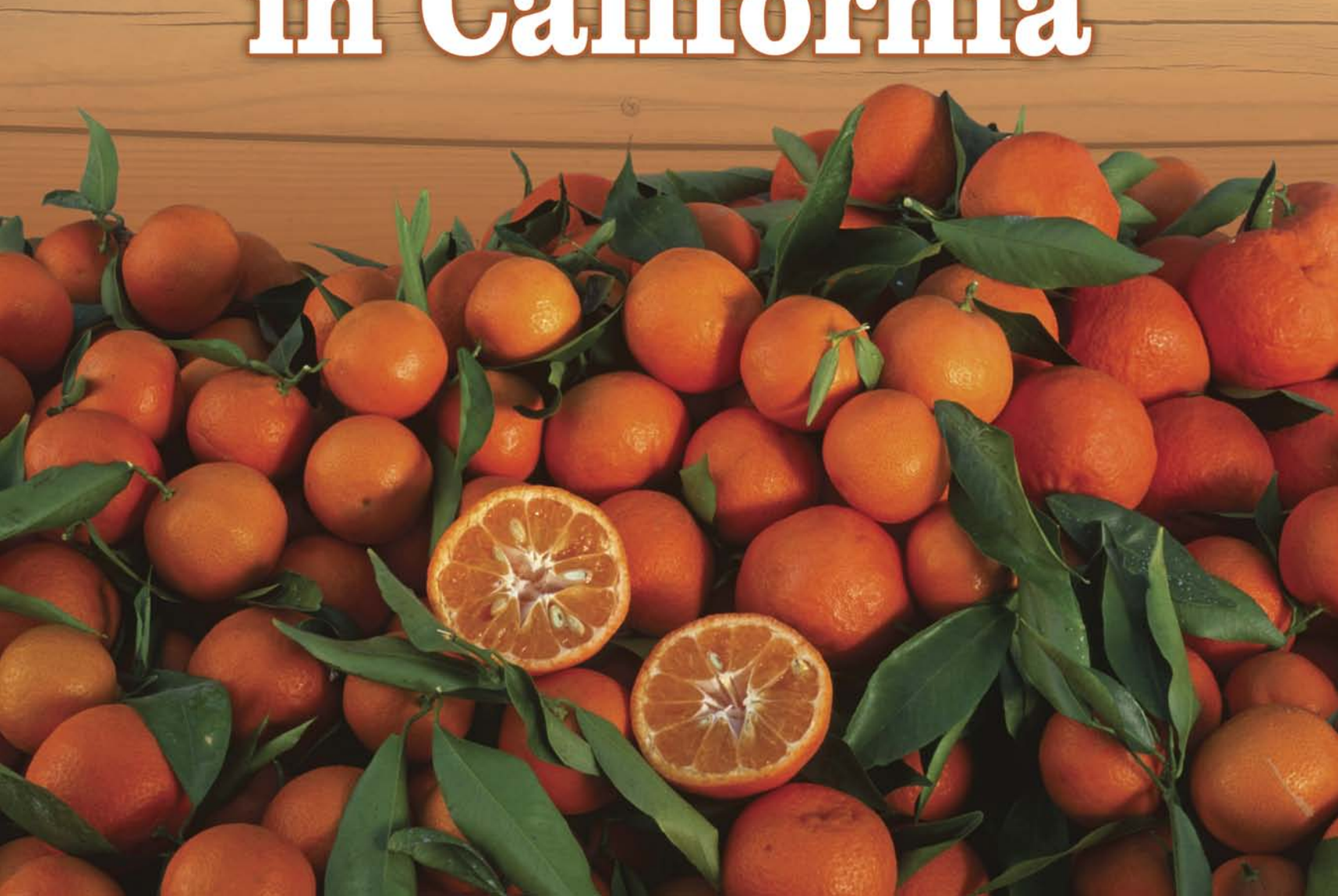
Renewing America's Food Traditions

Place-Based Foods at RISK in California



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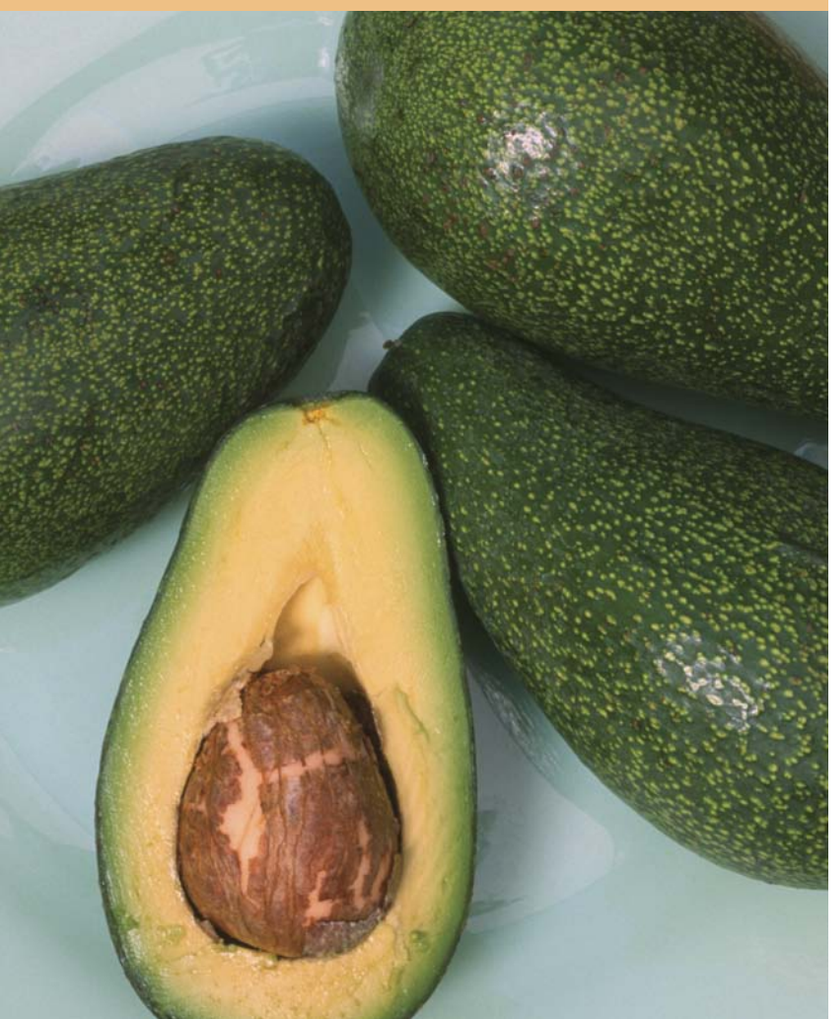
What's become of all the heirloom vegetables and heritage breeds?

