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Fig Taste--The Pack and The Outliers

Yesterday I had the chance to sample about 30 different fig cultivars in the San Jose area (warm summers). So...add those 30 cultivars (not all were marked!) to the previous 6 cultivars from about a month ago, then add that number to last year's tasting of about 10 other cultivars, and here is my sense of figs tonight...

SWEETNESS OF FIGS

I can personally confirm that ripe figs, fresh from the tree, are much sweeter than store bought figs. In addition, with perhaps one or two exceptions, every fig cultivar I tasted yesterday produced: somewhat sweet, sweet, or very sweet figs. All were within the sweetness ballpark.

On the limited issue of "super sweet" figs, however, I have yet to taste a fig that I personally would call "super sweet." I would reserve that term for things like dates, certain white sapotes, grapes left on the vine, certain peaches, and even, certain loquats. To me, "super sweet" fruit actually makes your eyes close as you taste it. The sweetness is that intense. At best, I have tasted a syrupy sweetness in figs, not "close your eyes" sweetness. Of course, I am not suggesting that I, or anyone else wants "super sweet" fruit above all other fruits. I am just trying to keep the terminology straight.

THE PACK: THE SIMILARITY OF FIG TASTES

One of the things that kind of jumps out at you when you scan the literature on figs is that essentially no one bothers to mention any differences in TASTES between the cultivars. Yes, they will talk about sweetness. Sure, they will mention preferred weather, and cropping, flesh color, etc. (A major pet peeve of mine is when they describe the flesh of certain figs as "strawberry flesh" which needlessly, subconsciously suggests something to the reader that is NOT true. These figs do NOT taste like strawberries! Please say red flesh!) And yes, they will mention that a fig is good, or great, or excellent. But there seems to be an almost unspoken assumption that...well...a fig tastes like...uh...a fig, end of story. Is it really that simple? (Or really that boring?) It would seem from my tasting of 30 plus fig cultivars yesterday that the answer is...well...substantially...yes.

Tasting fig cultivar after fig cultivar yesterday, I was struck by just how similar they all TASTED. And by that, please keep in mind I am speaking only about the actual TASTE of the fruit, not the sweetness or overall merit of the fruit. Some were clearly sweeter than others. Some had larger fruit. Some had juicier fruit. Some looked much better. Some were gritty and seedy. Others were more liquid. If pressed, I could rank them in terms of

my favorites.

But on just the issue of taste alone, my goodness, at best there were virtually inconsequential subtle differences in taste. That goes a long way toward explaining the fig literature.

But...and you knew this was coming...there were some exceptions. And to me, personally, these figs are slightly more interesting because...well I'll be...they must be considered taste outliers! Tonight, I am calling them outlier figs. I will mention my picks below. Perhaps others can nominate additional fig outliers.

But first I do want to refer back to the three taste groupings I mentioned in a previous fig post. What I termed "the triangle of fig taste" includes: a first point of the triangle for the honey taste, a second point of the triangle for the caramel/vanilla taste, and a third point for the berry jam taste. Going into the tasting yesterday, I actually anticipated that I would taste figs in each one of these three taste categories, and in various combinations, a plethora of taste combinations. My expectations, however, were wrong.

Instead, at this juncture, I would have to say that 95% of the figs I tasted would fall into the category of "honey taste" or expressed slightly differently, "sweet fig" taste. To the extent that any of the figs combined this taste with a berry taste, or a caramel taste, that foray away from the pure "sweet fig" taste was very limited, very subtle. In fact, not one of the 30 fig cultivars I tasted yesterday even came close to a berry jam taste, or a caramel taste. Very surprising.

OUTLIER FIGS

After tasting all these cultivars over the last 2 years, there are only three figs that I would consider to be taste outliers. At the top of my list-

1) *Violette de Bordeaux* (Also Known as *Negronne*)-- I was very surprised yesterday to find no fig that even came close to this fig in terms of tasting like berry jam. As I mentioned in the previous post, this fig has a delightful raspberry jam taste. Simply put, this fig tasted dramatically different from all the other figs I have tasted. Another fig that is rumored to have berry jam overtones is *Panache*, but tasting a few yesterday (which were *Reverse Panache* really)...well...all I can say is that *Panache* cannot hold a candle to *Violette* in this department. *Panache* is hopelessly subtle at most. *Violette* is the actual full blown berry taste. No question.

