

No Risk, Peri & Sons *The Nunes Company* *No Reward*

by Jordan Okumura



David Peri (left) and Tom Nunes (T5)

Fresh produce is an industry of families—from the multigenerational and established, to those digging their fingers into that first bit of earth. Both stewards of the land and industry pioneers, The Nunes Company Inc. and Peri & Sons Farms are two of these leaders taking family to the next level as they guide their burgeoning partnership forward to the leading edge of the organic industry.

With the partnership entering its ninth summer this year, the roots of Nunes and Peri & Sons now collectively span eight generations, as well as a joint venture in the fertile soils of the cool desert climate of Yerington, Nevada, and a new state-of-the-art distribution center. With this new facility in Nevada, the two families will be able to produce more than 20 different organic categories across 3,500 acres together. It's easy to see that the future looks more than bright for these companies; it looks downright fruitful.

With their fingers on the pulse of organic growth, Tom M. Nunes (also known as T5), Vice President of Operations of The Nunes Company, Inc., and David Peri, Owner and Founder of Peri & Sons Farms, join me in Yerington, Nevada, to discuss the lay of the land and how a partnership is not a compromise, but an advantage.

“This joint-venture has strategically positioned us to build on the strengths of our individual companies and provide unrivaled service for our customers,” Tom shares with me. “The opportunities to continue building and developing our resources, operations, and distribution footprint began eight years ago, and this new facility truly solidifies our efforts today. This partnership provides us with the opportunity and ability to respond to the demands of today’s customers and consumers alike.”



The Nunes Company, Inc. Founders Bob and Tom Nunes

The new facility, Walker River Cooling, was opened in May of 2017 and services retailers, wholesalers, processors, and other buying organizations throughout North America. Nevada-based Peri & Sons, one of the country’s largest onion growing operations, and Salinas, California-headquartered The Nunes

Company, one of the nation’s largest grower/shippers of organic fresh produce marketed under the Foxy Organic brand name, are a match made in produce heaven. Starting with 16 acres just eight years ago, the two companies will grow and ship more than 25 million pounds of organic baby greens and 40 million pounds of organic, fresh vegetables this year.

“In 2008 our Senior Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Mark Crossgrove, and I went and visited Peri’s Nevada operations,” Tom says. “We were looking for diversification in the organic land base and Peri was looking to grow in the fresh vegetable and leafy greens arena. The rest is history.”

So, what is it that makes Yerington an ideal location for growing organic fresh vegetables? To start, the mild climate during the summer months, the elevation which situates Yerington at 4,390 feet, the quality and quantity of the ground water, fertile soil, and of course...the partnership itself.

“From the moment I first observed the fields being grown by David Peri, I had a feeling our relationship would be long-term,” Mark says of the experience. “The quality of product being produced and harvested by David and his team was exceptional, and I knew it would fit in perfectly with our future organic sales and marketing growth plans.”

But it is more than just a strategic move that brings these two powerhouses together, as Tom shares with me.

“The decision, on our part, to enter into this partnership with Peri & Sons was an easy one. The Peri & Sons family are hard-working, honest, progressive, and innovative people who are unbelievably committed to our industry, the land, and sustainable growth. Fundamentally, that is an incredible basis for building a partnership,” Tom tells me. “Their skill-set is a great complement to ours, and their culture and values align with our own as well. There has been a lot of common ground between our two companies. Over the last eight years, since this partnership really found its footing, we have developed a strong relationship with not only David Peri, but his wife, Pam, his family, and their dedicated and highly-valued team.”



David and Pam Peri

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-Mark Crossgrove

To say that the admiration between the two families is mutual is more than an understatement. David takes a moment to reflect, and echoes Tom’s same sentiment on the unique gravity of the partnership and its impact on the purchasing customer and the consumer.

“It is amazing how quickly our partnership took hold,” David tells me. “In 2009, we planted romaine for the Nunes team. I personally asked folks in the veg industry about the Nunes family and was told nothing but good things. I learned that their family was just like ours, because we had the same level of integrity and shared common core moral values. I just knew it would only be a matter of time before we would become the perfect partnership. For us, farming is personal and we have a passionate, hands-on approach to every aspect of growing, from the seed to the table. That shared vision is what has kept us thriving for almost a decade.”

What does this collaboration look like as Nunes and Peri & Sons get their summer organic program underway in Yerington? Peri & Sons will focus on the farming and production side of the operation, as well as the personnel side

to a degree. In addition, the infrastructure tied to harvesting and cooling, as well as some of the management in

conjunction with both companies’ personnel, will be a joint effort. As for the sales and marketing side, Nunes is taking that bull by the horns.

When I ask David what he believes created the need for the partnership, he tells me that for starters, he wouldn’t call it a need.



Yerington, Nevada

“It has been more like a natural progression of two family companies coming together to become smarter and more efficient. Our operations completely complement each other,” he says. “As partners, we believe the team effort and cohesiveness of the two companies will be difficult, if not impossible, to replicate by other veg companies in the industry. The Nunes family possesses the same work ethic as our family does. They are hardworking, honest leaders and innovators that care about the industry. Their level of expertise in harvesting,



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- Tom Nunes (T5)

cooling, sales, and marketing is unsurpassed. Our combined set of skills, along with our great people, truly create the perfect match.”

Each company brings a set of unique strengths, talents, resources, and perspectives to the table. Their ability to work so well together as a team and to communicate and execute on shared goals and objectives is key to that ongoing success, as Tom reinforces.

Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval has shared his thoughts on the venture in recent months, noting this project is a great example of the success he is witnessing across Nevada: “I am proud to congratulate and thank this hometown company for investing in the region and bringing good paying jobs to Lyon County. The commitment of these two family-run companies shows their ability to creatively and strategically meet the demands of the marketplace. Nevada is proud to be a part of this vision and the positive impact it will have on our community.”

The combined operations of the two companies have brought more than 800 jobs to Lyon County to date, with additional job growth projected upon completion of the new distribution facility.



Tom Nunes (left) and David Peri discussing plans for the Nevada facility



David Peri (left) and Tom Nunes on site

Construction of the new Walker River Cooling facility broke ground in early September, with the foresight and planning to allow the companies the capability of growing and expanding.

“We incorporated only the latest-and-greatest from a technology, product-flow, and efficiency standpoint,” Tom says. “Our goal is to use our more than 40 years of cooling experience and industry knowledge to bring to market the best of class in terms of cooling

mechanisms, temperature control, product flow, industrial safety, and food safety.”

Having more space will also allow them to consolidate and put loads together, an option that makes sense for their customers, while offering a heightened level of quality and consistency. The 20-week harvesting window, from May through October, complements Nunes’ and Peri & Sons’ 52-week programs, bringing customers a diverse portfolio of offerings and an unsurpassed level of customer service.

“It is Nunes’ focus to grow the right crop, in the right place, at the right time, to give us the highest quality product 52-weeks a year,” Tom shares, adding that Nevada’s 20-week window is a huge component to the current land base structure the company currently has in its fold. “The infrastructure, time, and money we’ve spent

collectively between Peri & Sons and ourselves will allow us to ship an even higher quality product with this facility and partnership.”

In the competitive environment of organic fresh produce where most companies are vying for their own piece of the pie, The Nunes Company and Peri & Sons are sitting back and enjoying the fruits of their labor. Together. 🍅

