

Developing Alternative Markets for peach cull fruit — A new Michigan State University GREEN project - Bill Shane and Tom Zabadal, Michigan State University

Michigan's fresh market peach crop averages approximately 30 million pounds per year. Currently there is no alternative market for cull peach fruit. During the packing process a significant volume of the crop is discarded due to imperfections. Packing houses assess growers handling charges for cull peach fruit. Wineries in Michigan have used Michigan peaches to make wine and brandy but the high costs of removing pits by hand have hampered this use.



Investigators Bill Shane and Tom Zabadal at the SW Michigan Research and Extension Center, Benton Harbor, Michigan are heading a MSU GREEN project to stimulate the development of alternative markets for Michigan peaches.

The strategy for the project is to develop a practical processing procedure with available and/or affordable equipment to separate pits and flesh and explore products that could be produced from the resulting puree. One of the initial targets is the use of cull fruit for fermentation products such as wine and brandy in the Michigan wine industry.

In 2004, the MSU project team acquired a used Lansencamp pulper-finisher with the help of Peterson and Sons Winery and adapted a precrusher to reduce soft cull peaches to puree. Tons of cull fruit from Greg Orchards Produce, Inc., were converted at the SW Center facility to puree which was trucked in bins or barrels to winery cooperators Round Barn Winery, St. Julian Winery, and Sandhill Crane Vineyards for use in wine and brandy.

The winery cooperators are currently in the midst of making peach wine and brandy from the purees they received. The cooperation of the growers, packers, and wineries was excellent and the experiences gained are being used to refine fruit handling and pulping procedures for the 2005 season.