For the last few centuries, diversity on the farm, in our waters, and on the table was the norm—not the exception—across California and most of North America. Today, one in fifteen wild edibles as well as two-thirds of our historic domesticated crop seeds and livestock breeds have diminished to the degree that they are now considered "at risk". We must not only remember the rich contributions made by these plants and animals—and the farmers, harvesters, hunters and fishers who steward them—we must also reinstate them into our contemporary food system.



How do we renew America's food traditions?

Renewing America's Food Traditions (RAFT) is an alliance of food, farming, environmental and culinary advocates who have joined together to identify, restore and celebrate America's biologically and culturally diverse food traditions through conservation, education, promotion and regional networking.

RAFT is developing a comprehensive list of food species and varieties unique to each foodshed or eco-region of North America, noting the indigenous and immigrant cultural communities in which they have been tended, and determining which are at risk of being lost, either ecologically or culturally.

RAFT-listed foods that have outstanding flavor and commercial potential are nominated to the Slow Food USA Ark of Taste, a living catalogue of foods that have been forgotten or marginalized by the industrialized food system and are at risk of disappearing. Only the tastiest of endangered foods make it onto the Ark, with the goal of cultivating consumer demand, vital to agricultural conservation.

Through publications by RAFT's non-profit partners, farmers, ranchers, fishers, chefs, retail grocers, educators and consumers can learn about these foods and become active participants in restoring and celebrating our diverse bio-cultural and culinary heritage.

Join us in restoring and celebrating America's diverse foods and food traditions!

Front cover: Algerian clementines photo by David Karp
Left: Fuerte avocado photo by David Karp

Red Abalone
by Barbara Bowman

If Dungeness crab is the king of California shellfish, then Red abalone is queen. Or, maybe it's the other way around.

Growing up in San Francisco in the 1940s and 1950s, I developed my taste for succulent, sweet abalone. In Chinatown, the chefs would sauté it with asparagus or seasonal greens. Seafood restaurants would bread thin abalone steaks and briefly sauté them in butter. At the time, my favorite meal was the abalone sandwich prepared at small seafood joints dotting coastal Highway 1. Always the most expensive sandwich on the menu, it never cost more than $1.85. No breadcrumbs, no lettuce, no mayo—just abalone flash-fried in butter, served between slices of white bread. The bread, sometimes toasted, absorbed the butter and the rich abalone juices.

The Red abalone is California's largest sea snail. Its scientific name is *Haliotis rufescens*, *haliotis* being a combination of two Greek words meaning "sea ear". It isn't the type of shell—like a conch—that you put to your ear to hear the ocean; rather, it is ear-shaped. A big ear, an ocean-harvested abalone can be 12 inches long and weigh 8 pounds, and there is substantial white meat (the adductor muscle) in each iridescent shell.

Back when I was enjoying abalone sandwiches on white bread, California's commercial fishers were annually harvesting well over one million pounds of Red abalone. By 1970, the catch began a dramatic decline due to human over-harvesting. At the same time the sea otters, an endangered species of marine mammals that had been protected long enough to recover, began to swim out to the kelp forests to eat abalone.

Then came the fateful year of 1997, when the California Department of Fish and Game (DFG) closed down commercial fishing of all abalone species. The same year DFG outlawed recreational abalone fishing south of San Francisco.

Today the rocky coast of northern California supports highly regulated abalone fishing/diving. Scuba and other underwater breathing devices are prohibited; licensed fishers are limited to breath-held diving which makes the deep abalone beds in the inter-tidal areas inaccessible. By 2002, DFG reduced a fisher's daily limit to three, with an annual limit of 24 per person. Legal harvesting size is seven inches; and wild-caught "abs" cannot be bought or sold. The season is open April through June and August through November.

In several locations along the California coast, aquaculturists are working to perfect the sustainable farming of Red abalone. There are concerns associated with such mariculture, including issues about keeping the animals and the surrounding waters healthy, and the benefits/risks of using artificial feed instead of harvested kelp. So far, farmed abalone proves consistently high in quality although harvested at a smaller size than legally-harvested abalone. Most farmed abalone is sold fresh to restaurants, where it is often the menu's highest priced dish. Red abalone, food that has been feeding California's coastal tribes since before the arrival of Europeans, has become a luxury item.

