



# The Chestnut Grower

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## Value-Adding Increases Viability of Chestnut Enterprise

By: John and Heather Kane, Tweenhills Chestnuts, Hoskinstown, N.S.W (Reprinted with permission from the *Australian Nutgrower*, Dec. 2005)

In 1998 we started planting chestnuts. This came after a 15-year period where John agonizingly researched all the potential opportunities for making a living from our 40-acre farm east of Canberra at Hoskinstown in NSW. The altitude was right, the attitude was right, the soils were good, there was good access to local markets (the ACT) and there was adequate rainfall, though the need for supplementary irrigation was likely.

Our initial aim was to produce nuts to sell directly to the wholesale markets as well as to the various community markets in the ACT. We believed also that as we had easy access to the Sydney wholesale markets, we would be able to make a living from the farm.... more later. The business plan seemed feasible and we truly believed that we would be in commercial production by year 8.

Planting continued each year until 2004 and we now have over 2400 trees. At year 3 (2001) we had a real wake up call. One variety, Purton's Pride, produced over 500 kgs from 108 trees. As we had not expected any significant production until year 5, we did not have the necessary grading and inspection equipment to handle these nuts, nor did we have a cold storage facility.

We immediately realized that from then on, we had to be ahead of the game and be ready for increasing production levels. We then started to source all the equipment that we needed to handle and store the chestnuts. (cont. pg 3)



Hot roasted chestnuts are a popular snack in chilly Canberra.

## Talking Organic Chestnuts with Ladd Hill Orchards: New Products, New Markets

*In this interview, the Chestnut Grower editors continue exploring the organic chestnut market by offering insights and suggestions from Ben and Sandy Bole Sherwood, Ore.*

*For more information, visit [www.laddhillchestnuts.com](http://www.laddhillchestnuts.com).*

They don't really do it for the money. Nor the label recognition. Not the sheer fun of it, either.

Like all growers who take the extra steps necessary for organic production, Ben and Sandy Bole grow organic because they believe, says Ben, "it's just the right way to grow things."

The Boles of Ladd Hill Orchards, Sherwood, Ore., have been applying organic practices to their 25-acre chestnut operation for more than 10 years. Two years ago, they applied for and received official organic certification from Guaranteed Organic Certification Agency (GOCA) of Fallbrook, Calif., a company with organic certification activity across the nation and overseas, specializing in mixed vegetables, grain crops (cont. pg 5)

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## A Message from the President



CGA PRESIDENT  
HILL CRADDOCK,  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR  
UNIV. OF TENNESSEE  
DEPT. OF BIOLOGICAL AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

*Greetings from the President!*

I am looking forward with great anticipation to our 2006 Annual Meeting, and I think it's a great idea to meet with the NNGA (and I don't mean the Northern Nevada Golf Association).

The Northern Nut Growers Association has had a venerable history promoting nut-growing in North America since its founding in 1910. Some of the most poignant first-hand descriptions of the chestnut blight pandemic were published in the early NNGA Annual Reports. And the history of chestnut breeding and the development of the commercial chestnut industry in the USA are chronicled in the pages of later reports and NNGA publications. No nutgrower's bookshelf is complete without at least one dog-eared copy of the green-covered "Nut Tree Culture in North America" (Many of us remember its yellow predecessor, too). The 1979 edition had one chapter on chestnut trees, by Dick Jaynes, and chestnuts were mentioned again in the chapters on diseases and nut tree breeding, but there was mouth-wateringly little information about commercial chestnut production. The 2003 edition, edited by Dennis Fulbright, had a significantly updated chapter on chestnut. The needs and knowledge base of amateurs and professionals, however different, complement one another very well.

The NNGA represents a wonderful example of "citizen science" from which the chestnut industry can draw inspiration, experience, know-how, and germplasm. Many of the cultivars we choose, the propagation methods we use, the disease and pest control strategies, harvest, handling, storage, and marketing technologies we employ may have been researched and developed by NNGA members or funded by NNGA grants. Many questions of fundamental importance to the commercial chestnut grower remain unanswered. Chestnut growers in the United States confront challenges unique to this particular crop, but that are shared with chestnut growers worldwide. By meeting together with groups such as the NNGA, we strengthen the lines of communication that will facilitate solutions to the problems we face together.

