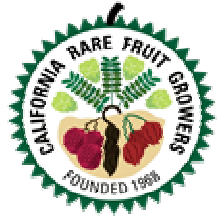


LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

November 2006 Volume IX Issue 6



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November Meeting

Date: Saturday, November 25, 2006

Time: 10:00 A.M.

Place: Sepulveda Garden Center
16633 Magnolia Blvd., Encino, CA 91316

Program: Paula White of Orcon will be our speaker. Orcon is a company that specializes in the sale of live beneficial insects, along with natural products for the home, garden and pet. **Paula** has been with Orcon for the past 20 years. She will bring products for sale. This is an exclusive offer for CRFG, as Orcon is a wholesale company and does not make their products available to the general public.

December Meeting



Date: Saturday, December 16, 2006

Time: 10:00 A.M.

Place: Sepulveda Garden Center
16633 Magnolia Blvd., Encino, CA 91316

Program: Let's get in the holiday spirit and celebrate! Bring your questions, suggestions, tips. We will open up the floor. Following our meeting we will have a pot luck luncheon, just as we did last year. So please bring a main dish, salad, dessert or appetizer to share with us. We will provide the paper goods and drinks.

COCONA – Solanum sessiliflorum – Solanaceae

article written by **Alfredo Chiri**



Common Names: Cocona, Peach tomato, Turkey berry, Orinoco apple, Topiro, Roolláhe, Coconilla, Akui'bedn, Daboca, Kochari, Kukuna, Lulo, Popó, Popoi, Wakui'bedn

The Cocona is a native of South America where the wild species are found in Perú, Colombia and Ecuador. The plant has been found distributed along the low lands of the Amazonia to 4,000 feet in altitude in the Andean hills. The fruit has a very high genetic diversity (biotypes) as to shape, size, color, flavor and fragrance. In Perú there have been found at least 25 biotypes and in Brazil 35.

The Cocona plant is a heavily branched herbaceous shrub that can vary between 2 to 6 feet high. From a central thick stem scalloped ovate leaves grow, 18 inches long and 15 inches wide. The leaves are covered densely with white hairs on the underside prominent with veins on their margins. The color of the leaves will vary from dark green to pale green depending upon the plant variety.

The flowers are borne in clusters of 5 to 9 in the leaf axils. They are bisexuals, 1 inch wide with 5 greenish-yellow petals, 5 yellow stamens and a dark-green 5-pointed calyx.

The fruit may be round, oblate, oblong or conical, with a blunt rounded apex. The fruit size average varies from 1 to 4 inches in length and up to 3 inches wide at the base. The skin is thin, smooth and soft and is covered with peach-like fuzz until the fruit is fully ripe, and then it becomes smooth. Depending on the variety, the fruit will be red, orange or yellow. The thin flesh has a faint flavor of tomato and surrounds the pulp. The pulp varies in thickness, and is juicy, meaty and of color creamy-white to pale yellow. Abundant throughout the central pulp are thin, flat, oval, cream-colored seeds surrounded by gelatin-like membrane with an acid flavor and pleasant aroma.

In Perú the Cocona is classified by the size, color and shape of its fruit. The 4 most prominent types are: Small-size fruit, purple-red; Medium-size fruit, yellow; Round like an apple, yellow; Pear-shaped, yellow. The medium size fruit is utilized mainly for juice.

The Cocona is self-fertile. Fruits mature about 8 weeks after pollination. The Cocona plant life is about two years. The Cocona is primarily propagated from seeds, even though vegetative propagation is possible to perpetuate a particular cultivar. Seeds extracted from the ripe fruits are placed in the shade for 2 days to ferment and break down the gelatin that surrounds them. They are washed and dried briefly out of the direct sun. Then

planting is similar to the practice used to plant tomatoes. Plant seedlings 5 to 7 feet apart, depending on the fertility of the soil. Fertilize established plants with 2 to 3 oz. of a 10-8-10 NPK formula every 2 months.

(Starting with this month's issue, we will begin featuring a little bio on different members of our LA Chapter. This month we will start with **Lynn Maxson**, our very dear program director.)

Although born in Georgia, **Lynn Maxson** came to California at the tender age of six months. After attending junior college in Santa Ana, he joined the Army (a 3 year stint) and spent 6 months in the Army Language School in Monterey, then some advanced training in Washington D.C. and the rest in Germany. After the Army, **Lynn** joined IBM and worked for them for 36 years. He retired in 1992 and went into private practice as a software consultant, which he continues to engage in.

He married and raised four sons in Garden Grove. It was during this time he joined **CRFG**. Living in Orange County, **Lynn** was an active member of their Chapter for about 20 years.

When he moved to Simi Valley he decided to join a local Chapter. **Bill Grant** was the Chairman at that time and **Lynn** began helping him to find tour locations and speakers.

The rest is history! The Los Angeles Chapter has reaped the benefits of **Lynn's** fine efforts over the past 6 years. Thanks to his hard work and dedication, we have had many wonderful tours, outstanding speakers, and many enjoyable laughs together. Don't know what we would do without him. Thank you, thank you, thank you, Lynn.

Venetian Pastry, (submitted by our LA Chapter member: Anna Bruni Benson)

- ½ cup butter
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- pinch of salt (optional)
- ½ cup raisins

Cream butter and sugar; add eggs one at a time. Sift flour, baking powder and salt. Add to butter and egg mixture. Roll raisins in a little flour and stir into batter. Butter and flour a muffin pan. Place 2 tbsp of mixture in each of the dozen cups. Bake at 325 degrees for 20-25 minutes.