My advice for preparing this luscious delicacy: slice as thinly as possible, pound to tenderize and simply sauté in butter quickly. Hard to find, Red abalone is easy to overcook.

California aquacultured Red abalone is available from The Abalone Farm (Cayucos, CA), Monterey Abalone Company (Monterey, CA), Pacific Abalone Farms (Pacific Grove, CA) and Carlsbad Aquafarm (Carlsbad, CA). Learn more at http://www.dfg.ca.gov/

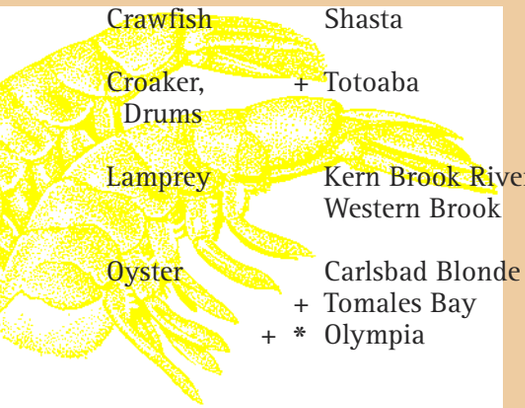
A native San Franciscan, Barbara Bowman grew up in an era when milkmen delivered Golden State milk to the back porch, Sam the Vegetable Man sold the freshest produce from his truck parked at the curb, and butchers broke down whole carcasses of beef and sold calves liver at the small neighborhood groceries.

Barbara Bowman photo by Bill Bowman

Rare Place-Based Foods of California

This is a growing and changing list;
additions and corrections are welcome.

CATEGORY		VARIETY NAME	RARITY
Berries			
Blackberry		Olallieberry	T
		Youngberry	T
Raspberry		Cuthbert	T
Strawberry		Banner	E
		Klondike	
Fish & Shellfish			
The species listed here are either under state or federal protection, have populations too low to have an open commercial fishery, or are an international species of concern.			
Abalone	+	Black	E
	+	Flat	T
	+	Green	T
	+	Pink	T
	+	Pinto	T
	+	Red	T
		White	E
Bass		Pacific or Giant	E
Chub		Mohave Tui	E
	+	Owens Tui	E
Clam		Horseneck	T
		Pacific Razor	T
		Pismo	T
	+	Tomales Bay	X
Crawfish		Shasta	E
Croaker, Drums	+	Totoaba	E
Lamprey		Kern Brook River	T
		Western Brook	T
Oyster		Carlsbad Blonde	E
	+	Tomales Bay	T
	+ *	Olympia	T



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* = On the Slow Food USA Ark of Taste + = see below

Foraging, hunting, fishing, farming and gardening have been and continue to be part of Native American communities' traditional management of their places. Among those marked "+", there are certain varieties or particular populations in California that Native Americans have long used, managed or conserved. Individuals or organizations outside indigenous communities can become allies toward restoring or affirming the Native American farmers' rights to stewardship of certain cultivated seedstocks or their traditional resource management rights for "wild" foods, thereby acknowledging and supporting these communities' food sovereignty.

Gravenstein apple
photo by Paula Shatkin

White Sonora wheat
photo by Elizabeth Howe

Black Sphinx date
photo by Gina Fiorillo-Brady

What place-based foods have unique traditions in California's landscapes, seascapes and cultures? Which of them offer flavors and textures that can't be found anywhere else on the continent? How many of these foods—as traditionally grown or used—might now be at risk in their home place?

These are the questions being asked by the non-profit organizations collaborating in the Renewing America's Food Traditions (RAFT) Alliance. The initial answers shared here came from Californians: Native American foragers, Italian-American fishers, Japanese and French orchard-keepers, Anglo, Hispanic and Germanic farmers, gardeners, vintners and gleaners. All who call California their home.

We now invite you and your friends—rural or urban—to offer us your perspectives on which foods now grown or gathered in California's soils and waters are among those most important to West Coast food history, most vital to California's destiny and sustainability, and which might currently be at risk of disappearing from our tables.

We encourage you to add, amend or adopt foods on this list, to support those communities that remain their stewards, and to celebrate their taste of place this autumn at American Traditions Picnics in great California places.

Snow Queen nectarine photo by David Karp
David Karp photo by Ottillia "Toots" J. Bier

Snow Queen Nectarine: Epitome of High Flavor

by David Karp

When I first tasted a Snow Queen white nectarine at the Santa Monica farmers market in 1996, I was blown away. Under its speckled, leathery skin, its melting, juicy, creamy white flesh offered a perfect balance of sweetness and acidity, and intensely floral nectarine flavor—far richer than the taste of recent low-acid white varieties, which mostly are merely sweet. Commercial farmers may regard the Snow Queen's speckling to be a defect, but nectarine aficionados know the freckles as "sugar spots," likely indicators that the fruit is extra-sweet and flavorful.

"Snow Queen has everything wrong with it," said Art Lange, a grower. "It cracks, it ripens unevenly on the tree, it bruises easily, it's totally unsuited for commercial production. There's only one reason I grow it: it tastes so darn good."

Because of its horticultural peculiarities, only about eight to ten farmers in the United States grow Snow Queen, but the fruit inspires passionate devotion when it appears at farmers markets, and chefs from fancy restaurants compete ferociously to procure supplies.

