



# The Chestnut Grower

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## Growing an Industry

by Michelle Hall, University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry

Northern California welcomed the Chestnut Growers for the annual meeting with *slightly* cooler temperatures than it is known for in late July, but still plenty of sun and, unfortunately, a bit of smoke in the air.

Lingering areas fires didn't slow this group down, however, as we crisscrossed the area, visiting orchards, equipment manufacturers and two delicious restaurants.

Friday night's kick-off gathering was enjoyed by all and featured wine, cheese, fruit and other appetizers, including chestnut hummus and chestnut spinach dip, whipped up by Carolyn Young. Lee Williams brought samples of his chestnut beer, liqueur and coffee to taste.

Through presentations and other discussions, the theme arose of thinking of the chestnut growers of America as an industry. Dennis Fulbright, who hosted the business



*In the absence of a projector, Dennis Fulbright, left, helps Ken Hunt, right, with his presentation at the Chestnut Growers of America's July meeting in Chico, Calif.*

meeting in President Mike Gold's absence, noted that growers shouldn't think of themselves as just "hobbyists."

Having the Chestnut Growers of America at all is a great start, he noted. Securing grants to study chestnuts, for example, is impossible, Fulbright said, if the industry is not visible and prominent. He said everyone needs to "be active in their own regions." (cont. pg. 8)

## 'Ad' in Big Exposure

Don't be surprised to see CGA's logo staring back at you from the winter issue of Fine Cooking magazine. The publication for chefs will be carrying an ad by the Chestnut Growers of America, encouraging people to buy American-grown chestnuts for the holidays.



The advertisement includes CGA's Web site and directs readers to find a CGA member near them. The ad will look nearly identical to what is above – its background is light brown, however, which doesn't quite show up in this black-and-white publication!

Ray Young, CGA secretary-treasurer, said the Board of Directors was looking for ways to do something that would "benefit all growers."

Young also mentioned that the board was very interested to see if the ad is effective. He encourages all members to find out from their customers how the customers heard about them. Young said his chestnut operation will be monitoring whether customers found them through the ad using a feature on their on-line shopping cart. CGA

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## A Message from the President

MIKE GOLD  
UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI  
CENTER FOR AGROFORESTRY

### Marketing Your Chestnut Crop/How Much Water?

*Chestnut harvest season is in full swing. Along with the hard work of the actual harvest comes the need to market and sell the crop. This issue of The Chestnut Grower has a great deal of information on the market side of the industry, including our ad in Fine Cooking magazine, information about the development of freeze-dried chestnut slices as a new value-added product coming out of the CGI in Michigan, and marketing to chefs/restaurants. For U.S. chestnut production to continue growing rapidly into the future as more acreage and production comes online, we need to continue our current efforts to pool our collective thinking and be ready to expand our sales of both fresh and value-added chestnuts.*

*Water – how much is needed to produce an optimal annual crop load on chestnuts? We have had an exceptionally heavy amount of rainfall in many parts of the eastern U.S. in 2008, including Kansas, Missouri, Iowa and Ohio to name a few. In Missouri we are at least 20 percent higher than in a normal year (already over 50 inches). I have heard from a number of growers in this region indicating that they have outstanding production this year – heavier crop loads and larger nut sizes. This leads to the question asked above about water. I suspect chestnut orchards might respond to a great more water than is currently supplied, either through Mother Nature alone or in combination with irrigation. [While chestnut cannot tolerate “wet feet,” in better drained soils it is a question worth answering.]*

*This issue also contains a detailed report from Dennis Fulbright who attended the 4th International Chestnut Symposium in Beijing in September. The next (5th) International Chestnut Symposium will be here in the U.S. – stay tuned for more on that in the coming months and years.*

*My personal thank you to Dennis Fulbright and everyone on the CGA Board of Directors for filling in during my absence from the CGA annual meeting last July. I was very sorry to miss the meeting.*

*Finally, to Greg Miller, let’s all toast a glass of chestnut beer to your health – we are all delighted to know that you are on the mend!*

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### PUBLICATION DEADLINES

Fall issue deadline 9/15 mailed 10/15  
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## A ‘Slice’ of the Pie

by Michelle Hall, University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry

Growers in Michigan, as part of Chestnut Growers Inc., are working to change the short, refrigerated shelf life of chestnuts.

