



Small Town, Big Blueberries

Rice Lake's RS-130 price computing scales help
Cronk's Berry Bucket, a blueberry farm in Sarona, Wisconsin, USA,
grow to their fullest potential.



Cronk's Berry Bucket grows three varieties of blueberries with over 1,000 individual plants annually.

Cronk's Berry Bucket has been a booming blueberry farm since 2007, and they are still growing. Kevon and Amy Cronk—owners of Cronk's Berry Bucket in Sarona, Wisconsin—started with half an acre of blueberry plants. Now, they have a full acre with over 1,000 blueberry plants and three different varieties: Chippewa, Patriot and Blueray.

Although there are many varieties of blueberries, only a select few are able to thrive in northern Wisconsin. The Chippewa variety is similar to a wild blueberry—the bushes are lower to the ground and berries are on the smaller side. These blueberries are also perfect for baking. The bush of the Patriot variety looks more like a tree, and these berries are slightly larger than a Chippewa blueberry. A picker-favorite is the Blueray variety—these very large and sweet blueberries fall into your hand almost like grapes!

Kevon says they decided to grow blueberries particularly because “strawberries are too low to the ground,” making them much harder to pick and care for. Kevon remembered his college roommate, whose parents grew blueberries as a hobby. Kevon thought blueberries might make a good fit for their land too, as well as something they could do as a family for extra income.

People come from all over the world to pick or order their blueberries. Since opening for business, the Cronk family has met people from Europe and other parts of the world, something that may have never happened had they not started the farm. “People from Eastern Europe, France, England and more have been vacationing nearby or visiting the area and have visited Cronk's Berry Bucket.”

“We’ve had people from all over the U.S., many from large cities, many young and old that have never had the opportunity to pick berries of any kind. Picking becomes an experience many have never had.”

—KEVON CRONK,
Owner of Cronk's Berry Bucket

The blueberry picking process is very delicate. Immediately after the blueberries are picked to fill an order, they are hand-sorted, and any stems or debris are removed. If the blueberries are for an order, they are placed in a cooler until they can be picked up. Cooling them down after being out in the summer heat ensures they stay fresh for as long as possible.

Price computing functions accurately calculate prices according to weight and eliminate over- or under-charging customers.



For the first few years at the farm, blueberries were sold by pints and quarts. When Kevon realized the size of plants and number of blueberries were increasing, he knew he needed a scale to sell based on weight instead of volume. Through careful research, Kevon decided to get his first of three RS-130 battery-operated price computing scales from Rice Lake Weighing Systems. "One of the reasons we went with a Rice Lake scale is because it's a local company for us," Kevon mentions. Cronk's Berry Bucket is just under 20 miles north of Rice Lake. He also liked that the RS-130 scales are battery-operated, so in the event that it needs to be in the blueberry field where there is no electricity, it still runs correctly.

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Accuracy is also important for Cronk's Berry Bucket. Because the blueberries are sold based on weight, it is essential the scale is accurate to avoid over- or under-charging. With the RS-130 scale, customers are able to see both the weight and price for extra confidence. Kevon says that the kids like watching the display to see the total weight. "It's comical sometimes to watch the kids' faces light up when they see how much they pick," Kevon adds.

The tare and price computing functions of the scale are crucial when weighing blueberries. Unlike bigger fruits such as apples or pears, blueberries must be weighed in a container which is where the tare function comes into play. When weighing blueberries, only the net weight is wanted. By placing an empty container on the scale and pressing "tare" before filling it with blueberries, the scale will calculate only the net weight of the blueberries versus the gross weight which includes the weight of the container. This function gives the operator the correct weight and price.

Because Cronk's Berry Bucket has a set price per pound for their blueberries, they are able to set a PLU key to that specific price. If the price needs to be changed at any given time, the RS-130 has nine PLU keys for different prices per pound. Throughout each season, Kevon keeps track of how many pounds of blueberries have been picked. He also compares blueberries harvested versus blueberries sold, and U-pick versus pre-picked to determine areas they could improve or change.

Cronk's Berry Bucket has three RS-130 scales, all of which helped weigh over 5,000 pounds of blueberries that year alone. "Just plug it in and it's good to go. Very easy and very user-friendly," Kevon concludes. These Rice Lake scales ensure Cronk's Berry Bucket will have accurate weighments and a unique berry-picking experience for years to come.



The Standard in Price Computing Scales

Challenge:

Due to the growing number of customers, blueberry bushes and yields, Cronk's Berry Bucket needed an accurate scale to sell blueberries by weight rather than volume and provide data insights.

Solution:

The RS-130's memory keys allowed Cronk's Berry Bucket to accurately weigh blueberries with a set price-per-pound feature. The scale also helped Cronk's Berry Bucket track total sales and calculate total berries harvested.

Rice Lake RS-130 price computing scale

