

III. CHARACTERISTICS OF FRESH PRUNES IN RELATION TO QUALITY OF DRIED FRUITS

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A study involving fruit sampling at dehydrators in Gridley, Red Bluff and Tulare County was conducted in the 1978 season to (1) evaluate certain quality characteristics of fresh prunes as to their potential use for predicting dry prune quality and suitability for dried fruit vs. juice, and (2) determine the influence of fresh fruit size on quality attributes of both fresh and dry prunes. Correlations between the various fresh and dried prune characteristics are now being determined and will be reported later. This information can be useful in attempting to eliminate undersize prunes before dehydration, and it could eventually lead to significant improvements in handling and drying procedures.

IV. FRENCH PRUNE CULTIVARS EVALUATION

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The primary efforts in 1978 were (1) to try to determine whether time of harvest and related maturity factors influence the quality grade of processed #707 French prunes, and (2) to determine the pitting of several French prune selections.

To determine the influence of harvest timing on quality, about 60 pounds of fresh #707 French prunes from two blocks were picked separately at weekly intervals for five weeks, dehydrated, stored and then processed and evaluated by expert prune industry personnel in mid-November. Samples of improved French of similar age and growing adjacent to one of the #707 blocks were similarly collected, handled and evaluated.

Of the total of ten #707 French and five improved French samples, four of the five improved French samples were judged to be of Santa Clara quality, while only one of the ten #707 French samples merited Santa Clara quality. The earliest picked improved French sample was California quality while the Santa Clara quality #707 French sample was harvested in mid season. Skin peeling appeared to be the primary defect of the #707 that resulted in California grade on all but one sample.

One green bin lots of #707 French were harvested for pitting evaluation from five different growers blocks at various stages of the harvest season. In addition, one bin lots of Woods Red French, Woods Black French and improved French were also harvested for pitting.

Results of the pitting tests showed that all four of those French prune selections pitted satisfactorily. Quality evaluation results with the #707 French indicate that it may have an inherent skin characteristic that reduces its appearance quality in relation to improved French when processed by current industry procedures.