While freezing and dehydrating chestnuts are nothing new, CGI is rolling out something a little different this fall – they’ve developed a freeze-dried chestnut slice that’s shelf-stable for up to two years. What’s better, the slices taste “just like a chestnut” directly out of the bag. Or they can be rehydrated in only 15 minutes (other dried chestnuts can take up to 12 hours) or ground and used as a base for pasta, breading for fish or sprinkled on your potato for a sweet topping, for example.

Eight ounces of chestnut slices will rehydrate to 1 lb. of chestnut puree, said Roger Blackwell, president of CGI. It takes about 3 lbs. fresh chestnuts to make 1 lb. chestnut slices.

“Nothing has been added – it’s a pure chestnut,” he said. “No preservatives, additives whatsoever.

“For shipping, it takes a whole lot of pressure off,” Blackwell said of the stability of the dehydrated product.

CGI has been developing the product for three years. With about 40 growers contributing a percentage of their crop each year and with the “invaluable expertise” of Dennis Fulbright, plant pathologist from Michigan State University, and his helpful colleagues, the co-op keeps learning and improving the crop, from the field to the table. It has the tonnage and resources to develop value-added products, said member Virginia Rinkel, the mastermind behind the original dried slices. To start, the co-op uses a commercial chestnut peeler to make quick work of pesky shells and pellicles.

Although Rinkel started out “playing around at home” – slicing the chestnuts by hand and drying them in a dehydrator at MSU when she and Fulbright first decided to pursue a dehydrated chestnut option – CGI now (through a series of grants determining how to make the slices more efficiently) has chestnuts sliced and freeze-dried by a private processing company using an exact formula CGI has developed.



Rinkel credits Joe Colyn, a food processing expert CGI hired to pursue the chestnut slice idea, with really taking the product one step further and seeing it to completion.

Blackwell said CGI is marketing the new product mostly to chefs. The slices are easy to work with but are a bit pricey for the general public (about \$24/8 oz.), he said. That said, curious buyers can purchase the slices at CGI’s Web site at <http://www.chestnutgrowersinc.com>

“There’s the recipe convenience of using this product, rather than having to deal with the risk and laborious task of scoring and peeling the chestnut, removing the pellicle, and boiling them before you can even begin to cook with them,” Blackwell said.

Rinkel added that when you “take all your time and labor into consideration, you end up with almost the same end cost,” as fresh or even the costly frozen peeled chestnuts, that have to be shipped with dry ice limitations.

Demand is as-yet unknown, although CGI’s research has shown chefs find the product very appealing. This fall comes the major test marketing. CGI has about 1,200 lbs. of slices to sell this year. How the fall goes will determine how much they will produce in the future. They are selling the slices on the Web, in addition to marketing them directly to chefs through Heeran Bros. Gourmet Specialty line, Ram Produce and their own 1-800-667-6704 number.

“Right now our goal is still to sell as many quality fresh chestnuts of good size to the marketplace as possible,” Blackwell said. “We play with the residue – small stuff that doesn’t appeal to the consumer – to make additional markets.”

“Like any normal business starting out, we’re just hoping we meet the right need at the right time,” Rinkel said. “We try to innovate each year a little bit.”

CGI received grants from the Michigan Department of Agriculture, making the creation of their chestnut slices product possible. *CGA*

## Your Orchard to the Local Menu

We asked Craig Cyr, Executive Chef and Proprietor, The Wine Cellar and Bistro, Columbia, Mo., how growers should go about marketing chestnuts to local restaurants. Cyr prepares unique recipes at our Missouri Chestnut Roast each fall for the audience during a cooking demonstration (see photo at right), working with fresh chestnuts from our orchard. Cyr also has used chestnuts on the menu at his restaurant here in Columbia.



