



The Western Chestnut

Vol. 7, No. 2

Published by The Western Chestnut Growers Assn., Inc.

Spring 2005

Sweet Success: NutQuacker Farms pairs with local winery for Italian chestnut festival; markets popular chestnut honey

by Rachel McCoy, University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry

Chestnuts are all the “buzz,” literally, at NutQuacker Farms in Hood River, Oregon.

In addition to fresh chestnut sales from their home, Mark and Kim Beam have partnered with a local winery, Hood River Vineyards, since the fall of 2000 to honor the tradition of soaking a peeled chestnut in a glass of wine during an annual Italian chestnut festival. Since establishing a bee colony, chestnut honey has become another popular attraction.

“We learned about the tradition from people from Poland, Italy and several European countries who live in a more chestnut-oriented culture,” says Mark. “And just like cooking chestnuts, it’s done differently in different Italian villages.”

Interestingly, the chestnut does not become too soft or soggy when placed in the wine. “It doesn’t actually sit there very long before it is eaten,” Mark said. Red wine is usually suggested for the tradition, though other varieties also work well. The sweetness of the chestnut is an excellent match for wine, and guests often snack on roasted chestnuts to accompany this unique beverage.

Most guests enjoy spending leisure time just “hanging out” in the orchards during the festival, says Mark, as they sip their wine. He

roasts chestnuts over burn barrels, always an object of curiosity for attendees. There is no admission charge and roasted chestnut samples are free.

Chestnut honey, however, may be even more popular than the roasted chestnuts or those plunked into wine glasses.

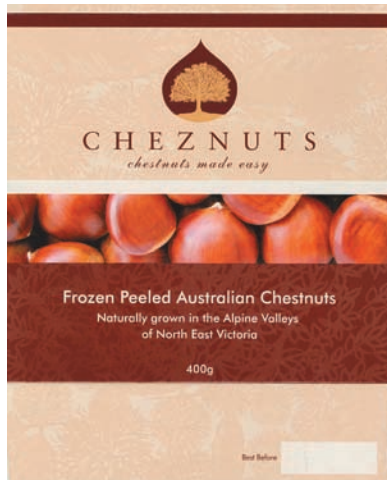
“Last year we sold more honey in one day than we did in two days last year, so we can see demand for the product is doubling,” Mark says.

The Beams’ popular chestnut honey came about almost by accident. They live in the Hoover Valley, nestled at the base of Mt. Hood, considered an apple and pear region. Once the fruit season passes, the chestnuts are in bloom.

Mark observed he wasn’t finding the level of pollination success by wind he had hoped for and decided to try bringing in bees to assist in the process. His nut yield that year doubled.

(cont. page 5)

“Cheznuts” frozen, peeled chestnuts open new markets; bring flavor, convenience to consumers



The Caseys’ Australian Chestnut Company sells frozen, peeled chestnuts in this attractive box.

Pick up a box of Cheznuts, or peeled, frozen Australian chestnuts, and the simple tagline scrolled across the package will catch your attention: “chestnuts made easy.” This consumer-friendly phrase, however, tells little of the determination and vision growers Brian and Jane Casey of Eurobin, Australia, have put into developing the innovative product since the mid-1990s.

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A Message from the President



WCGA PRESIDENT
HARVEY CORREIA
CORREIA CHESTNUT FARM
ISLETON, CALIF.

It's spring again and an exciting time of year, looking forward to the beginning of another crop. Here at my operation in California, spring has started early and bud-break seems to be a couple of weeks earlier than "normal"... like last year. Weather rarely seems normal and my thoughts have often been on those in the northwest that have experienced drought conditions, while we've had abundant rainfall this winter in my area. I haven't heard any stories of frost damage yet, and I sincerely hope that everyone made it through the winter and will avoid any major problems this spring.

If you haven't already done so, this is the time of year to have a soil analysis of your orchard performed so that you may properly plan this year's fertilization program. This should be supplemented by a leaf tissue analysis in July or August, depending on your season, to confirm how things are coming along. I put a large application of potash on my orchard last fall and the heavy rainfall this winter hopefully did its job of moving it into the root zone.

This year we are moving the annual meeting and orchard tour back up to the northwest. The dates are July 8 and 9, with optional orchard tours on the 10th in the Portland, Oregon, area. If you have a subject that is of particular interest to you, please contribute materials or offer to lead a discussion on it at the meeting.

I'd also like to encourage everyone in our membership to consider what topics they'd like to see covered in our newsletters. Again, many of the articles have been written by other growers just like yourself. We'd all like to hear and read about the experiences of others and I ask that you consider volunteering your help and writing an article. The editorial staff of the newsletter would be glad to help with editing if you're concerned that you just can't write well enough. We'd love to hear what you've got to say!

Finally, I've made two requests in prior newsletter issues this column for input on the possibility of changing the name of the Western Chestnut Growers Association to one such as the Chestnut Growers of America. As a reminder, this idea was initiated when several of our members, myself included, met at the annual Northern Nut Growers Association meeting and decided that our name should represent the broad area of growers we represent. I have only received a response in strong support of the idea with no opposition becoming evident. I expect that we will have a board meeting soon in order to put this matter to a vote of the membership.

