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WITH LOVE, GRANDMA

A STRATEGIC PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN FOR WHOLE FOODS MARKET

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

3	Summary
4	Goal and Objectives
5	Opportunities and Challenges
6	Target Audiences
8	Strategy
9	Media Analysis
10	Messaging
12	Tactics
14	Evaluation

SUMMARY

This strategic public relations campaign strives to create meaningful relationships on behalf of Whole Foods Market in order to maintain its reputation as a company that is in touch with its consumers, especially given the social climate in the U.S. With the recent presidential election, ongoing racial tensions and COVID-19's impact on the economy, Americans are struggling with emotional well-being more than ever. According to the APA (2020), the average reported stress level of Americans is currently 5.4 compared to the typical 4.9; 70% of Americans are concerned about the economy; and the majority of Americans are unhappy with the government's response to the pandemic.

COVID-19 has caused much chaos and pain in 2020, and although there may be more clarity surrounding the illness by the time Hanukkah, Christmas, etc., draw near, many families will be apart for the holidays — especially families with grandparents. To address these COVID-19 impacts on family gatherings during the 2020 holiday season, campaign messaging will center around the following theme: Whole Foods Market will bake desserts using grandmas' recipes so that families can have a taste of home at the holiday dinner table, even if they cannot be together. The campaign will run from Nov. 28 to Dec. 24 and will target female U.S. Baby Boomers who like to bake, Gen Xers (children of Baby Boomers) and the media.

The campaign will kick off with a recipe contest where grandmothers across the U.S. can send in their favorite holiday dessert recipes via a social media link or by mail. Four winning recipes will be chosen and used to bake dessert items in Whole Foods Markets in New York, Florida, California and Texas, where COVID-19 has hit the hardest; desserts will be sold in stores Dec. 15 to Dec. 24 to include both Hanukkah and Christmas celebrations. Additionally, the four winning recipe entrants will receive \$500 Whole Foods Market gift cards, and half of the dessert sales will be donated to COVID-19 relief.

GOAL

The goal of this campaign is to significantly strengthen Whole Foods Market's image as a company that is in touch with the emotions of families and grandparents affected by the pandemic.

OBJECTIVES

- To increase support from Gen Xers and Baby Boomers toward Whole Foods Market's COVID-19 response efforts by 20% by January 2021.
- To increase store visits, grocery pickups and grocery deliveries from Baby Boomers in Whole Foods Markets in New York, Florida, California and Texas from Dec. 15 to Dec. 24 by 30%.
- To increase positive media coverage of Whole Foods Market's COVID-19 response and donations by 20% by January 2021.