I also have to admit here that I overstated the pervasive silence in the fig literature on the issue of taste. It is not actually complete and total! A handful of sources out there do, in fact, do mention the raspberry jam taste of *Violette*, as well they should. I think this is a special fig.

2) *Yellow Neches*--Apparently, this was a fig favored in colonial times. I do not know its full story. Suffice to say it is incredibly small, with scant flesh, and on its face, well...just looks like a pathetic fig. But, I do think it has one thing going for it. It tastes different from the other figs. It seems to taste more of caramel and vanilla. I guess, it more or less occupies that point of the triangle all by its lonesome. Maybe the reason why it tastes this way is that it is almost all skin and little flesh. What a quirky fig..er...thing resembling a fig. If you put it up against the large delicious, syrupy figs out there, it just seems so sad. Would I grow *Yellow Neches* for its distinctive taste? Umm.....

3) *Col de Dame Noir*--This fig was clearly different from all the other 30 cultivars I tasted yesterday, and a pleasant surprise at that. The first taste impression you get is that...the sweetness has been ramped down a

bit, and the acidity of the fruit has been noticeably ramped up. Then, you search for a taste and you find that... the honey taste, or sweet fig taste is almost all gone, and in its place is...is...is...is...and you can't quite grab onto anything. The flesh is so red and luscious you almost beg it to veer into a berry taste, but it just won't tread the same path as Violette. Or does it? Hard to say definitively...perhaps another tree...in another year? It seems plain that Col gives you a different kind of fig experience: sweet skin surrounding an "almost berry with no fig taste" flesh. Something tells me that further tastings of this one might unlock it's secrets further, but for now, this fig is definitely an interesting outlier.

The following thread was started by Paul on September 24, 2006 at 10:50 pm PST

Panache Fig

Paul

I have a panache (Tiger Fig) And it does have this Jam like taste as you describe, Infact it is one of my favorite figs for this reason. Now if the Violette de Bordeaux has a lot stronger jam taste then I definately want to add it to my fig collection. I have read about it in the past and have been very interested in it for quite awhile but was not sure where to get a cutting from. Do they sell cuttings of it at the place where you did the taste testing ? If so can you forward a phone number so I can get intouch with them ? Thanks.

William Visalia Ca

The above followup was added by William on September 25, 2006 at 7:30 am PST.

Violette de Bordeaux

Thanks for these thoughts, Paul. As always, interesting to hear what you've been up to. I'd agree that Violette is a great tasting fig--- in the USDA collection, pretty much every year it's the one I like the most. And I like it specifically because of that strong, distinctive berry-like flavor. William--- get wood from the USDA NCGR at Wolfskill, run by UC Davis.

It's not the only variety that has that flavor, but it always seems the strongest in Violette to me. By the way, it apparently needs a hot climate to get decent-tasting fruit (like so many figs!). In foggy parts of the Bay Area, I've heard it is lousy from people who've tried to grow it. I haven't.

I'm curious about Col de Dame Noir. Is this a French selection brought in by Todd Kennedy? And where were you? At Filoli? In quiring minds want to know!

The above followup was added by Tom A. on September 25, 2006 at 12:46 am PST.

Thanks Paul!

There are sometimes such thoughts contributing, in this board, so interesting and well done, that I can only read in a religious silence and full of admiration! (and saving them in my PC, too! ;-))

Such Paul thoughts are one of them!

The above followup was added by Francesco on September 26, 2006 at 0:04 am PST.

Figs

My capacity to analyze and categorize fruit flavors is, at best, embryonic compared to Paul's skills (I'm sure that wine-tasting does help to sharpen the palate), so I don't have too many comments to add. I will say that we mostly agreed on which figs seemed to have more distinctive character. In particular, I did agree that "Col de Dame Noir" was one of the best-tasting figs that we sampled.