Following is a Q-and-A with Cyr by Michelle Hall. We hope this information directly from a chef/restaurant owner will help growers market their nuts!

**Q: What do restaurant owners need to know about chestnuts to help them decide whether to buy them from a grower? What do restaurant owners look for in chestnuts? What do you like about chestnuts?**

*A: Depending on the application of chestnuts in recipes, the restaurant should look at what type of chestnut products the growers have to offer. There are many different ways to purchase the nuts: individually quick frozen (frozen individually and out of the shell); fresh in the shell; candied; ground in flour; etc. The growers should have all the information needed for the consumer to make an informed decision. If buying fresh in the shell chestnuts, I look for firmness, color and quality of the meat inside the shell, which should be a nice shade of yellow with no sign of shrinkage, discoloration or decay. Fresh chestnuts should be kept cold for storage to avoid spoilage. Fresh chestnut are my choice for cooking because of the unparalleled color, flavor and texture. The frozen chestnuts, however useful for many applications due to the ease of not having to peel them, do not retain the wonderful color of a fresh chestnut. Another big thing for me in purchasing chestnuts is buying them as local as possible.*

*I like using chestnuts for a variety of reasons. First, I love the versatility of chestnut's flavor. The nuts lend themselves to many dishes, sweet or savory. The chestnut also has a kind of nostalgia to it and is not widely used in most restaurants, which makes it a fun and sort of obscure ingredient to use. The versatility of the starchy nut also is wonderful to use in a variety of applications from soup to stuffing, and from bread to pasta dough.*

**Q: How should growers approach restaurant owners about buying and cooking with their chestnuts?**

**Anything you should NOT do when marketing to restaurants? Chestnuts are a seasonal, highly perishable food. How can growers work around that?**

*A: The grower should be sure to have all the necessary information to give to chefs and restaurants to have a good chance to sell. First, some literature of the farm and where they are produced. Secondly, information on price and quantity of the nut, and how long the season in which the products will be available. Next some information of preparation for people who are unfamiliar with how to peel, store and use the nuts, maybe even a variety of tested recipes to give with the nuts.*

*Call on restaurants in the morning or call to set up an appointment with the chef (preferable for me). Shucking and freezing is a good way for growers to store excess nut and most likely get a better price per lb. Excess nuts can also be frozen whole and sold while supplies last throughout the off season.*

**Q: How have you used chestnuts?**

*A: We have been a part of the chestnut festival for four years and have done many different recipes with chestnuts at the restaurant as well. This year we will be featuring chestnuts in a chestnut and hazelnut granola, stir fry of roasted chestnuts and local vegetables, and a roasted acorn squash stuffed with chestnuts, local pork sausage and spiced sage butter. In previous years we have featured chestnut raviolis with goat cheese, apples and fried sage brown butter; a lobster and chestnut bisque with porcini mushroom and Oregon black truffles; and chestnut encrusted patchwork pork loin with local honey and wholegrain mustard glaze.*

*I really enjoy using chestnuts on the menu at the Wine Cellar – it adds a new dimension every time I create a dish. We will always try to incorporate these wonderful delicacies into our menu. (See one of Craig's recipes, page 5.) CGA*

## Baby Back Ribs with Tequila, Orange, Molasses, Chestnut Glaze

Recipe courtesy Craig Cyr; prepared at 2007 Missouri Chestnut Roast cooking demonstration

1 slab baby back ribs (local if possible)

spice blend: paprika, garlic powder, onion powder, dried rosemary, salt and fresh ground pepper

1 qt. chicken broth

Season ribs with spice, marinate for one hour. Place in oven-proof pan with chicken stock and wrap with aluminum foil. Place in oven at 250 degrees for approximately two hours; until fall-apart tender. Top ribs with glaze before serving.