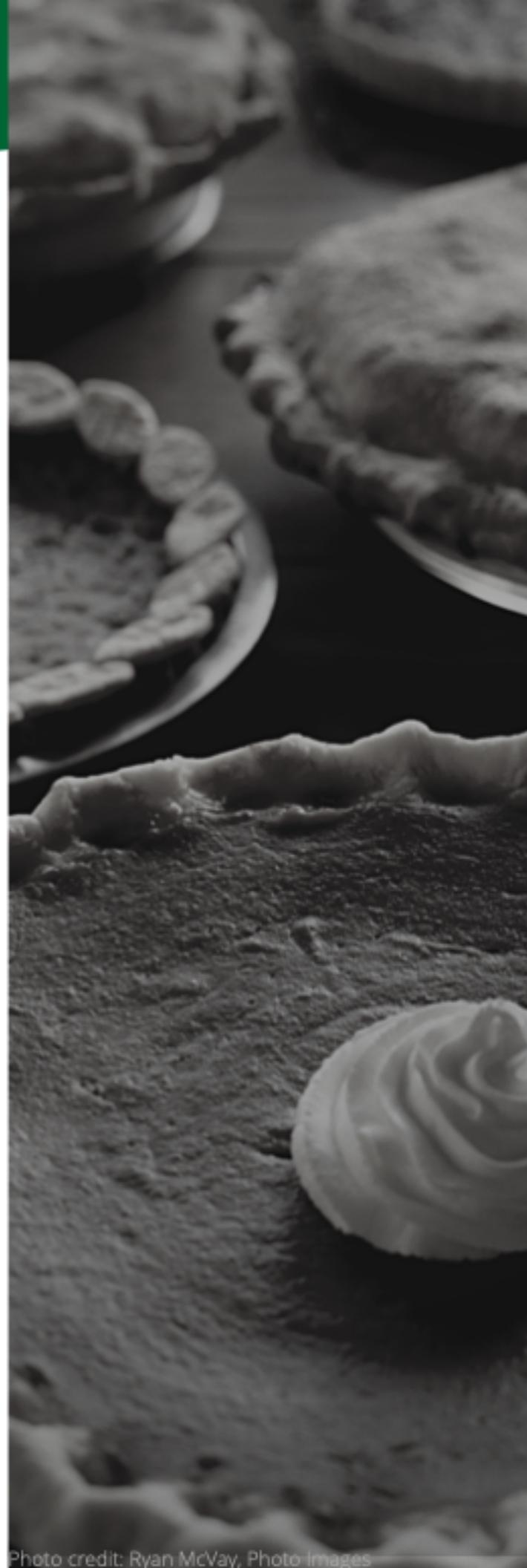


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OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Regarding opportunities, Whole Foods Market has already positioned itself as the “top retailer for COVID-19 health and safety measures,” as the result of a Consumer Health & Safety Index study (Whole Foods, 2020a). Now, it can maintain its favorable image by positioning itself as the grocery store that is the most thoughtfully connected with families during the 2020 winter holidays. Top competitors include Trader Joe’s, Sprouts Farmers Market and Kroger, but since Amazon acquired Whole Foods Market in 2017, it has arguably become the most high-profile grocer among these competitors, and it is the most popular, too (Dun & Bradstreet, 2020; Andrews, 2019). The need for COVID-19 relief provides an additional opportunity; COVID-19 relief donations will benefit both the goal of this campaign and people in need.

Primary campaign challenges include cutting through the noise during the holiday season, when all grocery stores amplify marketing and advertising efforts. Additionally, it could be difficult to appeal to people who do not celebrate Christmas or Hanukkah. Finally, potentially severe winter weather in New York, Texas and California could prevent people from visiting Whole Foods Markets or getting groceries delivered.

TARGET AUDIENCES

Female Baby Boomers Who Like to Bake: Baby boomers are at the heart of “With Love, Grandma,” and it will be important to sufficiently engage female baby boomers who like to bake so that they will want to take part in the campaign recipe contest. A 2019 Mintel study found that baby boomers like to boast skills common among those in their generation, like cooking, to younger generations: “Baby Boomers may respond well to the chance to remain ever-present in the lives of their incompetent adult children. Highlighting the potential for human connection might be the most effective way to market ... to Boomers” (p. 48). “With Love, Grandma” powerfully aligns with this marketing technique: it is a way for baby boomers to share the dying art of making old-school, homemade desserts with their children and grandchildren — from a safe distance.

If baby boomers get highly excited about the campaign recipe contest, they may talk about it with their children (primarily Gen Xers), who will later buy the holiday desserts for themselves and their children. Through these conversations, Gen Xers will be pre-exposed to campaign messaging, which is a prime opportunity. Potential challenges include reaching grandmothers who are technologically challenged. However, baby boomers enjoy social media and are active on YouTube and Facebook (Suciu, 2020; Statista, 2019). Additionally, they seem “most comfortable” using Facebook (Mintel, 2019).

Main Dimension	Segment	Breakdown
Demographics	Age cohort	56 to 74 (born 1946 to 1964)
	Gender	Female, male
	Race	82% White, 11% Black, 5% Asian
	Religion	78% Christian, 5% non-Christian (Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist), 13% other
	Marital status	67% married
	Household size	2
	Homeownership	80% own homes
Socioeconomic	Household income	\$78,000
	Education	25% have bachelor's degrees or higher
	Employment	More than half are employed
Psychographic	Personality	Hardworking, sensitive, rule keepers, proud, loving, competitive
	Values	Family-oriented, religious, political, financially stability

Demographic, socioeconomic and psychographic information on U.S. baby boomers (Colby and Ortman, 2014; Fry, 2019; Fry, 2018b; Naftulin, 2019; Pew Research Center, 2020a; Fry et al., 2018; Rubtsova, 2019; Ryback, 2016).