As always, please send me any comments or concerns you may have: email to harvey@chestnuts.us or telephone at (866) 492-4769. Thank you.

Harvey J. Correia

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The Western Chestnut is published quarterly by the Western Chestnut Growers Assn., Inc. at 203 ABNR, Columbia, Mo., 65211.

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Single membership is \$25 per year per person-- household membership is \$35. Members receive The Western Chestnut quarterly. For foreign delivery contact the Editor for pricing. Back issues may be obtained by members. Membership applications may be obtained from the Secretary-Treasurer.

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to WCGA, c/o PO
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PUBLICATION DEADLINES

Fall issue deadline 9/15 mailed 10/15
Winter issue deadline 12/15 mailed 1/15
Spring issue deadline 3/15 mailed 4/15
Summer issue deadline 6/15 mailed 7/15



Cheznuts frozen, peeled chestnuts expand Australian industry (cont. from page 1)

During the mid-1980s, the Caseys were living in suburban Melbourne and decided they would move to “the country.” The couple purchased a small property in Eurobin – about half way between Bright and Myrtleford in North East Victoria – a property already home to around 100 young chestnut trees. Consequently, Jane and Brian’s involvement with chestnuts was begun.

By 1990, this involvement had escalated significantly, and Jane became a member of a steering committee given the task of establishing a national chestnut association, known today as the Chestnut Growers of Australia (CGA). She became an inaugural director and secretary, and Brian is currently the chairman of the CGA.

“Because we were so involved with the industry,” Jane said, “we could see very clearly the number of trees that had been planted and the anticipated crop that would be coming on line in the future. With demand static and industry trends indicating a move toward quick and easy food preparation, the future for chestnuts was not looking very bright. We felt a sense of urgency, but didn’t know quite what to do.”

The industry focus at that time had settled on the expansion of the domestic chestnut market, a challenge proving to be very difficult. Limited levy funds meant there was little spending on promotion, and traditional chestnut consumers are an aging population.

A turning point

In 1994, a horticultural marketing consultant approached the industry and offered to assist in developing export markets. The consultant obtained a marketing skills program grant to take a group of growers on a market visit to Japan. Brian and Jane joined the trip, which opened the door to their first international customer – a Japanese buyer for fresh chestnuts that the Caseys have supplied since 1996.

Perhaps a more critical outcome of the journey was the exposure the Caseys gained to frozen, peeled chestnuts, which were being imported into Japan from China. The Caseys describe this product “like a bolt of lightning” for solving the challenge of surplus production of fresh chestnuts. Prior to seeing this product

in Japan, the couple’s only experience with processed chestnuts was canned products brought in from Europe – a product that didn’t spark their interest. These small, yellow frozen nuts from China were something quite different. Jane remembers holding them in her palm on a footpath in downtown Tokyo and exclaiming “we have got to produce these!” And so began the task of developing frozen, peeled chestnuts, or “chestnuts made easy” for the consumer audience.

The product emerges

During the time of the visit to Japan, both Jane and Brian Casey were involved in the Australia Chestnut Network (a group of 25 growers desiring to pursue export markets for fresh chestnuts). One year later, the Caseys envisioned a change in direction for the chestnut industry and separated from the network group. However, seeking to retain their interest in export markets for chestnuts, they formed a small but significant group with Nightingales (the largest producers of Australian chestnuts) and Ardern & O’Kane. This group became Australian Chestnut Marketing.



Left: Members of The Chestnut Growers of Australia, Lmted., produce full-color recipe booklets for preparing their frozen, peeled chestnuts. The convenient product and great recipe ideas encourage consumers to try chestnuts.

After a small but significant research project at Food Science Australia in November 1996, both Nightingales and Ardern and O’Kane expressed no further interest in spending funds to develop a method to peel chestnuts. In 1997, Australian Chestnut Marketing approached the CGA for assistance, and the board chose

to undertake a feasibility study into processing rather than taking over the existing project. Brian and Jane – with virtually no funds of their own, but a strong determination to pursue processing as a matter of urgency – decided to look at all possible options.

Jane undertook extensive research on peeling machinery in Europe, the United States and New Zealand, as well as the current methods and new research being undertaken in China and Korea.

Taking into account their skills, financial resources and risk threshold, the Caseys decided to process (cont. page 6)



Cultivar recommendations: Upper West Coast region

Choosing the right chestnut cultivars for your soil, climate and crop preferences requires experimentation over time and a sense of curiosity. Advice from fellow growers can also be helpful, and this section provides cultivar selections from the upper West Coast. If you have experience with cultivars you would like to share, we welcome your input. Please contact Michael Gold, editor, at goldm@missouri.edu or (573) 884-1448.

Cultivar Report, Burnt Ridge Nursery & Orchards: Onalaska, Wash.

