

Super Satsumas and Colorful Citrus

By Carol Anne Modena

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A delicious way to up your intake of vitamin C and phyto-nutrients this winter is to dive into the Co-op's color collection of seasonal citrus. Confused about the array of tangerines and mandarins and oranges and grapefruit? Ask a Produce worker—they'll gladly cut you samples.

One winter hit worth waiting for is Satsuma Mandarin Oranges. It's easy to get addicted to these seedless, zip-peel little orange balls of sweet juicy sunshine. We're fortunate to have a grower in Northern California, Johansen Ranch, which provides us with high-quality, tree-ripened, organic gems that have traveled a fraction of the distance Chinese Mandarins would cover to get to a chain supermarket.

Not only are these citrus rich in flavor, they're also rich in history. In 1910 Rich Johansen's great-grandparents Anton and Bertha moved with their seven daughters and many other families from South Dakota to the warmer climate of Orland, California. There they purchased an 80-acre farm. Rich's grandparents John and Martha married in 1916 and acquired the original farmland, cultivating apricots and peaches. The irrigation ditches they built that year were still being used into the 1970s!

In 1960 the family planted 2000 Owari Satsuma Mandarin trees. "As the Mandarins grew, it was fortunate that everyone had a day job," says Rich. "Mandarins take forever to develop. It took eleven years before we had a flavor that we considered consistently good." It was also during the 1960s that Rich's mom Margaret became deathly allergic to chemicals and could no longer live on a conventional farm. Fortunately, farm manager Ned Wilson was a native Cherokee whose dad and grandfather were experienced in farming without chemicals. "Every tree was a brother to him," says Rich of Ned. "He was their steward." With the help of Ned and Amigo Bob Cantisano, the farm converted to organic.

Today they grow Owari Satsumas, Clementine Mandarins, Washington Navels, Blood Oranges, Meyer Lemons, and olives. Look for Johansen citrus at the Co-op this winter. We are pleased to offer produce from a family farm whose goals are "to be good stewards of the land, to help others realize their dreams, and to prepare the farm for the next generation."

Adapted from materials from Johansen Ranch.