Gen Xers: In terms of their relationship with baby boomers, only a third of Gen Xers see their parents weekly — they have much closer relationships with their children (Mintel, 2020, p. 46). While their relationship with baby boomers may seem like a challenge, Gen Xers' lack of connection with their aging parents might be seen as an opportunity to capitalize on in “With Love, Grandma.” The real challenge will be cutting through the noise during the holiday season as Gen Xers are bombarded with messaging from other public relations and marketing campaigns.

Along with tapping into the emotions of Gen Xers, “With Love, Grandma” will need to engage these higher-income consumers to carry the financial aspects (Feeding America donations and dessert sales) of the campaign. But Gen Xers, as spenders, may prefer to have their “With Love, Grandma” desserts shipped to them through Whole Foods Market’s online ordering system. Due to COVID-19, it has been projected that these “tech-savvy consumers [will] prefer to shop from the safety of home” from July 2020 to December 2021 (Mintel, 2020, p. 11).

Regarding generational characteristics, Gen X is often considered the middle child of the generations: “They represent a halfway point between two larger generations: more diverse and more educated than the Boomers, but not to the same extent that Millennials are” (Mintel, 2020, p. 16). Surprisingly, Gen Xers’ social media habits are similar to baby boomers. In addition to email promotions, digital campaigns “should focus on Facebook and YouTube” (Mintel, 2020, p. 29).

Main Dimension	Segment	Breakdown
Demographics	Age cohort	40 to 55 (born 1965 to 1980)
	Gender	Male, Female
	Race	61% White, 18% Hispanic, 12% Black, 6% Asian
	Religion	70% Christian, 6% non-Christian (Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist), 19% other
	Marital status	66% married
	Household size	2 or more (more than half have children living with them)
Socioeconomic	Homeownership	Two thirds own homes
	Household income	\$85,000
	Education	29% have a college degree or higher
Psychographic	Employment	82% are employed
	Personality	Socially responsible, agents of change, tolerant, humanitarian
	Values	Work/life balance focused, family-oriented, religious

Demographic, socioeconomic and psychographic information on U.S. Gen Xers (Dimock, 2019; Fry, 2018a; Mintel, 2020; Fry et al., 2018; Pew Research Center, 2020b).

STRATEGY

People rely on Whole Foods Market for food and other essential items amid the pandemic, and the grocery chain has established itself as a “top retailer for COVID-19 health and safety measures” (Whole Foods, 2020a). But it needs to connect with its consumers on a deeper level, through an initiative that showcases Whole Foods Market’s sympathetic stance on the emotional difficulties of the pandemic. Simultaneously, it needs to shed light on a looming, pandemic-related problem that Whole Foods Market can and should strive to alleviate with help from its consumers: the hunger crisis in America.

The strategy behind “With Love, Grandma,” a corporate social responsibility (CSR) campaign, allows Whole Foods Market to both thoughtfully connect with consumers and to give back to local people in need during the 2020 holiday season. By engaging baby boomers with a recipe contest; tapping into the hearts of Gen Xers with Grandma-inspired apple pies and jelly donuts; and generating interest among the media, the campaign takes a comprehensive approach in reaching and impacting target audiences. Furthermore, offering “With Love, Grandma” desserts in New York, Florida, California and Texas exclusively, sensitively communicates that Whole Foods is aware of regions that have been most impacted by COVID-19.

Perhaps most importantly, by donating half of the “With Love, Grandma” dessert sales to Feeding America’s COVID-19 response fund, the campaign will help Whole Foods Market attract broader audiences beyond those being targeted. It has the potential to target those who do not celebrate Christmas or Hanukkah but still wish to help people in need and communicate that the grocery chain is not simply seeking financial gain.