*Hill*

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### PUBLICATION DEADLINES

Fall issue deadline 9/15 mailed 10/15

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Summer issue deadline 6/15 mailed 7/15

## Value-Adding Increases Viability of Chestnut Enterprise (cont. from page 1)

In the following year, in the midst of a drought, we started to have some serious doubts about the future viability of the farm. Even though we were still in an early setup stage, it soon became obvious that the net return we were getting from the wholesale markets would not sustain us financially. We calculated that the effort in time and the expenses in harvesting, inspecting, grading, cleaning, packing, storing, transporting and selling our nuts to the wholesale markets were financially unviable. Well, we quickly came to the obvious conclusion that in order to make the farm work, we had to start some form of ‘Value Adding’.

Fortunately for us at that time, one of the Guru’s of roasting chestnuts - Jurg Hepp - had decided to put his Chestnut Roasting Business on the market. Jurg had spent the previous 10 years establishing his well-respected roasting business in Canberra. The red vans had become a landmark/institution in the chilly Canberra winter. Initially we were unsure, scared is probably a better description, but eventually we decided ‘what the heck!’ and purchased the business. It consisted of 2 mobile vans (food service approved) fitted out for chestnut roasting and a small cold room. Jurg had based the design of the roasting equipment on Swiss systems that he had experienced in his youth. The charcoal fire is a traditional European method and imparts a unique flavour to the roasted chestnuts. Luckily for us, Jurg went out of his way to teach us how to roast chestnut successfully. That was April 2003.

This was definitely the turning point for us. Although it has been a steep learning curve, we now feel quite confident that by roasting our nuts and direct selling to the public, we will eventually be able to make a living from the farm without having to rely on sending large volumes of chestnuts to an oversupplied wholesale market. One of our first lessons learned, as a family operated business, was to separate farm activities and roasting activities. So we do not start roasting until after the harvest is complete. For us, that means that roasting starts in late-May to June and continues through August, depending on the quality of the chestnuts. Adherence to strict quality control is the foundation for the success of our business.

Initially, whilst we were learning our craft, we operated only at the Fyshwick Markets. This year, 2005, we roasted chestnuts at both the Fyshwick Markets and in Garema Place, in the middle of the City Centre, in Canberra. Roasting is definitely the highlight of the chestnut year for it is great fun. Next year, we plan to also operate at the Belconnen Markets as well as selling direct to the public as “Farm Gate” sales, essentially trying to avoid having to sell through the wholesale markets.

In our roasting business, we value our customers and look forward to meeting them each year. It is always great to hear “You’re Back!” as regulars rediscover us at our outlets. They even ring us up in April wanting to know when we will be there. Once news gets out that we are at the markets, they come from all over Canberra. Newcomers are a delight, as we let them sample the nuts and tell them of the virtues of our product.

We spend hours talking to those from the “old country”. These are the people who were brought up with chestnuts and always drop in each day just to taste and savor the memories of the old days. They have so many stories and experiences to share that you just can’t help but feel good at the end of the day. We have customers who have lived and tasted chestnuts all over the world, including Portugal, Italy, Serbia, China, Korea, England and more. Our knowledge of chestnut traditions in these countries has grown and we have been inspired to visit some of these countries to see first-hand the roasting of chestnuts.

During our trading days we spend time educating people in what chestnut varieties to buy, what to look out for, how to pick a good



*The chestnut roasting van has become an icon at Fyshwick Market in Canberra.*

nut, which chestnut varieties are good for roasting and which nuts are better for steaming or boiling, etc. Needless to say each day is exhausting and very long. Trouble is that even at the end of the day, when you have finished your dinner, there will always be about 50kgs of nuts to cut for the next day’s trading. Each nut must be scored so that it doesn’t explode during the roasting process! Yes it is hard work but fortunately the season is only about 3 months, so there is always a light at the end of the tunnel. The rewards are fantastic.

For the past 3 years, we have had to buy supplementary roasting chestnuts so that we could meet the demands for the winter trading, but we hope to be self-sufficient in the future. Last season, we roasted 1.5 tonnes of chestnuts. We have found that De Coppi Marone is definitely the best roasting chestnut, with Wandii Wonder coming in a close second. Our customers look for a sweet, easy to peel chestnut with a pleasant after taste. They also appreciate being able to talk directly to the grower.

