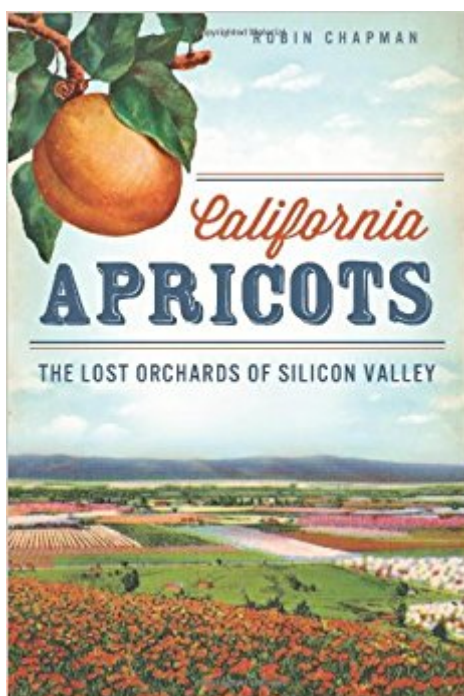


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# California Apricots: The Lost Orchards Of Silicon Valley (American Palate)



## Synopsis

Picked warm from a tree, a California apricot opens into halves as easily as if it came with a dotted line down its center. The seed infuses the core with a hint of almond; the fruit carries the scent of citrus and jasmine; and it tastes, some say, like manna from heaven. In these pages, Robin Chapman recalls the season when the Santa Clara Valley was the largest apricot producer in the world and recounts the stories of Silicon Valley's now lost orchards. From the Spaniards in the eighteenth century who first planted apricots in the Mission Santa Clara gardens to the post-World War II families who built their homes among subdivided orchards, relive the long summer days ripe with bumper crops of this much-anticipated delicacy.

## Book Information

Series: American Palate

Paperback: 176 pages

Publisher: Arcadia Publishing; First Edition edition (April 16, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1609497953

ISBN-13: 978-1609497958

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.3 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 30 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #237,131 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #30 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Gardening & Landscape Design > By Region > West #57 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Gardening & Landscape Design > Fruit #59 in Books > Science & Math > Agricultural Sciences > History

## Customer Reviews

"Robin has lovingly 'canned' the unsung history of Santa Clara Valley's apricots so present and future generations will understand and appreciate their significance, not only to the area but to the country and World. It's especially significant to those who have moved to the region or were born after the apricot boom. The more high tech we get, the more we need to know our past....This enjoyable, well-written, definitive guide will capture your interest by entertaining and educating you on the value of this tasty treasure, which is chockfull of Anti-Oxidants, Vitamin C, Potassium, Iron and more." --C. MacDonald, See California  
"I spent the weekend engrossed in Robin Chapman's well-researched, amazing ode to the Santa Clara Valley's agricultural heritage, "California Apricots:

The Lost Orchards of Silicon Valley." Chapman, whom you might remember from her time as a reporter on KRON-TV, grew up in a house built by her father in an apricot orchard in Los Altos. Her book is a love letter to the Valley of Heart's Delight, back when summer days meant fresh fruit sweeter than anything in a supermarket today. In addition to her own research and memories, History San Jose gave Chapman access to an amazing photo collection donated by late philanthropist Burrell Leonard (who eventually turned his Cupertino orchards into Valco). The slim paperback volume even ends with a collection of apricot recipes that'll send you running to your nearby farmers market." --Sal Pizarro, Silicon Valley Mercury-News "It's time to sit back, slice of apricot nut bread in hand, and learn some apricot lore. TV reporter-turned-author Robin Chapman has just written California Apricots: The Lost Orchards of Silicon Valley, which chronicles the fruit's local history. She takes readers from the days of the Spanish padres to the time when the Santa Clara Valley ranked as the world's largest apricot producer to the years when housing subdivisions ate up the orchards. It's full of fascinating facts (even Steve Jobs called it "paradise") and historic photos. If the shot of the two boys sneaking a snack from the apricot drying trays doesn't make you misty-eyed about this region's agricultural past, nothing will."--Linda Zavoral, Mercury News "Los Altos author Robin Chapman's 'California Apricots: the Lost Orchards of Silicon Valley' (History Press), published in April, has vaulted into the top 10 of the publisher's 1,200 titles, sending it into a second printing six weeks after publication."--Los Altos Town Crier, June 26, 2013.

