



Promoting sustainable agriculture
since 1974

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED: NUTRICLEAN CERTIFIED ORGANIC

Some of you have noticed that we carry a few items certified organic by NutriClean. In the past, NutriClean referred to a residue-free testing program, not organic certification. NutriClean's parent company, Scientific Certification Systems (SCS), originally used a different "SCS" seal on their organic certification but they no longer do. Instead, there is "NutriClean Certified Organic" and "NutriClean Certified Residue Free". Residue Free is not an organic claim but means that the crop was tested for pesticide residues. At VV, we only carry NutriClean Certified Organic, which refers to a USDA accredited organic certification program.

You have probably noticed there has not been an edition of produce notes for a long time. We are committed to continuing to publish them, yet sometimes it is impossible to keep everything on schedule and our first priority is always to provide you with the best service possible.

PRODUCE NOTES

November 10, 2003

CITRUS UPDATE

All of a sudden our warm autumn months are past, winter is upon us and it's time for the winter citrus season to begin. Here's an update on what's to come.

Navel Oranges: Most of the navel orange growers say the fruit sugar is already at legal levels for harvesting. Warm weather has kept the rinds green and we'll need continued cool conditions to color the fruit up and get the harvest moving along. Some growers have started to harvest and will de-green their fruit with ethylene. These early varieties, such as the Fukumoto and Newhall, don't have all the flavor of a fully ripened Washington variety but they make a decent start to the season. Look for Washington navels to start by the end of November. Growers expect a mid-sized crop with mostly large fruit.

Valencia Oranges: Supply is starting to wind down, especially for smaller sizes. Fruit is tending towards more softness but is still nice and sweet. Most Valencia growers stopped harvest during the fires but have since resumed business. It was a close call for many of them who almost lost their orchards.

Satsuma Mandarins: By all reports, the first organic satsumas will be out of the Coachella Valley by mid-month. Soon to follow will be the long awaited *Johansen*, *Wild River* and *Heath* labels from the northern Sacramento Valley in late November. Hopefully, no one will de-green their satsumas with ethylene since it affects the flavor and shelf life of the fruit. Early varieties, such as the Dobashi Beni and Okitsu Wase, will be first on the market but they can't replace the finer tasting Owari Satsuma, expected in December.

Meyer Lemons, Eureka and Lisbon Lemons: Eureka and Lisbon lemons will continue in light supply until early to mid winter when they'll kick into high gear. Meyer lemons are heading into their prime season and the crop is forecast as abundant. Some lemons are showing scars caused by thrip, tiny insects that attack fruit in its early stages of growth.

Limes: Limes are still in good supply but will begin to taper off as cool weather persists.

Grapefruit: Marsh Ruby grapefruit starts up again out of Riverside this week. By Thanksgiving, we expect Marsh Rubies out of Coachella and Star Ruby and Rio Star grapefruit from Texas. The Texas crop will have some mite scarring but the interior fruit quality will be excellent, as it usually is. We could sure use some grapefruit it's been hard to come by.

Other Tangerines and Mandarins: Daisy tangerines start this week. Fremont, Page, and Fairchild tangerines, and Orlando tangelos are due to start sometime between late November and mid December, depending on variety.

1100 Cesar Chavez Street
San Francisco, California 94124
voice: 415 641.3500
fax: 415 641.3505

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FARMERS NARROWLY ESCAPE FIRES

What a frightening week it was. Thankfully the rains came. When it was over, some 743,000 acres had burned. That's over a 1,000 square miles. About 3,570 homes burned, and 22 people lost their lives. At this time, it's difficult to know how much farmland was lost but the fires roared through apple orchards, citrus and avocado groves. Of the growers we work with, none were harmed. But there were many close calls.

Sespe Creek, near Ventura and on the edge of the Los Padres National Forest lost 100 avocado trees. The fire came within 100 yards of the packing shed and office. Neighboring growers lost close to 5,000 avocado trees. Avocado wood is oily and the trees drop a lot of flammable leaf litter making them much more flammable than citrus trees. None of Sespe's citrus was lost.

Steve Taft of *Eco Farms* spent his weekend hurriedly digging firebreaks around his orchard, as did the other growers he knows. He estimates a loss of 1,000 acres of citrus and avocado in the greater Temecula-Rainbow area. Other growers, without water and electricity, couldn't keep their trees from drying out and worried about losing them. Further south, the historic town of Julian lost all its apple trees, a very important crop for this tourist dependent area. Nearby *Rancho del Sol* farm had to evacuate twice but was somehow spared.

Now that it's over all these farmers have the same get up and go farmers are famous for. It's time to replant, repair damaged roofs, and get on with things. Many also lost income due to the Mexican fruit fly quarantine that went from November '02 through August of this year. One of the best ways to help these farmers stay in business is to buy their fruit.

Support California organic citrus and avocados, they need your help!

MAKE YOUR OWN SUGAR PIE PUMPKIN FILLING: It's Easy

If you'd like to make your pumpkin pie with fresh pumpkin now is the time. With an abundant supply of sugar pie pumpkin available you can prepare puree for the holidays and freeze enough to see you through the winter.

Sugar Pie pumpkin makes a great, all-purpose puree. Its flesh is sweeter, denser and less stringy than standard Jack O'Lantern pumpkins, and it's particularly good in breads, muffins, pies and soups.

A medium-sized Sugar Pie pumpkin weighs about 4-pounds, yielding approximately 1-1/4 cups puree. Most pie recipes call for at least 2-cups puree per pie.

You can freeze any leftover puree for up to 6 months. Refrigerated puree keeps up to 3 days.

There are three main ways to prepare pumpkin puree:

Baking. Halve pumpkin, scoop out the stringy mass of seeds, place halves face down in shallow baking dish. Cover with tented foil and bake until tender when pierced with a fork, anywhere from 50 minutes to 1-1/2 hours. Cool, scoop out the flesh, then puree or mash.

Boiling. Halve pumpkin, scoop out the stringy mass of seeds, and peel; cut into chunks. Place in a saucepan, cover with water and boil until tender. Drain, cool, then puree or mash.

Microwave. Halve pumpkin, scoop out the stringy mass of seeds, and microwave on high 7 minutes for each pound. Check for tenderness at halfway point and adjust timing if needed. Cool, then puree or mash.

Don't discard the seeds! Take a few minutes to clean and prepare the seeds and you'll have a great snack. After removing the strings, rinse seeds lightly, toss with a little oil, season with salt or tamari, garlic powder, and/or chili powder. Spread them out on a baking sheet and roast in the oven along with the pumpkin. They're done when they turn crispy and a light golden brown.

