



What It Takes

This week you'll find Black Mission Figs from Maywood Farms near Corning, CA. Unlike many of the farmers we know, Bob does not come from a long line of family farmers. In fact, Bob comes from Silicon Valley. But ever since he was a boy, Bob has dreamed of becoming a farmer, which stemmed from his fascination with watching his family's small garden grow. When he bought his first farm, Bob was interested in the dried fig market; however, his first fresh fig harvest in 1986 created such a positive reaction that he decided to stick with fresh figs instead of dried ones. That same year, Bob married Karen, and they began running the farm together. They started experimenting with organics in 1990 by converting only 25 acres of their figs to organic. It turned out to be so successful that they began the transition for their remaining acres in 1998. To this day, Bob knows he made the right decision by starting his own farm and he loves every minute of it. Figs are a special treat. We like to eat these fresh Black Mission figs right out of the box and we've shared a favorite recipe with you too.

Storage and Ripening

Black Mission Figs are ready to eat right out of the box. They are very perishable and can mold quickly in heat and moisture, so please eat them or prepare them in the first three days and keep in the coolest driest place in your refrigerator. Immediately take the peaches out of the box and put them on the counter. They make a beautiful centerpiece in a pretty bowl. Some of them may give to slight pressure - these are ready to eat. As for the others, let them ripen at room temperature for a couple of days, checking them often. Once they give to slight pressure, they're ready to eat. Keep the grapes in the coldest part of the refrigerator. Only wash the portion you want to eat, because warm and moist grapes are prone to mold due to high sugar content. Apples are ready to eat and best stored in the crisper. For your crispest apple Ginger Gold's are best when eaten with 2 weeks.

The Red Flame Grapes this week are from Three Sisters Farm, located near Fresno, CA. These are from the same farm as the incredible Champagne grapes you had earlier this summer. Three Sisters has been certified organic since 1981, but even before Joe and Johnni began farming, Joe's parents owned the farm. Beneficial insects and predators like owls are used to control pests that would otherwise damage their grapes.

The Ginger Gold apples are grown by the Stewart Brothers, in Hood River, Oregon. They have been working on their family farm since they were kids. It all started when their parents, Ron and Cheryl, decided to sell their dry-cleaning business and start an organic fruit farm. For many years, Ron was the only organic farmer on the National Commission for Small Farms. When he passed away in 2003, his sons, Ronny and Jimmy, took over and expanded the farm to include many varieties of apples and other fruit. This week, they've provided us with delicious Ginger Gold apples. The trick to great fruit is creating a natural loop in the production process by composting cast-off fruit and peels, which is a sustainable way to keep the soil rich and fertile.

You'll also find the incredibly tasty Colorado Peaches from Brant and Carol. Brant says the season continues to being trying. Not only did they have a reduced yield from last winters freeze, but a couple episodes of hail close to the beginning of harvest reduced their yield even more. We are fortunate to be getting another round of these summer favorites. Please be understanding if you find a nick on your peaches and some of the smaller sizing this season. Thankfully the same great taste comes through.

Health and Wellness

Would you believe it if we said you could eat more and less at the same time? It's true! Professor Barbara Rolls of Pennsylvania State University, has found that by incorporating more water-rich foods (like fruits and vegetables) and eliminating foods that are high in calories, people actually eat fewer calories during the day. Her research shows that you can eat the exact same number of calories at a meal, but by getting rid of high-calorie foods, you can eat a bigger meal, feel fuller and you're likely to eat less later in the day - meaning over one day, you can eat bigger meals, but end up with fewer calories. For example, take a chicken salad sandwich and say it's 270 calories. By using whole wheat bread, reduced-fat mayonnaise, and adding grapes, you have cut down on calories and fat while adding a water-rich food (grapes) that will fill you up more as well as providing all the health benefits of a serving of fruit.

One of my favorite things of summer is this recipe along with grilled summer vegetables, grilled or fresh peaches and sweet corn any way you like it. It's a meal that will keep the memory of summer well into the winter months.

Grilled Figs With Goat Cheese

Ingredients

- 8 ripe figs
- 1/4 cup fresh, soft goat cheese
- 1 teaspoon mixed minced fresh thyme and rosemary, or any combination of fresh herbs
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 8 fig or grape leaves, or 8 6-inch squares of aluminum foil
- 8 rosemary-twig skewers or toothpicks
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon Banyuls or balsamic vinegar.

Directions

1. Pinch figs apart slightly from their stem ends, forming four sides surrounding a central pocket. Into this pocket, spoon a small amount of goat cheese. Sprinkle each with a tiny bit of herb mix and a pinch of salt and pepper. From the bottom up, use a leaf or sheet of foil to form a cup around each fig; skewer leaf or foil through fig so that it holds securely.
2. Grill figs, open side up, just until they brown slightly and cheese softens. Remove, sprinkle with a few drops each of soy sauce and vinegar, and serve.

Yield: 4 servings
Time: 10 minutes
(Adapted from Gary Danko)

