



The Perfect Fruit: Good Breeding, Bad Seeds, and the Hunt for the Elusive Pluot

Chip Brantley

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The creation story of the "perfect fruit," delving into the world of the demanding farmers, brilliant obsessives, and food fanatics who create the fruits we love.

Is it possible to create the perfect piece of fruit? a fruit that cannot be improved upon? Since the dawn of agriculture, people have been obsessively tinkering to develop fruits that are hardier, prettier, and better tasting. Today, consumers have sophisticated palates and unparalleled access to the best fruits from around the world, and many of them believe that in California's San Joaquin Valley, a fruit breeder may have developed the perfect fruit: a sweet, juicy, luscious plum-apricot hybrid known as a pluot.

In *The Perfect Fruit*, Chip Brantley goes in search of what it takes to trick nature into producing gustatory greatness?and to bring it to a market near you. The story begins with Floyd Zaiger, a humble and wily octogenarian who is arguably the greatest fruit breeder in the world. From there, it stretches both back and forward: back through a long line of visionaries, fruit smugglers, and mad geniuses, many of whom have been driven to dazzling extremes in the pursuit of exotic flavors; and forward through the ranks of farmers, scientists, and salesmen who make it their life's work to coax deliciousness out of stubborn and unpredictable plants. The result is part biography, part cultural history, and part horticultural inquest? a meditation on the surprising power of food to change the way we live.

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