

# Grower Profile

This Profile is excerpted from *Newfarm.org*. For the complete article go to [http://www.newfarm.org/features/0804/masumotoindex\\_print.shtml](http://www.newfarm.org/features/0804/masumotoindex_print.shtml). Mas is the author of five books including *Epitaph for a Peach*. To learn more about Mas, check his website at [Masumoto.com](http://Masumoto.com).

## Eco-Farm Keynote: David 'Mas' Masumoto STORIES: How farmers can help people connect food with memory

All of us have a story, and maybe the best way to describe my story is to begin to tell a little bit about a peach I grow. Sun Crest is one of the last remaining truly juicy peaches. When you wash that treasure under a stream of cooling water, your fingertips distinctively search for that gushy side of the fruit, your mouth waters in anticipation, you lean over the sink to make sure you don't drip on yourself. Then the juice trickles down your cheeks and dangles on your chin. This is a real bite, a primal act, a magical sensory celebration announcing summer has arrived.

That peach only makes sense if you know what great peaches taste like. My biggest fear is that there is a generation growing up who have never tasted that sort of produce, and if they haven't tasted it, how will they know if they're missing something wonderful? I claim that it's all about a sense of memory, a memory all of us know and understand. You understand that sense of difference.

The question then is, of course, what is that greater memory that people share with food—and is there a generation that's going to grow up that has no such memory? I claim that memories are often wound around stories. They belong to what I call 'The Memory Economy.'

Let me explain that. My peaches fill the flavor niche industry left behind. Large scale farming operations can't mimic my methods, in which skill and human management replace huge doses of capital and technology. I want my fruits to manifest the life and spirit of a family farm. ...but my peaches begin a journey in taste, texture, and aroma accompanied by stories. People who enjoyed my peaches understand and appreciate flavor, they pay attention to memories. And that's why that memory that we hold, I think, is the crucial link to going from just simply having produce that's farmed organically to something that's farmed wonderfully. Because it's memory that fills that gap in between, and as I said, we have that memory, we have that passion to understand and work with nature in the environment. And as the organic market place matures I hope we keep falling in love with that memory over and over and over. It's like my wife and I. We've been married for twenty years, and I sometimes forget to tell her that I love her ... and you need to say it over and over and over.

Farmers have these kinds of memories, and they're deeply attached to their land. It stays with you and it teaches you things. I'll read a short passage from my book *Four Seasons in Five Senses*, that talks about that connection we have with memory, the land and ultimately generation.

"My old peach orchard tells my family's stories. In the twisted trunks the history of my father who planted these trees more than thirty years ago. I recall helping him as the family lined up trees by sight, holding up a bare root tree, closing one eye and squinting the other, tearing down a quarter mile row trying to keep the row straight. We weren't perfect nor fast, and for decades I've had to swing my tractor wide to avoid the crooked tree I must have planted. But planting five hundred trees by hand and trusting our vision seems to be a wonderfully human way to begin an orchard. We made mistakes and rationalized our efforts.

Life in nature is not always straight."

...the work that we do, especially in organic farming, is not always straight, nor should it be, and that's the memory we celebrate. Knowing more about my farm and the story behind it is part of buying and enjoying my peaches. All these stories are engaged to the senses for a type of authenticity, and when I talk about story, I mean the story that you pause and reflect about. Memories are grown slowly; memories are repeated like a good story is told over and over...

That's how stories and memories work. And if my peaches are working in an interesting way at a certain point they're no longer my peaches. My hope is that a consumer, when they bite into them, will combine their personal memory with that peach. Their understanding of what that peach is about, where it came from in their memory and mine, and understand that's the whole story about it. In that sense, I think when people enjoy organic produce they never eat alone because they're sharing the story of all of you in this audience with that meal. And it's a wonderful act to think about eating socially again, eating with others. The fast food industry wants

you to eat alone because you'll eat faster. It's all based on speed. I think wonderful produce, organic produce, works in the other way. It's certainly part of a notion of slow food...

Memory can become a tool of social action, because the more that people commit to memory, the greater the value that's achieved. Memory is my greatest marketing tool, and when it's working you begin to save family farms. If twenty percent of the nation ate from their memories, with that memory satisfied by the wonderful taste and flavor, it would save all family farms. Just think of the revolution in organics if people started eating with that memory, and understanding the depth of that memory.

Our job is to keep that memory alive, to get the public to think in stories...

