Schools can provide a very viable market for locally grown or produced foods and Idaho Preferred works to help connect producers with school foodservice directors who are selecting foods for thousands of students who eat school meals. In 2018, Idaho Preferred worked with the Idaho School Nutrition Association to offer a Farm to School track at their annual summer conference. The Farm to School track kicked off with a “Birthday” party celebrating 15 years of Farm to School in Idaho. Attendees then heard from Idaho commodity commission partners who discussed using whole grains, beans, potatoes and barley in school meals. School foodservice staff tasted samples, received product and recipes and talked to producers about these Idaho products.

October is National Farm to School Month and Idaho Preferred encouraged schools to participate by providing menu and recipe ideas, sourcing recommendations and marketing materials. Each week of the month featured a different theme including melons, grapes, apples and potatoes. Students were invited to draw Idaho’s famous Spuddy Buddy doing a physical activity with prizes provided by the Idaho Potato Commission. Participating schools served Idaho-based meals, hosted special events and invited farmers to serve their products at lunch.

Summer feeding programs also provide a great opportunity to introduce students to seasonal produce. Idaho Preferred worked with ten feeding sites to source local foods and presented an educational program to the over 750 students who took part in this critical child nutrition program.

2018 was another successful year for the Idaho Preferred program. The Retail Roadshow that increased sales by over $2.5 million in 2017 was expanded to include additional grocery stores across the state and a Nursery Roadshow was added to promote Idaho-grown plant materials. Television and radio advertising helped promote these events and increase awareness of Idaho food and agriculture products statewide. Chefs and restaurants learned more about Idaho products through farm tours, food shows and distributor promotions and consumers were reached directly through special events, cooking classes and a robust social media campaign. Nearly 300 farmers, ranchers, winemakers, food producers and nurseries are benefitting from these programs. A recent membership survey showed sales increases of as much as 25% as a result of Idaho Preferred participation.

Each year Idaho Preferred looks for new opportunities to increase consumer awareness of Idaho foods through direct consumer contact. In 2018, some of these events included an agriculture tour in the Magic Valley for Registered Dietitians attending their annual conference; a new event in Coeur d’Alene that promoted local foods, specifically proteins, in a BBQ event called From the Ashes; and a partnership with Albertsons to promote Idaho foods at the Western Idaho Fair. Also new this year was a partnership with the Idaho Falls Arts Council, Idaho Agriculture in the Classroom, and Leadership Idaho Agriculture to educate youth in Eastern Idaho about Idaho food and agriculture. The “Artitorium” project was a month-long event that included hands on learning experiences for over 1400 children and their parents. Idaho Preferred continued to support Foodfort in 2018 - a popular component of Treefort Music Fest for local food and brew enthusiasts.
FOODSERVICE PROMOTIONS:
Nearly half of every consumer food dollar is spent at foodservice so it is critical to help chefs and restaurants recognize what is grown locally and where they can find it. To help in this effort, Idaho Preferred continues to host annual tours of local farms and ranches. In July, over 40 chefs, restaurant owners and culinary students visited potato, onion and melon farms as well as a cattle ranch and feedlot in Weiser River area.

Representatives from Sysco of Idaho and Food Services of America took part in the Chef tour and as a result, hosted sales promotions of local products in September and October. Sysco now has a multi-page Local Product Guide that makes it easier for their customers to identify Idaho products in the Boise warehouse. A promotion of products listed in this book led to an increase in sales of local products of nearly 40%!

Each month the Boise Chapter of the American Culinary Federation, the local chefs’ professional association, holds a meeting to provide training and education to its members. Idaho Preferred is on the agenda each month and invites local farmers and food producers to introduce their products to this influential group of culinary professionals. In addition Idaho Preferred sponsors an annual “Knowledge Bowl” that pairs chefs and culinary students in teams to test their knowledge of Idaho food and agriculture. Questions come directly from the tour which adds a lot of fun and encourages participation in the annual “Row to Restaurant” tour.

RETAIL PROMOTIONS:
Retail promotions continue to play a very important role in Idaho Preferred’s mission of increasing consumer awareness and purchase of locally grown products. The 2018 Retail Roadshow built on the very successful promotion of specialty crops that took place in 2017 that resulted in incremental sales of over 87 tons of Idaho produce. In its second year, the September roadshow included stops at 23 retail grocery stores across the state stretching from Coeur d’Alene and Moscow, south through the Treasure and Magic Valleys and east to Driggs and Preston. At Albertsons, Atkinsons, Broulims, Swensons, Stokes and Walmart stores, consumers sampled fresh produce, signed up for prize drawings and took advantage of great prices on peaches, pears, apples, sweet corn, melons, onions, potatoes and other fresh produce. The roadshow events were promoted via radio commercials, live radio remotes, Facebook ads and through social media posts. Participating stores received promotional materials including custom signage and produce bins as well as merchandising assistance.

In addition to the Roadshow, Idaho Preferred members had the opportunity to introduce their products to independent retailers through the Idaho Preferred pavilion at the Associated Foods Show in Salt Lake City. Ten companies took advantage of this opportunity to reach new retail customers.

Finally, as a result of meetings offered by Idaho Preferred with Albertsons in 2017, over 50 Idaho companies were able to place their products in the new-concept Broadway Albertsons store when it opened in 2018.

NURSERY PROMOTIONS:
A very effective produce Retail Roadshow in 2017 led to the introduction of a similar event to promote nursery products in 2018. The Nursery Roadshow included events at 10 retail nurseries in Twin Falls, Idaho Falls and the Treasure Valley. Each event included special promotions of Idaho-grown plant materials, special signage identifying locally grown items and an information table manned by ISDA staff. The events were promoted through radio ads and live radio remotes were held at select locations. In addition, social media posts and Facebook advertising helped increase awareness of Idaho nurseries, nursery products and special events.

www.idahopreferred.com

CONTACT IDAHO PREFERRED:
SKYLAR JETT 208.332.8542 | skylar.jett@isda.idaho.gov
MEGAN HARPER 208.332.8532 | megan.harper@isda.idaho.gov