

Gulf Coast Fruit Study Newsletter

Volume 21, Issue 2

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July 24, 2007 Meeting

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PEAR ROOTSTOCKS AND THE TENNOUSI PEAR

The search for the perfect pear and the perfect rootstock to grow it on continues. For commercial orchards, the most desirable combination results in a larger fruit on a smaller tree. But finding the right combination takes considerable trial and error because it varies between cultivars and also varies with local soils and climate conditions. For Medford, Oregon, one ideal combination seems to be the BA-29C quince rootstock and the **Comice** (Royal Rivera) pear. Another successful combination in the Northwest is the OH x F 87 rootstock with the **Bosc** pear, also producing a tree with reduced size from standard rootstocks and larger fruit. By contrast, in other Northwest trials the highly touted Pyrodwarf dwarfing pear rootstock from Germany consistently has produced smaller than usual pears with the added negative of reduced yields of **Bosc**, **Bartlett** and **d'Anjou**. Here in Houston, Pyrodwarf proved to have absolutely no vigor and was not useful as either a rootstock or interstem. OH x 87 does work for us, producing a tree smaller than the OH x F 40 series, which was initially the rootstock choice selected by Dr. Atlas at the Bear Creek Extension Demonstration Orchard. OH x 87 has not been tested widely in Texas, but seems to produce smaller fruit.

George McAfee and I decided to experiment with the **Tennousi** pear, perhaps the (at the moment) perfect pear for Houston since we can't grow either **Bosc** or **Comice**. It has fruited for several years now with very minimal fireblight, producing a good sized, attractive and flavorful pear that does not oxidize easily when cut. The index tree at the Extension Service Orchard is a seedling. We have it grafted on **P. calleryana**, **P. betulaefolia**, on BA-29C quince directly, and with various interstems, and on chanomeles Japanese quince. Clearly, the first two which we know can produce very large trees, depending upon the cultivar, are also large with **Tennousi**. BA-29C seems to produce a very small tree, and may not be useful here, but time will tell. The chanomeles quince is more vigorous, and could be ideal. **Tennousi** is directly compatible with both. If you have access to other pear rootstocks, we would be interested in giving those a trial also.

Next Gulf Coast Fruit Study Meeting

Our next program will be held on Tuesday, **July 24**, at **7:00 PM**, and will feature a discussion on grape culture in Texas by Fritz Westover (fawestover@ag.tamu.edu), our newest County Extension Agent who is brimming with enthusiasm. Fritz has worked with Jim Kamas, who is retiring, and who has done extensive work with grapes as well as peaches in the Fredricksburg – Austin area

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GRAPES IN TEXAS

Last year our Gulf Coast Study Group visited a small but successful winery in the Alvin area, and we were impressed by the beautiful demonstration orchards there, primarily growing the variety **Black Spanish**. This particular small black grape has been grown here for more than 100 years. The owner of the winery confessed that most of his production grapes were actually imported from as far away as California, and only about 20 % of his raw material came from his own orchards. There are several other successful wineries in central Texas and certain vinifera wine grapes have been successfully grown here. Our limiting factor is Pierce's disease, a lethal infection caused by the *Xyella fastidiosa* bacterium and spread by leafhoppers. Unfortunately, if you look at a map of the United States depicting where this disease is most vigorous, it encompasses the Houston and Southeast Texas area, as well as much of the deep South and northern Florida. There is no effective treatment of infected vines, but there are a number of cultivars that are unaffected by this problem.

Such disease resistant vinifera grapes are **Champanel**, a red jelly variety developed by TV Munson of Denison, Texas and **Roucanneuf**, a French x American grape hybrid which has small pink berries. Dr. John Mortensen of the University of Florida has developed a number of disease resistant varieties, including **Orlando Seedless**, which is a small greenish berry and **Blanc duBois**, a white wine grape. We have locally successfully grown a numbered Mortensen hybrid, originally obtained by Dr. Leon Atlas many years ago, which is large, somewhat oval and greenish yellow. Bob Randall has named this **Mortensen's Seedless**, although it is not totally seedless. I am not sure if anyone has tried this as a wine grape, but it is tasty.

We look forward to Fritz Westhover's presentation and his discussion of the success of the wine industry in Texas.

NAFEX AND SOUTHERN FRUIT FELLOWSHIP MEETINGS

Two upcoming fruit growing meetings that might interest you are the annual North American Fruit Explorers (NAFEX) meeting to be held in Clemson, SC on Aug 22-24 and the annual Southern Fruit Fellowship (SFF) meeting to be held on October 11-13 in Crystal Springs, MS. These meetings feature a number of lectures by both University Professors and accomplished amateurs in the field as well as tours of local commercial and experimental plantings in the area. You can taste the fruits of new cultivars and pick up useful information on plants you would like to grow here. The details of the NAFEX meeting are outlined on their website (www.nafex.org) and in their quarterly publication, Pomona. The schedule for the SFF meeting appears in the SFF quarterly newsletter, or you can write me (natelson@pipeline.com) or the SFF editor, Jesse Thompson (jessebonniet@aol.com) for details. The SFF meeting is being held in conjunction with a local annual horticultural festival and a number of people will have unique plants for sale. Both of these organizations are cheap as well as educational to belong to and you get to meet some wonderful people and visit different fruit growing areas of the country, each year, as our annual meetings always seek new locations – SFF primarily in the South and NAFEX, throughout the country.

GRAPE UPSIDE DOWN CAKE

(untried recipe; source: Grape Recipes From the Kitchen
<http://www.honeyflowfarm.com/graperecipes.htm>)

2 lbs. red grapes, seeded or seedless
¾ cup sugar
1 tsp. salt
2 ¼ cup cake flour
1 1/3 cups sugar
2 ½ tsp. baking powder
½ cup shortening
1 cup milk
1 tsp. vanilla
2 eggs

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 9 x 12 inch baking pan. Wash grapes and pinch stems off. Cook in heavy sauce pan until pulp is soft; run through a sieve or cheesecloth to remove seeds, if necessary. Place grape pulp into saucepan, add skins and ¾ cup sugar; cook until skins are tender (about 15 minutes). You should have about 2 cups of pulp,

Sift dry ingredients into mixing bowl. Add shortening, ½ cup milk, eggs and vanilla; beat 2 minutes. Add remaining milk; beat 30 seconds. Pour into prepared pan. Spread grape mixture over top of batter. NOTE: Grape layer will sink to the bottom during baking. Bake 45 minutes. Serve warm with whipped cream, if desired. Makes 12 servings.

GRAPE PARFAIT PIE

(untried recipe; source: Wenger Grapes (www.wengergrapes.com), citing Better Homes & Gardens Cookbook)

Combine 1 envelope (1 tab.) unflavored gelatin and 1/3 cup sugar. Add 1 ¼ cups boiling grape juice and stir to dissolve the gelatin. Add 2 tablespoons lemon juice. Spoon 1 pint vanilla ice cream into the gelatin mixture and stir until melted. Chill until mixture mounds when spooned (about 45 minutes). Fill one baked 9-in. pastry shell with gelatin mixture; chill until set. Trim with whipped cream, if desired.

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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