

THE FOOD JOURNAL

Dedicated to pursuing food history and supporting culinary collections at the Los Angeles Public Library



Charles Perry
CHSC President

Cooking With Pills

You run into quaint words in old cookbooks, such as “pill,” the 17th-century spelling of “peel.” Actually, a citrus peel is kind of like a pill – good stuff, but proverbially hard to swallow because the outer skin with its delightful aromatic oils is attached to that bitter white pith. For centuries, cooks struggled to harvest zest with as little pith as possible until fine graters recently made the job quite easy.

Strangely, medieval Arab cookbooks always warned that you must at all costs keep the peel flavor out of citrus juice, sometimes even recommending that the person who peels a lemon or orange not be the one to squeeze it. That would be a *terrible* idea with orange juice. We always leave the peel on when we squeeze an orange, so some oil sprays into the juice. Without it, orange juice has only a generic fruit flavor; you wouldn't be able pick it out in a lineup.

So the peel is crucial if you want the citrus flavor. Still, it was counterintuitive for the English to decide to make bitter orange “pill” (the bitterest kind, from the sour or Seville orange, which is more aromatic than the peel of the sweet orange) the star of orange marmalade.

A lot of people are aware that marmalade was originally made from quince (in Portuguese, *marmelo*), that highly aromatic fruit most Americans don't bother with because it needs

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Nancy Zaslavsky
CHSC Vice President,
Programs

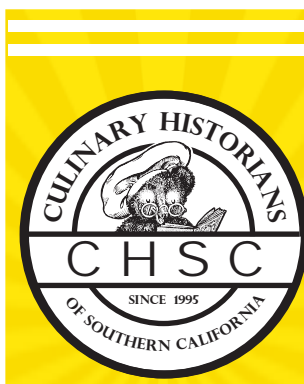
Program Notes

It's been a wild Covid ride since we started Zooming programs back in September 2020 when dear Anne Willan was our good-natured guinea pig experiment. It was pure will and luck Anne's and October's Marc Meltonville's programs were Zoomed from England with no major glitches. Since then, Richard Foss has proved to be our virtual star as he continues to sweat through monthly programs each with myriad technical issues, including the multi-tasking role of Q&A helmsman at program's end. Thank you, Richard.

2021 was the first year in our 25 year history CHSC didn't take a summer holiday but continued videoconferencing programs straight through July and August to help diehards avoid months of depression in a culinary history desert—we hope everyone pulled through safe and sound! The second half of the year began with August's Eric C. Rath, “Sushi Before Sushi, Umami Before Umami: The Hidden (Fermented) History of Japanese Food.” September brought Barbara Haber, again Zooming into our homes with “Community Cookbooks: Overlooked Gems on Library Shelves.” Pamela Cooley spoke on “Searching for Amelia: My Quest for the Author of the First American Cookbook” in October. Robert Wemischner talked in November about “Baking 101: My Roundabout Route to a Career” and the year topped off with December's Genevieve Bardwell, “The Appalachian Tradition and Culture of Salt Rising Bread.” This is a great line-up, right? If you missed any of these outstanding virtual programs please visit chsocal.org and click on Events and then click Past Events.

January is when CHSC dues are due. Please renew right away so you'll be in the highly coveted, star-studded March 2022 members directory. Please consider generously joining at a Patron, Benefactor, or Angel level.

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Upcoming Virtual Programs via Zoom Videoconferencing:

February 12, 2022
Kevin Kosar
“Moonshine: The Eternal Spirit”

March 12, 2022
Mark Johnson
“The Bacon Paradox: Danger and Desire in the Twentieth Century”

April 2022
Alex Peña
“Lenten Capirotata Bread Pudding”

May 14, 2022
Laura Shapiro
“What She Ate and Why I Wrote About It: Women, Food, and Biography”

June 11, 2022
Darra Goldstein
“The Kingdom of Rye: Russian Food and National Identity”



Outdoor space at
The Rose Venice

The Californication of America's Restaurants

“Restaurateurs have successfully channeled California ideals into unique, thoughtful restaurants in and out of the state, but it requires serious effort not to fall back on stereotypes. Over the last few years, California, and not just LA, has begun to set the national culinary tone.” Read more here:

<https://www.eater.com/2019/8/15/20791929/restaurant-design-california-inspired-dining-rooms-los-angeles-aesthetic>

Found in the Stacks: Chef Wyman (1927)

by Tiffney Sanford

Trusted Southern California culinary arts experts of the 1930s and 40s, such as the pseudonymous Marian Manners of the *Los Angeles Times* and Prudence Penny of the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, owed a debt of thanks to Chef A.L. Wyman for locally demonstrating and popularizing the economical preparation of food in the home. While the household tips and recipes of Marian Manners and Prudence Penny are still referenced today, Chef Wyman remains largely forgotten.

