Gulf Coast Fruit Study Newsletter

Volume 15, Issue 1

Edited By: Ethan A. Natelson, M.D.

August 17, 2000 Meeting

Planning Committee:

Bill Adams
Leon Atlas, M.D.
Yvonne Gibbs
Prema Kuratti
George McAfee
Bob Marx
Ethan A. Natelson, M.D.
David Parish
Bob Randle, Ph.D.

Current Meeting:

The next Gulf Coast Fruit Study Program will occur on August 17, 2000 at 7:00 PM. We will sample pears, jujubes and pomegranates grown here in Houston. We will also review material presented at the recent Southern Fruit Fellowship (SFF) and North American Fruit Explorers (NAFEX) meetings.

Contact Us!

Harris Cty Extension Service 2 Abercrombie Road Houston, TX 77080 Phone: 281/855-5611 Fax: 281/855-5638

Annual Pear Tasting

Pear production in the United States has been dominated, for many years, by the so-called winter pear industry of California, Oregon and Washington. The goal has been to produce pears which store well and can be shipped well into the winter months. In contrast to the many new apple varieties which are replacing the classic Red Delicious, new pear introductions from this country have been essentially non-existent. Currently, 60% of the total United States pear production has been of the D'Anjou, 20% in **Bartlett**, 16% in Bosc and the remainder in Comice and red sports of these cultivars. A few niche markets exist in Asian pears. We do import as well as export pears. The import market comes primarily from Argentina, Chile and Australia where we find alternate varieties such as Concorde, Packham's Triumph, Taylor's Gold and a few others. We export about 30% of our total pear production with 55% of the export market in Mexico and most of the remainder to Brazil.

Most research in the United States on rootstocks, storage parameters, trellising techniques, etc. takes place in the Northwest or in a few specialized research units of the USDA, such as Beltsville, Maryland. For these reasons, those of us in the Southern United States must conduct our own testing to find varieties and rootstocks that work best for us. Amateur organizations such as North American Fruit Explorers (NAFEX) and Southern Fruit Fellowship (SFF) with testing groups, not only in pears, but in many other fruits, allow us to develop information on suitable cultivars for our area.

At our tasting last year, most people rated Southern Queen, Moonglow and Warren as our best dessert pears. Our lack of cold weather reduced production of the latter two as well as Tennessee this season but we have others that you may like. The Southern Bartlett, which was found near Alexandria, Louisiana, was quite productive and the fruit fairly large this year as

the tree became more mature. Leona was also productive. Its cousin, Louisiana Beauty, is lower chill and growing vigorously and we hope to have this one next year. Baldwin is another that is a regular heavy producer and good when properly ripened. In terms of Asians, we have great expectations from Broussard, a Delacambre, Louisiana find which is just coming into bearing as well as a few others we have not fruited before. As always, we have a huge crop of Turnbull, which some people have liked in the past. Meadows is another heavily productive and nicelooking pear for our area. Keep in mind that when pears fruit for the first time they are often smaller than those fruits produced on the more mature tree and may not have their fully developed flavor either. We hope you can come and help us find the right pear to suit your taste. We will try to have some of these varieties as grafted trees at our annual plant sale in January, since most are not commercially available.

New Ideas?

We frequently have the idea that something recently published must contain more accurate information than an ancient tome on the same subject. At least in horticulture, this is often not the case. What follows are excerpts from two books written almost 150 years ago that are as accurate in description and detail as any written today on the same subjects. Thos. W. Field's *Pear Culture: A Manual* was written in 1858 but publication was delayed by the Civil War until 1866. Everything in this book is as correct today as it was when Field put pen (or quill?) to paper. What follows is his description of why quince root stock is favored by many orchardists over standard pear rootstock:

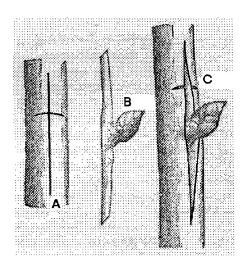
"He who wants large crops of pears, indifferent to size and quality, may plant all his trees on the pear stock, in deep soil; but he has to wait from 10 to 15 years. If you want fine fruit, which, in fact, pays better, with less trouble and expense, select your varieties on the Quince. These will often bear the first year, and always the third and fourth from their planting. If I had 30 trees to plant, 20 should be on the Quince, the balance on pear stock."

Thos. W. Field. Pear Culture: A Manual. Orange Judd & Co: New York (1866).

In February, I visited Harry and David's orchard in Medford, Oregon and saw about 15,000 trees just planted on quince (BA 29-C type) exactly as Field described and for the same reasons. Field also was quite familiar with the use of interstems (interstocks) or double working to combat the incompatibility that certain pears, such as Bosc, have with quince:

"It is often desirable to improve the texture and flavor of some varieties of pears, by growing them upon the Quince, although they have proved unadapted to it. The desired effect is obtained by double working — as it is the roots, the providers of nourishment, that govern to a great extent these characteristics in the fruit. Any free-growing varieties may be budded on the Quince, for the purpose of double working, although some care should be taken to obtain such as harmonize with the Quince. The Virgalieu and the Buffam are the best, although not the most vigorous growers; yet most pears grow well, when propagated upon them."