The strategies, tactics and key messages in this public relations plan are designed to target audiences that must be reached to accomplish the primary goal of the campaign: to significantly strengthen Whole Foods Market’s image as a company that is in touch with the emotions of families and grandparents affected by the pandemic.

MEDIA ANALYSIS

The media's function in disseminating campaign messages to the aforementioned primary audiences makes it critical to the success of "With Love, Grandma." As a high-profile grocery chain, Whole Foods Market is active in traditional and digital media realms; it regularly engages journalists, news outlets, online publications, bloggers, influencers, etc. (Stern, 2019; Whole Foods, 2020a, Whole Foods, 2020b).

However, Whole Foods Market's relationship with the media has significantly changed since Amazon acquired the grocery chain in 2017. According to Bradley (2018), the acquisition has been multifaceted, resulting in increased media attention but also "increased negative sentiment based on inaccurate assumptions about the brand now that it is part of Amazon. ... Negative and inaccurate assumptions and storylines include the brand's move away from local products and suppliers and reduction in quality and consistency."

Currently, a Google search of "Whole Foods" results in pages of both positive and negative media coverage. Whole Foods Market has fared relatively well in terms of the pandemic, but other factors could prove difficult in targeting the media as a secondary audience, namely in regard to Whole Foods Market's CEO, John Mackey. In an interview with the New York Times, he recently "sparked backlash after saying that Americans are obese because they make poor choices" (Morris, 2020). A direct quote from Mackey's interview relays his opinion that obesity is "less about access and more about people making poor choices, mostly due to ignorance" (Morris, 2020).

Mackey's poor interviewing skills will be a challenge, but "With Love, Grandma" provides an opportunity to continue to repair Whole Foods Market's image as a grocery chain that is in touch with its consumers. With its emphasis on regional flavors and local food banks, "With Love, Grandma" can highlight the grocery chain's commitment to not only local ingredients but local people.

MESSAGING

Female Baby Boomers Who Like to Bake

- The holidays will be different this year — especially for grandparents who are unable to safely spend this time with their families. That's why we are creating limited edition holiday desserts made from recipes submitted by you, Grandma; Nov. 28 to Dec. 4, simply visit WholeFoodsMarket.com/WithLoveGrandma to share your favorite Christmas or Hanukkah dessert recipe. A team of professional bakers will choose four recipes to create desserts for stores in select states, and if your recipe wins, you will get a \$500 Whole Foods gift card!
- Did you know that COVID-19 has hit New York, Florida, California and Texas the hardest? Delicious, soul-soothing "With Love, Grandma" desserts will be featured in stores in these states from Dec. 15 to 24. We hope they bring a small slice of homestyle joy to people who can't have a slice of their grandma's pie this holiday season.
- Feeding America has determined that 50 million people may experience hunger because of the pandemic. So, to boost Feeding America's COVID-19 response efforts, we're donating half of our "With Love, Grandma" dessert sales to this incredible organization. Whole Foods is not only bringing the flavors of home to holiday dinner tables but helping people in need this December.

Gen Xers

- There's nothing that can replace Grandma's buttery apple pie at the Christmas buffet or Bubbe's soft, pillow-y jelly donuts at the Hanukkah dinner table. But Dec. 15 to 24, Whole Foods stores in New York, Florida, California and Texas will offer desserts made with recipes from real grandmothers, bringing a little taste of home to families that can't be together this holiday season because of the pandemic.
- Feeding America has determined that 50 million people may experience hunger because of the pandemic, and you can help. To boost Feeding America's COVID-19 response efforts, we're

donating half of our “With Love, Grandma” dessert sales to this incredible organization. When you buy one of these memorable treats, know that you’re also helping Americans in need.

- If you live in New York, Florida, California or Texas, you live in one of the states where COVID-19 has hit the hardest. For many of you, making it through each day has been no small feat, and this year, making it through the holidays might be even harder. If you can’t have a slice of your grandma’s pie this holiday season because of the pandemic, we hope our “With Love, Grandma” desserts bring a slice of homestyle joy to your life.