The origins of this variety remain mysterious. In the 1950s David L. Armstrong of Armstrong Nurseries, based in Ontario, California, ran a breeding program aimed at developing "low-chill" stone fruit varieties adapted to the warm winters of Southern California. One was Snow Queen, which resulted from a 1957 cross of an unnamed peach and another unknown peach or nectarine. In any case, after Snow Queen was introduced in 1975, it became a home garden and farmers market favorite; the French also started growing it, and raved about the "Snow Queen flavor."

Oddly, in Southern California, Snow Queen has often been confused with Stanwick, a legendary heirloom variety. For a decade I sought to unravel the mystery of this mix-up, and finally, last year I succeeded when a farmer confessed that he must have confused budwood of the two varieties.

To me this variety epitomizes "high flavor," a concept once dear to fruit connoisseurs, but almost unknown today. I would rank a good Snow Queen, along with the Old Greengage, as the finest fruit in the world.

You can find Snow Queen nectarines from mid-June to July from California growers such as Andy's Orchard (Morgan Hill, CA), Goldbud Farms (Placerville, CA), Honey Crisp Farm (Reedley, CA), Kennedy Farms (Reedley, CA), Knoll Organic Farms (Brentwood, CA), and Summer Harvest Farm (Dinuba, CA), as well as trees from Dave Wilson Nursery (Hickman, CA).

David Karp, a writer and photographer specializing in fruit, has written as a freelancer for The New York Times and other publications since 1992. He grew up in Los Angeles, and moved back after thirty years away, lured largely by the chance to explore the orchards and feast on the fruits of California.

Reviving Hoshigaki: A Persimmon's Farmer's Table

by Jeffrey H. Rieger

I DON'T LIKE TO WASTE two or three tons of fruit every year, and Americans haven't yet learned to enjoy perfectly ripened soft Hachiya persimmons in sufficient volume, so I make hoshigaki.

Hoshigaki is a whole, ripe, firm Hachiya persimmon that has been peeled, hung on a string in a warm, well-ventilated place, and given a very delicate hand-massage every three days. These fruit massages go on for twenty-one to thirty-six days, until it dries to an even, smooth texture and concentrated sweetness, with a natural efflorescence of fructose.

Making hoshigaki has been a fall tradition in Japan for centuries. When Japanese immigrants settled in the foothills of the Sierras, they brought the tradition with them. My orchard was planted by George Oki, one of the members of the Japanese American community. When he sold me the farm, George handed me the keys and a map, gave me a quick tour of the property corners and irrigation valves, wished me good luck, and retired from growing fruit. In a last minute gesture of good will for which I am truly grateful, he left me the tractors and all the farm equipment, including stacks of objects whose function was truly foreign to me. I made a rule that I wouldn't discard anything until I figured out what it was for. Eventually I realized that a lot of the mystery objects were custom-made hoshigaki tools. Ironically, the only thing I inadvertently threw away turned out to be a custom-ground hoshigaki knife.

When you grow fruit for a living, the trees dictate what you do, and the weather can make complete hash of your best schedule and most detailed plans. Hoshigaki season is no exception. When the weather turns cold and rainy, you're battling the danger of mold. When it gets too hot and the fruit dries too fast, you struggle to slow it down so the fruit doesn't get tough.

I first received basic persimmon peeling instructions four years ago from a friend of mine, Tosh Kuratomi, whose family has been producing traditional hoshigaki for generations. Since then I have developed my own style of making hoshigaki. Of course, you can cut corners, and some people do. They use a dehydrator, or hang the fruit and forget about them until they look like a shriveled up sheep scrotum. But such shortcuts produce a product the consistency of shoe leather, with a brittle, chewy texture. Making hoshigaki is a lot like wine making. You have to start with great fruit, and then handle them with respect if you are to achieve a great product.

While hoshigaki processing can be technically demanding, the greatest challenge is volume of labor needed. You spend entire days, from mid-October through New Year, peeling and massaging rack after rack of fruit. It can get a little tiring. During our hoshigaki season, our drive back from the market is not measured in miles. We measure in loops of string. As we drive six hours and over four hundred miles back from Santa Monica to the farm, the "co-pilot" riding shotgun snips lengths of string 22" long and ties them into loops. I think the record is 230 loops per hour. It's one thing to peel and massage 20 pounds of fruit for a month—that's only about 36 persimmons. It's another thing to take care of 6,000 pieces of fruit at varying stages of drying. It's beyond difficult, it's absolutely all-consuming. It's like having multiple sets of quintuplets from infancy to college

age all vying for your attention at once. You don't get to take a break. You don't get even a holiday season.

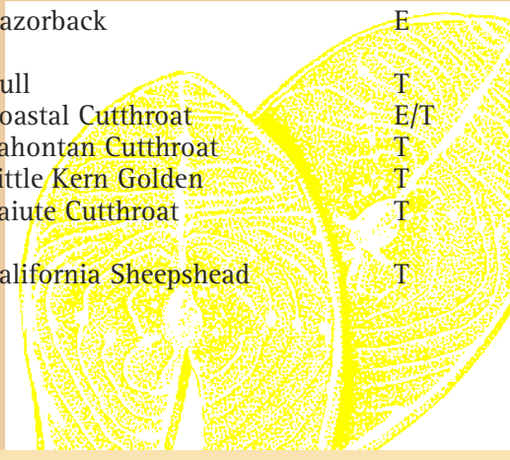
Even at $40 a pound, I am not sure that hoshigaki is worth the amount of anxiety, the cramped fingers and the sore back. Nevertheless there is something wonderful about taking an incredibly fragile, perishable piece of fruit, and helping it turn into a beautiful, shelf-stable delicacy. But the thing that means the most to me is the personal contact with customers who take the time to thank me. Hearing back from people really makes my day. It cheers me up instantly when I get an e-mail that says "My Japanese grandmother cried when I gave her these," or "I had no idea they were going to be so good, do you have five more boxes I can purchase?" Hoshigaki holds deep meaning for so many people. It's more than just food. For me, it symbolizes the completion of the season and culminates a successful harvest. It also creates a bridge to the New Year, carried back to the dead of winter after all other fruit are gone, and the trees have been put to rest.

