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Friday, September 19, 2008

# Pricey produce: Capay figs fetch \$20 per pound in NYC

Sacramento Business Journal - by [Celia Lamb](#) Staff writer

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Noah Barnes had no idea the figs grown at his family's Capay Valley farm were getting marked up by four times the local sale price until he read about it in **The New York Times**.

For \$19.99 per pound, the Aug. 19 story said, customers could buy the green-and-gold striped figs at **The Orchard** produce store in



Noel Neuburger | Sacramento Business Journal

Thaddeus Barsotti shows off a box of candy-stripe figs grown at Capay Fruits & Vegetables.

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Brooklyn.

“I saw that \$20 price, and my eyes opened a little bit,” said Barnes, sales manager for **Capay Fruits & Vegetables**. “I’m selling them for \$5 a pound out here.”

The Capay farm calls them candy-stripe figs because of the striped skin. The Orchard sells them as raspberry figs because of their bright red flesh and berry flavor.

Barnes said his family found the figs growing on a tree near an abandoned house in the Capay Valley about 25 years ago. They took branch cuttings and started an orchard that has grown to about 800 trees. He has no idea if the tree is unique or if it’s a variety that’s grown in other areas.

“I haven’t done much research on it,” he said.

Based on the fruits’ description, Denise Junqueiro at the **California Fig Advisory Board** said they are probably a rare variety called panache figs, also known as tiger figs.

“What!?” she said, when told they’re selling for \$20 per pound in New York City.

There are hundreds of varieties of figs, but California growers typically produce about a half-dozen types, according to the Fig Advisory Board. Local varieties include the brown Calimyrna fig, deep purple or black mission figs, cream-colored kadota figs and the Adriatic fig, used for fig bars and paste.

Figs are readily available in Northern California, but they’re much rarer in other areas of the country, said Patrick Mulvaney, owner of Mulvaney’s Building & Loan restaurant in Sacramento. Mulvaney grills Capay’s candy-stripe figs and uses the caramelized figs in cake and salad.

“They are pretty tasty, and they cost the regular fig price out here,” he said.

Green fig varieties have neared the end of their season, and the restaurant recently has been buying black varieties such as mission figs, he said.

“Figs are really hard to get or (are) expensive in pristine condition, except around here,” Mulvaney added. “They don’t transport very well.”

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“Anything in New York City, even normal produce there, is very expensive because it’s imported from around the country,” Barnes said.

Capay Fruits & Vegetables has finished harvesting the candy-stripe figs and had seven 48-count cases left last week. Next year, Barnes said, he’ll market them a little differently.

“I think I’m going to go for a more exclusive, limited offering and a higher price because I never have enough,” he said.

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