Caveat: Firm conclusions can obviously not be drawn by one run through an orchard, as not all cultivars ripen on the same schedule. Some of the trees had ripened almost all of their fruit, leaving only a few overripe and bird-pecked specimens left to pluck. In other cases, trees bore large crops of completely unripe fruit. This was the case with the large "Panache" tree, which was loaded with beautiful, but unready, fruits. (There was a limb-sport that bore unvariegated fruits, and some of those were ripe, however ... those were the "reverse Panache" fruits that Paul mentions above.)

I have a (much smaller) "Panache" at home that does have ripe fruit on it, and they do indeed have a berry-like flavor. I have a "White Adriatic" right by it, and, interestingly enough, that cultivar also seems to have some of that flavor. I'm not sure that I've ever sampled "Violette de Bordeaux" fruit (although I do have a small plant), so I can't compare it to the others.

I can certainly detect honey-like flavors in many figs, but that is hardly surprising: many fig cultivars are named after honey, after all! However, when it comes to caramel and vanilla overtones ... well, I haven't particularly noticed them yet. But I'm sure that my palate just requires a little more "education"!

One word of warning: When tasting figs from every tree in an orchard, it is perhaps best to split the fruits open and bite directly into the pulp.

Fresh figs can be full of latex (many of the figs we picked dripped latex from the stems after being picked), and, if one eats the whole fig, one eats a fair amount of the latex as well.

I've never had a problem with fig latex before (although some report allergic reactions from simply brushing against fig foliage, etc.), but this time was different. Toward the end of our little jaunt, I started to realize that it really **hurt** every time I bit into a new fig. I noticed that my mouth, tongue, and lips were tingling (verging on burning, actually). When I visited a nearby restroom facility, I noticed, in the mirror, that my lower lip was actually somewhat swollen! Yikes!

I did eventually recover (I've clearly lived to tell the tale), but eating was a little painful for a few days.

So all I can say is, beware!

(I have eaten large bowls full of figs before, but typically after picking them and letting them sit around for a while in the refrigerator or on the kitchen counter. So perhaps the latex somehow denatures after the fruit has

been off the tree for a period. Or maybe there is more latex in unripe fruits; I probably consumed a fair number of less-ripe figs in our collective zeal to try fruits from as many trees as possible.)

The above followup was added by Ashok on September 26, 2006 at 1:35 am PST.

William, you can get fig wood at

You can get it from UC Davis:

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Main/docs.htm?docid=12871>

You choose what you want, and they will mail it to you in Jan or Feb when they do their pruning.

The above followup was added by Jonathan in San Francisco on September 26, 2006 at 2:58 am PST.

Outliers and Merit

I want to clear up a possible misapprehension about what I said in the initial post. Simply put, I am NOT saying that I believe that Violette, Yellow Neches and Col are the best tasting figs.

Instead, I am asserting that there is a large group of figs (the pack) that have a substantially similar taste. Then, there are at least 3 fig cultivars that I have tasted that seem to be taste "outliers." These 3 figs taste noticeably (not subtly) different from the pack.

This is akin to saying that there are...I don't know... 25 peach cultivars out there in the world. And in terms of just TASTE alone (not size, sweetness, etc.), 23 of them taste substantially the SAME...like...well...a peach! But...one of the peach cultivars actually tastes noticeably different, like a peach mixed with orange. And a last peach cultivar tastes like peach mixed with mango. Thus, these last two peach cultivars would be considered taste "outliers." The conclusion to be drawn from this is not necessarily that the 24th and 25th cultivars are the BEST cultivars of peach. Instead, they are merely of interest!

Admittedly, it seems to be true that some people, when confronted with the artificial choice of choosing their one, and only "favorite fig," find that they like a berry tasting fig slightly more than a honey tasting fig. (I think I probably fall into this group, as does, I guess, Tom A.) But, clearly such a preference is both subjective, and in some sense, misleading. To me, the best honey tasting fig is a 9.5 out of 10, and the best berry jam tasting fig is a 9.7 out of 10. Both are beyond excellent, and as I see it, you should be growing both!

In the case of Col de Dame Noir, apparently this fig cultivar is the pride of Catalonia, Spain. It is said to come in three colors, white, gray, and black. Based upon my experience so far, I would actually NOT say that Col is the "best tasting" fig. No way.