Edited by Laurence M. Hauben for Jeffrey H. Rieger, a Placer County farmer who grows hachiyas and rare persimmons on his 4-acre farm near Auburn, in the Sierra foothills. You can visit Jeff online at www.penrynorchardspecialties.com.

Laurence Hauben and Jeff Rieger photo by Desmond Jolly
Hoshigaki photos by Laurence Hauben

Fish & Shellfish continued

Perch		Russian River Tule	E
		Sacramento	E
Pike-Minnow		Colorado Pike-Minnow, Squawfish	E
Rockfish		Bocaccio	T
		Cowcod	T
		Dark Blotched	T
		Yelloweye	T
Salmon	+	California Coastal Chinook	T
		Spring-Run Chinook	T
		Winter-Run Chinook	E
		Northern California Coho	T
		Central California Coast Coho	E
	+	Northern California/ Southern Oregon Coho	E T
Scallop		Purple Hinged or Rock	T
Shark		Spiny Dogfish	T
Shrimp		Freshwater	E
		San Diego Fairy	E
Smelt		Delta	T
Steelhead	+	Central Coast	T
	+	Central Valley	T
	+	Northern California	T
	+	Southern California	E
		South-Central California Coast	T
Sturgeon	+	White	E
	+	Green	T
Sucker	+	Razorback	E
Trout		Bull	T
		Coastal Cutthroat	E/T
	+	Lahontan Cutthroat	T
	+	Little Kern Golden	T
	+	Paiute Cutthroat	T
Wrasse		California Sheepshead	T



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Fruit Trees

Apple	Etters Gold	E
	* Gravenstein (Sonoma)	T
	Hauer Pippen	E
	* Sierra Beauty	T
	Skinner's Seedling	T
	Waltana (Philo/Anderson Valley)	T
	Wickson Crab	T
Apricot	Alameda	E
	Hemskirke	
	* Blenheim, Southern and Central Coast	T
	Derby Royal	E
	Newcastle	E
Avocado	Burbank	E
	Fuerte	E
	Mexican Thin-Skinned (i.e. Steward, Topa Topa, * Puebla)	E
	Nabal	E
	Soledad	E
Cherimoya	Selma Pink Flesh	T
Cherry	Black Republican	T
	Napoleon	T
Citrus	Algerian Clementine	E
	Duncan Grapefruit	E
	Lavender Gem Mandrin	E
	Malta Blood Orange	E
	* Ojai Pixie Tangerine	E
	Paper-rind/ St. Michaels	E
	* Parent Washington Navel Orange	T
	Ruby Blood Grapefruit	E
	Warren Grapefruit	E
Date	Black Sphinx	E
	Blonde Beauty	E
	Brunette Beauty	E
	Empress	E
	Honey	E
	Tarbazal	E
	TR	E

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California's Fishing Fleet: The Link to Our Local Seafood

by Sara Randall

Morro Bay, Moss Landing, Port San Luis, Monterey, Half Moon Bay, Bodega Bay, Fort Bragg, and Eureka: These are the names of California's iconic fishing ports and their communities, where artisanal fishermen live and work. These fishing communities have a shared cultural history that comes from working to make a living on the sea. They are places where cultural activities are inextricably linked with the coastal waters of the Pacific and with the renewable resources held within it.

Fishermen are those who directly link chefs and eaters to our country's seafood, which is a publicly managed resource. Without an active and knowledgeable local fishing fleet, chefs and eaters lose access to sustainable seafood. The reality is that our Californian fishing fleet is in danger of being lost forever. This year fishermen are faced with a coast-wide closure of salmon fishing that will most probably extend into next year as well. This closure has devastated fishing communities up and down the California coast. Many fishermen have been left without their primary source of income, and in many cases have no other option but to keep their boats idle this summer. The closure of the salmon fishery also threatens California's other fisheries because artisanal fishermen often rely on salmon for the bulk of their income. Without salmon, fishermen often cannot afford to participate in other fisheries, such as California Halibut, Sablefish, Market Squid, Dungeness Crab, and Albacore Tuna. As the fleet shrinks, other kinds of businesses that all fishermen depend upon—like the icehouses and processing plants—may go out of business as well.

Other factors are compounding this year's tragedy for artisanal fishermen. As the value of coastal land increases, traditional uses of the waterfront are being pushed out and replaced with sprawl. Increasing government regulations have severely limited different fisheries around the state. For the small, family operations these restrictions mean that boats must travel longer distances away from their home ports to find open fishing grounds. This increases the danger a fishermen faces, in addition to consuming more fossil fuel. Despite soaring fuel costs and the cost of permits, fisherman do not have much flexibility in pricing the fish they bring to shore as they must sell them fresh.

Sara Randall photo by Natalie Galatzer

These hardships are becoming too much to bear for California's artisanal fishermen. In fact many are already going belly-up. California's fishing communities are an important part of our American food heritage. Our fishermen have hard fought knowledge and skills derived from many years on the sea. If our California fishermen are forced out of business, who will provide us with locally caught sustainable seafood?

