

## FARMER IN THE FIELD



## CALIFORNIA FIGS

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Growing up I would visit my grandparents' farm where close to the house grew a fig tree. I don't remember eating the fruit but I do remember playing under that beautiful shady tree. Today I look out my window at another beautiful fig tree that has become a favorite spot for workers to take a break and escape the sun. I have to admit I rarely think to go out and pick the figs but when I do I enjoy them. Grilled figs in a salad or served as hors d'oeuvres are delightful. Although we consider figs a fruit they are a flower that inverts into itself and the seeds are the actual fruit.

The fig tree has a lengthy history going back before Christ and is the most talked about fruit in the Bible. But fast forward to 1769 when figs were introduced to California by the Franciscan missionaries who planted them in the mission gardens at San Diego. By 1792 they were planted up the Pacific coast to Santa Clara, Ventura by 1793 and later on to Sonoma, giving the name Mission to the first California figs. With the gold rush came American settlers who brought new varieties to California and by 1867 over 1,035 acres of trees had been planted in the Sacramento and San Joaquin valleys. Today all dried figs harvested in the United States are grown in California's Central Valley.

Figs are an all natural energy source and rich in antioxidants and high in both soluble and insoluble fiber. Fresh or dried I will definitely be adding figs to my culinary experiences. So this year as the birds start chattering outside my window, a sign the fruit is ripe, I will grab some figs before they eat them all.