

The Leaflett

California Rare Fruit Growers - Central Coast Chapter Newsletter
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2005--The Year of the Apple

Magnoliales Annonaceae

Custard Apples



There are several varieties of fruits in this family known as Custard Apples. Of course, Custard Apples aren't "real" apples, or pomes--but I've written just about all I can think of about apples in general, so I'm researching other fruits *called* apples, too!

Probably the most well-known of the custard apples, and the one that grows best around here, is the cherimoya. The cherimoya tastes like a subtle combination of pineapple, papaya and banana. About the size of a grapefruit, it is an irregular oval in shape, covered in a leathery green skin with a scaly pattern looking much like large, overlapping thumbprint indentations. The flesh,

interspersed with large, shiny black seeds, is cream-colored and it is the texture of firm custard. Mark Twain called the cherimoya "the most delicious fruit known to man."

A native to the semi-tropical highland valleys of Ecuador, Columbia, and Bolivia, the cherimoya is a fairly dense, evergreen tree that grows 20 to 30 feet in height. Though sensitive to frost, it must have periods of cool temperatures or the tree will gradually go dormant. The indigenous inhabitants of the Andes say that although the cherimoya cannot stand snow, it does like to see it in the distance. Cherimoya trees take four or five years to produce their first fruit. They are propagated by seed or grafting. The seeds, if cracked open and eaten, are poisonous.

Cherimoyas seem to thrive in Southern California Coastal hillside climates (even if they can't see the snow!), but they can't thrive without help from their growers. In their native habitat, they are pollinated by certain insects that aren't available here, and bees are ineffective, so all pollination must be done by hand in June, July, and August. This is an extremely labor intensive procedure and makes cherimoyas rather expensive fruit. Not only that, when mature, they last on the tree only a week or two, so all trees must be checked often, also adding to the cost of production.

Although nearly everyone agrees that the best way to eat a cherimoya is simply to pop the seeds out and then scoop the flesh from the skin with a spoon, it **is** a rather expensive fruit, so by using it in cooking, more people can enjoy the taste with less cherimoya! This recipe came from the Diamond Organics cherimoya recipe sheet. It sounds delicious. If you aren't one of the many of our group growing this wonderful fruit for fun/profit, you should be able to find cherimoyas at local farmer's

markets or even the Whole Foods store. Cherimoya “season” is usually November through May, so hang on to this recipe!

Cherimoya Custard Pie

1 10-inch unbaked deep-dish pie shell

1lb. ripe Cherimoya (peeled, seeded and diced)

3 eggs (separated)

1 cup evaporated milk

1/2 cup sugar

1/2 tsp vanilla

1/8 tsp salt

Sweetened Whipped Cream

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Bake pie shell 5 minutes, set aside. Reduce oven to 375 degrees. In a food processor, puree cherimoya until smooth. Whisk in yolks, milk, sugar, vanilla, and salt until blended. Set aside. Beat egg whites until soft peaks form. Fold whites into cherimoya mix until no streaks of white remain (do not stir). Pour filling into crust. Bake 35-45 minutes or until filling is set and knife inserted halfway between center and edge of filling comes out clean. Cool, then refrigerate. Serve wedges topped with cream. This recipe makes one 10-inch deep-dish pie.

May Meeting

CRFG, Central Coast Chapter bus tour May 14, 2005—Report by Bob Tullock, co-chair

After several months of planning and a test drive of the route by our chapter activities chair, Joe Sabol, 39 hearty souls boarded an American Star bus at the Crops Unit of Cal Poly and headed north just before 7 AM on the morning of May 14, 2005. The bus stopped in the northeast corner of the OSH parking lot in the Target center just south of Paso Robles and boarded eight more people eager to tour. Marv Daniels had looked up a “Bus Roulette” contest on the internet and had numbered segments of the right rear bus tire as a “chalk board roulette wheel”. Most people on the bus offered to play the game and with our first stop at the Cholame rest stop, a winner was determined. After the time required for 40+ people to get in and out of a Cal-Trans facility we were on our way to Steve Murray’s Farm and Fruit Stand near Arvin, CA.