Support local fishermen by buying locally caught fish. Don't be afraid to ask where your fish is from. Use the Institute for Fisheries Resource's "Local and Seasonal Guide" at http://ifrfish.org to determine when fish are in season and where you can find fishermen who sell directly to the public.

Sara Randall grew up in a small fishing village on the coast of Maine at a time when coastal development and other economic pressures were rapidly changing the traditional maritime and fishing character of the village. That experience led Sara to work for the promotion and protection of sustainable fisheries and traditional coastal communities around the nation.

Going Home: Memories of Inland Empire Old Grove Oranges

by Elissa Rubin-Mahon

There is little to see that hints at the rich agricultural history of southern California when you are driving east on the San Bernardino Freeway towards Redlands from the San Gabriel Valley. All you notice at first glance are garish shopping meccas, wrecking yards, bedraggled trailer parks, and the gravel pits that feed development. Tucked in between and shoved against freeway chain link fences however, you might glimpse a few agricultural artifacts—struggling orange trees, remains of dusty olive groves, scraggly grape vines in dry plots. These are reminders of what the Los Angeles Basin was like before the housing boom of the 1950s and early 1960s massacred the ranches and their citrus groves, paving over the rest.

My 1950s childhood was spent in the middle of a half-acre remnant of an old Valencia orange orchard, on a street of orchard plots in the San Gabriel Valley of Los Angeles County. Although I didn't know it then, these were original groves planted well before the turn of the 20th century. Our trees had thick, dark, dusty trunks with glossy, leathery leaves. My brother and I sorted the ripe fruit into shopping bags, and put rotten ones into used tar buckets. We also helped irrigate our 40 trees. Each tree was ringed with a small ditch that we filled weekly during hot weather, using a garden hose from one of many artesian wells that supplied water to groves. This water was soon to be usurped by the growing communities of southern California.

In those times whenever we traveled to camp at Big Bear Lake in the San Bernardino Mountains, we drove on roads named for citrus varieties and caught glimpses of the Gage Canal, a stone-lined gravity-fed system that irrigated most of the Inland Empire citrus groves through a series of hand-operated wooden sluice gates. Our drive threaded through miles of patchwork orchards and truck farms; the air in springtime was heavy with the perfume of orange blossoms. We took for granted our trees and the tall glasses of fresh-squeezed juice they gifted us.

Gradually, exurban development encroached on all but a few groves. Malls, housing tracts, and freeways took the place of the rural beauty that had originally brought my family and many others to southern California. We, too, changed the landscape. Some of our trees were taken out when my father wished to build a larger house. Most remaining trees were removed as they failed.

Last year, childhood memories of small oranges, sweet-tart with concentrated flavor, dense fine textured flesh, and skins thin, smooth, and fragrantly oily brought me back to Redlands for a tasting of Old Grove oranges sponsored by the Inland Orange Conservancy. The event was held at a historic orchard. These trees, many of them more than 100 years old, were marked by scars from many agricultural experiments. Old Smudge pots were still in place throughout the grove to protect against frost. The buff-colored, mica-flecked soil looked like the childhood dirt I played in. The taste of the Washington Navel oranges was just as I remembered it to be.

Sometimes history is sweet, and it takes you home.

The Inland Orange Conservancy is working to protect the remaining old groves in the Redlands and Riverside areas. Learn more about the Conservancy and their "Share of the Crop" membership program at http://www.inlandorange.org.

Elissa Rubin-Mahon, an heirloom fruit preserve artisan, grew up on a remnant of one of the first Valencia groves in the San Gabriel Valley of southern California. Her childhood occurred at a time when many remaining groves and vineyards were at the cusp of an onslaught by urban sprawl.

Elissa Rubin-Mahon photo by Ariel Mahon
Old Grove Valencia oranges photos by Gina Fiorillo-Brady

Fruit Trees continued

Fig		Adriatic	E
		Mission	E
Grape		Alicante Bouschet	E
		Almeria	E
	*	Charbono	E
		Chasselas Dore	E
		Concord, California (original selection)	E
		Flame Tokay	E
		Lady Finger (i.e. White Cornichon, Black Cornichon)	E
		Mission	E
		Muscat of Alexandria	T
		Muscat Hamburgh	E
	*	Napa Gamay/Valdiguié	E
		White Malaga	E
Loquat		Advance	E
		Big Jim	E
		Champagne	E
Nashi (Asian Pear)		Okusankichi	E
Nectarine		Le Grand	T
		Silver Lode	E
		Snow Queen	E
		Stanwick	E
		White Rose	E
Olive		Barouni	E
		Manzanillo (Graber process)	E
	*	Mission	E
Peach		Babcock	T
	*	Baby Crawford	E
		Early Crawford	T
		Late Crawford	E
		Muir	E
	*	Silver Logan	E
		Strawberry Free	T
	*	Sun Crest of California Coast	T
Pear		Bartlett, Sierra Foothills	E
		Winter Nelis	T

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Fruit Trees continued

Persimmon		Hyakume	E
		Maru	E
		Tsurunoko	E
Plum		American/Klamath	E
	*	Elephant Heart	T
		Bavay's Gage	T
		French Prune	T
		Imperial Epineuse	T
		Jefferson	E
		Kelsey	E
	*	Laroda	E
	*	Mariposa	T
	*	Padre	E
		Wickson	T
Prickly Pear		Andy Boy	E
Quince		Van Deman	E