Burnt Ridge Nursery & Orchards, located in western Washington at approximately 1,000 feet elevation, has an almost maritime climate, with some of the coolest summer temperatures of the nation. The nursery location represents the extreme northern range for chestnut production. Specializing in unusual trees, shrubs and vines that produce edible nuts or fruits, the mail order nursery is a 25-year family owned business.

Colossal is grown at Burnt Ridge, though it is a smaller size and different shape than in southern locations due to the climate.

However, owner Michael Dolan did report some very large colossal nuts at last harvest, due to an unusually warm summer. Blank Colossal burs have been a problem for the nursery, which evaluated this as a potential pollination problem and found inadequate pollination was not the cause.

Despite the smaller size and possible occurrence of blank burs, the nursery, which sells chestnuts, chestnut seedlings and grafted trees, reports more requests for Colossal than any other nut, perhaps because of its widespread recognition.

T0G13: This is a timber type of chestnut from Spain that Dolan reports to be vigorous and beautiful in form, worth planting for the timber quality but also as a heavy bearing nut producer. It is also a good pollinator for varieties including Colossal.

Nevada: This cultivar produces well in the climate, with more filled out burs than Colossal. It is also used as a pollinator for Colossal.

Prolific: Burnt Ridge reports excellent success with this European selection, citing one tree that averaged 800 pounds of nuts per year from one tree. In the past 15 years of evaluating the tree, the lowest yield was 400 pounds in a year. Interestingly, the owner of the original parent tree passed away and the property buyers cut it down. The nursery did, however, take a start from the tree and occasionally propagates it. Though the nuts are average in size, the quantity is enormous -- one year it produced 1,200 pounds!

Korean Varieties: (OK Kwang, Yoo Ma, Don Tak) Dolan received some Korean cultivars from the Institute of Forest Genetics in South Korea, though they are not propagating these much due to low yield. He suggests Korean varieties may grow well in southeastern regions of the United States where the climate more

closely resembles that of Korea. These varieties have gall wasp resistance.

Italian Selections:

Precoce Migoule: This cultivar one of the earliest to reach nut maturity at the nursery. The nuts are good quality and every bur is filled. These work well for an early market.

Marron Di Val Di Susa: This variety comes from the valley of Susa, Italy, and the name means "large sweet chestnut of Susa." This is a good Marron for the northern region.

Local Selections:

Whitten No. 1 and No. 2 – These are selections of chestnuts that were brought out west in wagon trains during the 1870s. The trees grow extremely large – large enough that three adults and a child can link arms around the trunk. Branches can grow to four feet thick. The selections produce good quality nuts, and Burnt Ridge is propagating them and growing them as seedlings for eventual grafting.

The nursery calls this selection excellent genetic material for the west coast, due to the yield, size of nut and quality of nut. The selection seems very well-suited to west coast regions, as Dolan reports that without fertilizer or intentional watering they continue to produce massive crops year after year.

Connecticut Early: (*Castanea pumila*) Burnt Ridge reports this as another nut producer, which was acquired from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. The selection may be an Allegany chinkapin crossed with a Chinese chestnut. Has nut quality reminiscent of the American chestnut, with very early ripening, sweetness, easy peeling and blight resistance. The nursery sells this variety as a seedling.

Sleeping Giant (Chinese x American x Japanese): Excellent timber form and a nice sweet nut that is easy to peel, with a larger size than any American chestnut nut and is blight resistant. This variety is grown and sold as a seedling and requested by people interested in timber form.

Silverleaf: (Eurobella) The nursery reports good success with this cultivar, with well-filled husks and very good quality nuts. In California, the variety may produce split shells but this has not been observed at the nursery.

Gellately Hybrids: (Layeroka, Skioka, Gellately) Gellately hybrids are mainly Chinese (*C. mollissima*) but show some morphological characteristics of the European species (*C. sativa*). Layeroka is a widely planted variety in Washington, which produces early with a nice timber form. It is pollen sterile and somewhat susceptible to chestnut blight. Skookum is a selection of Skioka and is one of the better flavored chestnuts grown in the area and is easy peeling. Dolan suggests the Gellately hybrids may be more successful, however, east of the (cont. page 8)

NutQuacker Farms co-hosts Italian festival, produces chestnut honey

(cont. from page 1)



The chestnut orchard at NutQuacker Farms invites guests to relax and enjoy the scenery.

"A bee keeper told me if you're getting seven to 10 bees per tree you're doing well, but I was getting 30 to 35 per tree," Mark reports. "The bees go crazy for the chestnut blooms, so we decided to take advantage of their hard work by producing chestnut honey."

Last year, NutQuacker Farms produced 85 gallons of chestnut honey through a relatively simple process. The Beams' beekeeper lifts the honeycomb from the hive, cuts the caps off the honeycomb and centrifuges the honey out of the combs. The raw, natural honey is delivered to the Beams in 5-gallon buckets. Upon delivery, the honey is simply jarred and a labeled. No additional processing is required. The finished product is medium in color with a unique, distinct flavor.