Media

- Through the “With Love, Grandma” initiative, Whole Foods proves that it is more than just the top retailer for COVID-19 health and safety measures — the grocery chain demonstrates that it understands the emotional impact of the pandemic, too. Whole Foods is thoughtfully involved with families that can’t be together for Christmas or Hanukkah this holiday season.
- Feeding America has determined that 50 million people may experience hunger because of the pandemic, and Whole Foods Market is stepping up to the plate with its “With Love, Grandma” initiative. By selling holiday desserts made from grandmothers’ recipes and donating half of the proceeds to Feeding America’s COVID-19 response fund, Whole Foods is not only bringing the flavors of home to holiday dinner tables but helping people in need this December.
- Whole Foods Market recognizes that families in New York, Florida, California and Texas, where COVID- 19 has hit the hardest, need extra support this holiday season. By selling its “With Love, Grandma” desserts from Dec. 15 to 24 in these states, exclusively, Whole Foods sets itself apart from other grocery chains with its direct and meaningful approach.

TACTICS

Targeted Audience	Tactic	Evaluation
Baby boomers	Create a holiday dessert recipe contest open to U.S. grandmas. Have professional bakers choose four winning recipes to be used to bake dessert items in Whole Foods Markets in New York, Florida, California and Texas, where COVID-19 has hit the hardest. Reward the four winning recipe entrants with \$500 Whole Foods Market gift cards, and donate half of the dessert sales to Feeding America's COVID-19 relief fund	Number of recipe entries
Baby boomers	Create a "With Love, Grandma" web page (WholeFoodsMarket.com/WithLoveGrandma) to host all the details regarding the purpose of "With Love, Grandma," the recipe contest and COVID-19 response efforts	Social media monitoring; number of web page visits
Baby boomers	Create posters for Whole Foods Market stores in New York, Florida, California and Texas with "With Love, Grandma" recipe contest details; the link to the "With Love, Grandma" web page; and statistics on pandemic-related hunger in the U.S.	Number of recipe entries
Baby boomers	Mail "With Love, Grandma" flyers to retirement communities in New York, Florida, California and Texas with "With Love, Grandma" recipe contest details and statistics on pandemic-related hunger in the U.S.	Number of recipe entries
Baby boomers	Run a Facebook ad that asks grandmas to enter the "With Love, Grandma" recipe contest so that Whole Foods Market can create desserts that bring a taste of home to people in New York, Florida, California and Texas, where COVID-19 has hit the hardest	Social media monitoring; number of recipe entries
Gen Xers	Create a 12-day "Countdown to 'With Love, Grandma'" on social media, with posts that include cryptic hints about the four desserts that will be sold in stores Dec. 15 to Dec. 24. Ask social media users to guess the four desserts using the hashtag #WithLoveGmaCountdown. Reward anyone who guesses correctly with a voucher for a free "With Love, Grandma" dessert (reward up to 500 vouchers)	Social media monitoring
Gen Xers	Have cashiers give out stickers with funny grandma faces, dessert graphics and the hashtag #WithLoveGrandma to kids whose parents shop at Whole Foods Market in December	Social media monitoring
Gen Xers	Host a Facebook Live event with Feeding America's CEO to discuss the pandemic-related hunger crisis and the role of "With Love, Grandma" in alleviating the problem	Social media monitoring; number of desserts sold