Instead, I think it is a unique tasting fig that deserves some additional tastings to get to the bottom of exactly what makes it different. In fact, I brought back 3 additional Col fruits with me from that tasting to try to further

decipher its unique taste. Reluctantly, I admit that I still cannot figure it out to my satisfaction. The Col fruit I tasted had little or no "sweet fig" taste in the flesh at all, more acidity than the others, and normal tasting skin. The effect of the fig in your mouth was to steer your taste buds toward a berry taste, then fail to deliver that taste. So strangely, it is a berry jam fig without the taste of berries. Okay.

Then again, maybe this fig is, in actuality, a strong berry jam tasting fig, and this year, for whatever reasons, the climate prevented that berry taste from fully forming. Maybe it needs even more warmth than this site provided. In fact, maybe this is what Violette tastes like when IT fails to get its preferred climate. (Tom A. mentions that Violette does NOT get its berry flavor when grown in cold climates. Which leaves it tasting like... like...like what?) (By the way Ashok, you tasted Violette at the Davis tasting a few weeks back! It must not have made much of an impression on you.)

Actually, I would love for others on the Cloudforest to nominate any other fig taste "outliers" that they are aware of!

C'mon Pitangadiego, I know that you have tasted almost all the fig cultivars. I recall you mentioning that Falls Gold, when fully ripe, is like eating Jalapeno peppers! I personally think that renders it worthy of outlier status. Also why not post your excellent picture of all the fig cultivars here on the Cloudforest? In the meantime, here is a link to Pitangadiego's picture:

<http://forums.gardenweb.com/forums/load/fig/msg0901494317373.html?2>

Notice that tiny yellow fig in the middle? That is the sad little Yellow Neches fig. I ask you: who will love such a tiny little fig?

The above followup was added by Paul on September 26, 2006 at 10:36 pm PST.

More Figs

Paul,

Yes, I did get to eat a piece of a "Violette de Bourdeaux" fruit a few weeks ago ... but, honestly, the fragment was so small that I didn't get much of an impression one way or the other. I usually find that I need to eat a whole fruit, or, better, several, to really form an opinion. (Although eating too many figs all at once can be hazardous, as I mentioned above! I suppose the ideal practice would be to visit an orchard multiple times for smaller "rounds" of tasting, rather than one marathon binge.)

A bit off-topic, but Andrew Mariani characterizes "Rio Oso Gem" (a favorite peach of mine) as having a strong component of orange flavor. I've never heard of a peach with mango-like flavors, but perhaps it's out there somewhere!

The above followup was added by Ashok on September 26, 2006 at 11:08 pm PST.

fig thoughts

A few disconnected thoughts:

First, interestingly Pitangadiago's collection contains not one of either Kadota or Mission, two that usually place high on quality ratings in California. I do notice that he mentions "Vista Mission" in his writeup though the picture is listed as "Vista," and maybe he means what the trade refers to as "Mission" or "Black Mission." And he also does say "when the Vista finally started getting ripe, I realized that I had forgotten what a truly good tasting, superior fig it is."

So if he is in fact referring to "Mission" it makes me think of the current pomegranate mania, where in the end, after you have tasted all the new varieties, most say the old standby 'Wonderful' is still the best for flavor. Maybe chasing "new" figs is a waste of time, maybe the best are still Kadota, Mission, and Smyrna. By the way, anyone growing Smyrna ("Calimyrna")? I wouldn't expect it to do well in cool areas but you never know.

Second, Igo is suspicious, being simply Spanish for "fig" (and Italian too? The Google translator doesn't seem to work on that word) and therefore quite probably something of another name. There in fact could be, in fact probably are, many "igos."

Third, virus issues arise immediately, with most trees I see clearly infected with something that leads to broad, not very well defined chartreuse green areas blotched across the leaves. This virus may be beneficial in limiting figs' mostly rampant growth, but it also certainly limits sugar production by lowering photosynthesis in those areas and ultimately lowering fruit quality. How much will varieties improve when they are cleaned up? And another reason to be suspicious of cuttings from any plant you don't know is clean, and most probably aren't.

Fourth, climate and timing are CRITICAL for any fruit evaluation. Remember Pitangadiago is growing in a very different zone from Modesto, the Bay Area, or the Monterey Bay, and the UC collection is growing in a climate different from the Bay Area, Monterey Bay, and San Diego. Expect your results to vary based on climate.