Thus far, our approach to advertising has been minimal. Never the less, word has spread and we have been urged to expand the number of outlets that we operate. But we only **(cont. pg 6)**

# Selecting the Right Site for Your Chestnut Trees

By Michael Gold and Ken Hunt, University of Missouri Center for Agroforestry

*In this article, tips for selecting the right site for Chinese chestnut trees are explored - watch future issues for tips on site selection for other varieties.*

Spring has sprung. If you are planting any new orchards, remember to consider the importance of matching your chestnut trees with the right site and soil conditions to help minimize the risk of root rot or spring frost damage. Your choice of cultivar, location, climate, soils, terrain, etc. will all affect how chestnut may grow in your area.

## Climate:

The Chinese chestnut (*Castanea mollissima*) is the hardiest of the Asian chestnut species, with a natural range extending from south China to north of Beijing. In the more tropical, southern part of its range, it is found at higher elevations, in the northern range, it thrives only on better sites, particularly lower mountain slopes where it has some protection, good air drainage, good soil and the advantage of underground water from the slopes above. There are many different cultivars of Chinese chestnuts, and their hardiness varies. Be careful, cultivars that thrive in the deep south (USA) should not be planted north of Interstate 70 (roughly 39° N latitude) as a general rule of thumb. Spring frosts may damage new growth and flower/fruit set and early fall freezes can damage any immature nuts still on the tree.

Most Chinese chestnuts can tolerate -20° F temperatures when fully dormant, but it is strongly recommended that frost pockets be avoided as planting sites, to avoid injury to swelling buds in the spring. Site selection similar to the requirements for peaches, where summit and shoulder slopes are chosen to allow for good air drainage, would be the safest choice to safeguard from winter and late spring frost injury.

## Soils:

Site and Water Requirements – Chinese chestnut trees perform best in well-drained, loamy to sandy loam soils. Chestnuts will tolerate many kinds of soils not

well suited to agriculture, including stony, gravelly and sandy soils. However, heavy poorly-drained soils or soils that have a perched water table during wet seasons promote Phytophthora root rot, a devastating disease of chestnuts. Soils should be slightly acid (pH 5.5-6.5).

Chinese chestnut trees are rather drought tolerant once established, but ample water throughout the growing season promotes good tree growth and regular nut production. Maximum chestnut yields and nut size are obtained only under optimum soil water conditions, therefore irrigation is recommended. A lack of water during mid-August will result in smaller nut size, while a lack of water in September can prevent burrs from opening normally. Micro-irrigation techniques (drip and/or micro-sprinklers) are best suited for chestnut orchards.

## Terrain:

Research in Japan has shown that chestnuts require high levels of light intensity to be able to set and develop fruit. In addition, there is a direct relationship between the intensity of sunlight within the tree canopy and the number of female flowers per cubic foot of canopy. High light intensity stimulates nut-bearing shoot growth, which in turn promotes large fruit size. Therefore, never allow your Chinese chestnuts to crowd one another, their canopies should be exposed to full sunlight from tip to tip. *CGA*



*The Missouri River hills at the Horticulture and Agroforestry Research Center, New Franklin, Mo., are an ideal site for Chinese chestnut because soils are deep, fertile and well-drained. The river hills sites permit planting on slopes with good air drainage.*

## Organic Chestnuts with Ladd Hill Orchards (cont. from page 1)



and forages.

In addition to the lure of organic production, the Boles' diverse chestnut product mix is opening doors among chefs and specialty

retailers. Ladd Hill Orchards offers fresh Colossal chestnuts October through December, as well as peeled, dried organic chestnuts year-round for reconstituting in soups, stews, stuffing or desserts. Last year, the Boles added two new products: freshly milled, extra-fine organic chestnut flour and chestnut honeys, harvested directly from the orchards. Ben and Sandy suggest their mild, fruity flavored filtered honey for tea and the medium-bodied comb honey for toast or their chestnut scones — a new quick mix Ben describes as “delightful and light, with a slightly nutty flavor.” Ladd Hill Orchards also offers among its product line a strong, dark Italian honey (imported); an organic wild rice and dried chestnut mix; a chestnut pasta (imported); and gift boxes.

### ***How long have you been organic, and why did you decide to grow your chestnuts this way?***

We began growing organically 10 years ago, and this is our 2nd season as certified organic. We already had the records needed for certification, so we basically were certified the first year we applied. Since we don't have a lot of pests, we thought we could get by without a lot of spraying, etc. Sometimes it seems farmers almost spray crops just to be spraying. We thought we could avoid that.