Born in Sacramento in 1875, Arthur Leslie Wyman represented Globe Grain and Milling Company (known for Globe A-1 flour) and Southern California Edison in cooking demonstrations across Southern California



beginning in the 1910s. The press touted him as “a culinary artist of international fame,” possessing a Master of Culinary Arts degree plus experience at large bake shops and hotel kitchens around the world including the Waldorf Astoria (New York), Rector's (New York and Chicago), Alexander Young Hotel (Honolulu) and Shephard's (Cairo).

During World War I, in addition to teaching housewives how to use their new electric stoves, Chef Wyman lectured on “war economy cooking” and food conservation. This included tips on cooking with food scraps; canning fruits and vegetables; finding substitutes for wheat, flour and butter; conserving sugar; and introducing meatless dishes (using walnuts, beans or peas as meat substitutes) to your family. Interested in how to bake “war bread” by combining potatoes with barley or oats? Chef Wyman, along with his wife and cooking assistant Mabelle, taught you how.

Beginning in 1922, Chef Wyman parlayed his fame into a weekly column in the *Los Angeles Times* titled “Practical Recipes: Helps [sic] for Epicures and All Who Appreciate Good Cooking.” Readers were invited to submit questions and recipe requests to Chef Wyman's Glendale test kitchen that

he would answer in the column. Requests poured in from residents and tourists alike and the column featured 12-16 recipes each week. In addition to requests for specific recipes, Chef Wyman tackled topics such as growing and drying your own herbs, cooking with locally caught fish, and making jelly and preserves with locally available fruit (one example used the fruit of the Spanish Bayonet). His recipes, written out as an instructional paragraph, proved popular and readers often asked where they could buy his cookbook. After explaining he did not have a cookbook to sell, he urged readers to cut his recipes out of the newspapers and file them away.



Sadly, Chef Wyman passed away in October 1926. His wife Mabelle took over duties on the Practical Recipes column in the *Times* and finally published a cookbook of the late chef's recipes. The cookbook features recipes using California fruits and vegetables, including dishes he created and named after the towns of his readers—Sunland Salad, Eggs Riverside, Eggs Shirred Willowbrook, Hollywood Salmon, Pomona Salad, Gardena Sandwich and Los Angeles parfait. Check it out for yourself. *Chef Wyman's Daily Health Menus* (1927) is available at the Los Angeles Public Library.

Curious about the history of culinary coverage in the *Los Angeles Times*? The library has past Culinary Historian of Southern California lectures available to borrow on CD, including “Food and the Times: A Century of California Cuisine as Recorded by the *Los Angeles Times*” and “The L.A. Times Food Section Gals.”



Tiffney Sanford joined the Culinary Historians in 2007 and enjoys browsing the large culinary collection at Central Library. She maintains (to varying degrees of regularity) the blogs Hollywood Gastronomical Haunts and Los Angeles Library Tour, and contributes to the Los Angeles Public Library blog.

The California Bear-Chef first appeared in the *Pan-Pacific Cook Book*, 1915.

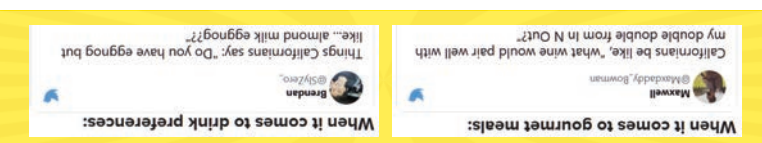


After drinking so much California wine, I need a Napa

630 West Fifth Street
Los Angeles, CA 90071-2002
Address Correction Requested



The Culinary Historians of Southern California



Was Hangtown Fry the first example of California cuisine?

Like many other events that occurred during the early days of California, there are different stories relating to the origin of Hangtown Fry, the now world famous dish that originated in Placerville, CA. Among them have been tales of "last meals" before hanging and one of a mistake made by a tired miner trying to cook dinner in the dark. However, here's the version most widely accepted and credited:

In 1849, just a short time after Old Dry Diggins had been renamed "Hangtown" in honor of the recent hanging of three desperadoes from the large oak tree on Main Street, a prospector rushed into the saloon of the El Dorado Hotel announcing that he had "struck it rich." Untying the leather poke from his belt, he tossed it on the bar, spilling its shiny contents of gold dust and nuggets. Turning to the bartender he loudly demanded, "I want you to cook me up the finest and most expensive meal in the house. I'm a rich man and I'm going to celebrate my good luck."



