to the growing influx of residents and visitors looking for unique and high-quality dining experiences. As a result, chefs are demanding more specialty produce."

By staying focused on service, Mr. Greens has earned a reputation among chefs as the place to turn to for unique or unusual needs — and it has paid off. The company has grown significantly since Chief Executive Officer Peter Politis purchased the business in 2011. Having started with a dozen employees and a couple of trucks in a 3,000-square-foot warehouse, the team has upgraded to its current 20-square-foot space, and is now eyeing an even larger facility. "We keep outgrowing our space," said Nick Politis. "It is a good problem to have, of course, but it is a constant challenge. We are always looking for more drivers, more trucks, more resources; adding new accounts; creating new routes."

Much of the growth under Peter Politis' ownership over the last seven years evolved organically through word of mouth or referrals from chefs. "We have a great relationship with the chefs in the area," said Nick Politis. "They are our biggest cheerleaders and often bring us with them when they switch jobs."

He added that the company's presence and popularity in the region also speaks for itself: "If you see our produce truck pull up to the Four Seasons restaurant every day, eventually you will want to give us a call."

Growth for the sake of growth was never the goal; the focus has always been on customer service. So much so, that Politis remembers times when the brand was growing so fast that they had to "put the brakes on" in order to build the infrastructure needed to provide the level of service they are known for.

That goes beyond just stocking the right produce. For some chefs, it could mean making two or three deliveries in one day or weekend because their storage space is too small to stock the quantity they need in between regular shipments. In other cases, it requires Mr. Greens to alter its operating model, such as turning Sunday into a workday.

"No one was really selling on Sundays, so we opened on Sundays and chefs love it," said Politis. "It can be hard to predict what is needed for an entire weekend service so it helps that we can be there for them."

Catering to the local industry also means tapping into the local farmers. The "eat local" trend is as popular in Miami as it elsewhere across the country, and a lot of chefs like to promote the source of their ingredients, noted Politis. The Florida growing season is unfortunately quite short, but Mr. Greens works with local farmers for as long as possible.

For the produce that isn't grown locally, Mr. Greens' product comes from all around the world, specifically across North America and the West Coast. Getting its foot in the door in some regions proved a challenge in the beginning, but the company has since earned a reputation of reliability with some of the leading farms and producers in this hemisphere.

"We don't play games. We worked to win confidence and are now one of the largest independent produce companies in the state of Florida," added Politis.