Variation (this is what Ana brought to our meeting in July)

You can use fresh peaches, plums or apples (peeled) Butter and flour a 9” baking pan and fill with about ½ of the dough. Place the fruit, cut in wedges, on the dough in two circles, and bake at 325 degrees for about 35-40 minutes, or until golden brown. As the dough rises it will cover a good part of the fruit, creating a very pretty pattern.

NOTE from Anna: “I always double the recipe in order to make a big cake or two small ones because everybody seems to like them and do not last very long...I have also used grapes.

This recipe is from my second Italian dessert book, “Solo Dolci (Just Desserts) published in 1996 but now out of print.”



Edgar Valdivia, Paul Thomson and Leo Manuel

Pitaya Experts

OCTOBER, THE MONTH FOR PITAYAS

Well, **Edgar Valdivia** began and ended the month of October spreading the word about that wonderful fruit- the pitaya, also known as dragon fruit. Early in October, **Ed** organized a ‘pitaya festival’. That was attended by about 70+ growers and enthusiasts. Not only did **Ed** speak, but also **Ramiro Lobo**, farm advisor for UC San Diego; and **Roger Washington**, a commercial grower of pitayas in Florida. A few words were also heard from **Paul Thomson**, the “father” of pitayas. After the lectures, there was a fruit tasting, a tour of a pitaya plantation and a testing to determine the best flavored pitaya being grown in the U.S. The festival was held at no charge to the public at Cal Poly Pomona. Then on October 28th the **Valdivias** opened up their home to the LA Chapter and the Santa Barbara Chapter. Much to their delight, among the 105+ people present were members of the San Diego Chapter, West LA Chapter, Orange County Chapter and Central Coast Chapter. This was an opportunity, not only to see **Edgar’s** orchard where he grows many, many tropical and sub-tropicals, and to learn more about the pitaya, it was also a great chance to socialize with each other and



to build up more enthusiasm for our great **CRFG** organization . Thank you so much to the

Grossbergers for bringing pitaya fruit to taste and to **Alfredo** and **Phyllis Chiri** for providing the delicious lucuma ice cream **Alfredo** also gave a short presentation on the lucuma to a few of our members. Thanks to all of you for bringing the delicious salads, desserts and fruits. It was a wonderful day!!



WHAT'S GROWING ON?

(Submitted by Dick Watts)

This is a good time to prune deciduous trees if the fruit has been picked. The leaves do not have to all fall off. Some of the evergreen trees can also be pruned, although some of the young fruit may have to be sacrificed.

There will be much leaf debris to be utilized. Don't throw it in the trash bin. Make compost out of it by grinding it up into smaller pieces or just pile it up to break down into compost. It may take a few weeks or months to be usable.

If compost is spread under all the fruit trees, it will conserve moisture and add nutrients to the soil.

As a supplement, steer or other manure can also be spread around the trees at this time and the winter rains should wash the nitrogen and minerals into the root zone.

Appealing Speaker

At the October meeting, the Los Angeles Chapter was introduced into the world of extremely rare fruits from places such as Borneo and Malaysia. Our speaker **Markku Hakkinen** gave a power point presentation highlighting such rare fruits as: compedak, terap, bilimi, and kundong. Of course, **Markku** also touched on the main focus of his travels and studies-the banana. It was a pleasure to have **Markku** speak, having come from so far away-Finland.

Born to garden - forced to work

**DON'T FORGET TO CHECK OUT OUR
CHAPTER WEBSITE WHERE YOU CAN VIEW
THIS AND PAST NEWSLETTERS;**

<http://www.crfg-la.org>

There are more than 100 common plants and houseplants that grow in our area that have parts that contain poison that may be injurious or even fatal to humans and animals. Nature allows this so animals and insects won't destroy our vegetation. Use care when around these plants to avoid ingesting them. Training young children to avoid putting anything in their mouth without your approval is the best prevention. Many of these plants may be planted in areas frequented by deer, rabbits, squirrels, gophers etc. as they will **naturally** stay away from them. Keep away from HORSES

This is a partial listing of poisonous plants, not all parts are necessarily poisonous however, contact your local poison control center of your local hospital if you suspect a problem.

Autumn Crocus
Azaleas (leaves)
Belladonna lily "naked lady"
Caladium
Castor Bean (seeds & leaves)
China Berry (tree and seeds)
Columbine (berries)
Cyclamen (underground stem)
Daffodils (bulb part)
Delphinium
Dumb Cane "dieffenbachia" (all parts)
Duranta
Elephant Ear "Caladium"
English Holly (berries)
Four O'Clock (roots, seeds)
Foxglove (leaves)
Hydrangea
Hyacinth (leaves, bulb)
Iris (underground stem)
Ivy (leaves)
Jessamine
Jimson weed (any part)
Larkspur
Lantana (foliage, berries)
Lily of the Valley
Lupine
Mistletoe (berries)
Mock Orange (fruit, leaves)
Monkshood
Mushrooms
Nightshade
Oleander (any part)
Pittosporum (fruit, leaves)
Poinsettia (any part)
Potato (seeds, sprouts)
Privet (leaves, berries)
Rhododendron (any part)
Rhubarb (leaves)
Scotch Broom (seeds)
Spanish Bayonet "Yucca" (root)

Spider Lily (bulb)
Sweet Pea (stem)
Tansy
Tobacco (any part)
Wisteria seeds