And, how many times have you read the results of "taste testings" where one variety scores high among a group that tests it and then the next month scores low, while a previously inferior variety replaces it? Maybe the new winner just needed a little more time. Consistent results are important.

That said, I definitely intend to try to get hold of the Trojano, Falls Gold, Danny's Delite, and Galbun that Pitangadiago mentions. May as well start with someone else's best bets, no? And I wonder if I will enjoy my head exploding.

By the way, I have heard the legends of Violette de Bordeaux, and have a stock plant in a container here at the nursery. It doesn't want to grow, and the fruit it set have failed to develop. Even the Kadotas and Missions ripen *some* fruit. Might be juvenility, might be vigor issues, I am also sure it is virused, and it might be climate on top of all.

But in the end I also wonder if I will taste it and think, "Mission is actually better."

Fifth, regarding Paul's shameless orchard crawl and overindulgence in sweetness and flavor (do you know moderation?), always beware of the "wine tasting" syndrome, whereby at the end of the day when all the taste buds are burned off the strongest, most intense, most bodaciously intense Cab is declared the winner. Then

when you yourself taste the "blue ribbon winner of the 1997 Santo Garbanzo County Fair" it eats the enamel off your teeth and leaves open sores inside your mouth. Just because something stands out at the end of the day doesn't always necessarily mean it will win in one to one competition with one of the "losers." Especially when you bring it back and try to grow it in your soil, in your climate, with your culture.

-Luen

The above followup was added by Luen on September 28, 2006 at 10:40 am PST.

Tasting A Lot of Fruit

Luen, with respect to the current pomegranate "mania," having recently been to a tasting of many different pomegranate cultivars, I have yet to taste a cultivar that is MUCH better tasting than Wonderful. Instead, I can confirm that there are pomegranate cultivars that taste different from Wonderful. Some taste a little bit sweeter. Some taste a bit stronger perhaps. And a few have a different, citrus-like taste. In the end, which taste you prefer in your pomegranates would be quite subjective.

However, the one thing that jumps out at you when you taste all the pomegranate cultivars in one sitting is that it is much easier to eat the softer seeds of some of the other cultivars. Of course, that realization is very much a product of the fact that you have ALL of the cultivars in front of you. So...if you grew up eating Wonderful pomegranates, and you do not mind eating it, seeds and all, then you would happily eat another Wonderful pomegranate. On the other hand, if you grew up eating the softer-seeded pomegranates, soft seeds and all, and you were suddenly given a Wonderful pomegranate to eat, you just might curse its much harder seeds, and throw the fruit aside. I enjoy both. But...I have to confess that I find the pomegranate to be a bit too labor intensive to eat regularly! I wish I could say I'm a big fan...

As far as the figs go, you will notice that I have not disclosed the fig cultivars that I thought were "the best" from that tasting. The reason for this is that I think that would be a little misleading, because so many were essentially excellent, tasting of sweet honey. In addition, I agree that when sit down and taste a lot of a particular fruit, your mouth does tend to get...uh...coated, and as such, it becomes more difficult to discern differences. And of course, at large tastings, the cliché is that the sweetest fruit typically wins, regardless of other factors. Personally, I try very hard to recognize all of this when I report my results from a tasting.

All things considered, I am comfortable standing behind my three picks for fig taste outliers. And, I am eagerly awaiting other people's nominations! C'mon, do all figs taste like figs? Or, have you tasted a fig cultivar that TASTES different? Perhaps a little mango thrown in? :)

The above followup was added by Paul on September 29, 2006 at 0:20 am PST.

wild figs

in australia there are many different types of wild figs, some good, most poor. but definitely interesting. much smaller, but much richer than commercial cultivars, a super figginess in smell and taste. very strong. way different to anything modern. no mango, but crunchy like eating sand with jam. there you go paul, thats different.

maybe you fig fanatics should go the whole hog and import some aussie native ficus. strangler figs, sandpaper, moreton bay etc, guaranteed to get some extreme figginess.

i can stand anything except except crunchy and nutty, and dry ain't good either.

juicy with no crunch, for me it's still brown turkey leading the pack, (but i've seen photo's of around ten? different figs all called brown turkey, and they ain't).

nighty nights all (4:44 am EST)
:o)

The above followup was added by mal on September 30, 2006 at 11:45 am PST.

