

# FARMER IN THE FIELD



## TANGERINES

**By Bonnie Swank**

March 2013

It was May 2008 when I wrote my first “Farmer in the Field” article focusing on fresh locally grown produce. When I decided to write about tangerines my focus took me on a trip to Southern California where it landed in the Ojai Valley. I was drawn in by a group of nearly 40 family farms who take great pride growing the Ojai Pixie Tangerine. The farms, some large, some small all grow individually yet come together for the picking, packing and selling of their fruit. With a total of about 25,000 trees they are a great example of cooperative farming that works. After tasting a Pixie in 1980 Jim Churchill took a leap of faith and planted 30 trees with the hope of finding a market for them. It was the support of Bill Fujimoto of the Monterey Market in Berkley who bought Jim’s entire production from 1989-1995 that helped build the reputation of the Ojai Pixies.

Tangerines are sweet, peel easily and have no seeds making them the perfect snack.

So what's the difference between a tangerine and a mandarin? They are actually the same thing. If you believe the fruit came from China then it's a mandarin. If you believe the fruit came from Tangiers then it is a tangerine. What makes this fruit so special? Well the farmers in Ojai will tell you it is their microclimate which helps produce the sweetest fruit. It is the same with our cherry orchard nestled in a corner of our home ranch. We may be one of the last to pick cherries in California but our cherries are deliciously sweet. Yes, Pixies can be found throughout California but the fruit is very sensitive to climate which in turn affects the sugar content.

*Spain has been exporting Clementines, which are a family of tangerine varieties, to the United States for the past few years; now some growers in California have planted enormous orchards (one man has planted 500,000 trees!) of some varieties of Clementines. You can find them in produce stores marketed as "Sweeties."*

*Pixies are less acidic than many other citrus varieties*

*A medium sized tangerine is cholesterol and fat-free and has on average approximately 50 calories. Tangerines are an excellent source of potassium (approx. 180mg), fiber (approx. 12 percent of the daily recommended allowance) and are of course packed with vitamin C as well as some calcium and iron.*

