

MARKETING

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Rivers Bros. Co., Los Angeles, Wholesale Fruit and Produce Dealers

In a few words am going to tell you what I know about marketing this delicious fruit.

We have been in the fruit business in this city for the last twenty years, and first handled the avocados sixteen years ago, getting them from Honolulu, or Haiti, through San Francisco, and at that time we never expected this fruit to be grown in Southern California. Three or four dozen in those days would have overstocked this city; some of the exclusive clubs and cafes were about the only ones that used them.

About twelve years ago we used to receive them from porters running on the dining cars out of Mexico, who used to buy them from the natives there very cheap. These were sold by the natives in baskets of different patterns, which were highly prized and much sought after.

This fruit at that time sold at from six to seven dollars a dozen. The trade has steadily increased since then, and at no time have we been overstocked on fancy fruit that was in good shipping condition.

Three years ago there was a man by the name of G. Fuentes, living at Atlixco, Mexico, who shipped us a basket of the finest fruit we ever handled, being the large black alligator skin and hardshell variety.

These were packed in excelsior in a basket that held about fifty pears, with nothing but a cloth cover to protect them, and they carried pretty well. We immediately wrote him to ship us all he could get. He began by shipping about two baskets a week, and we wired him again to ship more, and the next week it seemed like every train out of Mexico had some ten to twenty-five baskets of fruit for us. We were paying out about \$100 a day express charges, and before we could stop them had about five or six hundred dozen on hand. We thought we were stuck for fair, as we could not get rid of that many in California.

I got out Bradstreet's and spent about twenty-five or thirty dollars in telegrams to all the large produce houses in the East, and got orders out of Boston, Philadelphia, New York, Chicago and other large cities, following up with repeat orders, and we cleaned up this fruit at a good profit. Fortunately this fruit came onto the market in the holiday season, along about Christmas time. This fruit brought \$6 a dozen wholesale. This stands to show that there was a good market in this country, among certain cities, three years ago, and the trade has steadily increased since that time.

I will say here that a man from Lower California shipped us by boat 274 boxes of the large green variety fruit. This fruit was not packed at all and came in the worst possible

shape imaginable. Every pear was bruised and lots of them mashed, and we had a hard time getting freight out of them. We sold the seeds at from five to eight cents apiece, and the man who shipped them probably thought we robbed him, as we never heard from him again after making returns for them.

It seems to me there ought to be some way to classify this fruit without having so many different names, as it is going to conflict a good deal in filling orders and quoting them out on price sheets. We have orders coming to us from Arizona every week, and it will only be a matter of a couple of years when this fruit gets down to a reasonable price, that there will certainly be a big demand for it.

Last winter we handled a good many of Mr. Walker's fruit from Hollywood, getting as high as \$12 per dozen for them. We received some fruit from Florida the other day, packed in, a box with partitions in it of cardboard, the same as egg cases, with excelsior in the bottom of the box. This fruit weighed on an average of from one to one and a half pounds and seemed to carry very well that distance. A handsome package made out of a basket that would hold about a dozen fruit, and not too expensive, in my estimation would make a fine package to ship.

Again, preparing this fruit to be served is another thing that ought to be well advertised. It was my pleasure the other day to take a merchant from Silver City, and a customer of ours, up to one of our prominent clubs for lunch. As he had never had any avocado salad, I asked to have a couple of orders brought in. He said he had heard a good deal about them, but had never tasted any, and after tasting it said he didn't see how anybody could possibly like them.

I asked the waiter to bring me the makings of a dressing prepared in this manner: Taking a common tumbler and putting about one-fifth full of olive oil, one-sixteenth of an inch of vinegar on top of this, a large teaspoon of Worcester sauce, plenty of salt and a good sprinkling of paprika, I took half of a good-sized pear and poured this in on it, permeating it and mashing it up with a fork. He tasted this, and said it was the finest thing he ever tasted in the way of a salad.

The fruit is often condemned without a fair trial as to its merits. It certainly contains all of the parts to make it one of the best fruits produced, and when it gets down to a reasonable price I have no doubt there will be a big demand for it, and I look for it to be one of the coming industries of Southern California.

Questioned, Mr. Rivers indicated that \$2.50 to \$3.00 per dozen was a fair price for choice fruit; that higher prices were difficult to obtain.