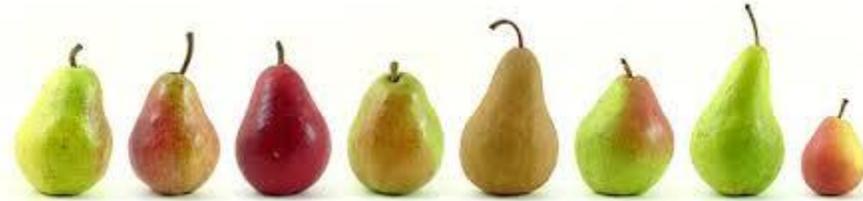


FARMER IN THE FIELD



PEARS “A GIFT OF THE GODS”

By Bonnie Swank

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In ancient times the Greek poet Homer referred to pears as “a gift of the gods”. This sumptuous juicy fruit was spread throughout Europe by the early Romans. At that time there were only 50 varieties where today there are over 3,000 varieties grown around the world. The Williams pear (a.k.a. Bartlett) originated in 17th century England. It wasn’t long before the fruit trees made the journey across the Atlantic to the American colonies. In 1812, unaware of the pears true name, nurseryman Enoch Bartlett of Massachusetts began marketing the pear under his own name. Boy if that happened today the lawyers would be all over this. During the California Gold Rush (1848-1850) trees were brought into California by prospectors looking for gold, little did they know they were bringing gold into the state in the form of fruit. Today the Bartlett pear is America’s popular variety considered the sweetest, juiciest and most flavorful.

There was a time in California when there were approximately 300 pear farms but today there are only around 60. Averaging about 130 acres each California is still the third largest producer of the nation’s total pear production. The Bartlett pear may be the most popular but California farmers also grow six other varieties each with their own unique flavors and characteristics.

A Bartlett pear is much like a banana starting out green ripening to a golden yellow. Green fruit should be left out on the counter until ripe. Putting green fruit into the refrigerator only inhibits the ripening process. Once the fruit has ripened then you can refrigerate it for a longer shelf life. The Bosc pears stem end starts to shrivel when fully ripe. The other varieties soften as they ripen giving slightly under pressure. Like so many fresh fruits and vegetable pears offer many nutritional and health benefits. To learn more visit the California Pear Advisory website at www.calpear.com

Pear varieties grown in California: Bartlett, Bosc, Seckel, Comice, Red Pear, Forelle and Sunsprite