

The Kidnapping of "Aristocrats"

Although the avocado proudly acknowledges the allegation that it is the Aristocrat of Salad Fruits, the demand for it is by no means confined to aristocrats. Lots of people like avocados.

As it hangs on the trees the fruit, dark green in color, beautiful in configuration, is something to tempt the epicure. Ordinarily persons who delight in this fine food secure it from their food store. The fruit is also tempting to others who, because of high early season prices, think it worth the risk to sell fruit not their own. There are others also who are not content to allow the fruit to develop its rich goodness and greedily rush it to market before it has reached the minimum maturity requirements.

With a rapid increase in tonnage expected as recent plantings come into bearing it will be necessary to greatly expand the market for avocados. Unlike some fruits the avocado does not always make a life long friend at the first meeting. But when properly introduced and the acquaintance properly fostered and nurtured, the avocado soon acquires an enthusiastic circle of fast friends who are happy to keep the friendship alive. If the first meeting is with callow, vapid specimens the formation of a beautiful friendship may never be brought about.

Knowing the special considerations necessary to gain the desired market acceptance of avocados, members of the industry have promoted and secured enactment of certain quality standards. They have also demanded vigorous prosecution of those caught stealing avocados, primarily because of the losses due to theft but also because they did not want this fruit, often below standard, on the market. As a result it has become very unhealthy to steal avocados, or to place below-standard fruit on the market. Two incidents have occurred lately illustrating the fact that it is not wise to get caught.

One, Charles Gale, of La Habra Heights was given a six months sentence for stealing fruit. He will be required to serve out half of the sentence, and was placed on probation for two years. Los Angeles county patrol officers nabbed the man after residents had turned in the number of a car seen beside an avocado orchard.

A fine of \$200 was levied in the San Diego courts against Prevost Bros., who also lost about 80 boxes of fruit through condemnation for failure to meet the state standardization law requirements. The San Diego County Agricultural Commissioner's office and the State Division of Market Enforcement presented the case for the state.

As the new crop comes to market there is a sudden increase in thefts and violations of quality standards. Many persons have been cited and convicted. Some fruit shippers think that it is to their advantage to rush immature fruit to market and take the chance of paying an occasional fine.

The organized growers and market enforcement officials are out to convince the recalcitrants that it is healthier to play, according to the rules.

—D. M. Rutherford. (Pacific Rural Press)