



# Direct Marketing Ribes

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## Introduction

Traditional small fruit crops (blueberries, strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and table grapes) have seen widespread increase in demand from U.S. consumers due, in part, to their documented health benefits. Although Ribes (currants, gooseberries and



jostaberries) have not had the same familiarity among Ohio consumers, increased interest in purchasing local food and eating more fruit for

good health presents new opportunities.

Decisions to commercially produce small fruit crops such as Ribes should be driven by the availability of market outlets.



The following marketing outline provides guidance on developing a marketing plan based on knowledge of potential buyers and your production capacity; product selection, packaging and pricing; place of distribution; promotion and communications; managing the marketing process.

## Section 1: Marketing Summary

The Marketing Summary is the first page of your marketing plan, but it should be the last section you write. Summarize the key points that you have written in your Ribes marketing plan in this concise and compelling summary.

## Section 2: People - Potential Buyers

Marketing is not only much broader than selling, it is a whole business seen from the customer's point of view (Peter Drucker).

Producers can begin by exploring potential consumer and wholesale markets, such as restaurants, grocery stores, value-added food and beverage manufacturers. What are the trends and forecasts for small fruit purchasing preferences and behaviors? Which markets does the producer have the interest and capacity to serve?

Producers can list and visit with potential and existing customers, documenting their location, products interest, and anything else that demonstrates why they are interested in purchasing the Ribes fruit. The more a producer knows about buyers before planting a crop, the better they can select Ribes varieties and make decisions about packaging and other marketing factors.

In some countries, consumers are familiar with fresh and processed Ribes products. Growers near people who are already familiar with currants, gooseberries or jostaberries may have a larger, more receptive market.

## Section 3: Products and Services

Producers need to determine which Ribes fruit they will sell, in what quantities, when will it be available, as well as how the fruit will be packaged, labeled and priced. Pricing assumptions should include what, when, and how customers will pay.

Producers also need to consider what customers will do with Ribes. Will they eat them fresh or process them into jams, jellies, baked goods, juice or wine? For consumers, producers can include suggestions for use, recipes and proper handling methods in the packaging or linked to a website. For wholesale buyers, producers will need to package Ribes in the form preferred by the type of buyer. Grocery stores, restaurants and food/beverage manufacturers will all have different packaging and labeling specifications. The cost of packaging should be factored into pricing.

#### **Section 4: Place - Distribution**

Producers need to decide how and where to distribute the Ribes fruit? Producers selling directly to consumers could opt for a farm market, community farmers' market, or included the Ribes as a part of a CSA – Community Supported Agriculture. The transportation and storage used should provide proper temperature, protection and other considerations to maintain the best product quality. When distributing to wholesale buyers, producers will want to have an adequate delivery vehicle or other distribution method to make it easy for the buyer to receive the Ribes product.

#### **Section 5: Promotions**

Direct marketing is often referred to as interactive marketing because it goes beyond mass marketing's broad audience appeal and involves two-way communication between sellers and buyers (Spiller and Baier, 2005).

Because many consumers are unfamiliar with Ribes and their uses, a targeted promotional campaign should focus on creating awareness and providing education.

Regardless of the tactics used (traditional or social media), producers should communicate the benefits to consumers and wholesale buyers. Producers can practice a brief 'elevator pitch' that concisely and convincingly communicates Ribes benefits, what makes their fruit produce unique and why they should buy from them.

Producers will benefit from 'thinking like a customer' and then investing time and money into campaigns that create awareness, then trial (such as taste testing), then customer sales and then relationship development that supports customer loyalty and referrals. Producers will also want to be familiar with competitors in order to position their product and business with that information in mind.

When selling to wholesale buyers, producers have the opportunity to become 'market partners' – working together on marketing communications, providing the best product and creating great consumer experiences.

#### **Section 6: Process & Plan**

Putting together a marketing plan helps producers walk through the decisions they need to make in order to reach their business goals. The plan includes the P's already discussed, as well as planning for resource and risk management.

This section could include a marketing communications calendar that fits with the production calendar; financial spreadsheets and summaries of costs and sales projections; a list of food safety practices, certifications, insurance coverage and other relevant quality assurance considerations; a summary of human resource needs and training; measures of success (# of new customers, sales amounts with various places of distribution, ...); list of market data resources, publications, food directories and organizations the producer has joined to support their production and marketing; other risk or resource issues important to the producer's operation or the customers.

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