

# YEAR OF THE AVOCADO

## LOS ANGELES CHAPTER

July 2008 Volume XI Issue 4



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

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### July Meeting

**Date:** Saturday, July 26 2008

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

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

**Program:** Debi Markley, will talk on "East Indian Herbs". Debi's introduction into Indian herbs came from a dear Indian friend who introduced her to her ethnic foods and how to cook them. It fast became Debi's favorite type of good. There is such a wide variety of spices and herbs that Indians combine in so many different ways in different parts of the country.

Those whose last names begin with M-Z please bring something for our July tasting table. Thanks to all of you who have brought in such a wonderful array of fruits, sweets and other goodies to our last meeting.

### August Meeting

**Date:** Saturday, August 23, 2008

**Time:** 10 am

**Place:** 13766 Herrick Ave., Sylmar, CA 91342 (818 362-3007)

**Program:** We will visit the garden of new member **Jim Schopper**, Jim's main interest for years has been vegetable gardening but he now has an assortment of various fruit trees.

**Directions:** Take the 405 Fwy N. to the 5Fwy N to the 210Fwy East. Exit at Yarnell and go right. At Foothill Blvd make a left. Go to Excelsior Street, make a right and then a left on Herrick Ave. Arrive at **13766 Herrick Ave.**

### In Memoriam



On July 12, 2008, family and friends gathered together to pay their respects to **Paul Thomson** who passed away on May 31<sup>st</sup> of this year. More than 80 people were present to honor his memory and reminisce over his many accomplishments, one of which, of course, was the co-founding of **CRFG** forty years ago. His contributions in horticulture have been felt all over the world, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, South America to name a few. But most of all he has instilled in those of us who knew him a great passion and love for growing and appreciating the fruits of the world.



## ALLSPICE TREE

By **Alfredo Chiri**

*Pimenta dioica* -Myrtaceae

### Donated by:

(1) CRFG and planted in 1992 (r.f.-09)

(2) Fullerton Arboretum and planted in 2000 (r.f.-09)

**Common Names: Pimento, Jamaica Pepper, Pimenta, Allspice.**

When Columbus returned to Spain from his first voyage to the New World, he spoke of having arrived in India where he found "a tree with leaves that smell just like cloves." He was referring to what we now know as allspice. The Spaniards were eager to show that they had fulfilled their mission of discovering a route to India by bringing back gold and spices.

The dried berries of the allspice tree were labeled "pimienta" or pepper. It was a complete misnomer, based only on visual appearance, since the allspice berries and the black peppercorns look somewhat similar, but they are about as far away from pepper as a spice can get. By 1601 the spice was at least called "Jamaica pepper." In 1693 it was listed as "sweet scented Jamaica pepper or allspice. Allspice initially was sold in Europe as a substitute for "round cardamon," (an aromatic seed of various zingiberaceous plants).

The popular name allspice apparently came into usage in the 17th century. It stemmed from the description that it is a blend of cloves, juniper, pepper, cinnamon and nutmeg, which remains the most prevalent description today. The pimento is related to the clove tree. The oil of both spices shares the same principal constituent, the phenol Eugenol (*Oleum Pimentae*).

Pimento, or allspice, also is known as *Piper maicense*, *Semen Amomi*. The allspice tree is an evergreen and averages 20 to 30 feet tall. The trunk is erect, with many round branches toward the summit. The allspice tree begins to fruit when seven or eight years old and is in

full bearing after fifteen years. The flowers are small, in axillary and trichotomous (three-forked) panicles, and they appear in June through August and are quickly succeeded by the berries.

The fruits are about 3/10 inch in diameter, with a rough and brittle surface. The fruit has two cells, each cell containing a single, kidney-shaped seed. The special qualities of the fruit reside in the rind of the berries. Berries are collected as soon as they have attained their full size but while unripe and green, since they lose their aroma on ripening, owing to loss of their volatile oil.

