
NOTES FROM THE NUT

CAPAY HILLS ORCHARD NEWSLETTER ISSUE 42



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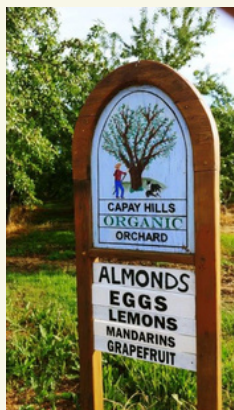
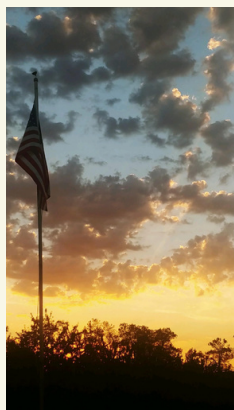
Holiday Specialties

The holiday season is upon us! We’ve made it through Halloween (you’re either for it or against it, right?) Thanksgiving, and less celebrated days like Labor Day, Columbus Day, Election Day, and Veterans Day. For our family, we’re now looking forward to the Christmas season, which only starts on the evening of the 24th and is preceded by the liturgical season of Advent. And then we’ve New Year’s Day, 2025!

Now, not everyone observes these or other holidays the same way. A lot depends on your religious and ethnic heritage for specific holidays celebrated or traditions associated with the way you celebrate. But there is one thing that we’re pretty positive is highly present in all celebrations ... food! While food consumption may be necessary for life, the preparation and consumption of it can also be fun, and it is undeniably a great way to celebrate and build family community.

Of course, this being an article about our farm and almonds, we need to share with you how we incorporate those into our menu for celebrations. Here on the farm, a favorite brunch item for holiday celebrations is omelets made by Brian. They always feature eggs from our flock of chickens, which has free-range throughout our orchard much of the year. Depending on the season and the year, there are also additions of fresh organic produce from our yard or our neighbor's vegetable stand. A pumpkin-almond butter muffin is a delicious side. Smoked or raw almonds make an excellent, highly portable snack throughout the day. Salads for holiday dinners usually feature our almonds, raw and chopped and sprinkled on top, sometimes with the addition of organic mandarin orange slices from our handful of trees. The main dish often hosts a turkey smoked low and slow with smoke from our almond wood. A gin-and-tonic using local gin from Gray Whale Gin, which uses our almonds in their recipe, is a great addition to evening holiday gatherings. Dessert gets even more fun with options like candied almonds, naturally gluten-free chocolate chip almond butter cookies, and vanilla almond milk ice cream. What's fun to know is that almonds actually have a long history of being used as gifts at Christmas due to their rarity!

Please check our recipes tab on our website for delicious ideas for menu items for the holiday season (or year-round, even!). If you have any recipes containing our almonds that you would like to share with us and with your fellow customers, please email them to capayhillSORCHARD@gmail.com and we'd love to add them to our website collection. Happy cooking, baking, and eating!



Almond or “Amond?”

If you ever find yourself in a circle of almond farmers, you might quickly become perplexed at the confusing occasional use of the word “amond” (pronounced “am-end”) when the farmers are clearly referring to almonds. “Why in the world aren’t they saying the word right?” you might think. If you’d ask them to explain their use of the word “amond,” they’d just smile and say “Well, it’s an almond on the tree and an ‘amond’ once it’s off the tree.” You’d of course give them another puzzled look,

and they'd laugh and further explain that almonds become "amonds" during harvest, when you knock the "L" out of them, referring back to the original method of knocking almond trees and branches with sticks and large mallets to remove the crop.

Saying "amond" versus "almond" is a term of cultural expression with some history thrown in. As referred to earlier, when almonds became a regular California crop 150 years ago, the trees were harvested by striking their trunks and the lower portions of their main branches with a mallet with a rubber or leather head on it, which protected the tree from damage during "knocking." Long poles were used to reach the almonds on the upper portions of the branches. The nuts that fell from the tree during knocking landed on tarps spread below, and the tarps were gathered up and dumped when they became too full to drag. Almond trees were much larger, taller, and less uniform in shape then, so it was long, hard, hot work and involved the whole family plus hired hands or neighbors.

Later on, post WWII, someone invented an almond knocker which was engine powered, and it knocked the tree. This took some manual labor away and also helped reach the taller and larger branches. This was the precursor to the modern-day shaker. Then as the years went on into the '60s-70s, hydro-mechanical shakers and ground-harvesting became the most common harvesting equipment and methods. They are still used today, with modifications and improvements coming out in new equipment each year. So today you could say that there isn't much knocking going on, just shaking!

Saying "amond" versus "almond" also depends on the crowd you're speaking with. We tend to use the word "almond" the most because we are newer to the almond farming world, and we often find ourselves speaking directly with our customers, who would be confused if we called them "amonds." Old-timers, who may have grown up knocking almonds, and Northern Californians more frequently use the word "amond." The geographical difference of Northern Californians using the word "amond" versus Southern Californians using the word "almond" may have to do with linguistic differences of original settlers, but that theory remains conjectural at best.

For over 10 years at Capay Hills Orchard we harvested the old-fashioned way with a mallet and poles and lots of kids helping, but this is a long, hard process and certainly not efficient when you own almost 1500 trees! It is, however, a great way to teach kids the value of hard work! To this day we actually still manually harvest 10-15 trees that cannot be mechanically harvested due to issues with equipment access or size and age of the tree. Most of these particular trees are around the house and are part of the original orchard on this land, planted way back in 1916 and still producing! So enjoy the remainder of your holiday season and start snacking on those "amonds!"



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