

First Hawaiian Avocado Shipment

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The first commercial shipment of avocados to arrive on the mainland from Hawaii, consisting of 113 flats, reached San Francisco on December 15, 1938 and went on sale Saturday, December 17. These were grown and shipped by Alvin Haley of the Hawaiian Avocado Co. to G. R. Earth & Co. and were sold by L. J. Hopkins Co. to retailers.

The shipment consisted of a seedling Guatemalan type, with green colored, shell skin and yellow fleshed. It looked much like a cross between a Nataal and a Mayapan, as known in California. The fruit ranged from one to one and a half pounds in weight running 10 to 13 to the flat. Freight from Hawaii was 35.4c per flat.

Hawaiian fruit may now pass the federal quarantine here provided it has undergone either heat or cold treatment under official supervision before leaving Hawaii. The heat treatment requires internal fruit temperature to be held up to 110°F for 8 hours. The first experimental shipment of fresh papayas was sent from Hawaii to Los Angeles and San Francisco this month. That fruit stood up better under the heat than under the cold. But the avocados stood the cold treatment better. This requires 15 days at a temperature of 35°F. or lower. Government entomologists are satisfied that either method kills the fruit fly in all of its stages of development.

The avocados showed the effect of their cold storage treatment. The skins were turned quite black. The flesh had become partly discolored and showed poor consistency with a flat taste. The consensus of opinion of prospective buyers who examined the fruit was that it gave the immediate impression of having insufficient oil content.

When these Hawaiian avocados were put out on the floor of the wholesale produce house they were priced at \$1.50 per flat. The retail store buyers showed curiosity but stuck to the standardized, well known, California-grown Fuerte variety of the Mexican type. These were plentiful in the market, ranging 20 to 30 fruits to the flat, selling for \$1.00, \$1.15 per flat with a few at \$1.25. These are comparatively low Fuerte prices because of plentiful seasonal supplies just now. San Francisco buyers had heard widely of this first Hawaiian shipment and came to inspect before buying that day. The price was finally lowered to 60c a flat and 51 flats remained for sale after business on the following Monday. Up to that time the average sales price per flat was \$1.00. They were given every possible sales push and market-wide publicity.

Beside the unattractive looks of this fruit (which was commonly supposed among the prospective buyers to be due to such long cold treatment) such large sizes during the winter season hurt sales. Housewife consumers have become too strongly educated to the Fuerte sizes.

The conclusion reached by the San Francisco produce trade was that such shipments

will not be profitable until such time as the processing can be improved to permit perfect interior appearance of the fruit, with high oil content and consequent flavor. There was not the slightest evidence among the trade of any feeling of discrimination because this fruit came from Hawaii instead of California.

California avocado growers need not be momentarily concerned over new competition from Hawaii even if these first shipments are a success. There are only about 400 acres of commercial plantings there so far, mostly controlled by this same Hawaiian Avocado Co.

A break-down of the continental United States avocado production as shown by 1937 tonnage produced showed 2,100 tons (28%) in Florida. The balance, in California, showed 2393 tons (32%) produced in San Diego county; 1782 tons (23%) in Los Angeles county; 1004 tons (13%) in Orange county, and 4 per cent or 306 tons in other California counties.