



Choose heart-healthy California walnuts

With California walnut consumption having grown almost five-fold in the UK since 2011¹, the California Walnut Commission explains their growing appeal and how they meet current consumer trends

In the last year alone, shipments of California walnuts to the UK have increased by 24%² as consumers increasingly recognise their health benefits, quality, and versatility in desserts, breads, sauces, spreads and even as a meat replacement for those looking for a more plant-based way of eating, says Pam Graviet, senior marketing director international at the California Walnut Commission (CWC).

“Last crop season, the UK was the fifth-largest importer of walnuts in Europe and the demand for healthy, nutritious food is increasing. Walnuts can play a role in offering a nutrient-dense, flavourful addition to the daily diet, which aligns with consumers’ desire to eat nutritious foods that also offer functional health benefits,” explains Graviet, “That said, annual per capita consumption in the UK is still very low, at 0.136kg, so there’s tremendous opportunity for growth.”

Last year, more than 4,500 walnut growers, many of them multi-generational family farms, produced a record-setting crop reaching 712,140mt, a 20% rise over the previous year, reveals Graviet. “Even with Covid-induced lockdowns and shipping challenges, almost the entire year’s production was sold and shipped before this year’s harvest as consumer demand for wholesome, delicious foods, such as walnuts, increased.”

Quality standards

While walnuts are available from many parts of the world, including China and Chile, California walnuts are grown, harvested and processed under stringent state and federal regulations, reputed to be the



world’s toughest, she notes. “California walnut growers and processors (handlers) also meet individual customers’ standards and specifications. A food safety control program and quality control regime (HAACP) is in place that meets the standards imposed by all regulatory authorities. So, the California walnut industry has had an impeccable food safety record for more than a century and delivers high-quality walnuts year-round year after year.”

Methods of use

Walnuts are increasingly used in a variety of cuisines around the world, notes Graviet. Plant-based innovation in Europe and the USA is seeing walnuts being used as a meat replacement in sausages, burgers, bolognese, tacos and as a pizza topping.

“Consumers around the

globe are looking for foods that help them improve and maintain their overall health and wellness... and many are moving towards a more plant-forward diet. California walnuts tick both boxes as there’s more than 30 years of scientific research demonstrating the health benefits of walnuts. Their soft meaty texture easily absorbs the flavours of other ingredients.

“Nutritionally, walnuts are unique among nuts as they are primarily comprised of polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs). They are the only tree nut to contain a significant amount of alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), the plant-based omega-3 essential fatty acid, at 2.7g per 30g serving, which human bodies need but can only get from food. In fact, 30g of walnuts (a handful)

offers 4.4g of protein and 1.4g of fibre in addition to a variety of micronutrients and antioxidants. Walnuts are also a heart-healthy food, as recognised by Heart UK.

“The CWC will continue its educational efforts, at both consumer and trade levels to demonstrate how this nutritious nut can be used in so many different types of cuisine.”

Research & development

For more than 50 years, the California walnut industry has invested over US\$20m in production research in the areas of orchard management, entomology, breeding and genomics, and plant pathology and nematology,” notes Graviet. “This research has resulted in new varieties, developed through traditional cross-breeding techniques, and more efficient orchard maintenance and use of natural resources.

“California handlers have spent more than a century caring for the land, sharing a commitment to public health, and supporting the communities they serve. They support research and innovation in water quality and conservation, soil health, energy use and air quality. And they constantly seek out and incorporate new methods of growing and handling walnuts that minimise waste, enhance productivity, and preserve and protect natural resources, producing a nutrient-dense whole food that improves human health.”

For further information please contact the California Walnut Commission on 01628 535 755 or via email at walnuts@comeintothegarden.co.uk

1-2 California Walnut Commission