Steve is a very progressive farmer and has built an exceptional farm and fruit stand that sells only what he produces. It has most stone fruits available from late April through Thanksgiving with cherries earlier and apples and pears later. Steve described his



varietal selection to maintain continuous fruit for sale in his store. We all sampled blueberries, pluots, apriums, peaches and nectarines until **some** of the more modest of our members were so ashamed of themselves they quit eating. However, **most** of us just kept on eating as we walked along. Steve also showed us some of the newer plantings of figs and avocados that will add to the sales. We then went to a shady area with picnic tables and ate lunch as a group.



Then, it was back on the bus and off to Porterville to the home and tropical, subtropical, deciduous fruit and vegetable growing farm of Walter and Brenda Thoma. Walter and Brenda have an amazing collection of bearing fruits and vegetables arranged in a manner suited to their food needs. (Walter grows nearly all of the food they eat. Doesn't he look healthy?) Much of the growth area is under permanent bird net and a large bearing Royal Anne Cherry tree showed the effectiveness of well maintained bird net. Walter has a large greenhouse for winter production and many raised beds and other specialized growing areas. Walter and Brenda live on a road named "Success Valley Drive" that could have easily been named that because someone had visited their place!

It was difficult to leave this beautiful spot and get on the bus to head for home. After a stop at Cholame and at the Target Center to let the North County folks off, we arrived at the Crops Unit about 7:30 PM. We had traveled 400 miles and visited two exceptional operations in just over 12 hours for a very full day. Most of the discussion on the way home was about the wonderful tour Joe Sabol had put together and with all of us wanting to make sure Joe was working on future tour--possibly in the Santa Barbara-Ventura County area. As tired as we were, we all agreed that when Joe says "what fun it is to be a member of CRFG" he says it all!

Ask an Expert

Question: Summer and growing your own tomatoes just go together, but here on the coast I don't always get the flavor and color I am used to, having come from a much warmer and drier climate. Do you have any ideas for a tomato that grows well here and might also be something just a little different? *A Confused Wannabe Tomato Grower*

Answer: No wonder you are confused—from Acme to Zlatlovka, there are over 7000 tomato varieties currently available from which to choose! Who can make that kind of decision alone? Fortunately, there was a great article in our local newspaper not long ago about the kinds of tomatoes that grow well here. I'm sure you can find a copy of the article on the internet, but one that was noted as suited to our coastal climate was "Green Zebra." I'd just purchased some plants because I liked the "blurb" on the container, so I was very happy to see that it was an outstanding performer in our area, too. Here is some information that might be helpful to you in making a choice of whether or not to try this variety.



The Green Zebra is a medium sized tomato ripening to a green color, with cream/yellow spots and stripes. Flesh is an emerald color and the flavor is generally considered excellent. This variety often makes top ten lists for its taste. The Green Zebra is used heavily in salads and salsa for its mild sweet-acidic flavor blend. The vines are well branched, provide good foliage cover, and have some resistance to septoria leaf spot. It takes about 75-80 days to mature. It was developed in 1985 by Tom Wagner of Tater Mater Seeds.

Use it where its unusual green color can be enjoyed. People who grow it rave about making salsa with it. The only negative I have heard is that it is difficult to tell when it is "ripe" and if it is left on the vine too long, it becomes mushy. (By-the-way, this is another perfect fruit to talk about in this "Year of the Apple" since tomatoes have often been called "Love Apples"!)

Community Orchard Update

A terrific group of volunteers arrived on Saturday morning, May 28, with their tools and snacks to work for a couple of hours at the CRFG Community Orchard located at Cal Poly. We had several "guest" helpers, including a friend of Pet & Marv Daniels' and our almost-three-year old grandson, Seth. Seth loved pushing the big wheeled cart full of weeds or branches one way and mulch the other way and said he "likes to be a farmer."

Things that we worked on were: Spring pruning, removal of grass and weeds from perimeter fences and other locations (Bernie, using the hula hoe, said chopping weeds was why he "left home"), moved limbs and branches to rear gates for shredding, thinned fruit, ate some ripe peaches, spread mulch, found a snake (Paul Janetski picked it up in his gloved hand!), and held a brief board meeting called to order by co-chair, Bob Tullock.

