



Attendees at the 2015 Grove Media Tour pose with California avocado growers Randy and Joann Axell

# Commission Hosts Annual Field to Table Grove Tour

The California Avocado Commission (CAC) regularly hosts grove tours for key influencers and stakeholders, such as media, foodservice partners and retail accounts in order to promote the farm-to-fork story of California avocados. The tours also provide information that helps to differentiate California avocados and communicate their premium quality allowing the Commission to deepen relationships with these influencers while providing a behind-the-scenes look at the care taken to produce California avocados.

In late April, CAC hosted a two-day grove tour in Ventura with attendees including consumer and trade media, registered dietitians (RD), foodservice operators and retailers. The attendees were treated to a variety of events, tours and meals throughout the weekend that highlighted the culinary and nutritional benefits of California avocados, while also telling the production story.

The tour kicked off with dinner at Salt Restaurant in Calabasas where chef David Iino wowed attendees with a multi-course menu featuring *Braised Boneless Short Ribs with Avocado Smashed Potatoes* and a *Chocolate Lava Cake with Chocolate Avocado Anglaise*. Past CAC Chairman Ed

McFadden attended the dinner and answered guests' questions about growing avocados.

The following morning, breakfast was hosted at Four Seasons Westlake Village, with California avocados front and center on the menu including items such as *Chilled California Avocado, Mango, Honey and Greek Yogurt Smoothie Shooters* and *Mini Egg White Frittatas with California Avocado, Oven Cured Tomatoes and Spinach*. Following breakfast, the group visited Brokaw Nursery, where Aimee Smith, sales manager, led a guided tour demonstrating the process of grafting avocados and nurturing the baby plants to full-sized trees.

Next, the attendees were shuttled to grower Randy Axell's avocado grove, Rancho Rodoro, where he discussed his life and history as an avocado farmer. The attendees were given the chance to try their hand at picking avocados (harder than it looks!). Lunch was served in his barn, with food provided by Chef Pink of Bacon and Brine. The menu featured dishes such as *Avocado Gazpacho Shots with Flowering Coriander* and *Vegan Key Lime and Avocado Tartlets with Avocado Blossom Honey*.

The group's final stop was a tour of the new Mission Produce packing operation in Oxnard. The guests were able to watch as incoming fruit was sorted, washed and packed for retail and foodservice customers. Attendees were able to ask questions and take pictures of Mission's innovative technology, and thoroughly enjoyed getting a behind-the-scenes look at the level of care and safety taken in every step of the process.

On the final evening of the tour, guests were treated to an overview of the nutritional benefits of California avocados, led by CAC RD Ambassador Katie Ferraro. The well-known registered dietitian hosted a presentation that featured information on avocado nutrition, highlighted the versatility



*Brokaw Nursery Sales Manager Aimee Smith demonstrates the process of avocado plant grafting*



*Media RD Trish O'Keefe, RDN poses with her hand-picked California avocado*



**gillian\_ferguson** 2 weeks ago  
 Had fun hanging with these guys this weekend. This 40 acre farm in Santa Paula produces 200,000 lbs of avocados every year.

susanesherrick, lovehardnyc, robgold89 and 83 others like this.

**fpproducehunter** #pendulous

**ktlallo**

**legenderryberry** Dreamy

**putapuredukes** Ok avocados are my most fave and I've never seen them au naturale! So sac-esque!!!

**hollyfloral** Luckiest

**skylarcmiel** Aka heaven!

of the fruit and gave an avocado nick-and-peel demonstration. Attendees were very engaged with the question and answer session led by Ferraro and CAC's Jan Delyser after the demonstration. Attendees then enjoyed a final California avocado-centric dinner and lingered well after the meal discussing all they had learned about California avocados and each other over the past two days.

CAC has built deep relationships with food media, food bloggers, third-party registered dietitians, trade media and foodservice representatives. This year's grove tour attendees were a mixed group with representatives from each of those categories. These stakeholders have become advocates for the California avocado industry in the digital, media and foodservice spheres, helping CAC share the California avocado story with consumers and inspiring them to choose California avocados.

To date, this year's tour has garnered more than 1.2 million impressions, and we expect to see continued results over the next month as our attendees post more coverage. 🥑

# THE PRODUCE NEWS

**Dietitians, bloggers get up-close look at California avocado industry**  
 BY JESS GIBBS | APRIL 27, 2015

VENTURA, CA — Dietitians and bloggers from across the nation got a first-hand look at the California avocado industry during a media tour April 25-26 hosted by the California Avocado Commission.

The tour encompassed stops at a leading avocado nursery, a longtime avocado grower and the country's largest packaging house, giving attendees a thorough look at one of the most popular crops in the Golden State.

En route to Broken Shelves in Buellton, CA, Jan DeLuser, vice president of the commission, told tour attendees that the state is expecting a crop of about 327 million pounds this season, which will be harvested by approximately 5,000 growers who value extensive grove in producing a high-quality "tender green" crop.

At Broken Shelves, the state's largest avocado tree producer, Sales Manager James Madrigal-Sheriff led an informative demonstration on the first five years of the life of an avocado tree, from seed to sale to a grower.

Following the stop at the nursery, the tour proceeded to Rancho Redondo in Santa Paula, CA, where grower Randy Asati, a third-generation avocado grower, invited attendees to pick avocados on his 25-acre avocado orchard.

Asati walked guide in his orch, telling attendees, "I love being able to spend every day on our farm and in the grove. It's very satisfying to be able to give something from a tree seed to a full tree."

After the grove tour, Asati invited attendees into his historic barn where Chef Paul of Boons & Bites in Solvang, CA, and the Food Network's "Curbest Eaters" host prepared a California avocado-themed lunch.

The final stop was at Mission Produce's new state-of-the-art avocado packaging house in Oxnard, CA, which is the largest avocado packaging house in the world — and is led by Trifilio. Peru is completed in just a few weeks.

Mission officials led attendees through the operation and explained the technology & equipment to get the highest-quality — and safest — product to consumers.

Following the tour of the packaging house, the commission hosted a dinner for attendees that featured California avocados in each course. Prior to the dinner, Katie Ferraro, a registered dietitian who works with the commission, studied the nutritional virtues and versatility of avocados during a demonstration.

DeLuser said the avocado category has exploded in recent years and acknowledged that production in Mexico, Peru and Chile has enabled consumers to reach untapped levels. But she said California holds a special place in the minds of some U.S. consumers who prefer a "tender green" avocado when available.

The California avocado season runs from April through September, and the state produces 90 percent of the nation's avocado crop. Seven varieties of avocados are produced commercially in the state, with the Hass variety accounting for 93 percent of the total crop volume.

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USDA MARKET WATCH, The Source PRO-ACT, The Path to Increased Profit Starts With Superior Ripening Technology.

RIGHTINGS: CAC's media center tour. Jan DeLuser, vice president of marketing at the California Avocado Commission, with Randy Asati, owner of Rancho Redondo.