

Did You Know?

- Walnuts, around since 7000 B.C., are the oldest tree food known to man.
- Michelangelo used walnut oil to help dry the paint in the Sistine Chapel in Rome.
- Walnut trees yield their first nuts for commercial production 6 to 8 years after planting, and can continue to produce walnuts for as long as a century.
- Walnuts are removed from trees by shakers.
- A Japanese tire manufacturer uses ground walnut shells to improve the grip of its tires.
- In Greek mythology, when Carya died, Dionysus, who loved her, transformed her into a walnut tree. The goddess Artemis carried the news to Carya's father and commanded that a temple be built in her memory. Its columns, sculpted in wood in the form of young women, were called catyatides, or nymphs of the walnut tree. These same columns, in marble, can be seen at the Acropolis in Greece today.
- Old country lore maintains that if you whip a walnut tree, it produces more nuts.
- The first commercial plantings in California began in 1867 when Joseph Sexton, an orchardist and nurseryman in Santa Barbara County, planted English walnuts.
- California Walnuts account for 99 per cent of the commercial U.S. supply and two-thirds of the world supply of walnuts.

The Oldest Tree Food Known To Man

Not only is the walnut the oldest food grown on a tree, it is one of the world's most respected things to eat. In Périgord, in Southwest France, excavations have brought to light shells of nuts that were roasted during the Neolithic period, more than 8000 years ago.

Around 2000 B.C. in Mesopotamia, the Chaldeans left inscriptions on clay tablets revealing the existence of walnut groves within the famed Hanging Gardens of Babylon

The walnut appears in Greek mythology in the story of Carya, with whom the god Dionysus fell in love. When she died, Dionysus transformed her into a walnut tree. The goddess Artemis carried the news to Carya's father and commanded that a temple be built in her memory. Its columns, sculpted in wood in the form of young women, were called catyatides, or nymphs of the walnut tree. These same columns, in marble, can be seen at the Acropolis in Greece today.

The name of the walnut tree and its nut comes down to us from the Romans. The word for nut derives from the Latin *nux* or *nucleus* (fruit of the shell), with a suggested derivation from *nox* (night) owing to the dark juice of the nut, which was used to dye wool.

The walnut and the oil extracted from it have been known since ancient times. Theory has it that the walnut may have disappeared in parts of northern Europe during the glacial period but was then reintroduced by barbarian invaders and by Greco-Roman conquerors

Source: The Walnut Cookbook, Jean-Luc Toussaint

In a Nutshell

The nut is composed of three elements. The kernel, the shell and the husk.

The edible kernel is two ivory-coloured lobes or hemispheres covered by a dark brown skin.

The endocarp, or shell, has been used in a surprising number of ways over the centuries.

The pericarp, or husk, is green, soft and fleshy, and is used to make a fine liqueur. A walnut stain is also made from the husk, which in earlier times was used to dye hair and is still used to tint wood. Boiled with the leaves and brewed into a cure-all, the husk was used in the past as a remedy for anemia, rickets and sore throats.

Source: The Walnut Cookbook, Jean-Luc Toussaint