The second book, Charles Baltet's *The Art of Grafting and Budding* is a translation from the French work, published in England in 1873. The original volume appeared even earlier. Every graft we use today, from the bark inlay graft to the banana graft for pecans is covered in detail and accurately illustrated. In the section on bud grafting, Baltet covers T-budding by the standard incision, the inverted T and here the cross-shaped incision when working with very large buds:



"If the buds on the scion shoot should be rather large for the diameter of the stock, for example those of the service-tree or of the chestnut (A), they will not be properly held in the incision unless it is made in the form of a cross, which is made with two cuts of the knife, instead of the T form: the upper part of the bark belonging to the bud is slipped into the upper part of the incision (B), and is there held fast in a firm manner, which could not be secured by the ordinary process. The bandage is applied, beginning either at the middle of the incision (C), and finishing at both ends, or beginning at the top, and taking care to close the bark well.

Charles Baltet. The Art of Grafting and Budding. William Robinson: New York (1873).

Future of Gulf Coast Study Group:

Since our initial meetings, Bill Adams has played a key leadership role in keeping our meetings both educational and fun. He and Tom LeRoy set up the demonstration orchard adjacent to the Bear Creek meeting facility and this concept has spread to other extension centers in Fort Bend and Conroe, for example. Tom has since moved to another county facility and now Bill indicates that he will be retiring in several months to pursue his many interests, including photography, at which he has always excelled. He is also working on a new book. He has suggested we change from our regularly scheduled quarterly meeting format to just two planned events, the plant sale and lectures in January and the August program. Should we have access to an unusual speaker, an unplanned program may be set up and advertised. Ultimately, if our meetings and newsletter are to continue, we may wish to fold our organization into a local chapter of a larger group or make other arrangements. Suggestions are welcome.

PICKLED PEARS (Yield: 1 serving)

14 lb Pear

1 qt Cider vinegar

6 lb Sugar

1 Tsp. Cloves, whole

1 Tsp. Cinnamon, stick

Any good preserving pear may be used. Slice and remove core or pickle whole; the latter method is preferred when Seckel pears are used. Peel pears. Put spices in a small cheese cloth bag and add to the vinegar and sugar and bring to a boil. Add pears and cook until tender. The pears will look clear when tender. Remove them with a spoon and place them in sterilized jars. Boil the syrup until it becomes thick, the pour it over pears and seal.

PEAR HARLEQUIN (Yield: 6 servings)

3 lb Pears (underripe)

1 can Pineapple (small can crushed)

1 Orange (juice & grated rind)

4 oz Maraschino cherries

3 C Sugar (per 4 cup fruit mix)

Wipe, stem, peel and core pears. Cut in small pieces. Mix pears, pineapple and orange (juice and rind) together. Measure. For each 4 cups fruit mix, add 3 cups sugar. Cover and let stand overnight. Simmer until thick (about 2 hours). Add cherries (cutting them in half). Stir well. Process for 10 minutes in boiling water bath. Makes eight 6 oz. jars.

NOTE: This is good used as a topping on pound cake.

VOLUME 15, ISSUE I

PEAR AND ALMOND PANCAKES (Yield: 4 servings)

5 Bartlett pears
1 pk Buttermilk pancake mix
Vanilla
1 pk Slivered almonds
10 oz Light maple syrup
10 oz Fig filling
5 oz Cane sugar
Whipped butter
Powdered sugar

Core, peel and chop pears to 1/2" chunks. Coat in syrup of 5 ounces water, 5 ounces sugar and refrigerate overnight. Prepare enough pancake mix for 4 people and add a small amount of vanilla for taste. Pour batter on griddle and immediately add pears and preferred amount of almonds to the cakes. Flip carefully with bubbles appear. Heat maple syrup and fig filling in a saucepan. Top pancakes with heated syrup, whipped butter and powdered sugar.

PEAR BREAD (Yield: 8 servings)

```
1 1/2 Tsp Yeast -- (2 1/4 Tsp)
2 C Bread Flour -- (3 C)
1/2 Tsp Nutmeg -- (3/4 Tsp)
1/2 Tsp Ground Ginger -- (3/4 Tsp)
1/2 Tsp Salt -- (3/4 Tsp)
2 Tsp Butter -- (3 T)
2 Tsp Honey -- (1 T)
3 Tbsp Pear Liquid -- Or Water, (4-5T)
1/2 C Pear Puree -- (3/4 C)
```

This is based on a bread made in the French countryside amid pear orchards. It has a delicate, sweet flavor of pears. It is a nice tea or breakfast bread, or can be used in mildly flavored sandwiches such as cream cheese and cucumber.

Make the pear puree by peeling and coring 3 pears for the smaller recipe, 4 or 5 for the larger one. Cut each pear in several pieces and put in a small saucepan with 1 or 2 T water. Start cooking over very low heat. The pears will quickly start releasing their own juices, and nor more water will be needed. Increase to medium heat. Cook the pears until they are very soft, about 10 min. Then drain off as much liquid as you can, saving the liquid. Put the pears in a blender or food processor and puree.

Measure out the required amount of puree. Put it and all other ingredients except pear liquid in bread pan in order suggested by your bread machine instructions. The amount of liquid needed for the bread will depend on the liquid in the puree, so you'll need to watch the dough for the first few minutes, adding pear liquid (or plain water) until it reaches the proper consistency - neither stiff nor too soft. Set for white bread, medium crust. Press Start. Once you have added the liquid, the bread does not need any further attention until it is baked.

HARRIS COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION 2 ABERCROMBIE DRIVE HOUSTON, TX 77084

Non-Profit Org. U.S. Postage PAID Houston, TX Permit No. 9216



