

What's in Season from the Garden State

Biweekly Highlights from Cooperative Extension, a unit of Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

August 11, 2009

Perfection of the Peach

Years ago, a sign that it was the end of summer was when the local peaches got mealy. By late August, peaches that had been sitting in cold storage for awhile had gone from juicy tang to a tasteless mush. That no longer is the case today, as years of research in peach and nectarine breeding have brought about varieties that have extended the season – both from an earlier start, to a later end. But that's not the only improvement on the peach front – peaches have showed up in different colors, shapes and flavors – a little something for every consumer's palate; and varieties with disease resistance help peach growers get unblemished fruit to the market.

Peaches and New Jersey go back – way back. Flowing from their origins in China along eastern trade routes to Europe, peaches made their way to America in the 1500's and were being grown in New Jersey in the 1600's. New Jersey had one of the first peach breeding programs in the US, beginning in 1907 at the Rutgers NJAES. The tree fruit breeding program continues today under the direction of Dr. Joe Goffreda at the Rutgers Fruit & Ornamental Research & Extension Center in Cream Ridge, NJ. Besides being one of a handful of peach breeding programs left in the US, Rutgers program is of great importance to New Jersey and other eastern peach growers because the varieties developed here, do well here. The same varieties that flourish in California's climate may do poorly in the northeastern climate, and vice versa.

Unfortunately for consumers, peaches and nectarines aren't typically sold by variety name the way apple varieties are sold. So, the only way consumers can differentiate is by looking for white or yellow fleshed varieties or round or flat varieties. What they are not aware of is the white or yellow peaches or nectarines they buy throughout the season are actually a number of different varieties, which ripen at different times, and have different flavor and other characteristics.

For instance, one of the newest varieties entering the market is Desiree™ ('NJ350'), an early season (early July) peach variety developed by Dr. Goffreda. The early season varieties that have been on the market are not as vibrant tasting as the mid and later season varieties, but Desiree™ is the first early season peach with full flavor that rivals the later season peaches. At the other end of the season, Victoria™ ('NJ353'), another new release, extends the season into mid-September.

Breeding a new variety of peach can take about 15 years until it is on the market. It takes 3 years to see the first fruit after the initial genetic cross is made. The trees then are observed for 3 to 4 years for performance and disease resistance, etc. The most promising selections are then clonally propagated and evaluated in trials on commercial farms. It takes a commercial nursery another year to propagate the trees that are released, and then growers cannot harvest fruit until the new trees are 3 years old.

Once the new varieties are ready for release, how do they get to growers? Rutgers has a commercial partnership with Adams County Nurseries in Pennsylvania, which assists in delivering the new technologies to New Jersey and other eastern growers.

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Desiree™, a new early season peach is as full flavored as mid season varieties.



Victoria™ is a new late variety that extends the peach season in September.

New Jersey Department of
Agriculture's Jersey Fresh &
Seafood Availability Report



Arugula
Baby Arugula
Basil
Beets
Blueberries
Cabbage
Cilantro
Collards
Cucumbers
Dandelions
Dill
Eggplant
Kale
Leeks
Mint
Nectarines
Parsley
Peaches
Peppers
Squash
Sweet Corn
Swiss Chard
Tomatoes
Turnips
White Potatoes

Bunker (Menhaden)
Fluke
Mahi-Mahi
Sea Scallops (Day Boat)
Swordfish
Tilefish
**Farm Raised
Hard Clams &
Oysters**
Littlenecks/Middlenecks
Cherrystones,
Chowders, Top-necks
Cape May Salt
Oysters
Delaware Bay
Oysters

Peach (and Tomato) Tastings

Not convinced there is much difference in flavors of peach? Or, maybe you're a foodie or wine connoisseur just itching to compare flavors. Then head on over to Rutgers tomato and peach tasting events! Besides the numerous varieties of tomatoes for the tasting, there will be peaches from Rutgers research farms on hand for tasting, some of which are varieties developed right here at Rutgers NJAES. The **Tomato and Peach Tasting** will take place on August 18th at Rutgers Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Bridgeton (Cumberland County) and the **Great Tomato Tasting** will take place at Rutgers Snyder Farm in Pittstown (Hunterdon County) on August 26th: <http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu/2009TomatoTastings.htm>

Peach Party!

Celebrating August as "Jersey Fresh Peach Month" this year is a month-long series of "Peach Party" special events and promotions, at 13 farmers markets, 26 restaurants and supermarkets throughout the state. Participating farmers markets and restaurants have created their own special events, utilizing local talent and locally grown peaches. http://www.jerseypeaches.com/events_nj_peach_promotion_council.html

Peach Q & A – What to do about drippy peach mess?

Dear njfarmfresh: I love to have Jersey Fresh peaches on hand as a quick and healthy snack for the kids in summer. But they are so juicy it ends up being a mess! What can I do? *Signed - Mom with a mop*

Dear MWAM: The best way to remedy this situation most summers is to send the kids outside to eat Jersey Fresh peaches. This way they can be hosed down, or they can take a dip in the pool or ocean for a quick clean up. Since this summer has been cooler, your next best option is to slice those peaches up in a bowl and serve with a fork. Or, get fancy and slice peaches and blueberries over yogurt, sprinkle with granola or wheat germ – this also makes a good dessert.

Caring for Peaches at Home – Getting it Right (Ripe)

The Jersey Fresh peaches you buy at the farm market or supermarket are usually already tree-ripe and ready for eating when you get them home. Jerry Frecon, Rutgers NJAES agricultural agent specializing in tree fruit, recommends leaving peaches at room temperature for a few days so they will continue to soften. Then transfer them to the produce drawer in the fridge where they can last awhile.



Peaches – Not Just for Dessert

When faced with a basket of Jersey Fresh peaches, most of us have no shortage of ideas of what to do with those peaches – visions of cobblers, pies and tarts dance in our heads. New Jersey chefs love Jersey Fresh peaches too and they are cooking up some incredible recipes – but not just desserts! Peach chicken piccata, peach salsa, and shrimp and peach salad are just some of the recipes appearing on New Jersey menus this summer. Find peach recipes from New Jersey's top chefs on New Jersey Peach Promotion Council's website: http://www.jerseypeaches.com/recipes_nj_peach_promotion_council.asp?Page_ID=1114.

Where to find Jersey Fresh? Ask for it where you shop or dine or go to: <http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov>

To receive these reports by e-mail: njfarmfresh@njaes.rutgers.edu

Web: <http://www.njfarmfresh.rutgers.edu>

For your county Rutgers Cooperative Extension office go to:

<http://www.njaes.rutgers.edu/county>