### ***What are some challenges you've faced?***

We have had some soil nutrition problems. A better organic fertilizer would help the soil fertility. We don't do any tilling in between the rows, so we have a grass understory that is now getting crowded out by the trees – which may help with a gopher and vole problem we have here in Pacific Northwest, especially this year. We've seen lots of voles in the orchards, which has even drawn in some Great Blue Herons.

Having all this nutritive material between the rows gives rodents something to eat, and so that's a bit problematic. They really like the tree roots, and so we use a Rodex tool that mixes air and propane and is detonated to eliminate the voles.

We had been controlling weeds and grasses with a weedeater, which is very labor intensive. This past year we worked with a machinery manufacturer in Eugene, OR., for some special equipment. It's a rotary mower mounted on the front of a Flory nut sweeper, which follows around the tree to cut within 3 inches of the tree. It is very effective. We used to cross mow but after installing a micro sprinkler system this was out of the question. We strung the irrigation lines in the trees so that they are now out of the way.

### ***How did you choose GOCA as your certifier?***

A customer we were working with knew the people at GOCA and said they are a very responsive, cooperative company with several clients in Oregon and would be good to work with, especially in terms of the paperwork. The paperwork is really an irritation - but you do what you have to do.

### ***Ladd Hill Orchards is listed under gourmet foods in the directory of Fine Cooking magazine. Do you think certified organic contributes to the gourmet perception, or makes your chestnuts stand out?***

Many callers have said that they found us online after seeing our advertisement in Fine Cooking, which allows us to be listed in their directory of products. They call us because they saw we are organic in the ad, which is exactly what we hoped for. There are definitely people out there who will buy organic if they can – this is our audience. (View the listing in the Fine Cooking magazine Shopping Guide under Gourmet Foods at [www.taunton.com/finecooking/ads/pages/nmad09\\_food.asp](http://www.taunton.com/finecooking/ads/pages/nmad09_food.asp))

### ***Regarding your honey and flour, how has the production process been affected by your certification?***

Obviously, chestnut honey can't be truly organic because you can't control source of nectar, so we say it's made from our own certified organic chestnut orchard.



*Ladd Hill Orchards organic chestnut flour, dried chestnuts and wild rice and chestnut mix make an attractive gift basket.*

Chestnut flour isn't easy to grind in the first place, and chestnuts are difficult to dry. It takes 7 or 8 days to dry down a batch. We use a custom walnut dryer and propane heat to batch dry in small quantities. With the flour, you have to be careful not to mix organic or non-organic flours. If you do, this requires you to go through a lot of effort to clean the machinery between runs and can be very time consuming. One of the challenges to

the flour is that chestnuts are expensive to start with, and so adding another dollar per pound for organic production can be tough from a marketing standpoint.

Our markets have been expanding, though. We have several restaurant customers for dried chestnuts in the Portland area. We also sell to Bob's Red Mill, a grain and grain product producer and distributor in Oregon. Their products are sold all over the country in large supermarkets. They sell all types of flours and have a store here offering our flour and dried chestnuts. We also supply several retail outlets that specialize (next page)



## Value-Adding Increases Viability (cont. from pg 3)

have so many pairs of hands - we'd like to maintain it as a family business. We have even been approached with a proposition to export raw chestnuts to Hong Kong, but our production levels are not yet high enough to support such a venture.

In selling our roast chestnuts, we charge \$22 per kilo, but don't be fooled. In roasting chestnuts, you lose about 20% of weight due to water loss, and encounter other losses due to nut wastage and in oversupply to customers. In realistic terms, we make about \$14 to \$16 per kilo, depending on the variety. Yes, it is better than the \$3-5 per kilo that we could receive at the wholesale markets, but don't be misled, there are plenty of operational business costs that need to be factored in as well.

We offer our sincere thanks to Jurg Hepp for allowing us to buy his business. We feel that although we could probably have just made a go of just selling raw chestnuts (in time), it would probably never have produced a viable retirement income for the both of us. Who knows, one day we might even make a profit!

In hindsight, the one main point that we would make to all newcomers to the industry is to make sure you have a realistic "Business Plan" and to have confirmed "Markets" for your product. We have been lucky, but will you be? *CGA*

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## Ladd Hill Organic Chestnuts (cont. from pg 5)

in gluten free products.

### ***What advice would you give to producers considering growing organically?***

As producers, we need to continue to expand the market, letting more people know that organic chestnuts are out there and they're great.