### For glaze:

1/2 onion, diced small

6 garlic cloves, minced

1 serrano pepper or crushed dried red pepper

1/2 cup tequila

1/2 cup orange juice

1/2 cup molasses

1/4 cup soy sauce

2 Tbsp. cumin

2 Tbsp. paprika

canola oil for saute

1 cup chestnut puree

In sauce pan, saute onion and garlic with serrano peppers until tender. Add tequila then flame and burn off alcohol. Add remaining ingredients and simmer to a spoon-coating glaze.

## Annual Meeting '08 Photos



Clockwise from top left: Outdoor lunch at Sierra Nevada Brewing Co. The parts yard at Weiss/McNair Ramacher, Inc. Nut set at the Harrison's orchard. Machinery in progress at Weiss/McNair. The canopy at the Harrisons. Sorter at David Weed orchard. Looking up at Weed orchard. Irrigation canal at Weed orchard. Middle photo: Getting the tour at Weiss/McNair.

## Chestnut Olympics: China Conference

by Dennis Fulbright, Michigan State University

Six Americans representing various aspects of chestnut culture from farms to forests attended the 4th International Chestnut Symposium held in Miyun-Beijing, China, Sept. 25-28. Traveling with me and representing Michigan's pioneering chestnut interests were my wife Jane; Michigan State University technician Mario Mandujano; and chestnut grower, nurseryman and CGA vice president Bill Nash. We really did not know where we were going or how exactly we were getting there once we landed at Beijing, but everything fell together when our driver/interpreter met us at the door of the airport. Reeling from the flights and time change, we still had a 90-minute drive to the hotel/conference center in Miyun county.

Miyun is a county about 40 miles northeast of the metropolitan area of Beijing that has recently has been thrust to the forefront in China as one of six "National Ecological Counties." In obvious contrast to Beijing proper, the county of Miyun is becoming well known for its modern and efficient style while holding a unique ecological position for purifying the air and water resources of the Beijing metropolitan area. With an inherent interest in agriculture and natural resources, the Miyun region is home to 14 rivers, the largest reservoir for Beijing's drinking water supply, and 60 percent of the county is covered in forest. It was apropos to hold the conference in Miyun as it is attempting to promote the production of organic produce such as asparagus and chestnuts. Not too far from the conference center in the midst of a light-manufacturing sector of the city was Lorain, a chestnut processing company that conference delegates were able to tour. About an hour away in the agricultural area of Miyun, delegates toured an organic chestnut farm, part of the Miyun Chestnut Cooperative.

The meeting was opened on Wednesday morning with as much pomp and ceremony as I had ever seen at a scientific conference. As dignitaries from the government and surrounding area were introduced and made their way toward the stage, orchestra music played over the PA system; for a while, I thought I was at the Oscars. Headsets on for interpretation, we were able to follow much of the fanfare and hoopla, but had no idea who these people were and why they were being introduced. The best part of the opening ceremony was when four of the most important dignitaries were asked to use golden hammers to break open the giant plaster chestnut in the front of the

conference center, symbolizing something (the start of the meeting?). Anyway, it was good fun and everyone was joining in the lighthearted festivities.



Chestnuts are obviously an important component of the county's agriculture. It was also obvious that not all Chinese consume chestnuts, as several 20-something Chinese people I spoke with had not been introduced to chestnuts and only knew about them from older relatives. This is somewhat of a moot point, for if only 10 percent of the Chinese people were eating chestnuts, that would still represent well over 100 million people. To satisfy this incredible demand, chestnut farms and processors were teaming up to produce year-round sources of chestnuts including peeled frozen chestnuts, peeled chestnuts stored in a foil-wrapped pouch, and cooked, scored chestnuts stored in foil-wrapped pouches.

