

DID YOU KNOW?

Pecan Trivia - Fun Facts About Pecans

The pecan is native to the rich, fertile river and stream valleys of part of the Southwest, Midwest and Central-Southern United States and part of Northern to Mid-Central and South-Central Mexico, and no other area of the world.

Pecan fossil remains show that the pecan tree and nut were prehistoric and predated the arrival of any human on the North American Continent.

The first written record of the pecan came from Cabeza de Vaca, a Spanish nobleman, who was shipwrecked on the Galveston Island and was a captive of the Indians from 1529 to 1535. He documented that a number of Indian tribes would congregate in the Guadeloupe River Valley in the fall and be sustained by eating pecans and nothing else for two months.

Pecans were favored by Indians and pre-colonial residents because they were accessible to waterways, easily shelled, and great tasting.

"Pecan" is a Native American word from the Algonquin language, which was used to describe all nuts requiring a stone to crack.

By 1762 Decourset, a Frenchman serving with George Washington in the American Revolution, observed that "the celebrated general always had these nuts and was constantly eating them."

President Washington mentioned in his diary of 1794 of planting "several poccon, or Illinois nuts" on the grounds of his Mount Vernon home. President Thomas Jefferson likewise planted pecans at his home at Monticello.

In 1847 Antoine, an African-American slave gardener on Oak Alley Plantation in Louisiana, grafted 16 pecan trees to some highly regarded native pecans. His accomplishment led to the opening of the commercial pecan nursery industry.

In the 1970s, Texas Desirable pecan halves were selected the first and only fresh food to nourish our astronauts to the moon and back on Apollo 13 and Apollo 14-pecans continued to be used on other space flights. No other nut on our planet has earned this high nutritional honor.

There are over 19,900 US farms and thousands of yard and landscape trees that grow pecans. Eleven varieties contributing significantly to the agricultural economy in 24 to 50 states, comprising states from North Carolina to California. Annual production of pecan nuts is about a pound for every citizen of the United States.

Can you imagine a pecan skyscraper? It would take 11,624 pecans, stacked end to end, to reach the top of the Empire State Building in New York City.

Texas adopted the pecan tree as its state tree in 1919. In fact, Texas Governor James Hogg liked pecan trees so much that he asked if a pecan tree could be planted at his gravesite when he died.

Pecans in space: it would take a trail of over 10 billion pecans to reach the moon!

Albany, Georgia, which boasts more than 600,000 pecan trees, is the pecan capital of the U.S. Albany hosts the annual National Pecan Festival, which includes a race, parade, pecan cooking contest, the crowning of the National Pecan Queen, and many other activities.

Would you go nuts for a refreshing dip in the pool? You'd need a lot of pecans—144 million to be exact—to fill an Olympic-sized swimming pool.

It takes a magnificent tree to produce a great tasting nut. Pecan trees usually range in height from 70 to 100 feet, but some trees grow 150 feet or higher. Native pecan trees—those over 150 years old—have trunks more than three feet in diameter.

That's one heavy nut: it would take 5,640 pecan halves to equal the weight of a standard watermelon.

Pecans come in a variety of sizes — mammoth, extra large, large, medium, small, and midget. They also come in several forms including whole, halves, pieces, granules, and meal.

There are over 1,000 varieties of pecans. Many are named for Native American Indian tribes including Cheyenne, Mohawk, Sioux, Choctaw, and Shawnee.

Some of the larger pecan shellers process 150,000 pounds of pecans each day. That's enough to make 300,000 pecan pies!

The U.S. produces 80 percent of the world's pecan crop. The United States Department of Agriculture predicted that approximately 324 million pounds of in-shelled pecans were to be produced in 1999 alone.

Before a shelled pecan is ready to be sold, it must first be cleaned, sized, sterilized, cracked, and finally shelled.

Between 1986 and 1996, pecan export sales rose almost 900 percent!