To us, the advantage to growing organic is that we feel it's the right way. It's easier on the land, and eliminates pesticide costs, but there other expense to counteract these. Still, it's the right way to produce a product if you can. We are confident that organic certification will continue to open additional markets. *CGA*

### CGA OFFICERS 2006 – 2007

The Nominating Committee will present the following slate of officers for next year at the annual meeting in July.

**President:** Lucienne Grunder  
**Vice-President:** Mike Gold  
**Secretary/Treasurer:** Ray Young  
**Past President:** Hill Craddock  
**Directors:** Mark Beam  
Sandy Bole  
Bill Nash

Any member, in good standing, of the CGA is eligible to serve on the Board. Please contact the Secretary, according to the By-Laws, if you would like to present another name for any of these positions. Thank you.

Sandy Bole, Chair  
Ken Hunt  
Chris Foster

### Correction to the membership directory:

Arpad Walker's correct address is:  
Chalice Vineyards  
PO Box 147  
Creswell, OR 97426

## Australian Chestnut Industry – Looking to the Future with a Strategic Plan

Leveraging a market, providing a consumer-oriented product and confronting day-to-day orchard management issues are part of the territory for most chestnut growers. Lumped together, these issues are pieces of an overall strategy for chestnut success. As we examine industry challenges and opportunities for chestnuts here in the United States, we must also look to our colleagues on a global level to determine our direction.

One outstanding example to consider is that of the Australian chestnut industry, operating under a new strategic plan for 2006-2008. The plan is designed to steer industry programs and developments, with actions assigned in accordance with a five-year vision.

Following are excerpts from the Australian Chestnut Industry Strategic Plan. Perhaps this plan will serve as a source of inspiration and a model for the Chestnut Growers of America and can be a source of discussion – and action – at the annual meeting in July. For more information about the Australian Chestnut Industry Strategic Plan, contact Brian and Jane Casey at [chestnut@cheznuts.com.au](mailto:chestnut@cheznuts.com.au).

### AUSTRALIAN INDUSTRY STRATEGIC PURPOSE:

*“To achieve long term viability for the Australian chestnut industry, producing and marketing chestnut products in raw and processed forms, enabling both large and small producers, (processors, distributors, wholesalers and retailers) to achieve commercial success through delivery of consistently high quality product, marketed in ways that lead to significant growth in local demand and successful competition in international markets.”*

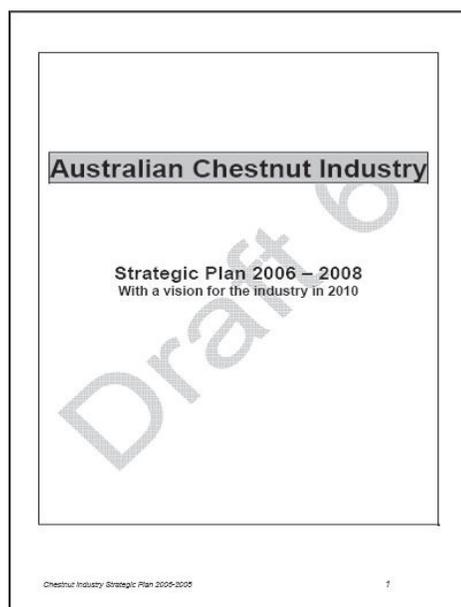
Sixteen industry representatives gave two days of their time to workshop this plan. All the participants brought skills to the workshop that covered areas that included production, supply chain, marketing (domestic & export), wholesale, R&D, organizational structures, and communications. At the completion of two days, this group shared a vision for the future growth and development of the industry and where it would be in 5 years. (next pg)



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## Australian Chestnut Industry Strategic Plan (cont.)

- The vision was created by determining a realistic retail price for chestnuts that could be obtained at that time, and then working out the steps the industry should action to reach this goal.
- Critical to the success of this plan will be the transfer and sharing of this vision with the rest of the industry and stakeholders.
- There is a strong belief, that with industry support, this plan will guide the whole chestnut industry to a profitable future.



*The Australian Chestnut Industry Strategic Plan 2006-2008 is a 23-page document including detailed action plans and anticipated completion dates.*

on those issues that are inhibiting performance so that initiatives could be built into the plan to overcome current challenges, problems and shortfalls.