Also giant figs

Dr Paul Recher has some kind of tropical fig in his collection that's a least 5x bigger than carica, it's crazy!, supposed to taste excellent too

The above followup was added by Jason on September 30, 2006 at 10:25 pm PST.

Different tasting figs

My ability to describe flavors is worthless. However...

The only way to really do this would be blindfolded tasting. I think that I can tell a Celeste any time, any where, Same for a good, ripe Black Mission. Ditto for Black Madeira. I would know my Vista any where - it is just in a category by itself. The Brown Turkeys, Walker, Blue Giant, etc are all pretty simiar in taste, though not size, etc. Excel is it's own flavor, though there are others that are like it. Tena, Deana, etc have little flavor and are similar.

Yellow Neches has a distinct flavor.

There are many that have a "strawberry jam" like taste, though I don't think any are exactly the same flavor as a strawberry. But each is a little different, though still in a sort of broad category.

There are many others, if you taste them side by side, you can tell a difference, but you probably wouldn't know which is which if you only tated one individually.

Falls Gold has a much stronger taste than almost any other - sort of the difference between pure maple syrup and Mrs. Butterworth - it is just richer, fuller, distinctive.

Ripeness plays a big factor. Sweetness increases dramatically in the last 24-36 hours,. but often taste

increases dramatically and/or changes in the same time frame.

The above followup was added by pitangadiego on October 02, 2006 at 9:14 pm PST.

On Wild Figs, Huge Figs & Mystery Figs

Mal, your post about Australian figs reminded me of something. Every so often, I will discover a web site on the internet that lists, and occasionally describes, the "wild underappreciated fruits" of a particular country or continent. I remember running across lists for certain African countries, certain Asian countries, and even India. Invariably, these places have a wild fig or two! In fact, wild fig species seem to have spread to every corner of the world. And now you mention the Australian figs. Hmmmm....I have to say that one thing I really cannot stand in a fruit is the sensation of eating sand. So I guess that rules out at least the sandpaper fig! Thanks for the heads up.

Jason, do you have a link for information on that fig? I googled "Paul Recher" and "fig", but that huge fig didn't seem to come up. Who is this guy Paul Recher? Is he a famous Aussie fruit guru?

Pitangadiego, thanks for the observations! Falls Gold sounds interesting. Do you know anything about its origins?

And can you recall the names of the cultivars that sort of fall into a berry jam group? At the moment, I would nominate Panache and Violette. Ashok also thought White Adriatic had some berry overtones.

Lastly, I would like to share a fig story tangentially related to the subject of "berry jam figs". A few years back I was at a somewhat distant CRFG scion exchange, one which always takes place in the frozen depths of January. Brrrrrr.

I remember taking my elderly uncle along just to show him all the scions. "So many sticks, each one from a different variety of tree," I told him. "You'll be amazed." Which he was...well...for about ten minutes! Can we go now? No! But I digress...

Anyway, we were minding our own business at the fig table, assiduously collecting and marking fig scions one by one, one for each cultivar. As I was doing that, a stranger approached and leaned over the table to get my attention. "You know," he said, "I am sure those are all very good figs you're collecting, but you know what? I'll bet my fig is better."

"Your fig?" I asked, looking up. "What's your fig?" "I don't know," he responded. "What do you mean you don't know?" I replied incredulously.

"Well," he responded, "the tree has no tag on it, and the prior owner planted the tree, not me, so I don't know what fig it is. The prior owner was an old timer in these fruit groups. He planted a lot of things on the property." "And," he continued, "I've asked fig experts to come out and try to identify the tree, and they just don't know."

"Alright," I replied, "you have my interest. I don't know too much about figs, but can you tell me at least why your fig is so good?"

"Oh yes, everyone says it tastes like the sweetest raspberry jam you've ever had, the sweetest, I mean absolutely heavenly," he replied with evident pride. "My figs are so good," he continued, "I sometimes sell them at the local farmer's market, and the customers there just keep begging for more each week. They say they are the best figs they've ever had."

