



COUNTY OF LAKE

MARKETING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

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Lake County Mountain Pears – Worth the Wait

Lake County, CA – If you want the perfect Bartlett pear with a deep ruby blush, elegantly longer shape, rich aroma, sweet juice, and tender flesh, you have to wait a little longer for the pears to ripen in the hills of Lake County but perfection is worth the wait. Lake County Mountain Pears are considered by many to be the gourmands' choice for the perfect pear.

The eight major varieties grown in Lake County – Green Bartlett, Rosired Bartlett, Max Red Bartlett, Red Sensation Bartlett, Bosc, Starkrimson, Comice, and Seckel – begin ripening in July with harvest into November. Due to the elevation in Lake County, which is at approximately 1,300 feet above sea level and higher than surrounding growing regions, Lake County Mountain Pears are ready for market just a little later than others but they are worth the wait.

Because of the elevation and mountainous terrain, Lake County has the best air quality in California and ranks third best in the US. Fog is rarely experienced – either coastal or valley fog – which translates into an average of approximately 265 days per year of clear or partly clear skies, all of which contribute to the perfect growing conditions for Lake County Mountain Pears.

During the growing season, very warm days give way to cool, clear nights. In fact, pear orchards in many areas of Lake County may experience up to a 50-degree differential between daytime and night temperatures, which helps increase the sweetness and acidity, a key factor in growing excellent pears.

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LAKE COUNTY MOUNTAIN PEAR VARIETIES (in order of harvest times)

Starkrimson

This variety has a solid, deep crimson red skin with white flesh. It is an early variety which harvests in July five to 10 days before Green Bartletts. Starkrimson ripens without cold storage and may be air-stored for a maximum of four to six weeks. Eating quality decreases after one month in cold storage, so it is best to eat them soon after picking.

Green Bartlett

This bell-shaped variety turns green to yellow as it ripens. It is harvested in early August and is the major variety that is canned. Green Bartlett has white, smooth, juicy flesh and is an excellent eating pear. Lake County is the number one fresh-market Green Bartlett-producing county in California.

Red Sensation Bartlett

This variety has more overall red blush and the same storage life as Max Red. It matures one to two weeks after Green Bartlett and is golden yellow with a crimson blush when ripe. It is a fine texture, excellent eating pear; flavor is similar to Green Bartlett.

Rosired Bartlett

This Bartlett has a solid wine-colored skin with russeting at the flower end that turns yellow-gold when ripe. It is harvested one to two weeks after the Green Bartlett and one week after Red Sensation.

Max Red Bartlett

This red with green stripe variety is usually harvested one week later than the Green Bartlett. It maintains good quality even after two to three months in cold storage. When ripe, the background color is golden with crimson stripes and has fine texture or "melting" flesh.

Bosc

This variety has natural russeting on golden yellow ground with dense, yellowish-white flesh. It is harvested in early to mid-September. The highly aromatic fruit is best eaten after two to four weeks of chilling. It has a sweet, nutty spicy flavor and is an excellent cooking pear. The hot Lake County summers produce the best quality fruit.

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Seckel

This variety is small in size but large in sweetness and spice. The smallest of all commercial pears, Seckel is green with a deep maroon blush that covers almost the entire pear. Harvested in mid to late September, there is no color change during ripening.

Comice

This variety is large and attractive. It is harvested in mid- to late September and must be held in cold storage for several weeks for proper ripening. Comice is very juicy when ripe and called the “Queen of Pears.”

RIPENING TO PERFECTION

Green Bartletts are usually picked green and are typically eaten when they ripen to a soft yellow color. The best way to ripen them, according to local pear packing experts at Adobe Creek Packing Company, is to put them on the kitchen counter for a few days until the desired color appears. If the top of the pear around the stem gives to pressure, it’s ready to eat and can be stored in the refrigerator for about one week; storing it earlier makes for a crispier pear.

