



# PRODUCE NOTES

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## Fun Melon Quotes

"The true southern watermelon is a boon apart and not to be mentioned with common things. It is chief of the world's luxuries, king by the grace of God over all the fruits of the earth. When one has tasted it, he knows what the angels eat."

Mark Twain

"Whether the knife falls on the melon or the melon on the knife, the melon suffers."

African Proverb

"Friends are like melons; shall I tell you why? To find one good you must one hundred try."

Claude Mermet

"Men and melons are hard to know."

Benjamin Franklin

"Success to me is having ten honeydew melons, and eating only the top half of each one."

Barbra Streisand

"Watermelon -- it's a good fruit. You eat, you drink, you wash your face."

Enrico Caruso

## Many Melons

July, August, and September are great months for melons here in Northern California. These refreshing and delicious vine fruits are rich in vitamins A and C, as well as Potassium, Iron and B vitamins. Our warehouse has been inundated with many different varieties of this summer staple. Melons are not merely nutritious; they also have a rather interesting history.

What we commonly call "melons" include two different species: *Cucumis melo* and *Citrullus lanatus*. Both are members of the gourd/pumpkin family, growing on trailing vines.

*Citrullus lanatus* is thought to be the more ancient of the two; probably originating in Africa. Watermelons are the most well-known of this species. Egyptians painted watermelons on walls of their homes and tombs, and references to watermelons were made in the Old Testament of the Bible. In those hot dry climates, watermelons were not only a food item; this fruit is made of at least 90% water, and easily potable. Members of the *C. lanatus* family were brought to Europe, but they require a warm climate, which limited their cultivation. Slave traders brought watermelons to the Americas, where they were soon grown by white settlers and Native Americans.

It is thought that the *Cucumis melo* originated near Egypt, Iran, India, and/ or Afghanistan. Varieties include musk melons (cantaloupes), charentais, and galias, which are all considered to be summer melons. Winter melons, such as casaba melons, crenshaws, and honeydew melons also belong to the *Cucumis melo* family. Ancestors of these varieties reached Europe via the Moors as early as the 13th century. By the 1400s, Arabic traders had introduced some sweeter varieties of melons to Italy and France. Also at this time, more bitter varieties were commonly cultivated in China; these were usually cooked. Historians note that Columbus brought melon seeds with him to Haiti in 1493. *Cucumis melo* is considered to be a very promiscuous plant, and gardeners have long advised against planting melons near cucumbers; likewise, the many forms of this ever-evolving species easily hybridize with each other.



-Lorrie Wesa

## Yolo County Melons

Yolo County is one of California's original counties, created when California became a state in 1850. Yolo County, which borders Sacramento, Solano, Napa, Lake, Colusa, and Sutter Counties, is quite rural, and is home to many fantastic, small, organic farms. Veritable Vegetable buys some of Yolo County's most delicious produce through Organic Harvest Network, an East Bay-based marketing partnership for eight small growers. I spoke with Peter Oszaczyk, of Organic Harvest Network, about Wooley Farm's and Durst's melons, some of our favorites here.

Wooley Farm is located in Gridley, CA. Brad and Judy Johnson have been farming organically here for over 20 years. Wooley Farm has produced some amazing Ambrosia melons and Yellow Doll watermelons this year. Jim and Deborah Durst have been farming in nearby Esparto, CA since the eighties as well. Their Hungry Hollow and Durst Organic Growers labels are synonymous with great produce. Peter told me that some of his favorite Durst melons are the Charantais melon and Red Seeded and Seedless watermelons.

Yolo County is an ideal place for melons, says Peter, because of their great soil and mild weather. A late frost this spring took out some of the early melons, but the area has recovered well. No need to knock, smell or thump melons this summer, just look at the label- if it says Durst, Wooley, or any other Yolo County farm, it's a sure thing!

-Lorrie Wesa

## Melon Shopping Guide

With so many melon varieties to choose from, making choices can be challenging, especially with limited shelf space. Fortunately, melon season is beginning to burgeon with color and flavor, ensuring whatever we eat is delicious and looks good! The following guide encompasses our current inventory of Yolo County melons.

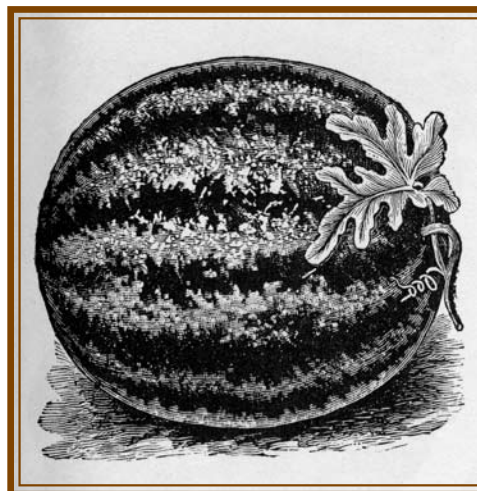
**Ambrosia** melons are hybrids of cantaloupes, but with a slightly more aromatic smell and orange flesh; the skin also shows similar webbing like a cantaloupe, but with stripes. **Galias** and **Sharlyns** are also comparable in appearance to cantaloupes as the skin on both are netted, but have fragrant green and yellow-white flesh respectively. **Canary** (sometimes called Juan Canary) melons have yellow-green flesh and are an easily distinguishable football shape, plus their thick, bright yellow skin brings a ray of sunshine to the stand. **Charantais** melons, green striped and orange fleshed, require delicate handling due to their thin skins; additionally, they provide visual contrast. The **Eel River** variety, besides having an interesting name, is orange skinned and lightly speckled green with a slightly amphibious looking skin—inside the flesh is orange and creamy. **Haogen** melons (my personal favorite!) are splendidly green and yellow striped, with a delicate juicy green flesh.

Watermelon varieties have increased in popularity in recent years, with yellow watermelons such as **Orchids** and **Yellow Dolls**, whose flavor leans towards the sweet and delicate. Also, don't miss the **Mickey Lee** or **Tiger Baby**—besides having excellent flavor, they tend towards a smaller, rounder size—great for small displays!

-Denise McAllan



*Cucumis melo*



*Citrullus lanatus*