Gen Xers	Create a YouTube ad (to run all of December) portraying the story of a real-life family who cannot be together because of the pandemic. Show an older baby boomer grandmother, her Gen X aged daughter and young grandson talking over a video call and expressing that they miss each other. Transition to the daughter preparing to place a Whole Foods Market's delivery order before she heads to bed, coming across a "With Love, Grandma" dessert then purchasing the item	Social media monitoring; number of desserts sold
Gen Xers	Create a weekly Whole Foods Market email newsletter that will be active in December 2020, exclusively. In the newsletter, share recipes; deals and sales; and short stories about families that cannot be together for the holidays because of the pandemic. Share information about the "With Love, Grandma" campaign (including COVID-19 response aspects) at the end of every newsletter	Email sign-ups; number of desserts sold
Gen Xers	Across all Whole Foods Market social media channels, create a post telling social media users that if they sign up for Whole Foods Market's new December newsletter, they can get a coupon for 10% off a limited edition "With Love, Grandma" dessert	Email sign-ups; social media monitoring
Media	Have CEO John Mackey hold a virtual press conference announcing the launch of the "With Love, Grandma" campaign	Media coverage analysis
Media	Write a press release to inform local communities about "With Love, Grandma" desserts and Whole Foods Market's plans for donating half of the sales to Feeding America's COVID-19 response fund. Share on Twitter	Media coverage analysis
Media	Distribute multimedia press kits to local journalists	Media coverage analysis
Media	Invite journalists to interview the team of professional bakers who chose the four winning dessert recipes	Number of responses; media coverage analysis
Media	Send "With Love, Grandma" desserts to food bloggers and micro-influencers before selling the items in stores	Media coverage analysis
Media	Pitch a story idea to editors at larger news organizations (The New Times, The Washington Post, USA Today) regarding a potential feature story about the grandmas behind the winning recipe contest entries	Story idea accepted; media coverage analysis
Media	Write a press release announcing the amount of money donated to Feeding America's COVID-19 response fund due to "With Love, Grandma" dessert sales. Share on Twitter	Media coverage analysis

EVALUATION

“With Love, Grandma” was developed based on the fragile, pandemic-influenced social climate that demonstrates a need for Whole Foods Market to communicate sympathetically and creatively with target audiences in specific regions. After the launch of “With Love, Grandma,” it will be important to continually evaluate the environment and adjust messaging and tactics accordingly.

Before, during and after the campaign, the success of “With Love, Grandma” will be evaluated through pre- and post-campaign surveys, social media monitoring, a media coverage analysis, the number of contest entries and the number of desserts sold. The goal, objectives, tactics and messages in this plan stem from secondary research that has illuminated the best ways to reach target audiences based on demographic, psychographic and socioeconomic factors as well as media consumption trends.

By meaningfully connecting Whole Foods Market with hurting Americans, the fundamental success of “With Love, Grandma” might be defined as the establishment of mutually beneficial relationships. However, a detailed breakdown, segmented by campaign objectives, is as follows:

- Measurement of Objective 1 (to increase support from Gen Xers and Baby Boomers toward Whole Foods Market’s COVID-19 response efforts by 20% by January 2021):
 - Pre- and post-campaign surveys, social media monitoring, number of contest entries
- Measurement of Objective 2 (to increase store visits, grocery pickups and grocery deliveries from Gen Xers in Whole Foods Markets in New York, Florida, California and Texas from Dec. 15 to Dec. 24 by 30%):
 - Number of desserts sold
- Measurement of Objective 3 (to increase positive media coverage of Whole Foods Market’s COVID-19 response and donations by 20% by January 2021):
 - Media coverage analysis

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With Love, Grandma



P R E S S K I T

WHOLEFOODSMARKET.COM/WITHLOVEGRANDMA



Whole Foods Market Connects with COVID-19-Impacted Grandmas, Families Through 'With Love, Grandma' Initiative

AUSTIN, Texas, Nov. 27, 2020 — [Whole Foods Market's](#) "With Love, Grandma" initiative is not only bringing the flavors of home to holiday dinner tables but helping people in need from Dec. 15 to 24. Select Whole Foods Market stores will offer limited-edition holiday desserts made from real grandmothers' recipes. Also, to boost [Feeding America's COVID-19 response](#), half of the dessert sales will be donated to this commendable organization.

Whole Foods Market is more than just the [top retailer for COVID-19 health and safety measures](#) — it understands the emotional impact of the pandemic and the increased risk for food insecurity among families. Feeding America has determined that 50 million people may experience hunger because of COVID-19, and Whole Foods Market is prepared to help.



