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A Fig's Tale

By DAVID KARP, SPECIAL TO THE TIMES
August 11, 1999

* Kadota. (Dottato). Skin thick, rubbery, green to golden yellow; pulp amber, sweet but a bit bland. Of ancient Roman origin, introduced to California before 1870; gained popularity in 1910s and '20s as chief canning variety; also tray-dried for Asian markets. Cultivation declining: 10% of fresh crop, 4% of dried.

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* King. (Desert King, White King). Large; skin thin, green; pulp strawberry; breba quality very good, second crop rare. Discovered 1930 near Madera. Of San Pedro type, which bears a first crop without caprification but requires it for the second in most areas. Matures well in coastal climates; home garden and local markets only.

* Mission (Black Mission). Teardrop shape; skin violet-black; pulp light strawberry; texture slightly coarse; flavor good fresh and dried, with a wild, "foxy" component. Breba crop very large in size, mostly sold fresh. Originated in southern Spain, introduced at San Diego 1769 from Baja California missions. 33% of fresh crop, 24% of dried.

* Panachee. (Tiger) Skin light yellow, with alternating bands of green; pulp strawberry; flavor variable, can be excellent. First described 1668; a home garden variety.

* Violette de Bordeaux. Small; skin purplish black with fine blue bloom; pulp deep red; best-tasting fig variety maintained at U.S. Germplasm Repository at Davis, with intense, complex flavor. More than 300 years old, grown in California since 1850s; a home garden variety.

(BEGIN TEXT OF INFOBOX / INFOGRAPHIC)

Fig Sources

* Avila and Sons. Fresh and dried, Calimyrna and Mission figs from Laton, Fresno County. At Santa Monica farmers market (Pico Boulevard at Cloverfield Avenue), Saturdays 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Beverly Hills (North Canon Drive between Clifton and Dayton ways), Sundays 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

* Circle C Ranch. Nine varieties of fresh figs, including Conadria and Desert King, from Lake Hughes, Los Angeles County. At Santa Monica farmers market (Arizona Avenue and 2nd Street), Wednesdays 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Hollywood (Ivar Avenue between Sunset and Hollywood boulevards), Sundays 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

* Ditomaso Farms. Fresh White King, Kadota, Mission, Strawberry and Brown Turkey figs, from Camarillo, Ventura County. Available in a few days. At Ventura Midtown farmers market (Main Street and Mills Road), Wednesdays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.; Thousand Oaks (Wilbur Road and Thousand Oaks Boulevard), Thursdays 3 to 7 p.m.; Ventura downtown (Santa Clara and Palm streets), Saturdays 8:30 a.m. to noon; Santa Clarita (Valencia Boulevard and Rockwell Canyon Road), Sundays 8:30 a.m. to noon.

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