### DOMESTIC & EXPORT MARKETING:

- Product performance in the market place is affected by inconsistent and occasional poor quality and inferior varieties. The market receives products with internal rot (already in the product prior to leaving the farm that develops during the transport/wholesale and retail chain) and external mold (which detracts from presentation). Many retailers don't have good product handling knowledge and consumers don't find chestnuts a convenient product to use.
- The public is not fully aware of the chestnut's health properties or that its attributes are closer to a grain than a nut. There is confusion with other nut products, a perception that like other tree nuts it is high in fat and that the carbohydrate will cause weight increase.

### CHALLENGES IN THE INDUSTRY TODAY:

The following is a summary of the 'challenges' which have been identified in the Industry today. It needs to be remembered that the planning process did not take account of the inherent strengths of the Industry, because these are factors which are already making a positive contribution to organizational performance. Rather this part of the process concentrated

- The Industry needs to determine whether to remain within the 'nut' industry and continue with 'nuts for life' or create a separate point of difference capitalizing on the product's unique health message. Currently, there is insufficient information available to support the 5 key benefits of the chestnut as well as high competition with all health messages in the marketplace.
- Industry statistics and market intelligence is limited as reporting systems are non-existent or ineffective. Many chestnuts are sold for cash and not included in statistics and some businesses are running blind on costs.
- The establishment of a broad based grower co-operative will need to consider: over-supply of the market, poor quality and internal rot issues are destroying the market.

### DOMESTIC MARKET:

- Current market research is outdated and previous marketing strategies have not been evaluated although previous comments included that the product is difficult to peel, inconvenient, many people have never tasted a chestnut and don't know what to do with it and the product is better understood by Europeans, Asians and the older generation.
- The Industry's marketing strategy is under-funded and is riding on the back of a generic nut campaign ('Nuts for Life'). There is a bit of a 'scatter gun' approach to the marketing activity to support consumers. Currently, new consumers are turned off by a bad experience with rotten chestnuts or using the wrong cooking variety. Only 25% of varieties are suitable for roasting.
- We have low production and we need effective technology to discover and remove rotten chestnuts before we sell them.
- In marketing to support customer activity, there is limited information on how to manage products through the chain. Not all wholesalers are fully supportive of the product, their expertise is limited. The cool chain is not maintained.
- There is inconsistent performance by the wholesale sector where some are committed and others are opportunists. Some wholesalers are dumping poor quality and there is inter-trade between wholesalers.

### EXPORT MARKETING:

- In understanding and matching customer needs and factoring insights into effective market development, the Australian product is expensive by world standards. There are high costs in freight, servicing the market and presentation. Strong cultural links in the overseas markets present resistance to Australian fresh product and it is difficult to maintain consistent quality for export product.
- There is a perceived risk to the industry that (**next pg**)

the future trade agreements may not prevent diseased products being imported. There is concern that Australia's quarantine barriers will be weakened over next 10 years. The Food Safety Standards apply equally to imports and domestically produced products.

## PROCESSING

- Labor and machinery are expensive. We are operating in a niche market and lack critical mass. There are no industry standards, and we rely on the general food standards.
- Peeling is currently conducted offshore. The domestic market is small but increasing. A processing cooperative produces chestnut meal locally and small quantities are being sold. A number of growers are independently trying to develop flour without combining discoveries and it is difficult to maintain quality and freshness of flour.
- Roasting is affected by chestnuts with internal rot and a large quantity of bad nuts reaching consumers. This is more serious today than 5 years ago. Due to the current inconsistent quality, some roasting businesses are finding it increasingly difficult to be economically viable.

## The Vision of the Future – December 2010

It is December 2010 and the Chestnut Industry has achieved total sales of 2000 tons, an average of \$6.50 per kilo net for good quality chestnuts is being returned to the grower (need to work back from RRP to ensure all players in chain are rewarded), and the total industry income to support all activities is running at greater than \$370K.

## INDUSTRY ORGANIZATION: (by 2010)

- Importantly the Industry Peak Body is now an incorporated association named Chestnuts Australia Inc. and is widely recognized for its leadership in bringing a strong sense of cohesiveness to what has become recognized as a dynamic industry.
- Furthermore the Industry has investigated and determined the advantages of establishing a broad based grower cooperative with an independent Board of Directors which co-ordinates supply, quality, processing, value adding and marketing. Chestnuts Australia presented the outcomes of the investigation to the AGM and implemented the decision of members.