The Beams sell the honey for \$10 per 14-ounce jar, with demand continually increasing. Word of mouth is highly effective, and

John Deere magazine featured the Beam's chestnuts in its Farm Facts and Figures section in the December 2004 issue.

customers who visit NutQuacker Farms to purchase chestnuts are always given a sample.

"No one has tried chestnut honey and not liked it," says Mark.

The popularity of the product may be even greater with international guests to the farm. Mark tells the story of a five-star chef from France who stopped by last year to purchase chestnuts just as he was bringing in the honey. The Beams were out of chestnuts, and offered her chestnut honey instead. "She was absolutely delighted to buy the chestnut honey. She thought it was wonderful," says Mark. The chef purchased two gallons of honey for use in gourmet recipes. (cont. page 9)

Chestnuts in the Press:

Smithsonian Magazine, September 2004: "Chestnuttty," by Susan Freinkel. The article features the chestnut breeding efforts of James "Hill" Craddock at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. It is available online at www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian/issues04/sep04/peoplefile.html

Chronica Horticulturae: A Publication of the International Society for Horticultural Science, Volume 45, Number 1, 2005. This publication features a write up and photographs from the Third International Chestnut Congress, Oct. 20-23, 2004, in Portugal. Pages 24-25.K

Kimberly Brown, M.S., R.D., is a registered sports dietitian and competitive endurance athlete based in San Diego, Calif. She provides nutritional counselling and meal planning to athletes worldwide and published an article titled "Top 10 Energy Foods" on the Sierra Rica web site, www.sierrarica.com/fi_nutrition_02.htm, which featured chestnuts in the "top 10." Below is an excerpt:

"Forget that low-carb diet! Carbs are essential to health and athletic performance. The key is making the right choices."

Not since the public outcry against fat has there been such uproar about popular nutrition—the message in the mainstream media seems clear: It's protein you want not carbs! With all the hype, it's no wonder so many of us are second-guessing our eating habits. In truth, the message about carbohydrates has been so over-simplified that many people are skimping on the most critical energy source the body has.

Restricting carbohydrates can zap energy levels, compromising the quality of workouts and negating the benefits of a fitness program. Here's a simple truth: There are many high-carbohydrates foods that are beneficial to both your health and athletic performance. The key is choosing the right carbs. Following is a breakdown of 10 of the best energy-sustaining foods, all loaded with powerful nutrients to keep your body running on premium fuel." The section on chestnuts reads:

Chestnuts:

"In comparison to other calorie- and fat-dense nuts, chestnuts contain less than 1 gram of fat per ounce while providing a hefty dose of fiber (3.7 grams), vitamin C (12 percent RDA) and folic acid (10 percent RDA), nutrients important for immune function, formation of collagen and reduced risk for cardiovascular disease. Chestnuts are tasty in stuffing, pilaf, vegetable side dishes and soups. Or try them as a snack by themselves."

CHESTNUTS ROASTING ON AN OPEN FIRE: HOT MARKET?

Once a familiar Yuletide scene across America, chestnuts roasting over an open fire are little more than a sentimental lyric to most homes today.

However, American-grown chestnuts may be on the verge of a renaissance, aided by Asian genetics that can withstand chestnut blight, which decimated native American chestnuts between 1890 and 1950.

The best news, according to Tom Wahl of the Southeast Iowa Chestnut Growers Coop, is that the U.S. imports 40 million pounds of chestnuts each year. That's barely a small fraction of the consumption of the Carter and Ford days, but Wahl figures it will be at least 75 Christmas at the current rate of planting before U.S. growers meet that demand.

NutQuacker: Mark Beam and his wife, Kim, tend 60 chestnut trees on NutQuacker Farms near Hood River, Ore. Paying \$15 per acre was a tough nut, but he notes that established trees demand few inputs. Other requirements: the patience to wait seven years for a crop, and a strong back for plucking nuts up off the orchard floor for six weeks.

The Beams' most enthusiastic customers are Asian and European immigrants. Many visit after harvest to nibble roasted nuts, sipping in glasses of red wine, Italian-style.

FARM FACTS & FIGURES

"We have a variety of recipes we give to customers, but I've no time picking up nuts that I don't have time to cook anything."

—Mark Beam, Chestnut grower, Hood River, Ore.

American-grown chestnuts could celebrate a revival, thanks to higher-resistant stock and nurturing buyers.





Frozen, peeled chestnuts emerge into Australian market (cont. from page 3)

Australian chestnuts in South East Asia. Once this decision was made, it was another 18 months before a suitable processing company could be found. Luckily, through a conversation Jane had with Chris Joyce at the ANIC (Australian Nut Industry Council) Conference in Albury, she was put in contact with Graeme Halting, an Australian working out of Vietnam. At last, they had a contact in Asia to communicate with and organize the process overseas. Graeme became a mentor to Brian and Jane, and his expertise in export markets and trade has been vital to their success.

“Graeme taught us so much about trade and international business,” Jane said, “and we really value his advice. It’s hard to know how we could have achieved what we have without him.”

