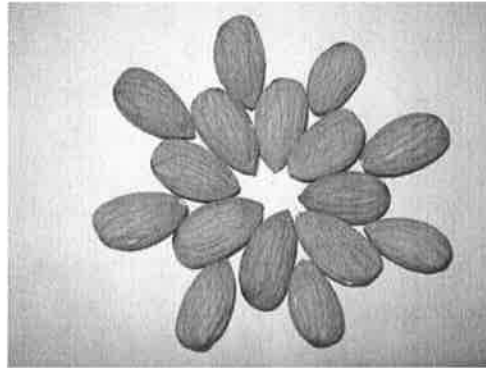


Valley Nuts

Michael Stahl



If you have ever eaten an almond in your life, you may be aware that it is one of the heartiest nuts available. Almonds are some of the healthiest nuts a person can bite into, and fortunately, they are also among the cheaper nuts one can buy. There are a few things you may not know about almonds, though. For example, you may not realize that almonds are not really nuts at all! In fact, they come from the fruits of almond trees. Almonds are in the pits of those fruits, which actually makes them seeds. To get at them, the stone-like pit has to be broken open. What is inside those pits is what we usually call the almond nut. Another thing you might not know is where almonds come from. Chances are if you are eating (and enjoying!) an almond at this moment, it was grown in California, USA. Almonds were not always grown there, though, and the story of how those seeds were made possible is quite incredible.

When the Spanish first settled in California, they actually shipped almond trees there. For some time, the Spanish took care of those trees and grew almonds to be eaten. When these Spanish settlers left, though, the almond trees were not looked after. Then, in the mid-1800s, almond trees were brought to America again, but this time, to the Northeast. Local farmers knew that California would be a better place for the trees because it was warmer there throughout the year. At that time, California's population was growing fast because of the discovery of gold. So, the almond trees were moved again and planted in California's Central Valley where there were plenty of new settlers to watch over them.

The Central Valley runs in the middle of the very long state. It is a 450-mile stretch of flatland that has become very important to the United States because of the many farms that now exist. Over 230 different types of crops are grown in that area, including tomatoes, grapes, cotton, apricots, and, of course, almonds. Six thousand different almond growers live in California's Central Valley alone. They provide about 70 percent of the world's almond supply.

In 1933, the United States began the Central Valley Project with the goal of directing water from sources in the northern parts of the state—where there was a lot of rainfall and flooding from time to time—to the Central Valley, which, in certain parts, was even considered a desert and didn't have enough water for agriculture. Water would be brought in from other states like Colorado, home to the lengthy Colorado River. A tremendous series of aqueducts, canals and pump plants were built. Manmade reservoirs as big as large lakes were constructed; new rivers were dug too. This project went on through six different decades. All of this water now helps to irrigate over 3 million acres of farmland.

So, even though a large portion of the state is warm, sunny and dry almost all year, the manmade water system of the Central Valley Project helped to make California one of the biggest providers of food to the country and the world. Next time you bite into an almond, think about all of the hard work and thoughtfulness that went into making that nut. And then, remember it's not a nut, but a seed.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What is an almond?

- A) a project designed to bring more water into a valley
- B) an area of California where many crops are grown
- C) a healthy seed that comes from the fruit of a tree
- D) a water system using aqueducts and canals

2. What sequence of events does this passage describe?

- A) the series of events that led the Spanish to settle in California
- B) the series of events that led to almonds being grown in California today
- C) the series of events that led to almonds being called “nuts” instead of “seeds”
- D) the series of events that led to the discovery of gold in California

3. The Central Valley Project helped make California one of the largest providers of food to the country and to the world.

What evidence from the passage supports this statement?

- A) The Central Valley is a stretch of land 450 miles long and runs through the middle of California.
- B) The United States began the Central Valley Project in 1933, and the project continued for six decades.
- C) Almond trees were planted in California’s Central Valley during the nineteenth century.
- D) Today, California’s Central Valley provides about 70 percent of the world’s almond supply.

4. Why might someone choose to eat almonds?

- A) Almonds are healthy.
- B) Almonds cost a lot of money.
- C) Almonds are grown outside of California.
- D) Almonds are less popular than they used to be.

5. What is this passage mostly about?

- A) the growth of California’s population in the 1800s
- B) the beginning of the Central Valley Project
- C) almonds and their history in the United States
- D) the tomatoes, grapes, cotton, and apricots grown in California

6. Read the following sentence: "For some time, the Spanish took care of those trees and **grew** almonds to be eaten."

What does the word **grew** mean above?

- A) described and explained
- B) raised and took care of
- C) got up and moved away
- D) attacked and defended

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence below.

In 1933, the Central Valley Project was begun; _____, the Central Valley is now a place where many different crops are grown.

- A) previously
- B) such as
- C) first
- D) as a result

8. What are some different crops grown in California's Central Valley?

9. What was the Central Valley Project?

10. What effect might the Central Valley Project have had on growing almonds? Support your answer with evidence from the passage.