Much of the conference was dedicated to genetics and the population structure of the seven different species of chestnuts found on the Asian, European and North American continents. A few papers reported on the population structure of the chestnut blight fungus in Europe and the spread of the fungal hypoviruses that cause the biological control of chestnut blight known as hypovirulence.

There were not too many papers on the farming of chestnuts, but a few stood out. First, there was the report of the gall wasp problem that has expanded its range to Italy. Various chestnut-producing regions of Italy have been affected differently with some yields being reduced by only 20-30 percent but others as much as 70 percent. One bright note – it was reported the common cultivar already available, 'Bouche de Betizac,' is resistant to the gall wasp.

A poster that I found interesting was on the water culturing of European chestnuts after harvest. This work looked into the practice to see if there was any substance to soaking chestnuts in water for several days after harvest. Overall, the poster stated that insect and some chestnut mold control were obtained for three reasons. First, the water simply cleaned the surface of the nutshell. Second, the anaerobic environment killed the (cont. pg. 7)

## Chestnut Olympics: China Conference (cont. from page 6)

worms and reduced some fungal rot. Third, the tannins that leached out of the shells created an antibiotic environment. Therefore, the authors thought there was something of value to the practice of water storage after harvest.

A question I asked the conference in a general session on chestnut use around the world was on the allergy issue. I told them that the United States FDA had placed the nut on the tree nut allergy list, based on the fact that they do not have any data to not put them on this list. I asked if any country was doing chestnut allergy research. This seemed to agitate the crowd. One person shouted out that they are not doing the research because they do not cause allergies. I repeated that “hearsay” data is not valid data and that the US-FDA needed science-based research to remove chestnut from the list of tree nut allergens. Finally, the director of the conference from Rome and a member of the committee on nuts from the International Society Horticulture Science (sponsoring organization of the conference) said he was aware of some research like this in Italy. I guess we wait and see.

Two papers were presented on yield-enhancing effects of reducing catkin formation. The first paper was on the use

of a chemical that removed catkins when sprayed at the proper time and the second paper reported on reducing catkin length in certain mutant trees. Both the mutation and chemical could enhance yields. Apparently, catkins sap energy and resources from the tree that could better be used in nut production. A marketing study from Italy suggested that the processing of novel roasted chestnut products (peeled, roasted and frozen or in-shell, scored and frozen) could compete with the traditional roasted chestnuts, especially among younger people, even though the consumers at first believed they would not like the novel products as they were described.

The trip to the chestnut processing plant was amazing. In what turned out to be a whirlwind tour, we saw a large number of chestnut products being made by employees working in suits that prevented contamination of the product. These employees were hand peeling, processing and hand packaging their products. Later, when I had an opportunity to ask the plant manager (with the help of an interpreter) if they would be mechanizing these processes, he answered that the chestnut is a fragile nut that requires hands to care for it and they need to be seen by people who can remove the bad nuts. **(cont. pg. 11)**



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## Growing an Industry (cont. from front page)

Fulbright noted his and Mike Gold's plans to apply for a \$100,000 USDA Specialty Crops Research Initiative planning grant to then have funds to meet in order to write a multiyear grant to help move the chestnut industry forward.

### *Presentations included:*

\* **Ken Hunt, Research Scientist, University of Missouri, MU's chestnut research.** He has recently noted the very different effect between using hardwood bark mulch and pine straw mulch on young grafted Qing Chinese chestnut trees. Pine straw mulch reduced the soil pH and tied up less of the soil nitrogen compared to the hardwood bark mulch. Tree growth was greater and the trees looked more thrifty with pine straw mulch, resulting in no graft failures since the effect of the 2007 Easter weekend freeze, compared to several graft losses with hardwood bark mulch.

"There can be an effect from mulch on your grafted trees," Hunt said. "It appears if you keep stress down you won't lose as many grafts."

Hunt recommends that grafted chestnut trees in Missouri should only be planted in the spring, allowing a chance for establishment before winter, and to be careful choosing mulches, base on his findings.

