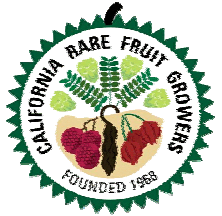


# YEAR OF THE AVOCADO

## LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

September 2008 Volume XI Issue 5



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

### 2008 Chapter Officers & Committees

#### Chairman:

Jorge Pelaez  
323 737-8188 chairman@CRFG-la.org

#### Treasurer:

K. Payton  
818 222-7556 treasurer@CRFG-la.org

#### Newsletter Editor:

Pat Valdivia  
805-584-6244 editor@CRFG-la.org

#### Program Chairman:

Lynn Maxson  
805 527-3912 program@CRFG-la.org

#### Publicity:

Shelley Smith  
818 363-5247 publicity@CRFG-la.org

#### Historian:

Emory Walton  
805 497-8835 historian@CRFG-la.org

#### Special Events:

Richard Watts  
805 484-3584 events@CRFG-la.org

#### Hospitality Chairman:

Anita Drapkin  
818 888-8630  
membership@CRFG-la.org

#### Food Coordinator:

Chris Warren  
818 362-8537 food@CRFG-la.org

#### Plant Sales:

David Payton  
818 222-7556 plants@CRFG-la.org

#### Secretary/Hostess:

Edith Watts  
805 484-3584 hospitality@CRFG-la.org

#### Development Fund:

Bob Vieth  
805 495-9789

### September Meeting

**Date:** Saturday, September 27, 2008

**Time:** 10:00 A.M.

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

**Program:** We will have as guest speaker **Mr. Roy Imazu** speaking on the subject of weed control and irrigation systems. **Roy**, a member of our Chapter, has been gardening since 1960 and holds a contracting license in landscaping. Be prepared to learn a lot of valuable information.

Those whose last names begin with **A-N** please bring something for our September tasting table. As always, thank you for the wonderful treats you bring to meetings.

### October Meeting

**Date:** Saturday, October 25, 2008

**Time:** 10 am

**Place:** The Payton's garden

**Program:** This month we will visit the Payton's garden. They moved to this address six years ago and have gradually accumulated over 200 large and, mainly, small fruiting plants. They are interested in growing every kind of fruit, both rare and common. Their trees range from the standard stone fruits, apples, pears, and avocados, to more exotic varieties such as cherimoya, atemoya, goumi, rose apple, allspice, kei apple, trebizond date, sugar cane, pitanga, mamey sapote, wampi, and many others. Many members' contributions are well represented in their garden. You will see how the Paytons have dealt with the challenge of gardening on a steep hillside and trying to grow things on impoverished soil. They report that you are bound to be impressed by the degree to which their enthusiasm outstrips their horticultural abilities.

**Directions:** For directions please call Pat Valdivia at 805 584-6244

## 2008 Festival of Fruit The Year of the Avocado

at CSU Fullerton hosted by the Orange County Chapter- September 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup>..

Have you registered? The Festival is almost here. Hope to see a big turn out from our LA Chapter

Keep checking the festivaloffruit.org website for the latest updates.



## Annatto

by Alfredo Chiri

### ANNATTO - *Bixa orellana* - Bixaceae

Common names: Achote, Annato, Achiote, Urucu, Lipstick tree, Sa ti, Hot dieu mau, Ku-xub, Rocou, Orleaan, Dok kham, Achwete.

The Annatto tree or shrub can vary between 6 to 18 feet tall, with a dense rounded shape and short trunk; bark dark brown; leaves green; inflorescence with pink flowers to two inches in diameter; turning into capsule ovoid, covered with reddish-brown soft spines; seeds covered with abundant orange-red pulp. Plant lives up to about 50 years. The name of the species was given in honor of Francisco Orellana, the conquistador, who explored the Amazon River in 1541.

The reddish-orange seeds inside a prickly heart shaped pod are crushed to obtain the orange yellow pigments bixin and norbixin as dye for the food and cosmetic industry. The part used is the dried pulp of the fruit.

The plant is a native to tropical America, possibly from the Southwest of the Amazonia. Found from Mexico to Brazil and Argentina and in the Caribbean. Today, Annatto is grown in the Philippines and Asian countries.

