



RFCI

July 2026

TAMPA BAY CHAPTER of the
RARE FRUIT COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL,
INC.

Meetings unless otherwise noted are held at 1:00pm:
The Oaks at St. Mark's Event Venue.
13312 Cain Road Tampa, FL 33625

<http://www.rarefruit.org>

Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com

<http://www.facebook.com/TampaBayChapterRareFruitCouncilIntlInc>

∞ Upcoming Programs and Events ∞

July 12th – The Great Annual Mango Tasting!



Cutting the fruit will begin at 12:00pm to 12:30pm. We need help preparing the fruit. Please use the sign-up link below to sign up to help with preparations for this deliciously anticipated event.

Please – **do not arrive before noon**, as church services are still occurring.

Volunteers helping with the setup of the tables should arrive between 1:00 – 1:30pm.

The actual tasting will likely start at around 2pm.

This year we will have mango varieties separated by flavor profile and have several separate areas setup to reduce long lines. Avoiding one long serving table will hopefully help allow for a better experience (especially remembering what you have sampled).

This event is open to members and their household.

The tasting is an excellent way to familiarize yourself with the many flavor nuances of mangoes, and know which ones you may want to grow yourself. Some trees may be available for purchase.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/30E0B4FA4AE23ABFD0-64284775-mango>

President: Chris Ramirez; Vice President: Paul Branesky, Secretary: Hillary Cosenza;
Treasurer: Susan McAveety; Newsletter/Membership: Denise Provencher



Let's Make Wine!



Paul Zmoda



Photo: George Campani

The Club's very own special member Paul Zmoda shared his wine-making wisdom with members at June's meeting. He has been learning and refining his win-making skills since 1972. Paul says anyone can make wine, but not everyone can make a good wine! Apparently he can, as he has won numerous awards for his wines. Members were able to sample several of his creations, which were very much enjoyed.

Paul uses not only the grapes he grows, but also other fruits such as flatwoods plum and starfruit. Different fruits produce different flavors and have different sugar and acid profiles, all things a good wine maker needs to know. Many tools, terms, procedures, and the science of wine-making were explained.

For more information on winemaking at home feel free to contact Paul at 813-598-0369, or email at flatwoodsfarm01@gmail.com



Top photo: Club President and Paul Zmoda

Bottom photos: Some of the Award winning wines

Photo: Paul Zmoda

Scenes from June's Meeting

Photos: George Campani



☞ What's Happening ☞

by Paul Zmoda

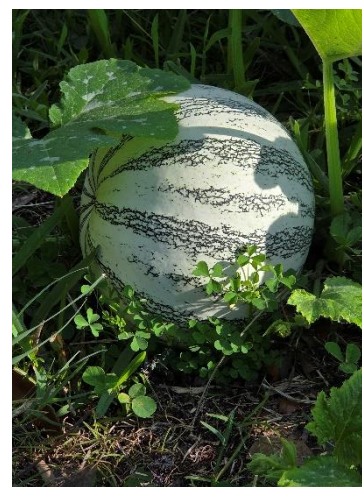
It's been really hot out, but that shouldn't stop my progress - a bit slower, but not halted completely.

The 'Guthrie' plums were a bust this year, mostly due to other plum pollenizers blooming out of sync; the drought didn't help either. I finally got to eat one Ceylon peach after waiting more than 15 years. They aren't very big, but sure are good. The chickasaw plum tree has quite a few fruits this year.

Still doing lots of grafting – both persimmons, and trying grapes again. Grapevines grow so much better for me if grafted.

The summer veggie garden is yielding lots of Thai soldier yard long beans. Callaloo is a heat-proof spinach substitute and best of all is a wonderful summer type squash called Sikil, the seeds of which were distributed by one of our past speakers, Josh Jamison. I am just recently exploring ways to cook it.

New plantings: *Asimina triloba* Pawpaws, Simpson Stopper, grapes and Bixa – Achioté – Lipstick Tree - *Bixa orellana*.



Sikil squash Photo: Paul Zmoda

Freezing Mangoes



Yes, Mango fruit can be frozen, and still retain quality, nutrients, and flavor.

Easiest method:

Peel the fruit, and cut the fruit into chunks, slices, strips, or puree it.

Puree is quickest, and can put into plastic storage bags, sandwich size is good, the air pressed out of the bags, and the bags then labeled with the date and contents. Place into the freezer, where they will remain of excellent quality for up to a year. When thawing, place in the refrigerator at least an hour before use. Frozen pureed mango makes an excellent smoothie, or slushy, or can be added to other drinks, or desserts.