The company is born

In 1998, the Australian Chestnut Company was established. This private company is wholly owned by Brian and Jane Casey. There are no other shareholders, and it is not a network or co-operative. The company was initiated out of a desire to separate the growing arm (Mountain View Chestnuts) from the value-adding and export parts of their chestnut business. Finally, the Caseys were on the road to processing frozen, peeled chestnuts.

In 1999, the company shipped a one ton trial load of chestnuts to Vietnam. The trial was, without doubt, a complete disaster. Only a small amount of the frozen, peeled chestnuts processed were acceptable for quality packaging. However, the Caseys invited area chefs to try free samples of the product, and the response was quite good. After receiving complimentary feedback, the Caseys revisited Vietnam to resolve any production challenges. The next shipment in 2000 was processed with much more confidence.

The volume grew to 4 tons of packaged, frozen, peeled chestnuts, and after some initial hiccups, production went smoothly. However, sales in Australia were slow.

“It was an unexpected outcome to learn that chefs in Australia generally don’t know what to do with chestnuts. The nuts processed in Vietnam were simply peeled using a knife with no heat involved at all. They were raw and like uncooked potatoes, not really at their best in this state,” said Jane.

One chef in Melbourne, when asked for his opinion of the nuts, said “they’re not very good.” When Jane inquired as to what he had made with them, he replied that he had defrosted them, chopped them up and put them on top of a cake. The Caseys could see educating consumers and chefs was going to be one of their largest market challenges.

By early 2001, a considerable amount of packaged product remained in the freezers and costs were mounting. The Caseys were becoming extremely disheartened about their next steps, and their strong belief in a market for frozen peeled chestnuts was put to



The Chestnut Growers of Australia has produced a series of eye-catching recipe cards for consumers and chefs, in addition to a recipe booklet.

the test. In March of 2001, however, the story changed.

Turning the tables

The Australian Chestnut Company was asked to supply frozen chestnuts to Bill Marchetti, a chef and the owner of The Latin restaurant (now closed) in Melbourne. He was traveling to Japan to be a guest chef at the Pan Pacific Hotel in Yokohama for three weeks in April. He had also been asked to prepare a dinner at the Australian Consulate in Tokyo celebrating the Cherry Blossom Festival. The main course served at the event was to be Murray cod with mushrooms and Australian chestnuts, and Brian and Jane donated thirty kilograms of frozen peeled chestnuts for the dinner. Although it was quite expensive a donation at the time, it turned out to be money well spent.

That same month, Brian and Jane decided on another visit to Asia. There they met with the importer who handled all the Australian produce for Chef Marchetti’s visit. The importer liked the Casey’s frozen peeled chestnuts so much, the company ordered substantial volumes. At last, Brian and Jane were back in business. No longer did they have to process and then hope to sell the product – they could now process with the product already presold.

The same importing company also asked the Caseys if they could supply frozen roasted chestnuts. On returning to Australia, a sample of chestnuts were roasted, frozen and sent back to the company. The response was positive, and soon the couple was roasting and freezing chestnuts. They roasted one ton of chestnuts in their shed at Eurobin that year under far from ideal conditions, and when a much larger order was placed for 2002, they knew they had to become more efficient.

The cost of setting up a processing facility in Australia is quite expensive. Fortunately, the Caseys received a **(next page)**

New Industries Development Program grant. “This has been integral to our success,” Jane said. “We could never have afforded to set a facility up on our own.”

The processing center, located in Myrtleford, is small and modest, but adequate for their needs both now and in the medium term. During last season’s production, Brian and Jane employed eight part-time staff, as well as freight companies, local tradespeople and suppliers.

The Australian Chestnut Company’s focus is on the production of processed chestnut products and the marketing of these products both locally and internationally. “Our aim is to be the premium producer of value-added Australian chestnut products, with our range increasing by one product each year,” Jane said.

Part of the Caseys’ strategy is that new products will be researched and trialed for one year, with general release during the next year. Recently the Caseys have increased their production of flour and are experimenting with Marrone Glace.

“The most important people to our business are our supplier growers, especially the Nightingales and Arden & O’Kane. They have been supportive of our efforts right from the start,” said Jane.

The Australian Chestnut Company has now expanded its supplier base to approximately ten growers.

“It is a pleasure to work with each grower, and we love visiting and walking around the groves, talking and sharing information,” Jane said. “Our growers understand that if we succeed, they succeed.”

During orchard visits, Brian and Jane provide information on chestnut markets and future trends, and the growers provide information on harvest volumes and current conditions affecting size and quality.

Lessons learned

The experience of producing frozen, peeled chestnuts has reinforced to the Caseys the value of maintaining quality.

“One fallacy we had to knock on the head very early on is that leftover second rate produce is okay for processing. In our experience we have found quite the opposite – if you start out with poor quality you end up with poor quality. Processing will not turn second grade chestnuts into premium produce. Our growers understand this and support us by supplying first grade chestnuts,” Jane said.