Fulbright added that a good pH meter can be useful for chestnut growers.

In addition, Hunt said MU will soon look at the Japanese method of aggressively close spacing of trees. The hypothesis is that this intensive management method will result in higher nut yields.

\* **Lee Williams, Trails End Chestnuts, chestnut drying and value-added chestnut products.** Williams introduced his chestnut drying system to attendees, saying he enjoys making things "as simple as I can to fit my needs."

Williams immediately sends his smaller chestnuts to the drying rack after harvest – the quicker you do this, he said, the easier it is to get the pellicle off when they are peeled. (Do not put in cooler first.)

He uses 2'x4' racks with 1/2-inch screens, which can hold

about 200 lbs. of nuts each. The racks can be stacked as high as needed.

Air movement is the key, Williams said, as condensation forms when the air isn't moving. The room he uses can get up to 80 or 90 degrees in the summer. In the winter, he doesn't allow the space to go below 40 degrees, using a small heater. Williams also turns the nuts.

In addition, Williams puts the pesticide Phostoxin in the 55 gallon barrels that he puts the nuts in after they are dried to keep bugs away.

The nuts dry until they are "rock hard," Williams said. "That's what I go for."

Williams also "goes for" using each part of the chestnut – he creates many unique, value-added products. He explained (and brought samples for Friday night's festivities!) many of them. "There's a use for everything," he said. "You don't have to waste anything." (cont. pg. 9)



*Top: Lee Williams discusses his chestnut drying system. Middle: Harvey Correia explains X-tend bags. Bottom: Lee's Chestnut Chips.*

### No 'Ozone Layer'

Lee Williams recently tried out an ozone generator, courtesy of his brother, who owns a winery. They are a "big thing" in sterilizing wine barrels. Williams used it to sterilize a few chestnuts and six weeks later, the ozone-sterilized chestnuts were pristine, in contrast to chestnuts sterilized in chlorine dioxide gas.





## Growing an Industry (cont. from page 8)

### *Williams creates:*

- \* Dried chestnuts.
- \* Chestnut chips: Sliced dried chestnuts. Can use for salad garnishes, etc. Reconstitute faster than whole dried nuts.
- \* Chestnut coffee: Gluten-free, additive-free, caffeine-free. Made of dried, oven-roasted chestnuts. Offers in large bags and in sealed tea bags for individual servings.
- \* Chestnut beer: Gluten-free. Fine-ground, roasted chips (darker beer is made from darker roasted chips). Williams makes the chips available to those wanting to do their own home brewing. Michigan Beer Guide called Williams' beer the "most beer like gluten free beer I have ever tasted."
- \* Chestnut flour: Gluten-free. Fine-ground chestnuts.

Williams said he typically adds one dollar per process to the price of a pound of chestnuts when making each value-added product. He creates a lot of his harvesting and processing equipment himself with scrap metal and salvaged parts.

Attendees learned a lot from Williams, including the fact that coyotes love chestnuts, as many wildlife do!

\* **Harvey Correia, Correia Chestnut Farms, storing, shipping and transporting fresh chestnuts.** Correia has used the CALM system in the past to extend the life of fresh chestnuts, but this year he is trying something new: Xtend bags. These bags, created in Israel, are made specifically for different fruits and vegetables to prolong their freshness, based on individual respiration rates. Although a chestnut bag is not available, chestnuts have a respiration rate similar to cherries, so Correia will be trying out the cherry bag this fall.

Correia will use the bags for shipping to customers. He says that shipping isn't nearly as important as what the customers do after they get the chestnuts and he hopes this bag will allow the chestnuts to keep longer.

Correia has tried a variety of bags over the years, including Ziploc with poked holes and thin poly film bags. Other storage and shipping tips Correia provided:

- \* Rinse freshly harvested chestnuts with water; put in cooler near fans.
- \* Put "Refrigerate upon receipt" stamp on box when shipping.
- \* Instruct buyers to keep shipping bag open in fridge for a few days after receipt.