Gathering of the berries is performed by breaking off the small twigs bearing the bunches. These are then spread out and exposed to the sun and air for some days, after which the stalks are removed and the berries are ready.

There are both "male" and "female" allspice trees. The so-called "male" trees rarely bear fruit. There is no way to tell which is which before the time of fruiting. The pimento tree is not improved by cultivation.

Several islands of the Caribbean grow the allspice tree, but the main producer is Jamaica. Other current sources are Guatemala, Mexico and Honduras.

### The 40th Anniversary of the California Rare Fruit Growers

will be celebrated at the

### 2008 Festival of Fruit The Year of the Avocado

at CSU Fullerton hosted by the Orange County  
Chapter.

Mark these dates: **September 18th and 19<sup>th</sup> 2008.**  
These Festivals are always a wonderful experience. There is not only a great feeling of camaraderie but also an opportunity to hear great speakers, to learn about interesting fruits, and to visit many wonderful orchards.

Keep checking the [festivaloffruit.org](http://festivaloffruit.org) website for the latest updates.

**A Stinky, Pricey Delicacy**  
**In Thailand, the durian fruit hits the \$200 mark**  
**By STAN SESSER (article appears on the June 21, 2008**  
**issue of the Wall Street Journal)**

The world's smelliest fruit may now also be the most expensive. It's the spiky, sulphurous durian, which has been selling in Thailand this summer for \$200 each.

Adored by  
Southeast

Asians and Chinese, the durian sends most foreigners fleeing, thanks to its unmistakable odor. "Gasoline" and "blue cheese" are two tame metaphors people often use to describe it; "garbage," "stinky socks" and "manure" also are frequently invoked. Even here in Thailand, durians are banned in hotel elevators, subways and airplanes. But they are the center of attention at Bangkok's upscale Otokor Market, where they are displayed in stacks, like pineapples on steroids.

The only thing about the durian more striking than the smell is the price: \$200 for a prized specimen, and that is in a city where almost every tropical fruit is a bargain. Speaking of food inflation, that's an increase of 50% in just two years.

The *Mon Thong*, the most plentiful of Thailand's 30-odd species of durians, can be had for a mere \$10 to \$15 each. But prices rise to the stratosphere for the *Kan Yao*, a prized variety whose best specimens come from the Nonthaburi province, next to Bangkok. Thais swear Nonthaburi's soil and water produce the perfect kan yao durians -- better than those grown elsewhere in Thailand -- or for that matter in Malaysia or the Philippines, whose local durians have their own enthusiasts. In the U.S., imported durians sold at Asian and specialty markets usually have been picked so green that by the time they ripen they bear scant resemblance to durians eaten in Asia.

Cutting  
open a  
durian,

whose season extends from April to July, requires considerable skill. The spikes are sharp, but Ms. Vibhavadi doesn't wear gloves as she slices the durian lengthwise with a big knife and

pulls apart the two halves. Each wedge yields three or four big dark brown pods covered with yellow flesh -- the part that's eaten. The taste -- sweet, nutty -- and the custard-like texture bear no relation to the smell, which is so powerful that a durian will quickly impart its aroma to milk, juice and everything else in the refrigerator, even if it's in a sealed container. A *mon thong* is so custardy it adheres to the fingers, and Thais complain that the taste is excessively sweet. By contrast, the flesh of the *kan yao* is firmer and the taste much more subtle.

One problem buyer's face is knowing when the durian is ready to eat, since different species -- and even the same species from different trees -- come in varying shades of green and brown that don't betray their ripeness. Ms. Vibhavadi, who grew up on a durian farm, says the solution is to listen carefully as you tap them with a knife handle. "When you hear 'peng, peng, peng,' they're not ready yet," she states. " 'Boop, boop, boop' and they're ripe."