Hailey Branson-Potts/LA Times

The cook stopped what he was doing and came out of the kitchen. Looking the prospector in the eye he said, "The most expensive things on the menu are eggs, bacon and oysters. The eggs have to be carefully packed to travel the rough road from over the coast; the bacon comes by ship round the horn from back east; and the fresh oysters we have to bring up each day on ice from the cold waters of San Francisco Bay. Take your choice. I can cook you anything you want, but it will cost you more than just a pinch of that gold dust you have there."

"Scramble me up a whole mess of eggs and oysters, throw in some bacon and serve 'em up," said the prospector. "I'm starving. I've lived on nothing more than canned beans since I got to California, and at last I can afford a real meal." Out of that prospector's wish, and with a little artistry from the long forgotten cook, the original Hangtown Fry was created.

Until the 1970s it was served at many local restaurants in Placerville and remained the same basic dish that was born in the Gold Rush. Though some folks today call it "disgusting," it has appeared on hundreds of menus along the Pacific Coast from Southern California to Canada. It was also listed on the menu of the exclusive membership-only Breakfast Club at Club 21 in New York City and, for a while, was featured on the first-class menu of at least one major American airline.

No dish epitomizes California and its Gold Rush more than Hangtown Fry. Like the miners who worked the river banks and hillsides, and the population that followed, it's a unique blend of many things, both those produced locally and those that have arrived from elsewhere.

Sources: <https://www.cityofplacerville.org/history-of-the-hangtown-fry-and-recipes>
<https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-in-hangtown-fry-placerville-20180220-story.html>

A Letter from the Editor

Oranges, loquats, apricots...You'd never know it from the contents of this issue, but California does grow fruits of other colors!

About this orange-colored fruit, though: I found out that the Blenheim Apricot has disappeared from CA orchards. Best known for its rose-hued color, honeysuckle aroma, and complex flavor that balances sweetness and acidity, these apricots were grown in Europe 200 years ago and thrived in Blenheim Palace where Winston Churchill was born. Arriving in CA in the 1880s, they became popular during WWI when imported dried fruit wasn't available. The largest farms were in Sacramento and Santa Clara valleys.

Yet its harvest season is short, it's susceptible to disease, sunburn, and can be too delicate to ship long distances. Plus increased urban growth and cheaper imported fruit forced growers to replace them with hardier, larger yielding crops. Here's the good news: a few commercial farms say they'll keep Blenheims from becoming extinct in CA. If you'd like to purchase some, here are a few sources:

B & R Farms: www.brffarms.com
Dwellely Farms: www.dwellelyfarms.com
K & J Orchards: www.kjorchards.com
Apricot King (dried fruit): www.apricotking.com
See Canyon Farm: www.seecanyonfruitranch.com



And now for some navel-gazing:



1. California is the top grower of navel oranges in the country.
2. Navel oranges get their name because one end looks like a navel or belly button.

3. The hard, lumpy section at the end is really a second young orange growing inside the orange's skin.



6. California's first navel orange tree was planted in 1873 by Eliza Tibbets in Riverside and it's still producing fruit today.

7. Navel oranges ripen from fall to winter and can keep on the tree for many months.

4. Navel oranges don't have seeds, so you can't grow one from a seed. The only way to grow a new navel orange tree is to graft it: cutting a blossoming bud from a navel orange tree and joining it with another citrus tree's trunk.

5. All navel orange trees are clones of each other from a single tree in Brazil.

Source: *Oranges: a Taste of California Sunshine*, Center for Ecoliteracy, www.ecoliteracy.org

The Culinary Historians of Southern California www.chsocal.org



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In Memoriam:

In honor of Board Member Don Corbett, who passed away in December 2021.

1. The French Dip Sandwich



Credit: Philippe The Original/Facebook

Despite what old man Cole's will tell you, the French dip sandwich was created in 1918 at Philippe's just on the edge of Chinatown. Philippe's had been around since 1908 but even 10 years in, mistakes still happen, as the legend goes, when a police officer came in for a roast beef sandwich and the decidedly French Philippe Mathieu,

apparently intimidated by the concept of a hungry cop, dropped the sandwich in a pan full of meat juice still hot from the oven. The cop loved it so much he

Lionel Sternberger. A man who took his namesake very seriously. Rumor has it that the Aristocratic Burger, as he called it, was created by accident when he burnt one side of a hamburger patty and decided to cover up his mistake with a pile of cheese rather than apologies. Sternberger's second big impact on the city was when he decided to loan a Mr. Bob Wain some money to start a burger stand of his own: Bob's Big Boy. Additional background via *LA Times*



