

NOTES FROM THE NUT

CAPAY HILLS ORCHARD NEWSLETTER ISSUE 37



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Summer Heat on the Farm

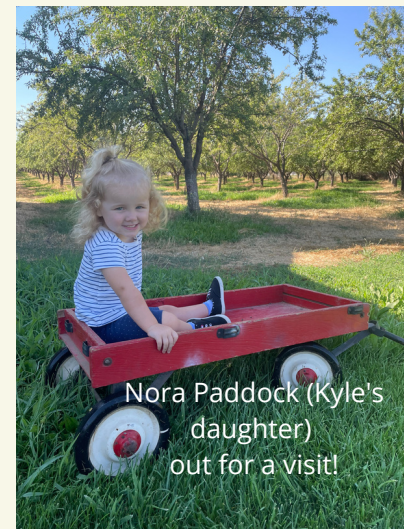


Summers are always hot in California, though admittedly this year it has been more mild, adding to the creation of a later harvest date. While we had a good past year of rainfall, the summer remains dry as a bone. While that may not seem normal to most Americans in other states, that is completely normal for us here!

The summer heat and dry weather provokes some interesting methods to stay cool. Our chickens take dust baths regularly in whatever shade they can find, walk around panting and with their wings held out from their sides, and refuse to drink their water unless we keep a frozen water jug in their reservoir to keep the temperature down. Many of our chicks are born in the summer, also, and they learn quickly these tricks to cope with the heat. Our dogs take long naps in the shade on the lawn, and we leave a kiddie pool out for them so they can cool off in that, too. Our dog Caesar, when he was a very young puppy and small enough to fit, would climb into the bottom shelf of our garage freezer whenever we opened it! Brian and Gretchen make sure to take their daily walk with the dogs in the earlier

hours of the morning, or it won't happen at all! The cats, too, spend a little more time in the coolness of the garage, and do more hunting and wandering at night. The family considers it a great blessing when the temperature outside drops below the indoor temperature before bedtime. This means we can open our windows and turn on our whole-house fan, sucking in the night air so we have a natural cooler air flow over us as we sleep. It's always disappointing when we wake up in the morning and it's already hotter outside again!

Of course, this hot and dry summer climate is where our almonds thrive! They spend the summer drinking from our groundwater-fed irrigation system and growing those almonds! The months from April to August are when you see the most obvious and consistent growth in the almond crop, even though the trees are growing and producing the new crop year-round. The summer is also when many of our yard and garden crops start to ripen. First come the apricots in late May. Then the cherries follow, with the boysenberries, strawberries, watermelon, tomatoes, and herbs right behind. In August, we harvest our first variety of almonds, the nonpareil, then in September our one peach tree ripens and we harvest our last two almond varieties, the Fritz and Monterey. Summer in California can easily extend to October. The autumn season as most people experience it doesn't really exist out here! While we take the experiences of our summers in California for granted, most people have rather different experiences of summer, as Alicia (in Colorado) and Kyle (in Texas) are finding out for themselves!



Some Healthy Notes

Here is a very common set of questions we get from consumers who are at the beginning stages of their health quest and research into almonds specifically: "Why aren't the almonds I buy in the store actually raw? Why have they been pasteurized?"

Perhaps somewhat as a preface to this, I will state that the vast majority of Americans do not know that most of the world's supply of almonds comes from California and that all almonds they find in any typical grocery store have been pasteurized. Those are two very important facts to keep in mind when considering choosing a healthy snack, in particular almonds.

I would like to take this article in two directions. First, I will discuss why almonds in general are a healthy snack to choose. Second, I will specify why *unpasteurized* almonds should be chosen if health truly is the aim. Our website has a great [page](#) filled with facts about the health benefits of almonds, and unpasteurized almonds in particular.

Almonds as a whole are well-agreed upon to be an excellent snack or meal addition as far as flavor enjoyment and health are concerned. Almonds are a great source of Vitamin E, magnesium (better than spinach or oatmeal), calcium (one serving has the same amount as a 1/4 cup of milk), they contain flavonoids (which, like other antioxidants, scavenge free radicals in the body), they are high in fiber, have been linked to better skin health, and have been increasingly linked to the prevention of certain cancers and diabetes and even weight loss. You really can't go wrong! Now, if almonds are so healthy, why does it matter that *unpasteurized, raw* almonds are the ones I choose? The ones in the store are advertised as raw. Can I eat those? To answer this question, I need to share a little history. In 2001, following several Salmonella outbreaks in Canada that were linked to almonds (remember, prior to 2001, almonds were not required to be pasteurized), the USDA, CDC, FDA, and ABC (Almond Board of California) created a piece of legislation which required all California almonds to be pasteurized. Also remember, we bought our farm (with an abandoned almond orchard on it at the time) in late 2000. When this law was created, it left a small loophole for raw,

unpasteurized almonds. It allowed raw, unpasteurized almonds to be sold, as long as they were sold directly to the consumer via a roadside stand. It allowed online sales via a website as an extension of that roadside stand. This exception to the pasteurization rule was almost removed, as many of you may remember from last summer (check out previous posts on Facebook and Issue 33 of this newsletter for information on that). Thank God (and all those who submitted their public comments) it was not removed! Unfortunately, this law did not disallow the use of the term "raw" on the pasteurized nuts being sold in groceries, which has been misleading to many. This law also only applied to almonds, though nuts like cashews and hazelnuts are also regularly pasteurized.

Now, let me explain how pasteurization changes the nutritional value of the nut. There are two kinds of pasteurization. Steam pasteurization heats up the nuts to a temperature of 200 degrees Fahrenheit and holds the temperature for at least 60 seconds. Health degradation of the nut begins at 105 degrees. Fumigation with propylene oxide gas is another method, one that is not considered as safe as steam pasteurization. Propylene oxide was even previously used as a racing fuel and banned for safety reasons! While it may be deemed safer, steam pasteurization still reduces the nutritional value contained in the nut because of the chemical breakdown caused by the heat it undergoes. It also degrades its shelf life, unlike our truly raw nuts which will still taste just as good two years after harvest if they have been stored properly! Roasting the nuts is of course also an option for pasteurization and one that is commonly seen and has the same nutritional breakdown as steam pasteurization.

To give a little more detail, the chemical degradation of almonds that occurs during pasteurization includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- the live enzymes that aid digestion of the nut are killed
- there is a 30-70% reduction in the presence of antioxidants after pasteurization
- the heat oxidizes the omega-3 fatty acids present in the nut, potentially turning them rancid and creating free radicals which have been linked to causing cancer

I hope after sharing all of this information the questions in your head have been adequately answered. It is due to all of these reasons and more that we have chosen to farm in the way that we do. If you really do want to eat healthy, you really ought to choose *truly raw, unpasteurized* almonds. It is much cheaper to pay the farmer than to pay the doctor, and those almonds in the store just won't do!



Josh and Koda



Alicia and Athena

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