Xtend bags are available at <http://www.stepac.com/>

### *Equipment manufacturing tours included:*



*Above: Equipment at Jessee Equipment Manufacturing.*

### **CGA Official Business**

The following slate of officers was accepted at the annual CGA meeting in July:

President: Mike Gold  
 Vice President: Bill Nash  
 Secretary/Treasurer: Ray Young  
 Directors: Lucienne Grunder  
               Dennis Fulbright  
               Lee Williams  
               Sandy Bole

The next annual meeting location is still to be determined.

\* **Weiss/McNair Ramacher, Inc.** Nut harvesters, sweepers and blowers manufacturer. CGA members viewed the entire production area, from parts to welding to finished machines. The company builds tractor-pulled and self-propelled harvesters, self-propelled sweepers, tractor mounted blowers and tractor mounted sweepers. They provide a large replacement parts inventory and service department. Researchers spend time in the field each harvest

monitoring equipment operations. Visit them online at <http://www.weissram.com/>

\* **Jessee Equipment Manufacturing** Manufactures aspirators, crackers, hullers, sizing decks, pre cleaners, float tanks, wash conveyors, inspection tables, pasteurization, complete hulling lines and complete shelling lines. The company has recently moved to a new 18,000-square-foot facility. See their Web site at <http://www.jesseeemfg.com/>

**(cont. pg. 10)**



## Growing an Industry (cont. from page 9)

### *Growing an Appetite:*

#### **Recipes from the Annual Meeting**

Carolyn Young kicked off the Annual Meeting with two delicious chestnut dishes: chestnut hummus and chestnut and spinach dip.

The Chestnut and Spinach Dip recipe is from the University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry, created by UMCA Event Coordinator Julie Rhoads. Find the Chestnut and Spinach Dip recipe online at:  
<http://www.centerforagroforestry.org/pubs/recipes.asp>

The Chestnut Hummus recipe comes from Israel via Dennis Fulbright's Chestnut Cooking Class at Michigan State University. See it at:  
[http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125-1570\\_2468\\_50908\\_50929-182217--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125-1570_2468_50908_50929-182217--,00.html)

Carolyn notes that she used chestnut flour instead of frozen chestnuts, as the hummus recipe calls for. *CGA*

The chestnut growers had great ideas for the newsletter at the recent meeting -- one I heard over and over was a section on "What I *Wouldn't* Do Again." This area would help growers learn from others' mistakes and be a great way to share information among members. It would be anonymous, though, to help solicit entries! If you have a tip of What *Not* To Do, please send it along Michelle Hall, [hallmich@missouri.edu](mailto:hallmich@missouri.edu). We intend for this to become a regular newsletter feature, so participation is needed!

## Chestnuts Downunder: HOLD THE BUS!

The international Chestnuts Downunder Conference, scheduled for Jan. 16-18, 2009, in Wangaratta, Victoria, Australia, has been canceled.

Organizer John Kane shares that the decision was based on indications from the Australian industry that growers would not be attending. Farm fuel costs have nearly doubled in the past six months and fertilizer costs have actually doubled over the past year, Kane said. In addition, the timing clashed with the Australian summer holiday season.

However, Kane is proposing an alternative plan: a workshop on Saturday, Jan. 17, 2009, at their farm, Tweenhills Chestnuts, 89 Pollack Rd., Hoskinstown, New South Wales. It will be a one day workshop (9 a.m. to 5 p.m.) with presentations on pests, diseases, nut rot, drought strategies and industry comparisons, as well as a farm tour. Guest speakers will be Dennis Fulbright, Michigan State University, and Lucas Shuttleworth, PhD candidate, University of Sydney. The registration fee will be around \$AU40, which will include lunch and morning and afternoon teas. An evening BBQ will be organized for those that wish to stay on. (NOTE: As of Oct. 14, 1 Australian Dollar = 0.6979 U.S. Dollars.)