Credit: Jessica Rossi/Flickr

6. The Orange Julius

When life gives you orange groves, make Orange Julius. Just take it from Julius Freed who decided in 1926 to open up a mobile orange juice stand. Things really took off when a friend of his desperately wanted a sip of the juice but couldn't stomach it due to his severe acid reflux. To compensate, he blended

8 Delicious Dishes That Were Actually Invented in Los Angeles (Allegedly)

by Greg Gonzalez and Daniel Zafran

Many people say L.A. hasn't contributed enough to American culture other than West Coast Jazz, skateboarding, beach music and the entire film industry. They make a fair point, but we're here to humbly offer up 8 dishes invented in our city. Long before the current culinary renaissance we are now living in, this city was pushing the limits of what could, and in some cases should, be passed off as food. But don't take our word for it. Have a read below!



came back later with friends all eager to try his new creation. And thus, a sandwich named after a completely different place was born in L.A. Additional background via Philippe's

2. The Oyster Cocktail

Not much food existed before the year 1900 but what did sounded pretty gross. In July 1894, Al Levy began selling what he called "California Oyster Cocktails" out of his push cart at 1st and Main downtown. It combined the city's two loves of drinking cocktails with crustaceans in them and eating seafood off of a push cart. The drink was a hit not just with the local street urchins (no relation to the contents of the drink) but also with the high class opera crowds. It was so successful that in 1896 he was able to open up an actual restaurant at 3rd and Main that solidified the drink as a must try food while in L.A. This was a classic rags to riches story for Mr. Levy proving, once again, that the world is your oyster cocktail. Additional background via *LA Times*

3. The Hot Fudge Sundae

Lookin' for some hot fudge, baby? So was Clarence Clifton Brown when he became the first person to pour some on an ice cream sundae at C.C. Brown's on 7th and Flower downtown; creating the world's first hot fudge sundae. The place had been open since 1906 but the success of his signature fudge allowed him to move in 1929 to a better location right by the Chinese Theater at 7007 Hollywood Boulevard solidifying themselves as a tourist and celebrity hotspot and cementing the hot fudge sundae as an American classic. The place closed in 1996 but a sign on the lamppost out front marks the spot and tastes almost as good. Additional background via *NY Times* and Eatocracy.



Credit: MrTimDC/Flickr

4. The Chili Burger

Sometimes to invent a new dish, all you have to do is add buns which is exactly what "Ptomaine" Tommy Deforest did at The Original Ptomaine Tommy's at 2420 N. Broadway in Lincoln Heights. The 24-hour chili parlor had been slopping chili down people's gullets since 1913 but it wasn't until he took his popular "chili size" (a hamburger patty drowned in chili) and served it with buns that the chili burger was born. Always the jokester, Tommy Deforest's nickname "Ptomaine" is actually the scientific name for food poisoning. Finally explaining the age old saying "Chili today, ptomaine tomorrow." Additional background via examiner.com

5. The Cheeseburger

It's hard to imagine a time when grilled cheese sandwiches and hamburgers weren't interbreeding but before the Rite Spot opened up in the early 20s at 1500 W. Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena you better believe they were sleeping in separate buns. The cheeseburger was created by the owner of this establishment:

the juice with milk, sugar, vanilla extract, egg and ice; making the focus less on the tummy and more on the yummy. Julius started selling this concoction at his cart and the people loved it so much they'd come up and say "Give me an orange, Julius!" and the you-know-what was born. Additional background via *The Daily Meal* and orangejulius.com

7. The Cobb Salad

Have you ever met a salad so famous you asked for its autograph? Then you may have cartoon oasis disorder. Seek help. But if you're looking for the salad of the stars, look no further than the old Brown Derby at 1628 Vine in the heart of Hollywood. But don't go looking because it's not there anymore. This was the second Brown Derby location and became a celebrity hotspot due to its proximity to the local studios but it really left its mark in either 1929 or 37, depending on which story you want to believe, when the guy who ran the place, Robert H. Cobb, was hanging out in the dining area with some Hollywood big shots and was sent into the kitchen to rustle something up for his glitterati guests. He grabbed everything he could find in the kitchen (iceberg lettuce, watercress, romaine, chicory, tomato, roasted chicken, bacon, avocado, hardboiled egg, chives, Roquefort cheese and French dressing), threw it in a bowl and the Cobb Salad was born. The celebrities loved it so much they would request it every time they came in and next thing they knew, it had its own star on the walk of fame with a star of French dressing on the side. Additional background via *Wall Street Journal*

8. The Chinese Chicken Salad

A lot of people credit this one to Wolfgang Puck but puck that. It was actually created by Madame Sylvia Wu at her restaurant, Wu's Garden, at 2628 Wilshire Boulevard in Santa Monica in the 1960s. Local celebrities loved the place as it was one of the few joints in town to offer quality Chinese food at the time. It's even credited with introducing L.A. to one of its greatest romances of all time: tofu. The salad came about when Cary Grant came in one day describing to Madame Wu a salad he had eaten one time and, ever the charmer, demanded she recreate it. What she came up with was the modern Chinese chicken salad complete with citrus and that signature crunch, heralding in yet another locally created dish named after a completely different place. Additional background via KCET

Final Food For Thought

Even if no other types of food came to town, we would still have a complete home-grown meal out of these 8 dishes. We wouldn't live long on such a diet but luckily we don't have to because of the rich diversity of cuisine we have to choose from but let these 8 menu items stand as our local contribution to the world-wide menu.

