

PECANS



· The Pecan (*Carya illinoensis*) is a species of hickory, native to south-central North America. Pecans are the only tree nut that is truly native to the United States.

· Pecans were first planted in Yuma back in 1969, with the first marketable crop about 4 years later. With yields approaching 3 times what was originally expected, the Yuma area was known as a thriving pecan producing region for over 30 years. With the focus now on vegetable production, the pecan acreage in the county has dropped to below 100 acres and many pecan trees still dot the area. In 2006, there were 14,000 acres of pecans in Arizona.

- Pecans are produced on large deciduous trees, growing to 60–120 feet in height with a trunk up to 5 feet in diameter. The pecan blooms in the spring and its flowers are wind-pollinated. Pecan trees are monoecious with separate male and female flowers on the same tree. Pecans are encased in a broad, dark brown with a rough husk about ¼ inch thick, which splits off in four sections at maturity to release the thin-shelled nut.
- Assuming that a pie is 9 inches in diameter, it would take 97,812,000 Pecan pies to circle the earth!
- Every Pecan pie uses 1/2 lb- 3/4 lb of Pecans. It takes about 310 pecans halves to fill a one-pound bag. So there are about 78 pecans used in every pecan pie!
- Pecans are one of the largest fruit-bearing trees. One irrigated, managed acre of pecan trees will produce about 1,000 pounds of Pecans.
- Pecans can be frozen and refrozen for at least two years without loss of flavor or texture.
- Over 500 varieties of Pecans exist today. Over 1,000 cultivars have been released over the history of pecan culture.
- Pecans are one of America's favorite nuts and are a good source of oleic acid, Vitamin B1 - Thiamin, magnesium, protein, and fiber.
- Pecans can help lower total blood cholesterol and combat heart disease. Pecans are believed to be helpful in fighting some cancers. According to the Iowa Women's Health Study in 2003 women were 60% less likely to have heart trouble if they ate nuts more than twice a week. According to research funded by the International Nut Council, Washington, D.C. - Nuts have been proven to be effective for diabetics, especially those placed on low-fat diets.
- The fiber in pecans and other nuts is mostly insoluble which has been linked to reduced cholesterol levels and shown to be helpful in warding off colon cancer. According to Frank Sacks of Harvard Medical School, Pecans contain phytochemicals which make them protective against cancers of the colon, stomach and rectum.
- Nuts are a part of most universally accepted balanced diets, such as the "Mediterranean Diet," which includes fish, poultry, vegetables, fresh and dried fruit, nuts, grains, olives and olive oil.
- America's President, food connoisseur and gardener, Thomas Jefferson, was very taken by the flavor of pecans and had trees imported from Louisiana for his Monticello orchards.

- In 1995, pecan wood was selected by the Atlanta Committee to make the handles of the torches for the 1996 Olympic Games. The torches were carried in the 15,000-mile U.S.A. relay and in the lighting of the Olympic flame in Atlanta on July 19, 1996.
- Astronauts took pecans to the moon in two Apollo space missions. Pecan wood is used in agricultural implements, baseball bats, hammer handles, furniture, wall paneling, flooring, religious carvings, and firewood.
- The U.S. is the world's largest pecan producer by far, with pecans also growing in Mexico, Australia, South America, Israel, and South Africa. Pecans are a warm weather crop, requiring some winter chilling, limiting U.S. growing areas to the southern states and the southwest.
- In 2001, approximately 40% of the U.S. crop was grown in the west. Profitability has also been declining in the southern producing states (Georgia, Florida, Mississippi) compared to the west where production per acre is actually on the increase. There have been very few new orchards planted across the U.S. during the last 10 years. Most of the shift in production is due to loss of trees and production in the south, and increased production per acre in the west.
- Unlike other nut crops grown in the west, pecans are grown in hundreds of different climates and soils. Orchards are grown from sea level to as high as 5000 ft, and from desert areas of Yuma to humid southeast Georgia. As a result, the peak production per acre varies from 600 lbs per acre in parts of the southeast to 3500 lbs in the southwest. Kernel yields also range from 30% in native trees to 62% in western improved orchards.
- The pecan market is probably the most unpredictable of all nut crops. It is unique compared to walnuts, almonds, and pistachios, in that very little of the crop is exported, and as much as 25% of the consumption in the U.S. comes from pecans imported from Mexico. It is the only nut industry with no generic promotion program and only limited state-by-state efforts. It has no large co-op or processor (referred to as "shellers") controlling more than 15% of the crop, such as Diamond Walnut or Blue Diamond Almond.

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