Brian and Jane have plans to continue their production of frozen peeled chestnuts and frozen roasted chestnuts. “For the first time we can really see a positive future for the chestnut industry,” Jane said. “The crop is going to increase, but rather than be fearful of

that, we are looking forward to the increase in volume and the potential to process even more and develop other export markets.”

The Caseys say they are experiencing a renewed sense of energy and optimism within the chestnut industry. “We feel this enthusiasm when we talk to our growers, and we feel it at the other end of the chain when we talk to consumers and users of our chestnut products,” they said.

Thanks to the diligence and vision of the Australian Chestnut Company, consumers no longer have to ask the popular question: “What do I do with them?” Cheznuts (the frozen, peeled product) can be utilized in recipes with minimal effort and excellent flavor.

As the Australian Chestnut Company continues to expand the potential for convenient, consumer-friendly chestnut products, the future looks brighter and brighter. Last year, the company harvested approximately 12 metric tons of chestnuts.

“Hans van Gemert at the 1996 Strategic Plan held in Bright estimated that the consumption of chestnuts in Australia is one nut per person per year. At the time, it was remarked what a huge potential for the industry if we could just increase that to two nuts per person per year,” said Jane.

“With processed chestnut products now available, that goal is closer than ever.”



The logo and tagline for Cheznuts frozen peeled chestnuts as it appears on the boxed product. The Australian Chestnut Company places frozen bags of peeled chestnuts into these boxes for customer orders.



Cultivar Recommendations (cont. from page 4)

Cascade Mountains. Skioka is a good pollinator variety.

Japanese/European Hybrids:

Developed in France and Italy, these cultivars have large nuts and are blight and *Phytophthora* resistant, which makes these cultivars useful in areas of poor drainage. Dolan reports some of these cultivars are starting to produce on their own roots as layered trees.

Bisalta No. 3: This is a Japanese/European hybrid that Dolan reports may bear too much, with as many as seven chestnuts in one bur, and then the nuts are small in size. If a bur only contains two or three nuts, however, they may be larger than Colossal nuts. This cultivar is a good pollinator.

Marigoule: This variety is known for *Phytophthora* resistance and is being propagated as a layered self-rooted tree. The Maraval cultivar produces nuts early, before the Marron types and is an early market variety with an attractive nut and thick shell that keeps well.

Chataigne Varieties: This classification refers to nuts that are not Marron. They are used in-shell and sometimes for processing into flour or for confections. Dolan has seen these even used for chestnut spreads and beer. This classification is used in France, not in the U.S. T0G13, Nevada and Prolific would be three examples.

French Varieties:

Belle Epine: This is a French cultivar reported by the nursery to be a good pollinator with a reddish brown nut. Very productive variety with good flavor. It ripens late in October and has a somewhat reduced nut size.

Bouche de Betizac: This is a French hybrid variety that Burnt Ridge reports is productive with a nice flavor and good disease resistance.

Marron Duvar: This cultivar doesn't consistently ripen at Burnt Ridge, but does well in lower elevations. It produces a large nut with high quality better suited to warmer regions.

For more information, visit www.burntridgenursery.com.

Nominating Committee Provides Proposed Slate for Summer Election

In accordance with association bylaws, President Harvey Correia appointed Ben Bole, Ken Hunt, and Nancy Pettit on December 22, 2004, to serve as the Nominating Committee. In turn, the Board of Directors confirmed the appointment and the committee has proposed the following slate of officers for 2005-2006:

President:	Hill Craddock
Vice President:	Lucienne Grunder
Secretary/Treasurer:	Ray Young
Director:	Mark Beam
Director:	Sandy Bole
Director:	Harvey Correia
Director:	Mike Gold

According to the bylaws Article XIII Nominations:

"Members may nominate their own candidate(s) by submitting a written petition to the secretary at his regular address, prior to the election and including the following:

- a) A written acceptance by each nominee to serve the association for the next year
- b) A request to place the proposed candidate(s) on the ballot with a clear description of the office being challenged, signed by at least 10 percent of the eligible voting members listed in the most recent membership directory.
3. Nominations may not be made at the annual meeting or in any manner other than as provided in this Section.
4. If no valid petitions are received by the Secretary by March 1st, the Nominating Committee's slate shall be considered to have been elected unanimously and no balloting shall be necessary."

Because of the length of time needed to come up with this year's slate of officers, this notice was not sent out prior to March 1st. As such, the deadline for submitting competing nominations was extended until April 1, 2005.

Since no nominations were received the "...Nominating Committee's slate shall be considered to have been elected unanimously and no balloting shall be necessary." The proposed slate of officers will assume their offices at the close of New Business during the WCGA annual meeting.

Proposed change in bylaws

At last year's NNGA meeting an informal meeting of chestnut growers was held. All but one or two of those in attendance were also members of WCGA, including 4 of the organization's 7 board members.