LAKE COUNTY PEAR HISTORY

Thomas Porteus is credited for planting the first commercial pear orchard in Lake County with four acres in the Big Valley area of Kelseyville, at the base of Mt. Konocti. Orchards began to be planted in the late 1800s and by 1919, according to the agricultural commissioner's records; 700 acres of pears were planted in the county. Pear acreage has fluctuated over the years since, with a high of 8,000 acres to a low of 2,000.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, Lake County consisted of many small land owners who grew mostly grain crops – but the price per acre that pear farmers were receiving convinced many to plant orchards. According to agricultural records, most of the plantings took place between 1910 and 1920.

Until the mid-1920s, the Lake County pear crop was dried locally and then hauled out to packing sheds outside of the county. But in the early 1920s, the California Packing Company was established and at the time operated the largest dry yard in the world in Kelseyville. The Adobe Creek Packing Company now stands at that location.

Once picked, the pears were brought from the orchards in boxes loaded on horse-drawn wagons. The pears were placed in large bins at the dry yards, covered with straw, and allowed to ripen. The ripe pears were cut and cored

on large wooden trays. The trays were put into stacks and covered with a large metal hood, which was placed on the top by four men. A pot of burning sulfur was placed under the hood and the pears were left to sulfur for two or three days. After the sulfuring process was complete, the pears were placed in the sun for a couple of days and then the trays were stacked again with space for air circulation and left for three to four weeks. At the end of that time, the pears were ready for shipment to the packaging plants. Harvest would last about three months in the days of the dry fruit market. People worked from August to November picking and processing the fruit.

Today, approximately 2,240 acres of pears are grown in Lake County. Lake County Mountain Pears even have their own annual festival. On the fourth Saturday of each September, the Kelseyville Pear Festival is held in historic downtown Kelseyville. For more information and pear recipes, visit www.kelseyvillepearfestival.com.

EACH PEAR IS PACKED WITH NUTRITION

According to USA Pear, fresh pears are loaded with dietary fiber, much of it in the form of pectin. In addition, fresh pears are a good source of vitamin C, potassium, and have no cholesterol, sodium, or fat. Few natural foods provide this much fiber and nutrition for only 100 calories, making Lake County Mountain Pears a very healthy choice.

During “pear season,” Lake County Mountain Pears may be purchased directly from local growers at the following locations:

Kelseyville Certified Farmers’ Market at Steele Wines

4350 Thomas Drive, Kelseyville, CA 95451

Saturdays, 8:30 a.m. to noon, May – October

Hanson Ranch

3360 Merritt Road, Kelseyville, CA 95451

(707) 279-4761

Seely’s Farm Stand

80 E. Highway 20, Upper Lake, CA 95485

(707) 275-0525

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Yoxagoi Orchards/The Purple Pear Farm Stand

California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF) certified

Available at Kelseyville Certified Farmers' Market, seasonal farm stand, or mail-order

Farm Stand: 3545 Soda Bay Road, Lakeport, CA 95453

Mail Order: P.O. Box 838, Kelseyville, CA 95451

(707) 279-4949

Lake County Mountain Pears also may be purchased directly from local growers through mail order from the following:

Adobe Creek Packing Co.

P.O. Box 335, Kelseyville, CA 95451

(707) 279-4204

www.adobecreekpacking.com

G Bar G Ranch

(707) 279-0950

www.lakecountyfarmersfinest.org/pears.htm

Mt. Konocti Growers

P.O. Box 365, Kelseyville, CA 95451

(707) 279-4213

Scully Quality Pears

P.O. Box 620, Finley, CA 95435

(707) 263-8500

<http://www.scullypacking.com>

Located in beautiful Northern California, Lake County is just two hours by car from the San Francisco Bay Area, the Sacramento Valley, and the Pacific Coast. Lake County is home to Clear Lake, the largest natural freshwater lake in California and possibly the oldest lake on the continent. Visitors to Lake County experience the state's cleanest air basin, spectacular scenic beauty, fine wines, headliner concerts, and unsurpassed recreational opportunities — from hiking, biking, golf, and off-road adventures to boating, fishing, kayaking, birding, and even rockhounding. The local area code is 707. For visitor information, contact the Lake County Visitor Information Center at (800) 525-3743 or www.lakecounty.com

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