In February, ten researchers from Warsaw Agricultural University, in Poland, published what they claim is the first extensive study of the durian's health benefits. They found that the *Mon Thong* was so high in antioxidants that they suggested it be included in diets to prevent heart disease. The *Kan Yao* also was found effective, but less so.

That should come as a relief to durian eaters who have suffered from its extreme richness and curious heat-inducing properties. Many people perspire excessively for an hour or two after consuming a durian -- the high sulfur content is generally thought to be the cause, says Bob Halliday, a Bangkok restaurant critic and a Western expert on Thai foods. A common remedy is to eat durian along with mangosteens, a small fruit with a hard purple shell and sweet, white flesh that many Thais believe has a cooling effect. Durian orchards often have mangosteen trees growing adjacent to them, and durian growers say the two fruits are like brothers; the branches grow intertwined.

Both durians and mangosteens were available in profusion at this year's annual Nonthaburi durian fair, held on the grounds of a Buddhist temple. Last year, the fair drew 20,000 visitors over a nine-day period.

Organizers certify each grower to make certain no one falsely claims to come from the province. The durian is so beloved that it practically sells itself -- when a pickup truck loaded with durians comes from a farm to Bangkok, it need only pull over to any curb, and a crowd of smiling Thais will instantly surround it. The fair is no exception. "I just sold a small kan yao for 2500 baht (\$80)," brags Prakong Krutthai, whose small table of durians was surrounded by potential buyers.

### **INVITATION**

The Los Angeles Chapter of the California Association of Nurserymen & Garden Centers (C.A.N.G.C.) extends an invitation to the West. L.A. and Los Angeles Chapters of C.R.F.G for a

*Fruit Tasting and Dinner with Tom Spellman of Dave Wilson Nursery*

*Bring your questions and taste the BEST in summer fruits for the home garden*

The format is different than **C.R.F.G.** as this is a mid-week dinner gathering, and the program should also be different than what was recently presented by Tom at **C.R.F.G-L.A's** recent meeting. We are being enticed with a fruit tasting.

Please RSVP as space is limited. **\$20 with RSVP / \$30 at the door**

**Wednesday, July 30, 2008**

**Mandarin King Restaurant, 17092 Devonshire Blvd., Northridge**

**6:30pm social, 7:00pm full course Chinese dinner, program to follow.**

RSVP to Art (818.348.1091) or Mike (818.894.8301)

### **A Great Tip**

After listening to **Bob Vieth's** interesting tips on how to trap thrips, member **Candace Rumenapp** was pleasantly surprised to find a very economical innovation on Bob's idea. Home Depot carries electrical box covers in the *right shade of blue*. The covers are not flimsy can be easily hung on the plants and smeared with **Tanglefoot**. All for the price of 25 cents each.-What a deal!

### **Tandori Chicken**

In conjunction with the July meeting on Indian Spices, **Debi Markley** has kindly shared this recipe with us.

2 ½ lbs chicken pieces, skinned  
1 clove garlic  
1 t salt  
¾" ginger cube  
1 lemon  
2 t garam masala  
1 ¾ c yogurt

lime wedges  
½ onion, sliced very thin  
¼ green chili (optional)

Process garlic and ginger to a paste. Prepare marinade of all ingredients except limes and pour in plastic bag. Add chicken and refrigerate 6-24 hours. Preheat oven to maximum temp. Bake in single layer 20-25 minutes at 400 degrees. Serve with limes.

### **TOYS 4US**

For those of you who are interested in some garden 'toys' here are some of the sources used by **Lynn Maxson**:

For a grape growing reference "**The Grape Grower**" by Lon Rombaugh (Amazon.com). The pocket digital refractometer comes from Sper Scientific (www.sperscientific.com). The powered sprayers **Lynn** demonstrated were obtained from www.nationalgardenwholesale.com. Others can actually google e-z sprayer for other sources of the battery operated one. And as for the digital angle measuring device- Bosch DWM-40L, this was ordered from Amazon.com.