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NAMES OF GUATEMALAN AVOCADOS

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Many of the avocados introduced from Guatemala in 1916-17 have come into, bearing in California and Florida. Several of the varieties are already in the trade, and are being planted commercially.

The office of Foreign Seed and Plant Introduction has received numerous inquiries concerning the meaning of the names given to these varieties. In U. S. Department of Agriculture Bulletin No. 743, "The Avocado in Guatemala", the statement was made: "In order to distinguish these avocados from varieties originated in the United States, names taken from one of the Maya dialects have been given them. Inasmuch as they come from the Maya territory, this may not be inappropriate."

The Maya race occupied Guatemala and Yucatan in prehistoric times, and there developed the most remarkable indigenous civilization of the western hemisphere. The Mayas particularly excelled in architecture and art, and they were the only race in the new world to develop a written language. Of their numerous deities, Itzamna, the creator of mankind, was held to be the chief, and Yum Kaax, the Maize God, who is portrayed as having for his headdress a sprouting ear of corn surrounded by leaves, symbolic of growth, may well be called the god of agriculture."

From the ancient Maya stock have sprung the twenty or more tribes which today occupy Guatemala. They are agricultural peoples, intelligent and industrious. The avocado is one of their favorite foods, and is called, in various dialects, oh, okh, un, on, and so forth.

In selecting the names for the varieties introduced into the United States from Guatemala, an effort was made to choose words which would not be unreasonably difficult to pronunciation, and which would, in as many cases as possible, have appropriate meanings. Several were named for Maya deities; one for an Indian who assisted in the work of introducing them; and in half a dozen instances, appropriate names were chosen from the Kekchi dialect of the Alta Vera Paz, an important avocado-growing regions of northern Guatemala. Below is the list, with a word of explanation concerning the derivation of each name:

ITZAMNA (No. 2), S. P. I. No. 55736. Named for the chief diety of the Maya Pantheon. Itzamna was considered the father of all other gods, and the creator of mankind. He was the founder of the Maya civilization, the inventor of writing and books, and the great healer.

LAMAT (No. 3), S. P. I. No. 43476. This name is that of one of the twenty days of the Maya calendar. The hieroglyph which represents it shows, presumably, the setting sun. It is also connected with the planet Venus in some way.

KANOLA (No. 6), S. P. I. No. 43560. This word is used in the Kekchi language of northern Guatemala to mean "sweetheart." It may not be of Maya origin.

ISHKAL (No. 7), S. P. I. No. 43602. Kekchi word, meaning "little girl". The avocado was so named because it was obtained through the aid of an Indian girl; it might be termed "the little girl's avocado."

COBAN (No. 8), S. P. I. No. 43932. Named for the town of Coban, capital of the department of Alta Vera Paz in northern Guatemala, where the parent tree is growing. Coban is one of the most important Indian towns of Guatemala.

KASHLAN (No. 10), S. P. I. No. 43934. A Kekchi word meaning "foreign." The parent tree stood in the yard of one Diego Muus, an Indian of San Cristobal Verapaz. It was selected for propagation, and several visits were made to secure budwood. Because of this fact, the Muus family termed the tree the *kashlan oh* or "foreigner's avocado," and the name was adopted for the variety when it was introduced into the United States.

CHISOY (No. 11), S. P. I. No. 43935- The river Chisoy, an affluent of the great Usumacinta, flows close by the town of San Cristobal Verapaz, where this variety was secured.

PANKAY (No. 12), S. P. I. No. 44785- A coined word, from the locative prefix *pan* and the kekchi word *keh* or *kay*, meaning "cold."—"literally "place where it is cold." The name was applied to this variety because it came from an extremely cold region, that of Totonicapan, elevation 8,500 ft.

NABAL (No. 15), S. P. I. No. 44439. A Kekchi word (the dialect spoken in the Alta Vera Paz region) meaning "plenty, abundance." The variety was so named because the parent tree produced unusually large crops.

NIMLIOH (No. 17), S. P. I. No. 44440. A Kekchi phrase, meaning "large avocado." This variety is one of the largest secured in Guatemala.

PANCHOY (No. 18), S. P. I. No. 44625. A phrase from the Cakchikel dialect (spoken in the vicinity of Antigua), meaning "place where there is a lake." It is the name of the valley in which Antigua lies, and where the parent tree of the variety was found.

TUMIN (No. 20), S. P. I. No. 44627. A Kekchi word, meaning "money". The variety was so named because it appeared to be a particularly valuable one.

HUNAPUH (No. 19), S. P. I. No. 44628. One of the twenty Maya day names. In the Kiche dialect it means "the one Lord of Power."

BENIK (No. 21), S. P. I. No. 44626. One of the glyph signs from the Maya inscription. It is taken by Brinton, the well-known archaeologist, to mean "strength and deific power."

KEKCHI (No. 22), S. P. I. No. 44679. Name of one of the principal . Maya tribes of the highlands of Guatemala. The variety was obtained in the territory occupied by this tribe.

MAYAPAN (No. 23), S. P. I. No. 44680. This was the name of an important Maya City. It means "place where there are Mayas."

KAYAB (No. 25), S. P. I. No. 44681. A Maya word, meaning "tortoise." It was the name

given to one of the nineteen months in the Maya calendar.

MANIK (No. 26), S. P. I. No. 45560. One of the twenty Maya day names. The hieroglyphs which represents it shows a hand in the act of grasping.

CABNAL (No. 27), S. P. I. No. 44782. Named for Jose Cabnal, a Kekchi Indian of Coban, who assisted in the work of securing these varieties in Guatemala.

CANTEL (No. 28), S. P. I. No. 44783. Named for the Finca Candelaria, a coffee plantation in Antigua where the parent tree was growing. "Cantel" is a corruption of this Spanish name, used by the Kekchi Indians of the Alta Vera Paz.

TERTOHO (No. 30), S. P. I. No. 44856. A Kekchi word, meaning "expensive" or "costly." The variety was so named because its fruit sold in the market at a much higher price than that of any other grown in the same region. It is one of the largest fruited of the Guatemalan avocados.

NIMAH (No. 31), S. P. I. No. 45078. A somewhat corrupted form of the Kekchi phrase *nim-li-ha*, meaning "large stream." The variety was so named because the parent tree stood close to the edge of a stream at Mazatenango.

AKBAL (No. 32), S. P. I. No. 45505. One of the twenty Maya day signs, meaning "night" or darkness."

KAGUAH (No. 33), S. P. I. No. 45561. A word used by the Kekchi Indians, meaning "chief" or "master."

ISHIM (No. 34), S. P. I. No. 45562. This word means "corn" (Zeamays) in most of the Maya dialects. We have thought it appropriate to use it as a varietal name for one of the Guatemalan avocados, because the Guatemalan Indians consider this fruit as useful and valuable as corn, their great staple food crop.

KANAN (No. 35), S. P. I. No. 45563. A Maya word, meaning "yellow when ripe." The flesh of this variety is of a rich yellow color."

CHABIL (No. 36), S. P. I. No. 45564. A Kekchi word, meaning "pretty" or "beautiful." The fruit, though small, is unusually attractive in appearance.