

THE PRUNE, BY ONE OF THE GREAT NURSERYMEN OF THE PACIFIC COAST

The Search for a Prune That Will Run Large and Will Dry Without Shrinking Too Much—Looks Like the Coates Date Prune Is It, Found After 30 Patient Years of Experimenting.

(Upon request, Mr. M. McDonald, of the Oregon Nursery company, Orengo, Oregon, one of the great nurserymen of the Pacific coast, wrote the following article for this number of The Statesman.—Ed.)

Prunes. This is the commercial form applied to the dried product of Prunus domestica, European plum. The one real difference between plums and prunes is in the variety of plums containing a high enough sugar content to dry sweet, and plums very low in sugar—that is below 8 or 10 per cent sugar in the ripe state, and when dried have a peculiar vinegary taste, indicating that a certain amount of ferment has set in during the process of curing.

Dried prunes, like many other forms of healthful foods, have come down to us from Europe. Just how long and at what date prunes were first converted into what we call prunes there does not seem to be any authentic record—suffice to say that for many years they have formed a healthful part of the diet of most European countries and of late years have entered into the American diet in no small way.

High Sugar Content Sought Since the earliest uses of the plums in a dried form the varieties containing the highest percentage of sugar have been sought after because of their more palatable texture when dried and the rather fact that the shrinkage from the ripe to the dried state is always much less in those plums containing a high sugar content than in those low in sugar. For this reason the small Petite De Agen, commonly called French Prune (although its history indicates that it may have originated in Asia), was early sought after. Its sweetness and smoothness of flesh made it the fruit par excellence in the dried prune line, but its tendency to overbear and produce only small fruit has ever been its handicap.

Another plum of the Prunus domestica type that has found much favor is the Fellenberg, or what we commonly call the Italian prune. So far as we are able to discover, this name is purely local on this coast and there is no apparent foundation for applying the name Italian. It may not be generally known that this variety actually reproduces itself from seed. The writer knows of a clump of seedlings in Oregon of the Italian variety, every one of them alike. Since this variety has shown such decided weakness in the constitution of the tree in the standard type that has been propagated in Oregon, we wonder why some of our propagators do not attempt to give us a better



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who just happen so—by guess, and some who are so because of mental effort and good judgment. To the latter class belong the women who choose wisely, and for a reason. You'll find this class using Crescent Baking Powder because it is a scientific product made to stand every kitchen test. And it's economical. Women of the West have proven this by many years' test.

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type than the one we are now growing. The fact that there are four or five times as many sweet prunes grown on the Pacific coast as there are of the tart kinds is ample proof that the prune of the future must contain more sugar than does the Italian variety known to the trade as the Oregon.

Looking for Better Prunes

In order to meet the requirements of the trade for a large sweet prune, we have had Burbank's Sugar prune, the Imperial Epineuse from France, both large but lacking in some degree the necessary requirements for a perfect prune that will not only fill the bill as a grower's tree but produce fruit that will meet all of the requirements of the trade in the dried fruit markets of the world. Many other seedlings have been introduced, but upon final test found wanting.

The New Coates

It was left to Mr. Leonard Coates of California, who had held to one ideal through more than thirty years of experimental work, to find the long sought for large sweet prune. For thirty and more years Mr. Coates held to the principle that it was through selection of improved strains in the French Prune, Petite D'Agén, that this desired improvement in prunes would be found. At last when he found this prune growing as a mutation or sport of the French prune in Santa Clara county, California, one can imagine his disappointment when he discovered that there was no fixed type and that this mutation produced variations running all the way from the ordinary French prune, Petite D'Agén, to the large prune we now call "Coates 1418" or Date prune, weighing 30 to the pound orchard run, and reducing only 50 per cent to the pound in drying.

Long Years of Work

With that patience borne of long experimentation, he at once began the long and tedious process of eliminating these reversions and standardizing one of the largest and best types of this mutation. It was not until Mr. Coates had carried his experimental work through three successive fruiting periods, selecting from the best type for commercial purposes, that he felt justified in offering to the prune world that new variety that is surely destined to revolutionize the prune industry of the Pacific coast. Were it not for the patience and perseverance of Mr. Coates in continuing this experiment through years this great gift of nature's might have been lost to the world in the mass of variations propagated from buds taken promiscuously from the original variation in the French prune. As it is, we have a fixed type of this new fruit marvel, the Date prune, and a ten acre orchard from which to go to each year to draw from a pure strain of buds for propagating purposes.

Three Dollars for One

It has been said that in its two big differentials, low shrinkage in drying and large grades, this prune will from a given number of pounds of ripe fruit make the grower three dollars for every dollar he now makes from the old varieties.

All of the tests this year seem to bear out this claim. A test by Mr. Jones of Myrtle Creek, Oregon, gives 63 per cent of dried prunes running practically 30 to the pound.

Another test by Mr. Best at Look Inglass, Ore., west of Roseburg, gave practically 50 per cent shrinkage, running about 34 prunes to the pound, and still another test by Mr. Brown at Dallas, Oregon, went better than 50 per cent dried fruit making about 36 prunes to the pound.

These tests in the face of the low sugar content generally found in prunes this year seem to bear out all the claims made for this new prune wonder which gives both size of fruit and high sugar content, together with that exquisite date-like flavor that makes it the prune par excellence for all time.

"BUY A BAG OF POTATOES"

The Chamber of Commerce of Nampa, Idaho, has issued an appeal to all potato growing districts of the country to institute a "buy a bag of potatoes" campaign with the end to facilitating the marketing of the large crop of potatoes grown this year in the United States. Idaho, the appeal says, has produced over 20,000 cars of "the finest potatoes ever grown, for which there is no mar-

WET FARMING HAS BIG START

Half Hundred Permits for Irrigation in Valley During Last Quarter

Percy A. Copper, state engineer, during the months of July, August and September issued 192 permits for authority to appropriate water from various streams in Oregon for a variety of purposes.

Hughes Must Continue Giving Water to Alpine

The public service commission yesterday issued an order denying to M. B. Hughes authority to discontinue furnishing water to the residents of Alpine. Hearing on the application was before Commissioner H. H. Corey at Alpine on August 16. The commission finds that the Hughes plant is a public utility and that the number of patrons in the town is sufficient to justify the operation of the plant at the rate of \$2 a month per customer.

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