## DOMESTIC AND EXPORT MARKETING (by 2010):

The Industry at large has adopted the policy of only marketing a consistent and high quality product. Protocols are in place to ensure only quality reaches the end user, (cont. pg 11)

## Count Me In!

### Register Now for the Annual CGA Meeting

by Ray Young, CGA Secretary/Treasurer

My sources tell me that there is a group of chestnut growers planning a great get-together at Western Illinois University in Macomb, Illinois this summer. The gathering is scheduled for Saturday, July 22, and will be followed by the four day Northern Nut Growers meeting. This is the first meeting of the CGA outside the west coast and the hope is that it will draw additional chestnut growers from the Midwest and the east coast.

For me, one of the most important events will be an attempt to determine what the most pressing needs are of the majority of growers. That is the goal of the grower "brainstorming" session on Saturday morning. Every grower has his or her own problems and CGA is looking for a way to help them. You need to be there to let your organization know your needs.

Additionally, the top chestnut researchers in the U.S. will be there to report on their current research efforts and to answer your questions. One of the local growers will present information regarding the operation of a chestnut co-op and the development of value-added chestnut products. And of course there will be visits to local chestnut orchards, both by CGA and NNGA.

Don't overlook the many outside activities available. If you can arrange the time the John Deere factory in Waterloo, Iowa has great free tours of their farm equipment assembly line. Their world headquarters are located in Moline, Illinois only 80 miles away with things to see and do.

CGA has extensive meeting information including contacts and pricing easily available on our website at [www.chestnutgrowers.com](http://www.chestnutgrowers.com). There you will find overnight lodging as low as \$17.50 per night (double occupancy) in the student dorms as well as accommodations in the campus hotel and additional housing in nearby motels. If you did not receive a registration form with your directory you can download one from the website. *Count me in!*

Ray Young

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## Australian Industry Strategic Plan (cont. from pg 9)

problems associated with internal rot have been eliminated, an education program has established the importance of all players in the chain working together to maintain quality and wholesalers are now confident they are receiving and able to sell a quality product.

### **In framing a product USP, it was determined that there is no other foodstuff that has such major health benefits:**

- Low Fat (99% fat free and no cholesterol).
- Low salt.
- Moderate carbohydrate (mostly starch, moderate energy).
- Low glycemic index.
- No gluten

Plus very useful fiber, protein, minerals and vitamins – all of which enhance health in general.

There is the added advantage of providing specific health benefits for diabetics and celiacs. Furthermore the product is known to be versatile, it is suitable for both savory and sweet dishes and provides added attributes of both flavor and texture. The ‘good for the body, good for the soul’ story continues as an emotive message directed at selected cultural groups and increased interest has been generated to raise usage for BBQ’s and snack foods. The Industry has determined to continue to support the ‘nuts for life’ promotion.

Processes are in place to ensure the accurate collection and assessment of Industry statistics and market intelligence i.e. production, yields per hectare, farm gate sales and consumer attitudes.

### **QUALITY MANAGEMENT (by 2010):**

The Industry has moved beyond QA and now has a fully effective quality management process in place from the grower

#### **Did You Know ...**

Italy is the world leader in the production of candied nuts, *marrone glacé*, and other processed chestnut products. *Marrone glacé* is a chestnut that has been preserved with sugar liquor to a candied consistency. A box of *marrone glacé* chestnuts is more expensive than a box of fine chocolates.

to the consumer, which ensures only quality product is marketed and sold through the chain. Chestnuts Australia establishes the best practice guidelines and product specifications for customers.

### **BY DECEMBER 2008, WE WILL:**

1. Establish organization as an incorporated association and change name to Chestnuts Australia Inc.
2. Investigate and determine advantages of establishing a grower co-operative
3. Expand membership to embrace all sectors
4. Improve effectiveness of the levy collection process
5. Investigate source of additional funding sources
6. Build on relationship with HAL
7. Ensure effective two way communication within the industry
8. Ensure effective communication with external stakeholders
9. Develop skills within CGA (Chestnut Growers of Australia Limited) and the industry
10. Effectively implement the strategic plan CGA

*Editor’s Note: Some acronyms are undefined, as this excerpt was taken directly from the Australian chestnut industry strategic plan draft.*

#### **Chestnuts in the Press:**

**The Times (U.K.)**, Nov. 19, 2005, featured an article “Just as Sweet as a Chestnut” in the Health Diet section. The article gave information about the health properties of chestnuts, some historical nutritive uses of the chestnut and a recipe.

View the article online at:  
[www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,8126-1876703\\_1,00.html](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,8126-1876703_1,00.html)



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