Whole Foods Market chocolate chip cookies
Photo credit: Whole Foods Market

"With Love, Grandma" will kick off with a recipe contest, open Nov. 28 to Dec. 3, where grandmothers across the U.S. are invited to submit their favorite Christmas and Hanukkah dessert recipes by visiting the ["With Love, Grandma" web page](#). A team of professional bakers will choose four winning recipes to create "With Love, Grandma" desserts for stores in New York, Florida, California and Texas, where COVID-19 has hit the hardest. The four winning recipe entrants will also receive \$500 Whole Foods Market gift cards.

"Making it through the holidays during a pandemic will be difficult for many people," said Whole Foods Market CEO John Mackey. "We hope 'With Love, Grandma' brings a little joy to families that are apart and supports families that are hungry this December."

CONNECT WITH US



Photo credit: Oleg Magni, Pexels

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"With Love, Grandma" Web Page: [WholeFoodsMarket.com/WithLoveGrandma](#)

Public Relations Twitter Account: [@WholeFoodsPR](#)

WHOLE FOODS MARKET BACKGROUNDER



Whole Foods Market pastry chef;
Photo credit: Whole Foods Market

In 1980, John Mackey, Renee Lawson, Craig Weller and Mark Skiles opened the first Whole Foods Market in Austin, Texas. They had just 19 employees, but infinite goals and ideas. It was an instant success.

Today, Whole Foods Market is a Fortune 500 company with 95,000 team members and more than 500 stores in the U.S., Canada and the U.K. And throughout its history, Whole Foods Market has devoted itself to remaining trusted and loved by loyal customers.

If Whole Foods Market seems different from other natural foods stores, it's because it is. In the U.S., Whole Foods Market is the first and only certified organic grocer. This means [exhaustive measures are taken](#) to ensure the organic foods customers see in stores are truly organic.

While Amazon acquired Whole Foods Market in 2017, company culture remains unchanged — it is driven by Whole Foods Market's commitment to quality foods, delighted customers, happy team members, mutually beneficial partnerships, profits and prosperity, and community and the environment.

For further information, please visit <https://media.wholefoodsmarket.com>.

At Whole Foods Market, the mission is simple but ambitious: nourish people and the planet, and do it well.

Around 40 years ago, there were fewer than a dozen natural supermarkets in the U.S. But four local Texans felt the call to create what has now become the world's leading natural and organic grocer.



Whole Foods Market bakery;
Photo credit: Whole Foods Market

WE BELIEVE IN

- **Quality foods**
- **Delighted customers**
- **Happy team members**
- **Win-win partnerships**
- **Profits and prosperity**
- **Community and the environment**



JOHN MACKEY, CO-FOUNDER AND CEO

BIOGRAPHY



John Mackey; Photo credit: Whole Foods Market

Mackey sold Whole Foods Market to Amazon in 2017, but he remains a central driver of Whole Foods Market's goals, vision and values. Mackey has said, "There will be no one that ever loves Whole Foods Market as much as I love it."

In fact, since 2006, Mackey has insisted upon a \$1 yearly salary. Well known for his advocacy toward capitalism and free market principles, Mackey feels called to service. He co-authored "Conscious Capitalism: Liberating the Heroic Spirit of Business," a New York Times and Wall Street Journal best-selling book.

Mackey's work for Whole Foods Market stems from his longtime commitment to goal actualization and his personal desire to bring quality products to health-focused customers. His most recent projects emphasize his desire to bring Whole Foods Market back to its roots through an educational health and wellness program aimed at employees and customers.

Mackey lives with his wife, Deborah, in his hometown of Austin, Texas.

In 1980, John Mackey, Whole Foods Market co-founder and CEO, created Whole Foods Market because of his passion for clean, organic eating.

Mackey built the natural and organic grocer from one small store in Austin, Texas, purchased for \$45,000, to a Fortune 500 company.



David Matthis and John Mackey;
Photo credit: Whole Foods Market



The first Whole Foods Market store;
Photo credit: Whole Foods Market

