



Publicity Toolkit for Exhibitors

Dear Expo Exhibitors,

We are looking forward to the [Virginia Food and Beverage Expo](#) on Wednesday, March 21 – the largest gathering of Virginia specialty food and beverage products under one roof. Because Virginia specialty food and beverage products are known for their high quality, this year’s Expo is appropriately themed, “The Best of the Best.”

VDACS’ Office of Communications is anticipating media coverage of this year’s Expo. We sent [this release](#) announcing the event with more outreach efforts to come. As an exhibitor, we’d also like to enlist your help in generating awareness and excitement of the Virginia Food and Beverage Expo. Below are tools that might help you to build awareness about your participation in the Expo.

This publicity toolkit includes:

- ! News release template
- ! Sample social media posts
- ! Expo key messages and talking points
- ! Media relations tips

When promoting the Expo, we just ask that you are sensitive to communicate it is a trade-only event. The Expo is not open to the public and no one under 18 will be admitted.

If you have any questions before or during the Expo about publicity or media relations for the show, please contact me directly:

Dawn Eischen, APR

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News Release Template

Below is a news release template that you can customize and send to your local media contacts —reporters in your region who cover your company. It’s important to keep in mind that writing and distributing a news release doesn’t guarantee that your company will appear in the news. But reporters are looking for stories that are interesting to their audience.

Make sure to modify this template for your individual company. Most news outlets prefer you email news releases to reporters who typically cover a food, features or business beat.

Please also send your release to the VDACS Office of Communications. Reporters interested in attending the Expo should register at www.vaexpo.com or contact VDACS’ Office of Communications directly.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date

Your Name

Your Company

555-555-5555 ext. 5

email@yourcompany.com

[COMPANY] to Showcase Products at Virginia Food and Beverage Expo

[COMPANY] announced today that it will participate in the Virginia Food and Beverage Expo on Wednesday, March 21 at the Greater Richmond Convention Center. Sponsored by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), the trade show connects buyers representing grocery stores, restaurants and gift shops directly with Virginia specialty food and beverage products. [COMPANY] will feature its popular/new/innovative product [X] at this year’s show.

“[Quote from company executive about how you’re looking forward to showcasing your product at the Virginia Food and Beverage Expo],” said [COMPANY leader].

[Include some background information on your product and company. Information such as when you were founded, product details and where your products can be purchased are helpful to media.]

With the theme “The Best of the Best,” this year’s Virginia Food and Beverage Expo celebrates the strong reputation and high quality of Virginia specialty food and beverage products. Hundreds of Virginia foods and beverages will be on display, allowing attendees an opportunity to meet one-on-one with producers, select new items, and place orders right on the show floor.

Food and beverage buyers may register online at www.vaexpo.com. Registration is free and encouraged to save time at the show entrance. Members of the media who are interested in attending the Virginia Food and Beverage Expo are encouraged to register at www.vaexpo.com or contact [Dawn Eischen](#) in the VDACS Office of Communications. **This event is not open to the public and no one under 18 will be admitted.**

Sample Social Media Posts

Below we've included some sample social media posts you could share on your company's social media pages. We plan to update our official VDACS [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) feeds with show information too.

Of course, use your own voice and perspective when posting about the Expo – these are just samples to get you started. And please use the Expo hashtag **#VAExpo18**. We also use #VirginiasFinest and #VirginiaGrown when it fits the situation.

Prior to Expo:

- ! Look forward to participating in the @VaAgriculture Virginia Food & Beverage Expo on March 21 at the Greater Richmond Convention Center. #VAExpo18
- ! We hope to see all our favorite buyers at the @VaAgriculture Virginia Food & Beverage Expo on March 21! #VAExpo18
- ! Getting our products ready for the @VaAgriculture Virginia Food & Beverage Expo on March 21 in Richmond. #VAExpo18 *(include a photo of products ready for the show)*
- ! See you tomorrow at #VAExpo18! *(include a photo packing the car before your trip)*

During Expo:

