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California Dried Fruits.

Sun-dried fruit is one of California's more important products. The hundreds of thousands of boxes of raisins sent to market annually from that state are wholly cured in the open air, and prunes, apricots, peaches and figs are treated in the same way. Pears, also, were formerly dried naturally with good results, but of late the taste of consumers have changed and a bleaching process is found desirable. Curing in the sun is made possible by one of the peculiarities of the climate, namely, entire absence of rain and the presence of very little moisture in the air during the summer and autumn months.

Until three or four years ago evaporated fruit was more commonly met with. Packers in the Santa Clara valley, where the business has reached the largest proportions, say that until 1887 evaporated fruit brought 50 per cent. more in the eastern markets than sun-dried fruit. In that year the harvest was unusually large and the evaporators could not handle all the fruit that was brought to them, and the orchard owners were forced to resort to sun-drying in order to save their crops. When the product thus prepared was sent east the prices realized were, to the great surprise of the shippers, higher than fruit dried by machinery commanded. The natural method has consequently gained in popularity. Fruit cured in the open air in moist climates is of little value, but in Santa Clara county, Cal., the atmosphere is so dry that it is said that fruit has been perfectly cured in the shade in drafts of cold air. Evaporators, however, still hold their place, and the quality of California fruit of all kinds prepared and sold, dried naturally and artificially, is annually increasing.

Prunes are perhaps the leading fruit sold in the dried form. Many new orchards have been started during the past few years and the annual output is steadily increasing. The tree

grows luxuriantly and is easily cared for. An orchard in full bearing in the vicinity of San Jose is usually estimated to be worth little less than \$1,000 per acre. The average yield is said to be 150 pounds to the tree, and 1½¢ per pound for the green fruit is called a low price. On this basis the net returns of an acre in full bearing ought not to be less than \$200. The curing is done both in the sun and in evaporators. A leading packing house says in a recent circular that "the California prune is better in every way than the French. It is of better quality when cooked and of better flavor. It is more like a date, and the western trade prefers California prunes to the imported goods, even at higher prices." The opportunity for an enlargement of this branch of fruit raising appears to be excellent.

Numerous apricot orchards, as well as prunes, recently started are now coming into bearing, and this fruit also finds a ready market, dried, east of the Rock mountains. The growers are now looking to Europe for a still wider demand. New peach orchards are hardly less frequently met with, and notwithstanding their extent, the demand is more than equal to the supply. California peaches are specially valuable for canning. They grow to a large size and are rich in sugar. Single specimens weighing three-fourths of a pound are common, while large lots averaging half a pound each have been received from time to time at the San Jose canneries.

Some of the largest canning establishments in the world are to be found in California. Packers who make special efforts to establish and maintain the quality of their goods have no difficulty in finding permanent and profitable markets. The reputation of California fruits is due in no small measure to the canners of the state, who have made numerous exhibitions of their output at fairs in the United States and Europe, as well as through the ordinary channels of trade. One concern in San

Jose employs 1,000 persons during the season, and is able to put up 60,000 cans of fruit a day.

Figs bid fair to become a leading California crop, though as yet the market value of the product is not very considerable. Notwithstanding richness of growth and delicacy of flavor, the best authorities assert that no figs are yet grown on the Pacific coast equal to the ordinary Smyrna figs in any of the essentials of commercial fruit. Smyrna figs are everywhere looked upon as the standard. Whether California will be able to establish a different standard is perhaps an open question. Genuine Smyrna figs have not yet been raised in the state, although frequent efforts have been made in that direction. The variety known as the White Adriatic grows freely and usually produces large crops. The black fig was planted generally by the early settlers and continues productive, but is not a favorite with dealers. The great confidence felt in this variety of fruit may be gathered from the fact that one capitalist in Ventura county has growing, or soon will have, no less than 50,000 fig trees, mostly White Adriatic. If these trees do as well as fig trees have elsewhere in California it is estimated that the crop ten years hence will amount to 1,250 car loads annually, which at 1¢ a pound green would bring in a gross income of \$250,000.

Distance from market is the principal obstacle to the Pacific coast drying and canning industries, as well as the shipment of green fruit. California fruit packers have hitherto dealt more with Chicago merchants than further east. Their wares have well-established reputations in all Mississippi valley cities and on the Atlantic coast as well. In future years the receipts here will doubtless be larger than heretofore. The climatic conditions of California are favorable to an enormous expansion of fruit growing in its various forms, and a favorable climate is the first requisite for prosperity.
—Bradstreet's.