

## AVOCADO VARIETY EVALUATION, 1971

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The subject of avocado varieties has certainly not suffered from insufficient attention at these meetings in recent years. In 1967 I discussed varieties and last year Dr. Malo included the same varieties I had listed three years earlier—plus Lula and Booth 7—in his paper on avocado and mango cultivars.

Nevertheless, consideration of varieties is a proper part of a general symposium so we will go over the variety situation briefly again. As in the past, we need to limit ourselves to varieties of commercial importance. There are many varieties which have considerable interest for other reasons but this simply is not the proper occasion to bring them into the picture.

Dade County is still greatly predominant in avocado production. In the 1970-71 season it produced 94% of the avocados reported by the State Inspection Service, the rest of the State accounting for only 6%. I'm sure that there is considerably less disparity between these areas if we include the non-commercial production, and we can anticipate increased production in several other parts of the State as better adapted varieties are found. Dr. Krezdorn's report last year on cold hardy avocados is an important step toward this end. The fact remains, however, that for purposes of this discussion we should concentrate on Dade County varieties and their problems.

Dr. Malo and I seem to be in substantial agreement that eight or ten varieties are needed to fill our requirements for large and small fruit from July through February. For these we listed Simmonds, Nadir, Ruehle, Waldin, Booth 8, Hall, Choquette and Monroe. Malo included Tonnage, Booth 7 and Lula; I mentioned Petersen. Neither of us listed Pollock, Collinson or Booth 1 although these produce far more than Simmonds, Ruehle, Petersen or Tonnage, because it is generally agreed that the first three varieties have drawbacks which will tend to reduce their importance. I think we might add Nesbitt to the list of varieties which can be expected to increase. It is a large, fairly dark green fruit of good eating and shipping quality that matures in August. It will help to fill the demand for large fruit between Pollock and Choquette, although I have not seen much evidence that it can be held in commercial quantities until mid-October when Hall and Choquette start.

The Avocado Administrative Committee's annual report for 1970-71 lists shipments for 51 varieties, plus 30,000 bushels of "seedlings and unlisted varieties." It is interesting to note, however, that four varieties accounted for almost 70% of the entire production. They were Booth 8, 25.1%, Lula, 21.6%, Waldin, 12.3%, and Booth 7, 10.5%. These proportions vary from year to year, and the 70-71 season was unusually heavy to Booths, but the figures indicate that there is more standardization of varieties than we sometimes realize.

The 30,000 bushels of seedlings and unlisted varieties includes several minor varieties of promise. Varieties in this category frequently are the private possession of a single grower, who prefers to ship them under the general maturity regulations for seedlings. Many of these have value only in their owner's eyes, but some are really worthwhile, and sooner or later they will become available to the industry generally, with or without their owners' permission.

A few weeks ago Pal Brooks and I were talking about this symposium and Pal said, "I'll be interested in seeing whether your recommendations now are the same as they were four years ago." After thinking about the matter, hoping I could come up with something new and better or more intelligent, I have to admit that they haven't changed much.

For early, large fruit I still pick Simmonds. For early small fruit, the Nadir. Ruehle and Nesbitt are about the same size and season, mostly in August, and I don't know which one will turn out to be preferable. For late August and September we have Waldin and Tonnage. I have reservations about both of these varieties but they are money-makers at the moment and will continue to be important in the foreseeable future.

Booth 8 will be the mainstay of production in October and both Booth 7 and Lula will continue to be important in November and December. I will say this, however: the four varieties, Booth 8, Lula, Booth 7 and Waldin will not continue to account for 70% of our production. Recent plantings have been heavily to summer varieties, Choquettes and Monroes, and I look for a steady increase in the proportion of the crop that comes from these sources. I wish I could conclude by reporting that a good small, late fruit has been found. On this, the most important gap in our spectrum, we are as far as ever from having a satisfactory variety.