FIGS

Figs are a relatively minor crop within the county with acreage less than 10 total acres. This ancient fruit belongs to the genus *ficus* and is found in a family of plants which include the mulberry. Figs are one of the earliest fruits known to be cultivated.

The origin of figs can be traced back to the region between Asia Minor and India where it is still grown in substantial quantities. Figs are famous all over the world for their rich and succulent taste. While Turkey is well known for its brown figs, Algeria is the world’s largest producer.

In the USA, southern California is a large producer and shipper all over North America. There are several varieties; Symrna, white, San Pedro, brown, Common, Dotatto and Praga just to name a few.

Called the “poor man's food” in Mediterranean countries, figs have a laxative effect, provide calcium and phosphorus, and dried they are high in iron. When fresh, figs should be eaten very soft, yet they can also be eaten as a dried fruit.

Figs appear in the earliest recorded history. When Cato advocated the conquest of Carthage, he used as his crowning argument, the advantage of acquiring figs as part of victory. These fruits have become so popular in America that many varieties - purplish, brownish and greenish-are grown in abundance.

Ants are great pollinators of figs. The base of fig flowers secretes a sugary liquid that attracts ants through a small opening. The ants go in search of the sweetness offered, picking up pollen on their feet. This is brought to the next fruit.

The old trade caravan routes spread figs far and wide, although possibly not as far and wide as the bird population of the world. Birds eat the seeds and through their migration patterns, birds have ensured the survival of figs in new locations.

Fig trees have no blossoms on their branches and when blossoms are present, they are actually located on the inside of the fruit. Many tiny flowers produce the crunchy little seeds that give figs their unique texture.

Figs are harvested according to nature’s clock, fully ripened and partially dried on the tree. Figs naturally help hold in moisture in baked goods, keeping them fresher. Fig puree can be used to replace fat in baked goods. E-mail us for details.

The origins of the fig tree can be traced back to Western Asia with archeological evidence from as far back as 5,000 B.C. The fig quickly became a stable food source for much of the world. References to uses of the fig have been found in many of the ancient writings. In fact, it has appeared throughout recorded history with emphasis in Egypt and Greece.

The oldest known living fig tree can be found in present day Lima, Peru. It has been dated as far back as 1538.
The fig tree flourishes in the Mediterranean areas and in dry climates. Due to various diseases that can attack it, figs will not grow in tropical regions. If there is too much rain, the fruit will typically split before harvest.

Fig Newtons were created in 1891 by the Kennedy Biscuit Works in Cambridgeport, Massachusetts. They had named many of their other cookies for nearby towns, and almost called it the "Fig Shrewsbury" before the town of Newton won out.

The man who originated the Fig Newton, Charles Roser put his cookie recipe to work in his factory in Kenton, Ohio, and sold out to Nabisco in 1910. Fig Newtons were one of the first commercially baked products in America. This cookie is the 3rd most popular cookie in the U.S., over 1 billion are consumed each year.

Figs are rich in calcium, potassium, phosphorus, and iron. Figs need a warm to hot growing season.

The numerous globes found within figs are held together with glucose. Most figs imported to North America are dried, and originate either in Greece or Turkey.

Dried figs are chopped and used in cookies or other pastries. Fresh ripe figs are served in Italy with prosciutto or San Daniele ham or eaten out-of-hand. Dried figs can be stewed or made to compote using port wine for an additional taste dimension.

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