Those interested must RSVP prior to Jan. 6, 2009. Contact details: [TweenhillsChestnuts@westnet.com.au](mailto:TweenhillsChestnuts@westnet.com.au) or +61 02 6238 2280. Alternative contact: [Admin@chestnutsaustralia.com.au](mailto:Admin@chestnutsaustralia.com.au) or +61 03 5751 1466. (Early confirmation would be appreciated.)

The Kanes' farm is about 20 minutes from Queanbeyan and Bungendore, towns where accommodation is available. Limited camping facilities on site. Closest airport is Canberra. *CGA*

### Chestnuts on Air

Check out a cooking with chestnuts demonstration (in anticipation of the Missouri Chestnut Roast) at <http://www.komu.com/>

Click on "Pepper and Friends" in the top bar, then "Cooking" in the menu on the right, and then "Making 'Chestnut Hummus.'"

Featured Chef Eric Cartwright is another demonstration regular at the Missouri event!

## Chestnut Olympics: China Conference (cont. from page 7)

The trip to the chestnut farm was enlightening because it showed a style of chestnut farming that we had heard about but had not seen. First, it was organic culture with organic fertilizers that had us all stepping a little uneasy as we walked down the rows of trees. Second, the trees appeared to be small and young. This was due, they said to the practice of severely pruning the trees each year. All trees were grafted near ground level. We did not see many burs on the trees and we were not sure if this was due to the fact we were there after harvest or if there just wasn't much of a yield. Some trees had many chestnuts on them which made it seem that they had not been harvested yet and there were few if any burs on the ground. Insects were thick including large aphids, but overall, there did not seem to be any major pest problem showing (other than the presence of the aphids). Many of the burs that I saw were small and had three shriveled nuts inside the burs. It appeared as if the nuts were not pollinated, but they shriveled instead of staying flat.

We had a nice trip to the Great Wall in a location where many tourists do not see the wall, therefore it was more rustic and in greater disrepair. The wall was amazing in its height and length. It was at the top of a razor-sharp ridge and went as far as the eye could see in the distance. We saw the Forbidden City and my personal account is that this historic site was better than I expected. It was larger and more complex with a fascinating history that parallels the Western world's Renaissance.

We were all taken back with the announcement that Greg Miller had fallen seriously ill in Ohio and would not be coming to the conference. Our thoughts and prayers were with him and his family and all we could do was hope for the best while we were seemingly isolated in this paradoxical country so far from home. Paradoxical, because with so much money and expertise available to them, they could easily mechanize chestnut processing, but with so many people needing jobs, it is obvious that keeping people employed is important to them. Everyone in the city is walking around with cell phones, yet when we checked into and out of our hotel, they scratched our names off a paper list that sat beside an unused computer on the counter.

China was one of the friendliest countries I have toured. When lost and looking at maps, someone always came up to us to ask us if we needed assistance. The subways are new, clean and modern; so are most of the buses. The

Olympic Park was beautiful as the sun set into an evening sky choked with coal-based soot and smog. It was an interesting time to be in China. Their astronauts had just completed their first spacewalk in Chinese-made pressure suits and had successfully returned to Earth. The successful production of the Olympics and Paralympics had just finished and they were just about ready to celebrate their 59th National Day (equivalent to our Independence Day). The language barrier is difficult at times, but it always seems to work out with a few laughs along the way. At this conference we were always treated special and were surrounded for five days by translators (graduate students in foreign affairs) and volunteers, students who knew some English but not as much as the translators. This team of young people made our stay special and they will be people we won't forget for a long time. CGA



*Top left: Sampling chestnut products at the Lorain factory in Miyun. Top right: View of Miyun from hotel room. Middle right: Sign boards advertising the conference were observed around the town and in the country on the way to the chestnut farm. Above left: Workers on the factory lines at Lorain. Above right: Harvesting chestnuts with bamboo pole.*



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