Grains

Corn	+	Cocopah Sweet	E
	+	Mohave Flour	E
	+	Yuman Dent	E
Wheat		Early Baart	E
		Pacific bluestem	E
		White Sonora	E

Livestock

Goat		San Clemente	E
Rabbit	*	American Rabbit	T
Sheep		Romeldale CVM	E
		Santa Cruz	E

Nuts

Almond		Dry Farmed (i.e. Paso Robles)	T
		Jordanolo	E
		Mission	E
Hazelnut		Beaked	E
Pine Nut	+ *	Nevada Single Leaf Pinyon	T

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The Pine Nut Tree and the Shoshone People

by Pauline Esteves

Traditional food is part of our way of life; it is part of who we are because the foods come from the land and the land is our identity. We believe foods should be eaten in a spiritual way. When we're going to eat we bless the food and we bless ourselves because the food is for healing.

The pine nut tree has always been a symbol of the Shoshone people. One of the old legends says that Shoshone people will never disappear. They will always be here because of the pine tree. They are like the pine tree, they have the little ones, the little ones that grow from the pine tree seeds. The Shoshones are like this. There will always be little ones coming up. We are not like some people that are very strong and have a mountain or rock as a symbol. Those deteriorate. But the pine tree will never deteriorate. This is why we believe in taking care of the pine tree that is not only the symbol of the Shoshone people from here, but from different areas. This relationship is well known amongst our people. Our responsibility for all of Mother Earth's belongings is also in that legend—we must care for all living things. We believe in this. We don't just believe that the pine nut should be eaten so we can be nourished by it. It is part of our responsibility. It is heavy on the shoulders of our people to care for all our food sources from the different parts of our homelands.

We do a lot of harvesting of the pine nuts, about twice, depending on the abundance. Even if there are only a small amount of pinecones on the trees, we still go there to show respect to the spirits of the land and for the pine nuts that were given to us by our Creator. In this way we are caring for the pine trees. Sometime in August when the pinecones begin to ripen, we go there with respect and ask for acknowledgement of the spirits all around, on the spirit of all things that are placed there, the belongings of Mother Earth. Then we harvest them and check to see if we can cook some of the cones in the fire and underground. If they are ripe enough to do that, we will do that. This is the first time we will use the pine nut. We cook it underground in that way only for a couple of weeks. The final harvest begins when the cones are ripened and the pine nut is ripened but is still hanging on the tree. We go out with

long sticks, whack them down, and pick the raw pine nuts from the cone.

This is a staple food for the Shoshone people. My elders used to pick as much as they could until their fingers almost froze, because pine nuts grow in a high elevation. Still today we know its value and we protect it. We try to work with all the developers in protecting those trees.

But like the old people, my elders, always said, "If we do not treat the land right or protect the land in the way it's supposed to be protected, somehow or other it will turn against us." I see it happening and this is happening due to the development people. They don't seem to care and they go and destroy different areas where wildlife live and where some of the native foods grow. They disturb the water sources also. Down here that happened when a developer came in and diverted the water. But we have our human rights and we're going to continue protecting our rights. Our response to developers who dismiss our concerns is this: We're not animals and we're not savages. We know more about this land than you do and we can educate you.

Pauline Esteves (Timbisha Shoshone) was born in Death Valley, California and has lived there her whole life. She led two major battles for her tribe's federal recognition (1983) and the transfer and return of part of Timbisha ancestral homelands. In March 2000 the Timbisha received five parcels of land, including 300 acres of Furnace Creek in Death Valley National Park. The Timbisha are one of the first and only tribes to get back land inside a National Park. Pauline also worked closely with the late Western Shoshone spiritual and anti-nuclear leader Corbin Harney. This story was recorded and edited by The Cultural Conservancy.

Pauline Esteves photo by Nicola Wagenberg

Seeding the Future: Native Grasslands in California Life

by Jacquelyn Ross

To see the lovely arc of traditional, Native-woven seed beaters and the wide, gentle scoop of the winnowing trays is to yearn to see these beautiful tools in motion. One imagines a line of women fanning across a sea of grass, moving purposefully, striking the grass with the beaters and knocking the seed into finely woven collecting baskets. Weavers from several Native California tribes continue to make and use these utilitarian baskets. These forms are constructed using local plant materials and original techniques maintained from a time long before the influx of land seekers and fortune hunters. Delicious nutrient-rich seed is harvested from perennial grasses, wildflowers, and other plants. Today, weaving such baskets is an act of faith that a favored stand of plants has escaped encroachment by invasive annual grasses and forbs, commercial development, and conventional agricultural management. One must believe that come harvest time, somewhere the stalks will stand ready, heads nodding and heavy with seed, awaiting the prayers, songs, and laughter of the gatherers. The collected seed will be winnowed in the trays in preparation for use. It is painstaking work, part of an original cycle of slow food that deeply connects people to the land.

Perennial native grasses were once dominant in the vegetation of California before non-Native settlement. The Mission era marked the deliberate introduction of grasses from Europe to support imported livestock species (cattle, sheep, and horses) and to provide grain (wheat, corn, and barley) to support a particular lifestyle. This new agriculture had the practical effect of supplanting indigenous plant species. Deliberate burning of the land was once a widespread indigenous land management tool in California and one that invigorated perennial grasslands. It was a practice not tolerated in the Mission era. Thus, the European agriculture systems impacted local food supplies for Native tribes, reduced wild life habitat, and forever altered the landscape in the local ecosystems.