Annatto seeds are used in Latin America for staining food. In the Caribbean, the seeds are fried usually with fat. After discarding the seeds, the then golden-yellow fat is used to fry vegetables or meat. Annatto has been used as a substitute for saffron.

The original Aztec drinking chocolate is reported to have contained annatto seeds. Using annatto to deepen the color of chocolate was common in Europe until the 17th century, and today it is used occasionally to give butter and cheese a deep yellow color.

In today's Asia, the annatto seeds are mostly used in Filipino and Vietnamese cooking, where they are used in

seasonings or marinades for grilled or fried pork meats, resulting in a bright orange meat surface.

Indigenous people in many North and South American countries have used annatto seeds as body paint during festivities and also as a fabric dye. The entire plant has been used against fever and dysentery. The seeds are used against sinusitis, asthma, uteritis, constipation, and skin disorders.

The leaves have been used to color food, but in general, they will give a modestly green color. In the wild, leaf colors other than green are rare, but gardeners have succeeded in breeding cultivars with red colored leaves.

The plant adapts easily to poor acid soils. It does not tolerate too much shade but prefers full sun. The plants are susceptible to drought and low temperatures. It also accepts temporary flooding.

**Golden Chicken** (Sometimes called a 'poor man's saffron' you can find **annatto oil** in a Latin market. Be careful not to get it on your clothing or counters it might stain.)

In a small bowl combine:

1 teaspoon Mexican oregano, 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt and 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper.

Rinse a 4 lb. roasting chicken and pat dry.

Sprinkle the spice mixture into the breast cavity and add 2 small bay leaves. Place the bird on a rack in a roasting pan. Brush skin well with **annatto oil**.

Roast the chicken in a preheated 375 degree oven for 45-50 minutes or until juices run clear when pricked.

Makes about 4 servings with tasty leftovers.

## Is Your Organic Food Really Organic?

From: [Organic Consumers Association](#), Published August 8, 2008

When you buy food with a "USDA organic" label, do you know what you're getting? Now is a good time to ask such a question, as the USDA just announced Monday it was putting 15 out of 30 federally accredited organic certifiers they audited on probation, allowing them 12 months to make corrections or lose their accreditation. At the heart of the audit for several certifiers were imported

foods and ingredients from other countries, including China.

Chinese imports have had a bad year in the news, making headlines for contaminated pet food, toxic toys, and recently, certified organic ginger contaminated with levels of a pesticide called aldicarb that can cause nausea, headaches and blurred vision even at low levels. The ginger, sold under the 365 label at Whole Foods Market, contained a level of aldicarb not even permissible for conventional ginger, let alone organics. Whole Foods immediately pulled the product from its shelves.

Ronnie Cummins, the national director of the Organic Consumers Association, emphasizes that most organic farmers "play by the rules." They believe in organic principles and thereby comply with organic standards. Unfortunately, Congress' pitifully inadequate funding for enforcement, including for organic imports from countries like China, "guarantees it'll be easy for unscrupulous players to cheat, and that's obviously what's going on here."

Farms that produce USDA-certified organic food are not personally inspected by anyone from the USDA National Organic Program (NOP). As a small and underfunded agency within the USDA (it has fewer than a dozen employees), NOP relies on what it calls Accredited Certifying Agencies -- ACAs -- to do the legwork. The ACAs take responsibility for ensuring that any farm or processor bearing the organic label meets the strict requirements for certification.

Since the Chinese government does not allow foreigners to inspect Chinese farms, an extra step is involved for oversight of organics from China: Chinese companies, which are allowed to inspect Chinese farms, subcontract with foreign ACAs. Cummins believes "the safest course of action is ... to say we won't certify imports from China because their law won't allow inspections."

For Americans who shop at the growing number of farmers markets springing up around the country, the status of organics from China -- or even organics from faraway U.S. states -- may be irrelevant. Just as the hippies who founded the movement intended, ethical eating extends beyond pesticide-free food for these shoppers, some of whom call themselves locavores, meaning "one who eats food produced locally." They wish to support small farmers and to ensure their food was produced

in an environmentally friendly manner by workers who were treated well and paid fairly.