- ! Don't miss us at today's @VaAgriculture Virginia Food & Beverage Expo. #VAExpo18 *(include a photo of your booth or Expo team)*
- ! Having a great time sharing samples with buyers & media at the @VaAgriculture Virginia Food & Beverage Expo. #VAExpo18 *(include a photo of your booth or Expo team)*
- ! Congratulations to X, X and X – "Best New Product" winners at the Virginia Food & Beverage Expo. #VAExpo18

After Expo:

- ! What a day! Had a great time sharing our products at the Virginia Food & Beverage Expo. #VAExpo18
- ! Enjoyed meeting other Virginia specialty food and beverage producers at yesterday's Virginia Food & Beverage Expo. #VAExpo18

Expo Key Messages and Talking Points

We encourage you to use these key messages and talking points when asked general questions about the show.

1. The Virginia Food and Beverage Expo is the largest gathering of Virginia specialty food and beverage products, many of which are part of the Virginia's Finest program.
 - a. The Expo is March 21 at the Greater Richmond Convention Center.

- b. The show is hosted by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS).
 - c. More information about the Expo and register to attend: www.vaexpo.com.
 - d. The Expo takes place every other year on even years.
 - e. The Virginia's Finest trademark program includes top quality Virginia-processed and produced specialty food and beverage items.
 - f. There are currently hundreds of Virginia's Finest products in the program representing approximately 500 Virginia-based companies.
 - g. The companies represented at the Virginia Food and Beverage Expo reflect the diversity of Virginia agribusiness.
 - h. The Specialty Food Association estimates that total sales of specialty foods in 2016 reached \$127 billion.
2. The Virginia Food and Beverage Expo is a trade-only show with free admission for specialty food and beverage buyers and the media.
 - a. The Expo is the only place where buyers can conveniently sample a wide assortment of Virginia products under one roof.
 - b. Trade buyers meet one-on-one with company owners, sample products and place orders on the show floor.
 - c. VDACS is expecting as many as 175 producers who will exhibit a diverse assortment of specialty food products, including meats, cheeses, peanuts, condiments, confections, baked goods, beverages, sauces, soups and seafood.
 - d. Previous expos have attracted as many as 1,000-1,500 registered attendees representing grocery stores, specialty and gift shops, celebrity chefs, restaurants, schools, museums, gift basket companies, hotels and gourmet food writers.

Media Relations Tips

It's always best to prepare ahead of time for media interviews. A well-placed story about your business or product could go a long way to getting to that next level. Below are some tips to help you prepare for media interviews and what to do once a reporter is interested in covering your business or product.

- ! Before the show, create a 1-page fact sheet about your products or company that you can give to reporters who might be interested in writing about you. This brief fact sheet should include:
 - o Important information about your business (ex. when you were established, statistics, sales figures, what makes your company or product unique).
 - o Your contact information (email and phone number) in case they have questions

or want to follow up with you after the show.

- Your web address and any social media accounts you use. Reporters will often use these when researching a story and you may even gain a new follower.
- ! Be prepared for questions from reporters. It's a good idea to create your own key messages and talking points ahead of time with answers to questions reporters might ask, such as:
- What prompted you to start your business or create your product?
 - How does your product differ from similar products?
 - What has been a challenge for your business?
 - What obstacles have you overcome to get where you are?
 - What do people say about your product(s)?
 - Where can people find your product(s)?
 - How is your product made?
 - Where is your product made?
 - What were your sales last year?
- ! During the show, wear a shirt with your logo on it. If you are interviewed or photographed, your logo will build brand awareness and identify your company.
- ! If a reporter shows interest in covering your business or product, offer to talk one-on-one with them at a specified time and location during the show. **VDACS will have an area set up for interviews during the show. Please check with VDACS ahead of time to ensure the interview area will be available.**
- ! If the reporter wants to interview you at your business, give them some information about your business (fact sheet or brochure) and your business card. If possible, while they are at your booth, set up a date and time to meet following the show. Get their business card. Follow up when you get back.