It is estimated that native perennial grasses comprise only 2% of California's grasslands today. Few of the native prairies remain. So, it is truly amazing that Native food traditions based in these plants persist today. Among the grasses traditionally valued especially for food are the California brome (*Bromus carinatus*), blue wildrye (*Elymus glaucus*), and creeping wildrye (*Leymus triticoides*). Annual wildflowers, such as chia (*Salvia columbariae*) and tarweed (*Madia elegans*) are also used. Chia is one of the better known of the wildflowers. Aside from the bewildering pop phenomenon that is the "Chia Pet," you may know chia as a good source of protein and omega-3 fatty acids.

Depending on what species of grass or wildflower is harvested, seeds may be roasted before grinding, and then

eaten raw or cooked as gruel or mush; thinned with water and used as a refreshing beverage; or used to make bread. Some seeds from other plants may be added for their special aromatic, spicy, or medicinal qualities. Although it would be difficult to find many Native families who have access to enough grass resources to use seeds as a staple today, Native pinole and other seed-rich dishes still appear at special community feasts and celebrations.

We have reason to hope that native grasses will become more prevalent in California in the years to come. Recent research supported by USDA's Agricultural Research Service partnerships show that perennial natives in particular attract great biodiversity, partly because they integrate so well with other plants. This seems to make them more appealing to wildlife. There appear to be other significant advantages of perennials over annuals, including a higher biomass and a greener landscape.

Farmers and tribal land managers are incorporating the grasses into their farming and garden plans. The results are promising. In the tribal context, it is useful to have places where young people can come to see these plants and learn about the life cycles and traditional uses. Although Native American communities have the enduring ties to these plants for foods, other people may adopt or support these same practices on a small, sustainable scale. From a land conservation perspective, planting hedgerows of native grasses mixed with shrubs and trees helps with weed control and reduces reliance on expensive chemical and mechanical control of weeds. This makes for a healthier landscape. The plants also stabilize levee banks and filter runoff. We may expect to hear about additional benefits of native grasses in the years to come. Resurgence in these species may help restore landscapes in ways that will heal decades of overuse and misuse. Native grasses: long may they wave.

Additional information about native plant restoration in California plus related organizations and opportunities can be found at http://www.nativehabitats.org/calnat.htm.

Jacquelyn Ross is Pomo and Coast Miwok from Sonoma and Marin Counties and an enrolled member of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria. She is a traditional fisherwoman, food gatherer, and basketry student. Jacquelyn is focused on issues of traditional food security, food sovereignty, and disruption of local food economies along the north central coast of California.

Tarweed (*Madia elegans*) photo by Christopher Christie

Nuts continued

Walnut		Concord	E
		Franquette, Scharsch Franquette	T
		Lompoc	E
		Mayette	E
		Northern California Black (Hinds or Claro)	T
		Payne	E
		Placencia	T

Sea Vegetables

Sea Weed	+	California Nori	T
	+	Sea Palm	T

Vegetables

Bean	+	Cocopah Brown	E
	+	Cocopah White	E
	*	Petaluma Gold Rush	E
		King City Pink	T
	*	Santa Maria Pinquito	T
		Red Flower Fava	E
Celery & Celeriac		Tehama Sunrise	E
Devil's Claw	+	Chemehuevi Po'onomp	E
	+	Death Valley	E
Kale		Walking Stick, Jersey	T
Leek		Esther Cook's	E
Melon		Bidwell Casaba	E
	*	Crane	E
		Eel River	E
		Persian	T
		Stutz Supreme	E
		Bella Dulce Crenshaw	E
		White Crenshaw	E
Potato	+	Bodega Red	E
Pumpkin		Manteca White	E
Rhubarb		Cherry Red	E
		Ojai Valley	E
Squash	+	Salton Sea Acorn	X
Tomato		Ace	E
		Willamette	T

T = Threatened E = Endangered X = Functionally extinct
* = On the Slow Food USA Ark of Taste + = see below

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Wild Plants

Oak	+	Engelmann's	T
Barberry		Nevin's	E
Bluedicks	+	Chinese Camp Brodiaea	E
	+	Indian Valley Brodiaea	E
	+	Kaweah Brodiaea	E
	+	Thread-leaved Brodiaea	T
Clover		Monterey	E
Sedge		White	E
Manzanita	+	Alameda, Pallid	E
	+	Baker's	T
	+	Hanging Gardens	T
	+	Hearst's	E
	+	Pacific	E
	+	Presidio	E
	+	San Bruno Mountain	E
	+	Vine Hill	E
Mariposa Lily		Dunn's	T
		Siskiyou	T
		Tiburon Island	T
Onion	+	Munz's	E
	+	Passey's	E
	+	Yosemite	T
Pholisma	+	Sandfood	T
Strawberry	+	Pacific	T
Sunflower	+	Algodones Dunes	E

Wild Game

Mammals		Northern Fur Seal	X
		Riparian Brush Rabbit	E
	+	Peninsular Bighorn	E
	+	Sierra Nevada Bighorn	E
	+	Stellar's Sea Lion	E
Reptiles	+	Desert Tortoise	T
		Green Sea Turtle	T
	+	Leatherback Sea Turtle	E
		Olive Ridley Sea Turtle	T

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Further discussion, additions, corrections and conservation actions are encouraged.

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This publication is available as a downloadable pdf on the Slow Food USA website. The foods list will be available on the website as a searchable, updateable list in 2009.