L.A. Meekly is a monthly comedy podcast on Los Angeles history & culture hosted by born and raised L.A. comedians Greg Gonzalez & Daniel Zafran. In each episode they dive deep on a topic from the city's past ranging from the formation of the freeway system and the notorious water wars to local hot sauces and the fan favorite Creepy Christmas/Chaunted Chanukah tales of local horror and paranormal events. See more at: lameeklypodcast.com

Charles Perry, Cooking With Pills Continued from Page 1

such long cooking. This marmalade was basically quinces boiled down with sugar to a thick jelly, like the *dulce de membrillo* which is still popular in Latin America.

Another old name for marmalade was quiddany, coming from the French, rather than the Portuguese word for quince, but in the 17th century the English started to apply that name to jellied pastes of other fruits, such as strawberries and rasp (raspberries). These were typically a bit less solid than quince marmalade, quinces being proverbial for their high pectin content.

The cooks liked to put both marmalades and quiddanies into little wooden cases to give out as presents. They often did the same with marzipan, too. In fact, the very word “marzipan” comes from the wooden box (*makhshabān*) used for this purpose in Moorish Spain, which was presumably the ultimate source of this cult of little sweet gifts.

But this doesn't explain how quince marmalade became orange marmalade. I do notice that in *The Ladies' Cabinet Enlarged and Opened* (1654), the recipe for (quince) marmalade included sour orange juice and peel. It looks as if the English had come to recognize that sugary sweetness needs a foil. When we make apple pie, we typically add lemon juice and zest because a plain apple filling would be as bland as apple sauce. In the Tudor period, people often added the juice and peel of sour orange to apple pie for the same purpose. (It's pretty good. Try substituting marmalade for part of the sugar.)

And then, maybe, things just got out of hand. It happens.

Nancy Zaslavsky, Program Notes: Continued from Page 1

A friendly reminder once again: please purchase all your Amazon products (not just books) on AmazonSmile (smile.amazon.com) and make Culinary Historians of Southern California your charitable organization. There is no extra cost to you and CHSC gets 0.5% for the same products, prices, and service. Pennies add up and the Library's culinary collection reaps the benefit.

When we finally get back to the Central Library's Taper Auditorium is anyone's guess as Covid continues to sneak its ugly head into our lives when we least expect it to reappear. Keep positive thoughts while masked in public and hopefully we'll see you in person soon.

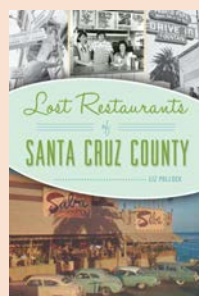


California Food History Books



Made in California: The California-Born Diners, Burger Joints, Restaurants & Fast Food That Changed America by George Geary

A wealth of well-researched knowledge with over 200 photos about favorite and famous restaurants around the state, it also provides useful tidbits for culinary historians such as restaurant slogans and original locations. Perhaps the best and most entertaining part of this book are the little-known facts and controversies that add fun and flair to our collective memories of many beloved eateries. I Love Lucy's chocolate shop scene was filmed at See's Candies, The Beach Boys referenced Fosters Freeze in a song, Baskin Robbins started the ice cream cake, memories of Pup 'n' Taco and much more. Reading this book will definitely make you feel nostalgic (and hungry).



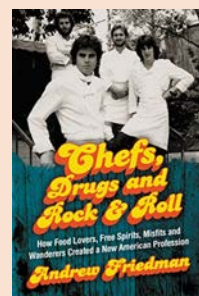
Lost Restaurants of Santa Cruz County by Liz Pollock

Explore the history of restaurants from the 1940s-1990s through fascinating photos, maps, menus and the lore of Santa Cruz County. Influences such as ration books, credit cards, computers and earthquakes directly affected these family-run businesses, just as food trends like car hops and natural foods and multicultural traditions created lasting memories and personal stories. Longtime resident and certified mixologist Liz Pollock also includes delicious recipes for popular cocktails from menus of each era. Explore a bygone era through a walk down memory lane.