The consensus was that for WCGA to be perceived as a national organization, the name needed to be changed to reflect its geographically diverse membership. The WCGA bylaws in Article XIII state: "These Bylaws may be amended or repealed by a two-thirds vote of the membership at any regular or special meeting thereof, if notice of such purpose has been given in the notice of the meeting."

The following announcement states the purpose of possible changes in bylaws.

NOTICE TO ALL WCGA MEMBERS: Changes to the bylaws may be proposed at the 2005 Annual Meeting. One of the proposed changes will be a change in the name of the organization.

NutQuacker Farms: Sweet Success with Chestnut Honey (cont. from page 5)

In addition to the bounty of chestnut honey, the Beams enjoy watching the bees and learning more about them, finding the swarms that fly over the farm particularly fascinating. The bees also seem to be enjoying NutQuacker Farms, with eight queen bees identified – a remarkably high number, considering most populations only have one queen.

But it's not just tourists and bees who are noticing NutQuacker Farms. The operation was featured in Alaska Airlines magazine, with a copy placed behind every passenger seat. John Deere magazine in December 2004 also featured the farm.

Another effective marketing approach the Beams have utilized for selling chestnuts and chestnut honey is inclusion on the Fruit Loop Valley map, a directory of local farms and the products sold in association with the Hood River Valley Chamber of Commerce. There is a fee to participate in the map, but distribution reaches 75 to 85,000 potential visitors.

"Being involved on the Fruit Loop map has been a serious promotional tool for us," says Mark, "and has doubled, if not quadrupled, our farm attendance."

In addition to sales of chestnut honey, the Beams sold 4,700 pounds of fresh chestnuts at \$5 a pound last year. Wholesale rates are between \$3 and \$3.50 per pound.

"We meet so many interesting people in this business, and it's great fun," says Mark. "Everyone has an interesting story, and many come back to see us year after year."

Chestnut Import Data, 2004:

According to the International Trade Association, the US imported 5,369 metric tons of chestnuts, for **US \$11.2 million**. (Note: this is the customs value; the retail market value inside the US would be at least twice as large.)

Here is the link to the table with the 2004 data for chestnut imports:

www.ita.doc.gov/td/industry/otea/Trade-Detail/Latest-Month/Imports/08/080240.html

The largest amount of imports came from only 4 countries, representing 97% of the total quantity of imported chestnuts:

Italy	= 5,821,451 pounds
China	= 3,325,857
Korea	= 1,650,779
Spain	= 662,877

Northern NutGrowers Association (NNGA) to host 96th annual meeting

The annual meeting of NNGA will be July 31- Aug. 3, 2005, at Central College in Pella, Iowa.

The meeting will include informational sessions, orchard tours of nut crops, a fundraising auction and a banquet in which the "King Nut" will be crowned.

Speaker topics will include black walnut, chestnut, hazelnut, hickory, paw paw, persimmon, nutrition and entomology. Nut Species Forums will offer a brief Cultivar Inventory Committee summary and technical discussions.

Orchard tours include Bill and Geri Hanson's "Ben's Black Walnuts" orchard-to-nutmeat sale operation and the Merlyn Carter Black Walnut Cultivar Performance Project planting.

The town of Pella, Iowa, offers a unique Dutch heritage to explore. Alternate field trips include the Pella Historical Village and the seven Amana villages of the area.

For more information, visit www.nutgrowing.org or contact Robert Miller at (515) 848-3757; by email at truckinsdad@hotmail.com.

WCGA Summer Meeting Announcement:

Friday, July 8 - Sunday, July 10
Portland, Oregon and Washington areas

The Western Chestnut Growers Association Annual Meeting will be held on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, July 8, 9 and 10 in the Oregon-Washington area. On Friday, we will have an early dinner followed by a panel discussion on orchard practices. The format will be an open forum with opportunities for all participants to seek answers from the panel. The business meeting will be held Saturday morning. The balance of the day will be filled with visits to orchards in Oregon, followed by a dinner on Saturday evening. Sunday will be available to visit some more distant orchards in Washington and the Columbia Gorge areas. We are still working out the details for the visits, but promise there will be something of interest to everyone. There will be a mailing to all members with the details for the weekend and suggestions for lodging in the Portland area.

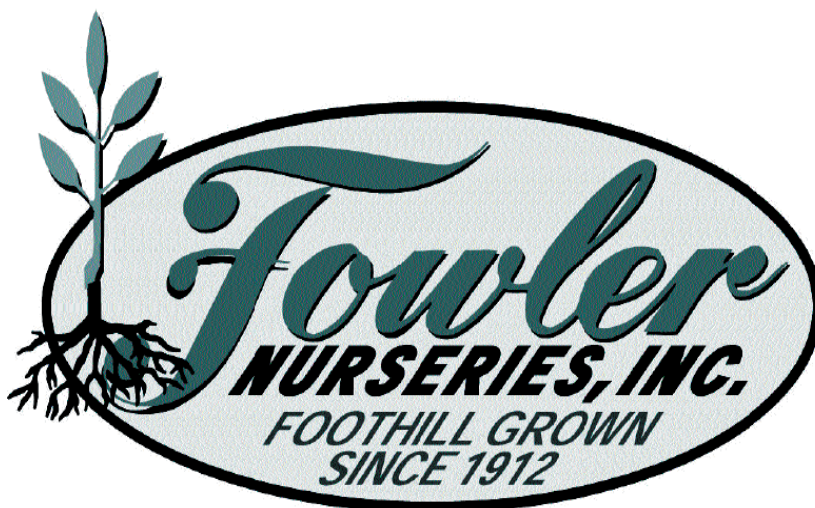
Questions? Contact Ben or Sandy Bole at
Ladd Hill Orchards
Phone: 503-625-1248 or email: laddhill1@aol.com.