"Really?" I mused aloud. "Well here we are in January so I guess there is no fruit for me to try. But do you think maybe I could get a scion of your mystery fig if you are willing?"

"Sure." he replied, and with that, he generously offering to take me and my uncle to his nearby home and fig tree. We followed him back to his home, and there he clipped off a scion or two for me and my uncle. So...it seems we had a "fig story," in fact, a "berry fig story," and some scions to go with it. But, in truth, I had do idea what to make of his story. Was this really an incredible mystery fig? I had my doubts. As you know, we rare fruit types are famous for these sorts of amusements. Yes, it's true, we have our fish stories. :)

And yes, that storied fig scion did root out nicely in my one gallon pot. It sits there today, still growing very slowly in a pot. Plant it out now?! Alas, I do not have the property to plant out every mystery fruit.

I do remember thinking that day, you know what...I don't know whether to believe all this, but in the next few years, at some point in September or something, I should go back to that town, or that farmer's market, try out his figs, and decide for myself. If it is truly that stellar, the "sweetest raspberry jam"...hmm...I will assuredly plant it in one of my last remaining spots.

Unfortunately, I have never gotten around to making that trip! Hmmm....maybe this weekend. :)

The above followup was added by Paul on October 03, 2006 at 0:14 am PST.

Falls Gold

I got it from a fellow in the South, who was Indian or Pakistani, if I remember correctly. He had a lot of figs, and sent me about a dozen or so. He supposedly got it from the "Bill Fogerty" collection, but have no info about that collection. I have a few which turned out not to be what they were supposed to be. The problem is, they are really great figs, but for now are unknowns. However I don't care what the name is, if it is a superior fig. My "Peter's Honey" is about to be renamed "Peter's Strawberry" - or it could possibly be the same as Verdino (sic) which was brought from Italy by a friend of a friend. And so it goes.

The above followup was added by pitangadiego on October 03, 2006 at 10:16 pm PST.

Paul. Dr Paul

Dr Paul Recher is an American (from New York?) that came here back in the hippy days and bought 80 acres of land (40 "was farmland") in the subtropics and then proceeded to make the "fruit spirit botanical gardens" he's either very eccentric or very crazy it depends on how you the viewer is :). I just think he's a really smart guy. Anyway he has something like 2500 or 3000 fruiting and edible species in his gardens which is now a complete self seeding jungle.

It's probably the best collection of edible plants in one place in the known universe. He got on a famous Australian garden show a few times and run around in his jungle showing his fruits, he even put cloths on for the occasion but half the people still thought he was the "crazy yank" and the other half of people loved him. Anyway that's a bit of a story for you.

I think the giant Fig he showed was *Ficus auriculata* "Coconut strawberry fig" but you might have to email him to be sure about that.

A visit to his garden while traveling is what got me inspired to start mine

The above followup was added by Jason on October 03, 2006 at 10:27 pm PST.

Sandpaper fig

Paul

It's the leaves, not the fruit that gives this Australian native its name. (The leaves are rough, and could substitute for sandpaper in a pinch.) Fruit has no sandy characteristic. Disclaimer: I haven't eaten this fruit, but it's well described in a number of bushfruit books I've got.

The above followup was added by Tom A. on October 05, 2006 at 10:42 am PST.

Sandpaper fig

There's a couple of different species of this, I have a few trees of one, the fruit is tiny, and furry like the leaves (and yep I've used them as sandpaper :)). I think almost any other fig is more edible than this one on size alone

The above followup was added by Jason on October 05, 2006 at 11:52 am PST.

A complete web site for figs

Hoping to give you a good advice, visit this french well done and complete web site on figs, varieties and choosing also by climate...

- [English version](#)

The above followup was added by Francesco on October 08, 2006 at 8:03 am PST.

sandpaper fig

I had one of these growing in my backyard. I opened up the fruit once and it was dry a fibrous. The fruit were

small. Apparently there are a few different types of sandpaper figs. Anyway, I chopped it out. Maybe I should have tasted it first.

The above followup was added by [fluff](#) on November 15, 2006 at 4:30 pm PST.

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