

WHY ARE THE GUATEMALAN AVOCADOS BEST?

E. E. KNIGHT,

YORBA LINDA, CALIFORNIA

Mr. President, Members of the Avocado Association, Ladies and Gentlemen:

When the Program Committee requested me to say a few words to you and gave me as my subject, "Why are the Guatemalan Avocados Best?" I thought, what is the use? I have been answering that question for the last four years, but sometimes it is necessary to repeat a truth many times to have it fully accepted.

I have lived in California a little over four years and during that time I have seen you start from seedling avocado trees, come down through Ganter, Harmon, Val-de-Flor, and up to your list of eight. List of eight, how much better that is than a list of one hundred and fifty-eight. That step was the first big advance towards the betterment of the avocado industry in this state. This association owes a debt to Prof. L. B. Scott for the help he gave us at that time.

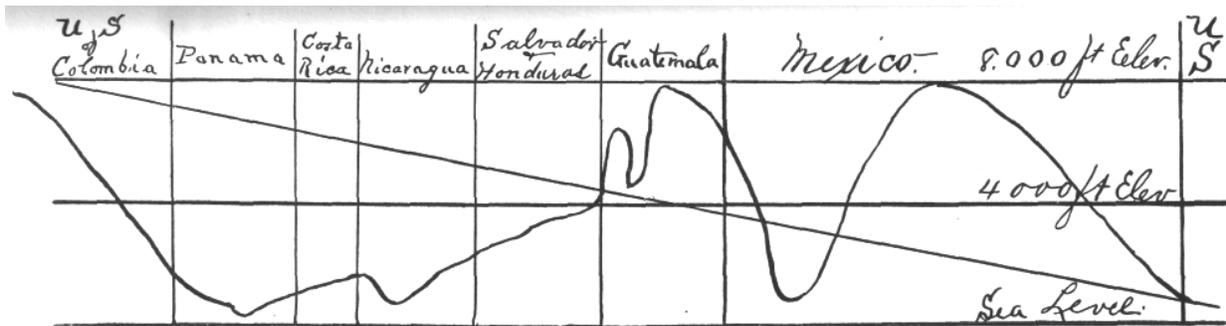
To many that list of eight may seem to be near the final solution of the question of varieties but it is not. It is only the first step, and one that was delayed longer than it should have been. I am satisfied that there is not a single variety in that list that will be propagated commercially, ten years from today. We shall have better ones before then. As time goes on we shall have gained in knowledge. The question of varieties is too important to be settled by the self interest of one or one dozen men. We must produce the best if we are going to make a success of the avocado.

In July, 1914, I landed in San Francisco with the first genuine Guatemala Avocado varieties ever imported into this state. These varieties came from the highlands of Guatemala where many of the finest avocados in the world are found. Two years ago this association through the help of Dr H J. Webber, succeeded in having the United States Department of Agriculture send Mr. Wilson Popenoe, one of its best explorers, to the Republic of Guatemala to have him report on the avocados found there. After sixteen months of explorations, Mr. Popenoe has made his report, which will be found in the proceedings of this association for 1917. Mr. Popenoe's report bears out all the claims that have been made as to the wonderful avocados found in Guatemala. Not one fault is found with the best of the Guatemalan avocados in any part of this article. In summing up the best Guatemalans as compared with the best found in the United States, he says: "The flesh is of a deeper yellow color, smoother, more buttery texture, and richer flavor than in any varieties yet known in the United States." (Page 117 Cal. Avocado Report for 1917.)

This report of Mr. Wilson Popenoe's will have more influence on avocado varieties in California than any writing to date. In his statements he is frank and conclusive. His explorations were extensive and thorough. He does not mention the excellent shipping

qualities of the genuine Guatemalan avocado. The ability of these varieties to stand up under the severe handling is not due as much to the thick skin as to the peculiar construction of the skin which is of a woody nature. Any avocado, whether thick or thin skinned, will ship well for a week or ten days from the date of picking. That is all that is required today, but within a few years, more or less fruit will have to be placed in cold storage to hold it. When the cold storage fruit comes out for re-shipment, then the genuine Guatemala can be handled with much less loss.

The best varieties of avocados are always found at high altitudes. Each isolated highland seems to produce a class of avocados different from all the others.



Free hand drawing giving approximately the elevation of tablelands from the Rio Grande to the Equator.

Americans as a rule, know little about the countries south of the Rio Grande.

You will note two distinct table lands that run from 4000 to 8000 feet in elevation. The diagonal line is supposed to represent more or less the same climatic conditions throughout its entire length. No superior avocados are found south of Guatemala until Colombia is reached. This sketch shows why. The fame of the avocados grown in Guatemala has for years been proverbial, still no genuine Guatemalan varieties were found in the United States, until within the last four years. Soon I hope we shall have many more varieties from Guatemala to make our selection from, as Mr. Popenoe has successfully introduced twenty-three varieties of the best found there.

The United States Department of Agriculture is the highest authority we have when it comes to introducing new varieties.

It has no axe to grind. It neither buys or sells. It is always cautious about making endorsements, but when it does endorse, you may be satisfied it is sure of its grounds.

Why are the Guatemalan avocados best? Here is your answer: "The flesh is of a deeper yellow color, smoother, more buttery texture, and richer flavor than any varieties yet known in the United States."