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Chestnut sabbatical to Italy gives Michigan State professor new inspiration: A travel log, part 1

Dennis Fulbright, professor of Plant Pathology, Michigan State University, recently completed a five month chestnut research sabbatical to Italy. He shares his experiences in this chestnut-oriented culture in this "travel log" article, including information about the integration of the nut into local foods and festivals and cultivation and production challenges.

Don't miss part 2 of the story in the July Western Chestnut issue!

When I first arrived at Michigan State University in 1979, one of the more illustrious professors in our department had just returned from a sabbatical leave in Europe. He said it was one of the best things he had ever done and he wished he had done it sooner and as frequently possible (every seven years). His suggestion to me was to make sure I took advantage of sabbatical leaves whenever I could. He said that up until the time they left, his family fought it all the way to Europe. However, as you might expect, the teenage children that were taken from their schools, friends and social lives in Michigan ended up loving it more than he did. I can remember seeing the slides of his trip at his seminar and it was obvious that he had a wonderful time.

I did what he told me and went on a sabbatical about 10 years after I had started at the university. It was to New Jersey/New York area and I went alone and frequently came home on weekends. This sabbatical, 14 years since the last one, was going to be different. Children were through high school and in college; they would come over and join us during their Christmas break. So all we had to do was find a place to live in Viterbo, Italy, determine how we would transport ourselves around the city and country, figure out the telephone systems we needed to adopt, and make sure we could pay for all of it. Thanks to the efforts of my host, Professor Andrea Vannini of the University of Tuscia in Viterbo, many of the unknowns were filled in solely with his efforts. I don't know how we could have done this without his help. He wrote letters of support for the visa required for stay longer than 3 months, he found us a never-to-be-forgotten flat in the medieval quarter of the town, provided everything we needed to make us comfortable, spent days getting us settled and normalized, his friends became our friends, and his hobbies (good foods and wine tasting) became our hobbies. And even better, at Christmas time his family became our family.

Because of Andrea's role and support in Italy the most difficult part of the trip was leaving home. After months of planning and organizing this simple five-month jaunt to Italy, it seemed that the last two weeks before we left for Italy went by in a 24-hour blur. Keeping up with current bills and payments is normally difficult enough, but here we had to anticipate those bills that might be coming during

the next 5 months and prepay or find a way to communicate via the Internet with these companies. Jane took charge of that and found that the Internet seemed to be the way to go to keep up payments once we were out of the country. The last two weeks were also filled with getting our children settled in schools in Ohio and Michigan, and meeting with the young couple who as newly hired teachers, were willing to take over the house sitting duties for half a year to help them save money on rent. Of course, with the house came a dog and two cats, and the chores that come with 14 acres of land and a house that would transition from summer to winter while we were gone. We had them over for dinner and showed them the idiosyncrasies of the place.

Departure in mid-August left us with various sensations; relief that the time had finally come to the hollow feeling that we had somehow left something undone. The last we had heard from the couple that were to live in our house was that they were in Florida taking cover as a hurricane approached. What if they couldn't make it back? "What ifs?" plagued us until we arrived in Italy. Leaving Detroit we landed in London after a short sleep on the plane, took off for Rome, met Dr. Vannini at the daVinci airport and by the time we went to bed that first night had a traditional Italian dinner under chestnut trees in the gentle rolling hills of the volcanic Cimino mountains outside of Viterbo near Bagnaia.

We used the first week to get settled into temporary university housing while the previous occupants were vacating our flat. During this time Andrea helped us purchase our bicycles, which would suffice as our main mode of transportation around town and back and forth to work. Andrea set about helping us purchase two telephones and Europe-wide calling cards. Professors at the university spoke English and all school children take English, and therefore know some, but are somewhat reluctant and embarrassed to speak it. Andrea, again, was instrumental in these situations and when I might start to believe that we adapted well and quickly to our new home, I would be understating the value of having an excellent friend and companion who could come to our rescue.

About a week after we arrived, we were taken to the Alpine research center in Pieve Tesino in the foothills of the Alps about an hour outside of Trento where Andrea was teaching a field mycology course (mostly mushrooms). Everyday for a week we went mushroom collecting in the hills filling baskets and for me, re-learning how to identify and classify them. (To be continued)

Learn more about Dennis' chestnut research in the next issue!



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