"Our family's series of lucky accidents placed us in a position to straddle the region's two economies. Agriculture was both the past of the Santa Clara Valley and its present when my parents came to California. Technology, which supported our family through my father's job at Ames, was a small part of its present but became all of its future. As my engineer father worked and the valley grew, I never thought to ask anyone why there were so many apricot trees around us. But, since my parents lived on the same street in Los Altos for the rest of their long lives, the life of the valley remained part of my own. When they died, I wasn't surprised to find a small, newly planted Blenheim apricot seedling just outside their back gate. That tree started my quest to find the story of the apricot and how it had its time in the sun in California."

Having been born and raised in Los Altos, California I found this book to be full of rich memories of my childhood and life forward. Our new home there was across the street from a large orchard where I played and had great adventures as a child. My mother spent her whole career working at Libby's cannery in Sunnyvale where most of the fruit from these orchards went. And I spent my

entire career in Silicon Valley where the orchards of Santa Clara county once were. But there is more to this book. Ms.Chapman did an excellent job of researching the history of this important part of the world from it's start as a Native American paradise to the "settling" of it by the Spanish and Mexican influences then to it's bustling food production industry to it's present day place as the High-Tech capital of the world. And with all this we even get recipes! The world is always evolving and Santa Clara and the surrounds are no exception. This is a story of the building of culture and history, something of which the United States has little of compared to places like Europe. I recommend this book to everyone who might be interested in knowing about one of the most vibrant places in the world with a history some may be surprised to learn.

How can someone who loves the place of her childhood be so balanced in her treatment of its transformation to something radically different? With a journalist's love for a good story, Ms. Chapman takes a concise journey thru the history of California. From Franciscan missionaries to early commercial orchards after the gold rush, to larger producers in the 20th century, the story of Silicon Valley ends with small remnants of the great orchards scattered among the Googles and Apples and Hewlett-Packards of today. It is a poignant reminder that change is inevitable (and not always bad), but that the good things of the past must be appreciated and remembered.

Finally someone has written the definitive history of the agrarian Santa Clara Valley, this little gem should come as a pleasure to everyone who has grown up, lived or visited there during this era. Even as a boy I knew this was a very special place and felt the urgency of it with time running out as Silicon Valley and the defense industry moved in, scraping away the orchards and polluting the air. Thank you Robin.

I've lived in California for over 30 years and though I love the history of all of our states, this book includes much I did not know about the place I now call home. The author's writing is conversational and it is clear she has a real affection for--not just the exotic apricot--but her native California's rich agricultural history. Who knew that high tech powerhouses like David Packard and Steve Jobs had their own apricot orchards? This is just one thing I discovered in California Apricots: the Lost Orchards of Silicon Valley. It's a great read and I highly recommend it.

This was a wonderful book that flashed me back to 1955, the year my mom and dad moved our family to Los Altos from Burlingame, CA. The author describes so well the orchards and their

beauty. I remember throwing dirt clods in plowed orchards and fights with the green apricots with other boys in orchards. All of us hired out to haul apricots or work cutting apricots with the wonderful Mexican women who could work so quickly. Something about those days was memorable for me because I now have an orchard in Monte Sereno, CA with more than 30 trees of plums, cherries, apricots, peaches and apples. Not only is this book readable because of the setting but also describes the history of the growth of the industry in the area. We often yearn for those simple carefree days.

As a 76 year old San Franciscan I read this book to learn what happened to the California apricots and apricot orchards I remembered from my youth. It appears to be an accurate if somewhat dry recounting of their fate, written in a reportorial style consistent with the authors background as a news reporter. There was little discussion of the human element, the sadness many of the apricot growing families must have felt as they experienced the passing of their way of life. Also missing was an adequate discussion of how the rare micro-climate of the Santa Clara Valley allowed apricots, particularly the king of apricots the Blenheim variety, to flourish as perhaps nowhere else on earth. (The last apricot tree the author's parents planted on their property was a Blenheim). The California's Central Valley, is too hot for Blenheim's. As someone raised on Blenheim's I find the currently available varieties almost inedible. Arguably the highest and best use of the Santa Clara Valley, but not the most profitable, was orchards.

Loved the history in a very important time for the Santa Clara Valley, with a fantastic crop.

I live in the Santa Clara Valley where apricot orchards used to reign. It is a pleasure to read how and when apricots came to be here including even the names of the streets and towns where ranches were located, how the premium cultivars were introduced, and how they were eventually shipped across the United States, and, in dried form, around the world. Unfortunately, although the wonderful soil and climate is still with us, the valley is now covered mostly with buildings, and apricots have been moved to the central valley where a different, and much inferior cultivar is the only one to grow in the heat. Anyone who relishes apricots should enjoy this book.

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