

The Big Potato Meets the Big Apple

The Big Idaho® Potato Truck Rides a New York City Barge





The Big Idaho® Potato Truck had already generated hundreds of millions of media impressions across the country, but it was simply too big to drive on the streets of New York City. So we did something better: we floated it around the city on a barge! The titanic tuber traveled through New York Harbor, around the Statue of Liberty, and up the Hudson River, attracting a ton of media attention for Idaho Potatoes.

[Video Compilation of Press Clips \(2 min\)](#)

Situation

The Idaho Potato Commission built The Big Idaho Potato Truck in 2012 for their 75th anniversary. It traveled across the country with a 6-ton simulated potato on a flatbed trailer to overnight success. Now the truck travels about 25,000 miles nationwide each year and leaves a lasting impression by participating in events large and small through its charitable component, “A Big Helping”.

New Yorkers are some of the largest consumers of Idaho potatoes in the country. Coupled with New York City being the largest media market, it was the perfect place to bring the Big Idaho Potato Truck; however, permits are difficult to obtain and there are few places to park the oversize vehicle, limiting the number of people and media who could see it.

Goal: Generate publicity in New York City for the Big Idaho Potato.



Strategy & Pitch

We knew it would take a highly unusual event to capture New Yorkers' interest. It would have to be outlandish and totally unexpected. While it was logistically too challenging to drive the Truck around the city, that's actually what we did - we drove it around the city... on a New York City river barge.

We planned to float the 6-ton tater through the New York Harbor, around the Statue of Liberty, and up the Hudson River, to attract as much media attention as possible for Idaho potatoes. We needed to stage a stunt so unique even New Yorkers who've seen it all would have to stop and stare, and the media would clamor to cover it.

In addition to floating the Big Idaho Potato Truck down the river, the event pitch included the following:

- Make sure as many New Yorkers as possible could see the Big Idaho Potato Truck.
- Inform/engage Idaho potato industry members of this unique event
- Make a charitable donation to a local organization as a thank you to all New Yorkers for being loyal Idaho potato consumers.

The Big Idaho Potato's "A Big Helping" program is a critical part of its mission, and it was important that our partner be an upstanding non-profit with a connection to New Yorkers and potatoes. We selected Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen in Manhattan.



Implementation

EvansHardy+Young reached out to city authorities to get the event approved and organized. To maximize exposure, we chose to have it in New York Harbor from 6am-12 noon, giving commuters plenty of time to share news of sightings with friends, family, and colleagues via social media.

With only a few hours to make a big splash in NYC, our PR team took advantage of every second! We had a team of four in NYC responding to media calls, conducting interviews, and meeting reporters at the barge in Brooklyn after the tour of harbor concluded.

We sent media alerts with times and logistics to news outlets throughout the five boroughs. An Associated Press photographer distributed images over the wire by 10:00 am on event day. Potato industry friends were invited to see the truck from a privately chartered boat.

We pitched photo desks, traffic reporters, photo editors, and general news desks. Content included:

- New Yorkers are the largest consumer of Idaho Potatoes in the U.S.
- The IPC was donating 12,000 pounds of fresh Idaho Potatoes (the weight of the Big Idaho Potato) to the Holy Apostles Soup Kitchen.

In addition to supplying food to the soup kitchen, the Idaho Potato Commission presented a check to Holy Apostles while aboard a private charter accompanying the truck down the Hudson. Commission members spent the following day serving at the soup kitchen, too.

Effectiveness & Results

The Big Idaho Potato Truck's visit to NYC was a huge success, generating massive publicity for Idaho potatoes via the Big Idaho Potato Truck. More than 100 million media impressions were generated on event day, most coming from NYC, the country's toughest media market.

Watch: [Video Compilation of Press Clips](#) (2 min)

68 news outlets covered the truck's visit, including: WNBC-TV, FOX (local), PIX11, WABC-TV, 1010 Wins (provided coverage throughout the day); plus NY Daily News, The NY Post, and many others.

“In total, more than 100 million media impressions were generated with most of the impressions coming from NYC.”

In addition to TV news, other key channels covered the event:

- **Trade:**
All the key trade publications covered the truck including Produce News, Capital Press, Potato Pro, Jim Prevor's Perishable Pundit, and Produce Business.
- **Taxis:**
Taxicab News, which is featured in 13,237 yellow cabs, ran feature stories about the Truck and its visit to NYC on the day of the event
- **Law Enforcement Alert:**
The NYPD issued a Law Enforcement Alert informing residents a giant Idaho potato was traveling up the Hudson River. Typically, these alerts are issued to notify residents of need-to-know breaking news.
- **Social Media:**
Social media was abuzz. Many questioned whether the Big Idaho Potato was real or not!

Budget: \$30k

Impressions: 100,506,412

CPM: \$0.29