We agreed to send a "donation" of \$500 to CRFG headquarters to help defray the cost of the insurance that covers all of us at CRFG functions, including chapter meetings. Joe Sabol showed us the beautiful plaque presented to him by Shandon High for the apple grafting volunteers. A tree planting date was discussed and will be taken care of by Joe Sabol and several others, including Bob Tullock, Pet and Marv Daniels, and Lark Carter.

Thanks to Pet and Marv Daniels for their organization and to those of you who showed up to help!

Announcements

Welcome to Our Chapter: Mary Buehnerkemper, Suedene Walker, Cathy Novak, David & Judith Jurji, and Rich Burke.

Bird Netting: Bad news--our bird net supplier has just learned that some "country" bought a boatload of the beautiful bird netting and the manufacturer sold every quarter mile bale they had! So, our supplier was cut off and left without any bird net to sell to the Central Coast Chapter this month as planned. Therefore, we will NOT get our bird net in May or June. Our supplier said, "late July", and we hope he knows what he is talking about! Meanwhile, we are all very disappointed and will have to make do with old net, Home Depot net, or other bird control measures until August!

Web Site: Check our site at: www.crfc-central.org to see what our web-master, Art DeKleine and his assistants, John and Choung Crowe and Pet and Marv Daniels are doing to keep us all informed.

Join the Parent Organization: Many of our chapter members are also members of the Parent association and, for those of you who aren't, perhaps you **should** consider joining. With parent

organization membership you receive a wonderful color magazine, *The Fruit Gardener*, filled with great articles on fruit growing, news, many chapter activities and contacts. Dues are **\$30 annually** or **3 years for \$87**. Membership applications are available from **Joe Sabol**. Call him at **544-1056** if you can't find him at a meeting.

Calendar of Meetings – 2005

Meetings are held the **second Saturday** of the month and **begin at 1:30 PM** unless otherwise indicated. Bring a friend, car pool, and, for most meetings, **bring a chair** for all in your party. What fun it is to be a member of CRFG!

June 11—Installing a Drip Irrigation System—Farm Supply—SLO: Mr. Joe Decker, Farm Supply, will be our speaker and host. Meeting will be at the **new** Farm Supply store on Tank Farm Road. **All in attendance will receive a very special coupon from Joe Decker for a discount on irrigation and drip supplies and equipment!** See driving directions below. Thanks to Jerie Garbutt for suggesting this program! **Refreshments: S - Z please.**

Driving Directions to Farm Supply: From the north or south--take Highway 101 to San Luis Obispo, exit Los Osos Valley Road and go south (opposite direction from Los Osos) on Los Osos Valley Road to South Higuera. Turn left on South Higuera and go **.3** miles to Tank Farm Road. Make a right turn on Tank Farm road and then drive another **.3** miles to **224 Tank Farm Road** which will be to your left.

July 9—The Luffa Farm—Nipomo: We will visit the greenhouses and herb gardens of this fascinating "fruit" farm at 1457 Willow Road in Nipomo. Thanks to Carol Scott for setting up this program! See their website at: <http://www.theluffafarm.biz/> **Refreshments: A - G please.**

August 13—Jack and Mary Kay Sword's Rare Fruit Orchard—Nipomo: We will visit the home and orchard of one of our chapter's founders. The Sword's orchard consists of a wide variety of "rare and exotic" fruits and nuts, and is a **MATURE** orchard. For instance, Jack has more than 60 macadamia trees! Thanks to Art Henzgen for suggesting the Sword's orchard as a place for us all to learn. **Refreshments: H - R please.**

September 8, 9, 10—CRFG Festival of Fruit—Santa Cruz area: This is the annual meeting of all chapters, a State Convention of CRFG! There will be no local meeting for the Central Coast in September. Let's all plan to attend the Festival in Santa Cruz! Saturday is the big day! Watch the CRFG website for news and details: <http://www.crfq.org/>

October 8--Chris Chaney's Wholesale Protea Nursery--Arroyo Grande: Mr. Chaney has well maintained Marion berries, raspberries, blackberries, blueberries and a greenhouse for pepino dulce and tomatoes. He also has grapes, kiwis, feijoas, lemon guava, and a mixed tree orchard with a unique system of netting. Oh, yes, and he has propagation houses and lots of **proteas**! He will sell us proteas on October 8 only. Thanks to Jenny Weaver and Carol Scott for setting up this meeting! **Refreshments: S - Z please.**

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