For the chunks, slices, and strips, place the pieces so they are not touching on a baking sheet lined with a silicone mat or parchment paper. Place the sheet into the freezer until fruit is frozen hard, usually overnight. Transfer the fruit into freezer bags, squeeze out the air, label them, and place them in the freezer for long term storage. Frozen mango will last in the freezer for up to a year with excellent quality. Using smaller bags, such as sandwich size, helps keep the amount you use to an appropriate size.

Dark Chocolate Avocado Pudding



Photo by R Barker, used with permission

Looking for something different to do with all those avocados that seem to ripen at once? Try this no dairy, very creamy version of dark chocolate pudding. You won't taste the avocado, just a rich, velvety chocolate pudding that is completely unexpected.

Source: adapted from Cook's Illustrated Magazine, January-February 2025

Serves: 8 Time: 25 minutes plus two hours chilling

Ingredients:

2 large avocados (8 ounces each) or 16 ounces of defrosted or rehydrated puree
1 cup water
¼ cup sugar
¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 tablespoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon instant espresso powder (optional)
¼ teaspoon table salt
3.5 ounces dark chocolate 70%, chopped

Instructions:

1. In a small saucepan bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring occasionally until sugar and cocoa dissolve, about 2 min: water, sugar, cocoa powder, vanilla, espresso powder (if using) and table salt.
 2. Remove from heat and cover to keep warm.
 3. Process in food processor until smooth, about 2 minutes, the pulp of the avocados.
 4. With processor running, slowly add warm cocoa mixture in steady stream until completely incorporated and mixture is smooth and glossy, about 2 minutes.
 5. Microwave the chopped dark chocolate at 50% power, stirring occasionally, until melted (2-4 minutes)
 6. Add melted chocolate to avocado mixture, process until well incorporated, about 1 minute. Transfer pudding to bowl, cover, and refrigerate until chilled and set, 2-24 hours. Serve.
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Avocado Preservation via Freezing



Photo by R Lopez, used with permission

Whole or halved avocados lose their texture when frozen, but if pureed, you can save perfectly ripened avocados for a variety of uses by freezing.

Source: National Center for Home Food Preservation,
[https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/freeze/fruits/freezing avocados/](https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/freeze/fruits/freezing%20avocados/)

Ingredients:

Counter ripened avocados that yield under gentle pressure and are free of blemishes

Instructions:

1. Rinse the avocados under cool water to remove dirt and any surface bacteria.
 2. Pat dry with a clean paper towel or cloth.
 3. Cut the avocados in half and remove the pit. Use a spoon to remove the pulp from the skin
 4. Place the fruit in a container and mashed them into a smooth puree
 5. Add one tablespoon of lemon juice for every two avocados (or alternatively, ¼ teaspoon of ascorbic acid powder per quart of avocado puree) for a better-quality product. These additions retard oxidation of the puree and reduce browning.
 6. Place the pureed avocado into a freezer safe container, leaving headspace for expansion. Use an ice tray or segmented container to create serving sizes.
 7. Seal and freeze. Once frozen, you can remove the frozen puree from the container and store it in a freezer safe bag.
 8. Label and date the frozen puree.
 9. When read to enjoy, place in the microwave for 20 seconds, or allow to thaw in the refrigerator for 30 minutes.
 10. Enjoy with sauces, dressings, smoothies, dips and guacamole, or as a spread on bread.
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∞ Club Notes ∞

Member contributions to the newsletter! What a great way to share what you are doing in your garden with other members, learn what other members are growing, and get your questions answered. Your submissions for the newsletter, pictures, notes of interest, events, tips, recipes, questions, etc. are especially needed - please send them to Tampa.Bay.RFCI@gmail.com
Submissions for the next newsletter due by: **July 22nd**.

Reminder about raffle plants: Please be sure to properly identify and label your raffle donations. It is important that the person receiving the plant knows its identity and what parts are edible, how to grow, etc. The emphasis is on edible plants of course, as we are a fruit club. Please, no invasive plants.

∞ Membership information ∞



Both new and renewing members can make quick, secure credit card payment using Square. Use this QR code

Check your newsletter email or address label for your membership renewal date.

Prefer using a check? Use address below.

NEW MEMBERS - Download and fill out a membership application from: <https://rarefruit.org/membership/>, and send with check or money order for \$25 made out to Tampa Bay RFCI to:

Tampa Bay RFCI, 12722 Prosser Rd., Dade City, FL 33525

RENEWING MEMBERS - Send check or money order for \$25 made out to Tampa Bay RFCI and mail to:
Tampa Bay RFCI, 12722 Prosser Rd., Dade City, FL 33525



The objectives of The Tampa Bay Rare Fruit Council International:

To inform the public about the merits and uses of fruits common to this region and encourages the cultivation, collection, propagation and growth of fruits that are exotic or unusual to west central Florida. The club also encourages the development of new fruit varieties, cooperating with local and foreign agricultural agencies.

Tampa Bay RFCI
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Dade City, FL 33525