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'Ernie's Choice' Peach

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'Ernie's Choice' peach is a firm, yellow-fleshed, freestone peach with a high percentage of red overcolor on a bright yellow ground color. It is being released by the New Jersey Agriculture Experiment Station for Northeastern fruit growers specializing in wholesale and/or you-pick marketing. 'Ernie's Choice' ripens between 'Redhaven' and 'Loring' with the first commercial picking on or about 5 Aug., in Aura, N.J. (Gloucester County).

Origin

'Ernie's Choice' originated from a cross made by L.F. Hough and C.H. Bailey at Cream Ridge, N.J. Advanced selections were propagated by E. Christ, and distributed to a New Jersey Peach Council Member, Larchmont Farms, Elmer, N.J., in 1973. The parentage of 'Ernie's Choice' cannot be determined because the identification labels were lost during the establishment of test trees in the trial block. After excellent performance ratings in the trial block at Larchmont Farms, additional trees of 'Ernie's Choice' were distributed to New Jersey Peach Council members in 1983. 'Ernie's Choice' was also

planted in a cultivar evaluation block in Aura in 1983. The test number NJ275 was assigned in 1985. The name 'Ernie's Choice' is given to NJ275 in honor of Ernest Christ, who served 40 years as Extension Specialist in Pomology at Rutgers Univ.

Description and Performance

Trees of 'Ernie's Choice' are vigorous, spreading, and productive. Leaves and fruit of 'Ernie's Choice' are as susceptible to bacterial spot [*Xanthomonas campestris* p.v. *pruni* (Smith) Dye] as those of 'Redhaven'.

The leaves are deep green and moderately large with globose or orbicular glands.

Flowers are large, showy, and light pink with a small calyx cup. Pollen is viable and abundant. Average date of bloom in Gloucester County is 9 Apr. The performance of 'Ernie's Choice', based on 12 characteristics, generally compares with that of 'Redhaven' and 'Rio Oso Gem' (Table 1).

Fruit is large, globose to ovate-round, and typically 6.2 to 7.0 cm in diameter when firm-ripe. Some of the fruit has a slightly raised suture. The fruit is attractive, with 65% mottled red blush and a bright yellow undercolor. Pubescence on the skin is slight. The flesh is yellow, very firm, melting, and frees readily from the pit. There is some red pigmentation near the pit. 'Ernie's Choice' is one of the first full freestone peaches to ripen in New Jersey. Fruit mature $\approx$ 10 days after 'Redhaven' and 21 days before 'Rio Oso Gem'.

Availability

Trees of 'Ernie's Choice' are available from the New Jersey Peach Council c/o Adams County Nursery, P.O. Box 108, Aspers, PA 17304.

Table 1. Performance of 'Ernie's Choice' peach in comparison with 'Redhaven' and 'Rio Oso Gem' at Aura, N.J. (1985-87).

Character	Cultivar ^a		
	Redhaven	Ernie's Choice	Rio Oso Gem
		<i>Ratings^b</i>	
Flower bud density	4.5	4.0	3.5
Fruit load (in June)	3.8	3.0	3.0
Bacterial leaf spot	3.9	4.2	1.9
Fruit attractiveness	3.7	4.0	2.2
Flesh adherence to pit	3.0	4.0	4.0
Flesh firmness	3.0	3.3	4.0
Flavor	3.0	4.0	3.0
		<i>Measurements</i>	
Yield (fruit/tree)	114	84	68
Fruit size (cm)	6.1	6.5	7.2
Red overcolor (%)	70	65	65
Avg bloom date	11 Apr.	9 Apr.	8 Apr.
Avg ripening date	26 July	5 Aug.	26 Aug.

^aMeans based on four tree replicates planted in 1983.

^bRatings were subjective on a scale of 1 (least desirable) to 5 (most desirable). Trees were propagated on 'Lovell' seedling rootstock.

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