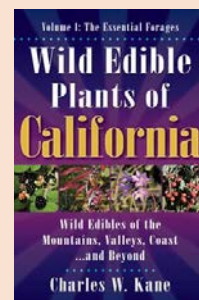
Wine Dogs California by Craig McGill & Susan Elliott

Is there really a need for a book about dogs who reside at celebrated California wineries and vineyards? Apparently, yes! This popular book showcases the unique personalities of each mutt or purebred with beautiful photos and short essays from renown wine advocates and writers. Cute stories about which canine star holds the pizza-eating record or how their loyalty serves the whole operation are memorable. If you love good wine and good dogs, this is the coffee table book for you.



Chefs, Drugs and Rock & Roll: How Food Lovers, Free Spirits, Misfits and Wanderers Created a New American Profession by Andrew Friedman

Like a good, long conversation at a dinner party, this book chronicles how the rise of “celebrity restaurant culture” emerged in the 1970s in California, traversed through New York, and has evolved into the complex, multifaceted industry of today. Told through a weaving of behind-the-kitchen-swinging door stories, personal memories, and a multitude of familiar and lesser known characters, it creates a picture of how crazy it was (and is) to run restaurants, work with wild and fascinating talent (perhaps interpreted differently now though the context of the #MeToo movement), and recall these times through a retrospective lens.



Wild Edible Plants of California: Volume 1: The Essential Forages by Charles W. Kane

California has a lot of plant diversity and this can be a foraging goldmine for wild edible plant enthusiasts. Learn the what, where, and when to take advantage of this edible bounty. This book prioritizes plants that are abundant, recognizable, and nutrient-rich to make your efforts easier and worthwhile. It also includes content on how to use and prepare wild edibles, with note about medicinal uses, and necessary cautions. With photos and non-preachy descriptions, this 164-page book is a great for the backpack or glove box.

Before California even became part of the United States, it was Los Angeles—not Sonoma, not Napa—that was poised to become the winemaking epicenter of the west coast. So much so that by 1850, the Los Angeles area boasted over 100 vineyards, and the city's first-ever seal, drawn up several years later, dubbed it the “city of vines.” So how is it that L.A.'s northern neighbors won California's winemaking crown, while the city's own history as a land of vines faded into obscurity?

“It's more of a tale of urbanization, unfortunately,” says Steve Riboli, who helps oversee winemaking operations at San Antonio Winery. Built in 1917 by Riboli's great-great-uncle Santo Cambianica, an Italian immigrant, San Antonio is the last surviving downtown Los Angeles winery. The timing was unfortunate—as it was built three years before Prohibition—but a local church allowed Cambianica to make sacramental wine, one of the loopholes during that dry era. “We were able to survive because he was a very devout Catholic,” Riboli says.



Interior of a winery with large casks, Los Angeles, c. 1910.

Photo credit: USC Libraries/California Historical Society

Before then, basement to full-fledged operations flourished in the area. But continuous population booms, especially during the Gold Rush era, both helped build and ultimately ended L.A.'s winemaking prospects.

The city's history as a wine town started when California was colonized by the Spanish. Spaniards enjoyed drinking wine and

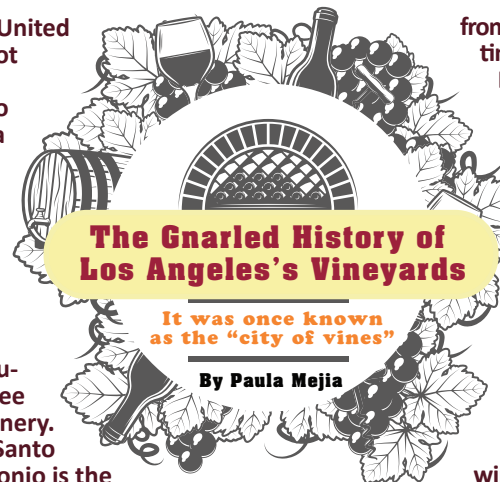
Franciscans used it in religious ceremonies. One of the missionaries sent there, Father Junipero Serra, had grape cuttings sent up from Mexico in 1778 and began to produce sacramental wine. The vines thrived at Mission San Gabriel, a skip away from present-day Los Angeles.

Around then, wine production in Los Angeles began picking up. Wine-making wasn't a commercial prospect for the region until a Frenchman, Jean-Louis Vignes (whose last name means “vines”) immigrated there. As journalist Frances Dinkelspiel writes in her book *Tangled Vines: Greed, Murder, Obsession, and an Arsonist in the Vineyards of California*, he was the first to recognize there was a market for wine outside the Los Angeles area.” Along the Los Angeles River, he built a stately, 104-acre vineyard that soon attracted visitors who wanted to drink and socialize there.