For one last story, I want to share with you my perfect peach memory, and I think you'll find that eating is a social act as well as a political act. It involves others, usually—often family and friends. For me, the perfect peach was with my grandmother, and let me close with this. My grandmother taught me how to eat a peach. She'd sit on a small wooden stool, slice peaches, and occasionally she'd stop like an innocent child and steal the taste from the golden flesh and quickly sneak a piece into her mouth. I watched her close her eyes and they seemed to tremble, the muscles of an eighty-year-old involuntarily twitchy and danciness that's lost in a dream. The savored flavor of the Bauchon peach caused a satisfying glow to gently spread across her face. Not a smile or even a grin, just the look of comfort, relaxed, soothing in content. I thought of that image even after she died, wanting to believe that would be the look on her face forever. Bauchon, grandmother, and I shared that perfect moment, and I've spent years trying to re-enact that scene, closing my eyes, smacking my lips. I smile and gradually, too, lose myself in a flavor of a perfect peach memory.

Good memories to you. Thank you very much.





# Fruit Box

When you wash that treasure under a stream of cooling water, your fingertips distinctively search for that gushy side of the fruit, your mouth watering in anticipation, you lean over the sink to make sure you don't drip on yourself. Then the juice trickles down your cheeks and dangles on your chin. This is a real bite, a primal act, a magical sensory celebration announcing summer has arrived.

~Mas Masumoto see pg. 2 for the full essay



## Box Contents

### To Be Eaten first

Lambert Cherries  
Champagne Grapes  
Persian Limes  
Bluecrop Blueberries

### May need ripening...

Donnie Avocados  
Sun Crest Peaches  
Ruby Pearl Nectarines  
Rival Apricots

Ethylene Table (Usually fruits produce, and vegetables are sensitive to, ethylene)

EP: Ethylene Producer  
ES: Ethylene Sensitive  
EN: Ethylene Neutral

## Ripening and Storage Techniques

**Lambert Cherries** (EN) are grown by Columbia Gorge in OR. They are the 2nd most common cherry. Lamberts are more heart shaped than round. They are smaller than Bings but taste similar. **It is very important** to store cherries in the coldest part of your refrigerator, usually near the back and bottom. The rule of thumb with cherries, as with berries, is not to wash the fruit until you are ready to eat. Not washing them helps extend their storage life.

**Champagne Grapes** (EN) are from Joe Sogomonian's ranch near Fresno, CA. They are likely a variety called Black Corinth which is often marketed as the Champagne. These are small purple grapes with delicious wine-like sweetness and a little less crunch than other table grapes. They are usually available at gourmet markets when fresh, but more commonly in dried form as the Zante currant. They should keep for a week to 10 days in the refrigerator.

**Bluecrop Blueberries** (EN) are from John Nelson, an Indiana grower located near South Bend. Bluecrop is the leading mid-season variety. Once home, remove berries from their container and pick out any rotten or unformed berries as well as the tiny stems. Blot the rest of the fruit and place on a shallow plate covered with plastic wrap and put in cold storage. Blueberries will last up to 10 days when stored this way.

**Persian Limes** (EN) are grown by Hector Rendon in Mexico. They are the main variety found in the American markets. Limes put in a plastic bag and kept in the refrigerator will last up to six weeks. Rick says organic limes are inconsistent and somewhat rare in the summer, so this is a special treat.

**Rival Apricots** (EP) are grown by Stemilt farmers in WA. Rivals are large apricots. They have a firm, deep orange flesh with a fine texture. These apricots have a mild flavor with low acidity. See nectarines for storage details.

**Donnie Avocados** (EP) are grown in Florida by Homestead Organic farms. If you're used to the small Mexican avocado varieties such as the Hass avocado, these will seem GIGANTIC to you! These avocados have a bright-green, smooth skin and a mild, sweet flesh. When the fruit yields to gentle finger pressure, it is ready to be eaten. Margie of Beehaven farm, another Florida CSA and avocado grower, gave me the following advice about avocados. She said, "Avocados should NEVER be refrigerated until they are ripe; and then, you should eat (or freeze it) them. They are easily cold-damaged. Temperatures below 55°F may hurt them and cause them to turn black inside."

**Ruby Pearl Nectarines** (EP) are grown by Valliwide in CA. They are a clingstone variety with a ruby red skin and a pearly white flesh. The flavor is sub-acidic and sweet with a Brix of 16-18. [Brix (sugar content) is determined by a hydrometer, which indicates a liquid's specific gravity (the density of a liquid in relation to that of pure water). Each degree Brix is equivalent to 1 gram of sugar per 100 grams of product. Google "Brix" for more details]. Ideally ripen at room temperature on the counter top (not exceeding 78°F). It is best to have room for air flow around each piece. Move to cold storage and eat within 1-3 days. Longer storage will diminish their juicy flavor.

**Sun Crest Peaches** (EP) are grown by Mas Masumoto in CA. See page 2 for a keynote given by Mas about Sun Crest peaches. Mas reflects about the disappearance of heirloom peaches. Mas has lamented about the disappearance of old peach varieties, like Sun Crest, in the market place. He perceives them to "homeless, and, without memory, secrets" that are in danger of being lost. We're lucky to have some of these peaches in our boxes. We recommend waiting until the flesh has a little give to it for best results. See nectarines above for more storage details.

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