

The Commercial Possibilities of Florida Fruit Products

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Production without conservation is like a foundation without the house. Since the days of the ancients people have made use of two types of conservation, first that of marketing the fresh product, and second, that of preserving it before placing it on the market. Too often, the Florida grower employs only the first method in disposing of his crop. Statistics show that Florida exported \$80,000,000 worth of food products last year and in return brought back \$70,000,000 worth of these same products, a large per cent of which might have been produced within our own boundaries. And, more surprising than the knowledge that they might have been produced, is the fact that a large part of them were produced, and then allowed to go to waste.

Reliable authority states that sometimes as much as ten per cent of the products delivered to the packing house are discarded as culls. This loss sometimes measures the difference between profitable and unprofitable production. Products known as culls are often so called only because of an external defect that does not injure their value for table or canning purposes. Year after year Florida walks by her own packing houses, where these culls lie, on her way to buy similar products put up in containers in

other states, to distribute to her own people.

A visit to three grocery stores in as many localities in the State revealed the fact that only one Georgia and two Florida firms were represented on the list of some seventy-five different factories whose fruit products found their way into the homes in the State. A visit of this kind is like a tour of America. From Washington with her loganberry fields and apple orchards, down the Pacific to the home of the famous Sunkist fruits, across the Rockies to Chicago, St. Louis and New York, with their factories to which center systems of transportation lined with carriers of fresh fruits and vegetables and from which radiate car loads of containers that find their way into all sections of the country. A closer inspection of these shelves further disclosed the fact that all of the products, with the exception of apples and cherries, could have been put up within our own State.

As unthrifty as the situation looks it is not as bad as it has been. About ten years ago commercial canning in this State developed simultaneously along two lines: the home proposition in which individuals working on a small basis put up a fancy product for a fancy price; and

the factory proposition operating on a larger basis put up a commercial product to compete with similar products on the world's market. The introduction of Home Demonstration work into the State in 1912 gave this industry tremendous impetus. During the intervening years there are many instances where exhibits of products made in the home have stimulated the commercial work on both a large and small scale.

A few of the many worthy examples of production for fancy trade from the home kitchen in one season, is the work of such people as:

Mrs. J. J. Willie, Lloyd, Florida, 2,000 containers of figs.

W. H. Haskins, Winter Haven, Florida, 25 gallons of guava jelly.

Mrs. Ballentine, Ft. Myers, Florida, 2,000 glasses of guava jelly; 1,000 glasses of Cattle guava jelly.

Mrs. Barfield, Caxambus, Florida, 2,000 No. 3 cans of guavas; 100 No. 2 cans of mangos; 200 gallons of roselle juice; 2,000 glasses of guava jelly; 1,000 12-ounce jars of orange jelly.

Mrs. Hess, Ft. Myers, Florida, 200 12-ounce jars of kumquats; 400 lbs. of crystallized peel.

Calls constantly come to the Home Demonstration Agents and the Home Demonstration office at Tallahassee for the Florida State College Bulletin No. 34 on Jellies, Preserves and Marmalades. This bulletin has not only gone throughout our own State, but also into every State in the Union. "If a penny saved be a penny earned," then the filling of the home pantry by the girls and housewives is but another method of marketing Flor-

ida products at home. Since the fall of 1918, through home demonstration work there has been reported 3,197,188 containers filled with fruits and vegetables.

Although citrus fruits rank first in point of production they are but one of the many varieties that can be grown. In addition to the citrus, chief among those that lend themselves readily to commercial canning are the guavas, roselle or Florida cranberry, mangos, strawberries and others that grow in abundance throughout the middle and southern sections of Florida, while in the northern section of the State we find figs, muscadine grapes and uncultivated blackberries growing in abundance. There are many others with promising possibilities, but these are grown at present in sufficient quantity to be utilized for commercial purposes. No less interesting in number and variety are the products to be made from these fruits, some of which are, preserves, jams, jellies, marmalades, chutneys, juices, vinegars, pickles and confections. Plans are now under way for the development of a muscadine vineyard in North Florida with an idea of placing grape products on the market.

The demand within our State for soft drinks, such as pepsi-cola, cheri-cola, coca-cola and many other of similar nature is sufficient to pay a yearly revenue of approximately \$3,503,210.88, according to figures obtained from the Internal Revenue Director of the State. Commercial production of the wholesome juice of the muscadine grape and various citrus fruits would in all probability find not only a welcome, but also a ready demand from the public. The juice of the musca-

dine grape which is a native of the State need only to be known to make a place for itself on the market. A satisfactory method of putting up this product has been developed by Mr. Chas. Dearing of the United States Department of Agriculture.

The manufacture of satisfactory citrus products has been only partly solved, but the possibilities seem so great that, in spite of discouraging failures and par-

tial successes the problem claims the time and thought of scientists and manufacturers. The fact that in other sections of the country the commercial production of other fruit products has long since passed the experimental stage indicates that this industry backed by the required capital, necessary training and perseverance can be entered upon with a minimum chance of failure.