



Local Farmers Celebrate “Cantaloupe Week”

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California’s cantaloupe producers are celebrating peak harvest season in the state’s most prolific production area – Fresno County.

The Fresno County Board of Supervisors officially declared the week of July 25 through July 31 as *California Cantaloupe Week* and local cantaloupe producers are celebrating with a restaurant recipe contest for Fresno-area chefs sponsored by the California Cantaloupe Advisory Board.

Participating in the recipe contest and vying for \$2,000 in prize money are the following restaurants: **Harris Ranch**, Coalinga, where Chef Reagan Roach is featuring *Grilled Harris Ranch Bistro Filet and California Cantaloupe Salad*; **Max’s Bistro & Bar**, Fresno, where Chef McKinzie Klein is preparing *Harrisa Spice Rubbed Grilled Prime New York Steak served with melon farro risotto, arugula and watercress salad with mint-marinated compressed cantaloupe, feta & champagne-cantaloupe vinaigrette*; **Trelio**, Clovis, where Chef Chris Shackelford is serving *Cantaloupe and Watermelon Salad with cilantro, shaved red onion, feta, and key-lime/agave dressing*; while **The Vineyard**, Madera, has Chef Chris Mariscotti preparing three separate cantaloupe menu items including a *Cantaloupe Ginger Cocktail* and two appetizers -- *Cantaloupe Carpaccio* and *Carbonated Cantaloupe*.

“Locally-grown is such a big movement among consumers today and cantaloupe lovers who live in and around Fresno may not realize they are so close to farmland and farmers who grow this delicious, sweet fruit,” said Steve Patricio, chairman of the California Cantaloupe Advisory Board and owner of Westside Produce, a major producer of cantaloupe located in Firebaugh. “We want consumers to look for locally-grown cantaloupe in their stores and to ask for it in local restaurants in support of the farmers and farmworkers who work hard to deliver a safe, nutritious product.”

Fresno County produces over half of the cantaloupe grown in California making Fresno the largest cantaloupe producing county in the state. The latest statistics from the Fresno County Agricultural Commissioner show that farmers in Fresno County produce nearly 250,000 tons of cantaloupe on 11,400 acres of farmland and generating over \$75 million in farm gate value.

Fresno County is followed by other major producing counties including Stanislaus, Imperial, San Diego and Riverside counties. California is responsible for 75 percent of the cantaloupe sold in U.S. stores. The peak months of production in the San Joaquin Valley are July, August, September. During May and June, cantaloupes are produced in the southern desert areas of the state and a smaller second cantaloupe crop also comes from the desert production areas in October.

In 2012, the California Cantaloupe Advisory Board voted in a mandatory food safety program. This food safety program includes a set of safety standards to which all California cantaloupe producers are committed in their mission to provide all California cantaloupe consumers with the highest level of safety and quality.

Consumers can visit www.californiacantaloupes.com find more information about California cantaloupe including recipes and videos on how to clean, cut and store cantaloupe; learn how local cantaloupe is grown and packed and read details about the mandatory food safety program that must be followed by all California cantaloupe producers.