And not matter how strict a law may be, there will always be those who game the system. Even if a Chinese inspector notices illegal pesticide use, he or she might feel pressured to stay silent, says Dr. Robert E. Hegel, professor of Chinese and Comparative Literature at Washington University in St. Louis. "Everybody there is so proud of increased production that few people ask much about the farmer's production methods," says Hegel. "And there's no 'organic' food tradition in China."

According to Hegel, in China "everything was just 'food' and it was, until the 1950s, mostly 'organic' by our contemporary definitions -- fertilized with human and animal waste, compost ... and ashes."

(The above article was written by **Jill Richardson**, founder of the blog [La Vida Locavore](#) and a member of the Organic Consumers Association policy advisory board. Her first book, about food politics, is due out in June 2009.)

## The Seeds of Today are the Fruits of Tomorrow

Don't throw away those seeds; don't add them to your compost. **Candice Romenapp** has come up with a much much better plan. If you have a great tasting cucumber, eggplant, squash or pumpkin; if that heirloom tomato is out of this world or you have a plum that is to die for then take the seeds from that fruit, wash them, dry them and package them. At our December meeting we will have a seed exchange. Once you have saved the seeds (be sure they are non-hybrid) store about 10-12 seeds in ziplock bags and label them with their name and characteristics, for example: taste, if it is prolific, where grown and so on. For each bag you bring you can exchange with someone else. **Candace** has come up with a great way to begin a collection for that vegetable garden, or add to your existing fruit trees. Also, with the price of food going up, this is a fantastic way to save a few dollars. So start saving now. More details will be discussed at our next meeting. But no doubt about it- our December meeting is going to be lots of fun!! Thanks **Candace** for a great activity!



### **Sugar & Spice & Everything Nice**

As **Debi Marley** pointed out spices are very important in Indian cooking. **Debi** was speaker at our July Meeting and in her show and tell presentation, shared with us the important spices used in Indian cuisine. Thank you for a superb talk.



### **NEW TO CRFG, BUT NOT TO GARDENING**

Thanks for a wonderful presentation by **Jim Schopper**, who opened his garden to us last month. A relatively new member to the Los Angeles Chapter, **Jim** kept everyone entertained as well as educated. We enjoyed seeing and learning about the many plants grown in his backyard. Thanks also to his wife, **Deborah**, for her wonderful hospitality and refreshments.

## **Another Important Date**

On Saturday, September 13<sup>th</sup>, there will be a Pitayaha/Dragon Fruit Festival and Field Day. This event is being held at the UC South Coast Research & Extension Center; 7601 Irvine Blvd., Irvine, CA 92616. The registration fee is \$30 which will include lunch, 3 pitaya cuttings, pitaya fruit tasting and handout materials. There will also be a tour of the plantings at the University, speakers, and a question and answer period. Registration is mandatory so go to: <http://ucanr.org/pitahaya> to register.

(**Ana Bruni Benson** always treats us to her wonderful desserts. Here is one of her tasty cookie recipes)

### **NOCELLI (Walnut Cookies)**

1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter  
1 1/2 cups sugar  
1/2 tsp. vanilla extract  
3 eggs  
2 cups flour  
3 tsp. baking powder  
2 cups raisins  
2 cups walnuts

Place raisins in medium bowl. Pour enough boiling water over to cover. Let stand one minute. Drain raisins well. Sift flour and baking powder into another medium bowl. Beat butter and sugar in large bowl until creamy. Add vanilla. Beat in one egg, then 1/2 of dry ingredients. Repeat with remaining eggs and dry ingredients. Stir in raisins (dough will be very soft). Chill dough one hour to firm slightly.

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Line 3 heavy large baking sheets with foil. Butter foil. Coarsely grind walnuts in processor. Mound ground walnuts on work surface. Drop dough by scant tablespoons onto walnuts. Using hands roll dough in ground walnuts, coating completely and forming balls. Transfer to prepared baking sheets, spacing 2 inches apart.

Bake until cookies spread and are golden brown, about 14 minutes. Transfer to racks; cool completely. Can be made 2 days ahead; store in airtight container.