But Los Angeles's winery days came too early to enjoy wide acclaim. “It was such bad wine for such a long time, and California was always trying to convince the East Coast to buy its wine, and not French wine,” says Dinkelspiel. “It took a really long time for people to be interested in buying California wine.” Americans were also far more partial to beer, and shipping was challenging. Even in the 1850s, California was still so isolated that residents were begging the government to build highways.

But in 1848, the Gold Rush hit. Many people who came looking for gold found themselves growing grapes. In her book, Dinkelspiel cites a journal of the time, the *California Farmer and Journal of Useful Sciences*, which informed farmers that they could rake in \$200 per acre if they planted grapes. Coupled with a tax break from the California Legislature, it's no wonder that the number of grapevines in the state swelled from just over 324,000 in 1855 to over 4 million just three years later. Soon, vines covered Los Angeles County, at least from Malibu stretching past Pasadena.

Los Angeles suddenly became a sizable city: In 1870, its population was 5,728, and by 1890, it had ballooned to over 50,000 residents. Part of that influx came



from a swarm of investors flooding the state, around the time a disease named phylloxera knocked out scores of European vineyards. “A lot of capital from England and around the world came to Southern California to try to take advantage of [it],” says Dinkelspiel.

But Northern California began developing, too. Worse, a strange ailment known as Anaheim Disease (later dubbed Pierce's Disease) started to cause Los Angeles's grapes to wither, then the roots to die altogether, starting in 1883. “Anaheim Disease, with its destructive and rapid rush through the vineyards, signaled the end of Southern California's dominance in the wine industry,” writes Dinkelspiel. By 1890, Northern California had far surpassed its southern neighbors in winemaking production. Some former winemakers began planting other crops, such as oranges, instead.

That too came to an end with the last haul of urbanization in the 20th century. The post-war population sent land values skyrocketing, and the last of the vineyards were ripped out. “[During] that time period, the 1800s through the '40s, '50s, and '60s, housing was just taking over everything downtown,” Riboli says. “So that's what really destroyed the industry.” Soon enough, the only known vines in Los Angeles were the survivors clinging to old buildings, such as the grapevines found on Olvera Street.

Despite winemaking's rich history in the region, there's been little effort on Los Angeles's part to reclaim that part of its identity. It may have to do with the industry's dark past: Missionaries and winemakers alike essentially enslaved local Native Americans for their labor.

The mission system set up by the Spanish had drawn or conscripted many Native Americans to live there. They were lured by talk of Christianity, or were seeking shelter during a time of environmental change and disease. Upon Baptism, though, the Spanish controlled their lives and forced them to work the fields. When the missions disbanded after Mexican independence, they couldn't go back to their land. So they went around Los Angeles in search of work.



The first seal of the City of Los Angeles

But, as Dinkelspiel writes, one of the the first acts of legislation passed by the newfound state of California, in 1850, was the Indian Indenture Act. The law forbade Native Americans from voting, and allowed them to be arrested on the spot for not working or for appearing drunk. Native Americans would be arrested on weekends. When they were released from jail, their labor was sold to the highest bidder, often a grape farmer. “At the end of the week, the vineyardists or farmers would pay two thirds of the fine to the city and the rest to the Indian worker—in high-alcohol aguardiente, ensuring the cycle would be repeated,” she writes. That cruel cycle lasted until 1862, when the California Legislature repealed the act. The wounds of this ugly history still resonate today. While Dinkelspiel says that these abuses are not yet widespread knowledge, “there is this gradual shift in public reception,” thanks to more information being released and acknowledged.

Though winemaking itself remains a side note in Los Angeles's history, and one that's not lauded due to the history of exploitation, its agricultural past and origins in viticulture remain curiously immortalized at the city's most famous intersection: Hollywood and Vine, the symbolic crossroads of its two most influential industries.



Photo credit: Blake Olmstead

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My wife and I sped through the streets of Santa Ana, weaving down side streets and around double-parked cars, in search of the magic house. The one with all the loquats.

Late spring is when Southern California erupts with the small, fuzzy pastel-orange or -yellow fruit. Trees have groaned with their bounty for over a century in places as varied as Compton and Santa Monica, Santa Ana and Pasadena, East Los Angeles and Long Beach. They're remnants of an era when loquats, not avocados or oranges, were a marquee crop, a sign that the region was a subtropical paradise.

