

Quince: What's old is new again

By GAIL OBERST
For the Capital Press

BUENA VISTA, Ore. — The ancient quince, native to Turkey and Asia Minor, has taken root in Oregon's Willamette Valley.

The hardy, tangy, soft-ball-sized fruit that must be cooked to eat or process has been in the New World since colonial times, but lost favor in recent years, outshined by sweeter and more accessible fruits.

Interest is returning, though.

In the West, as culinary and craft drink markets expand, the interest in quince has grown, prompting growers to respond. Quince has long been grown in sunny Central California, but requires irrigation there, giving temperate Oregon the advantage. The trees have been easy to maintain, requiring a fungicide just once so far in a 10-year span, said Tremaine Arkley, one of a handful of Oregon growers.

Chefs are applauding Oregon-grown fruit for its juiciness and flavor, Arkley said. Craft cider makers and distillers are also looking at the quaint quince to add tart flavors, complexity and persimmon colors to its brews.

Arkley and his wife, Gail, own a small orchard on the silty loam soils along the Willamette River south of Independence. Arkleys' 45 trees have been producing for about six years, but their partner Earl Bruck's 170 trees are older. Bruck, an octogenarian filbert orchardist from Wilsonville, was about to tear out his quince trees before Arkley offered to help him market the rare fruit. Bruck agreed and this year the partners are preparing to expand their orchards by 200 trees.

Their operation is still small. The Arkleys and Bruck last year sold nearly 10 tons of fruit, some of which went

Eat & Grow

Check out the USDA's National Clonal Germplasm Repository in Corvallis, www.ars.usda.gov/Main/docs.htm?docid=11309, to learn more about quince.

For those who want to grow quince, Tremaine and Gail Arkley suggest checking with One Green World, which lists eight varieties on its website, www.onegreenworld.com.

The Arkleys' operation can be reached by calling 503-838-4886. Their website is oregonquinces.com.

to CH Distillery in Chicago. The distillery has turned it into an all-quince eau de vie, a high-alcohol distilled fruit brandy. Stone Barn Brandyworks in Portland has also been making quince liqueur using Oregon fruit. WildCraft Cider Works in Eugene, Half Pint Ciders in Los Angeles and Randall Grahm's Bonny Doon are also using quince in their brews.

The quince "revival" in Oregon and in other parts of the U.S. has prompted the USDA's National Clonal Germplasm Repository in Corvallis to begin gathering quince seeds and plants from all over the world. Edible varieties, *Cydonia oblonga*, from Turkmenistan, Russia, France, Armenia, Georgia, India, Bulgaria, Turkey, Peru, Poland, Portugal and Smyrna are all stored or grown at the repository. The fruit varieties range in characteristics from golden to orange, small to large, warm-weather-loving to cool.

There are also flowering ornamental varieties of quince at the repository, native to Japan or China, but common in Northwestern yards. The website includes a database of characteristics, where they are available, photos of the fruit, flowers and trees and a reading list for those interested in history, commercial production, recipes and gardening.



Gail Oberst/For the Capital Press
Gail and Tremaine Arkley are expanding their quince orchards to meet a growing demand.



Courtesy of David Karp
Pineapple quince grow in a Buena Vista, Ore., orchard.



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