Today, they're the happiest regional problem we have. Loquats seem to ripen all at once, which sparks a communal race against the clock that sees anyone who has a tree try to get as many as possible before the parrots gorge on them. People dust off their recipe books to tackle all the loquats. Jams. Preserves. Butter. Upside-down cake. Empanadas. Barbecue sauce. Liqueur. Or we just eat them fresh until we can't stomach them anymore, and then beg neighbors to take away the rapidly browning fruit by the bucketful.

That was the situation my wife and I found ourselves in as we cruised around. The previous day, she had knocked on the door of a stranger's house whose loquat tree was particularly gigantic and asked if we could grab some. Now, she couldn't remember where that home was — and all the other loquat trees in the barrio made the quest even harder.

"That one's not it — the fruits aren't ready," she said. Nor that one — too barren. Maybe that one, I offered?

That was a pine.

Finally, we found the house. The tree was at least 20 feet tall and had so many loquats that it glowed like a traffic cone. We set up our equipment: bags, clippers and a rickety ladder. Usually, my wife waits for friends and customers to unload crates of them at her store, a market and deli in downtown Santa Ana. But today, we picked with extra vigor.

We were on a mission to defend the honor of the humble *Eriobotrya japonica*.



Over the weekend, the popular



IN DIVERSE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA, LOQUATS ARE THE REAL FRUIT WIPERS



BY GUSTAVO ARELLANO

website Atlas Obscura published a story about loquats with the headline "Los Angeles Is Covered in Delicious Fruit and No One Is Eating It." The headline was later changed, but it was too late. Foodies and commoners alike in Southern California railed on social media against this insult to our culinary soul.

Many took exception to the author's assertion that the neighborhoods of Silver Lake and Los Feliz were the Eastside of L.A. (Boyle Heights has something to say about that.) Others rolled their eyes at this latest installment of a newly transplanted East Coaster making a grand pronouncement about the way we live that's inevitably, laughably wrong.

But the real outrage was the premise of the article itself: No one eats loquats? Says who?

It's one of the rare fruits in these modern times that we can't buy year-round at Southern California supermarkets because of how quickly they spoil. So their appearance is a beloved annual ritual — it's more accessible than the Tournament of Roses, tastier than a grunion run, less messy than jacarandas.

But I was surprised at the level of love Southern California had for the loquat in the wake of the Atlas Obscura article. All of our disparate, divided communities seemingly united to trash the piece — even the "Eastside" hipsters who the reporter claimed had no idea about the fruit.

On Twitter, followers and strangers alike regaled me with their loquat stories. Latinos were surprised to learn that was the English name for the fruits they knew as *nisperos*, *misperos* or *nisferos*, depending on whether you're Mexican or Central American. Asians shared photos of Nin Jiom cough syrup derived from loquat leaves. People with roots in New Orleans told me they called the fruits "misbeliefs," a local mispronunciation of the Italian term for them, *nespoli*. And Armenians probably have the most evocative name for loquats of them all: *nor ashkhar*, which translates as "new world."

All of this was on my mind as my wife tossed loquats down to me as she reached higher and higher. Then it hit me: not just a stray fruit or five, but a realization. Loquats should be the lodestar of Southern California, the thing upon which we model our lives here.



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The loquat is an immigrant originally from China but one that spread to many other communities that embraced the fruit as their own. There's diversity within loquats — the Vista White variety is particularly sweet, while the Golden Nugget type has a crisp tartness. The trees that produce them are hardy — not needing much maintenance or water to fruit well but doing even better with care.

The all-at-once harvest creates instant community, because there's no way just one person can tackle a loquat canning session. And that so many loquats still fall to the ground and rot shows how much Southern Californians take our good life for granted.

Loquats are far better exemplars of how to live in Southern California than two other fruits that have long dominated the cultural life of the region: avocados and oranges. As delicious as they are, they're simply not good neighbors.

Both are notorious water guzzlers that need constant care and attention and wither if ignored. You rarely find them on public property the way you do loquats, and people don't hand them out as freely. Avocados and oranges both have a dark side, too. Our voracious consumption of the former has inspired drug cartels to shake down growers in Mexico. Oranges, meanwhile, became a multimillion-dollar business here on the backs of exploited Mexican laborers like both of my grandfathers, then struck from the industry's history.

Loquats? The reason so many exist in working-class communities is that the workers who picked them took the large brown seeds back home to sprout their own trees.

My wife and I left the Santa Ana house with a 99 Ranch Market bag full of loquats so ripe it seemed they would burst if you just looked at them. We dropped them off at her store, but I made sure to keep one for myself to enjoy in our frontyard.

Biting into its mildly sweet flesh was like an early summer day: cooling, comforting, perfect. I spit out the seed, then went to check on our loquat seedling, which has grown a few new leaves these last couple of weeks. In a land where we chuck out yesterday's treasures with little thought, loquats spring eternal.

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