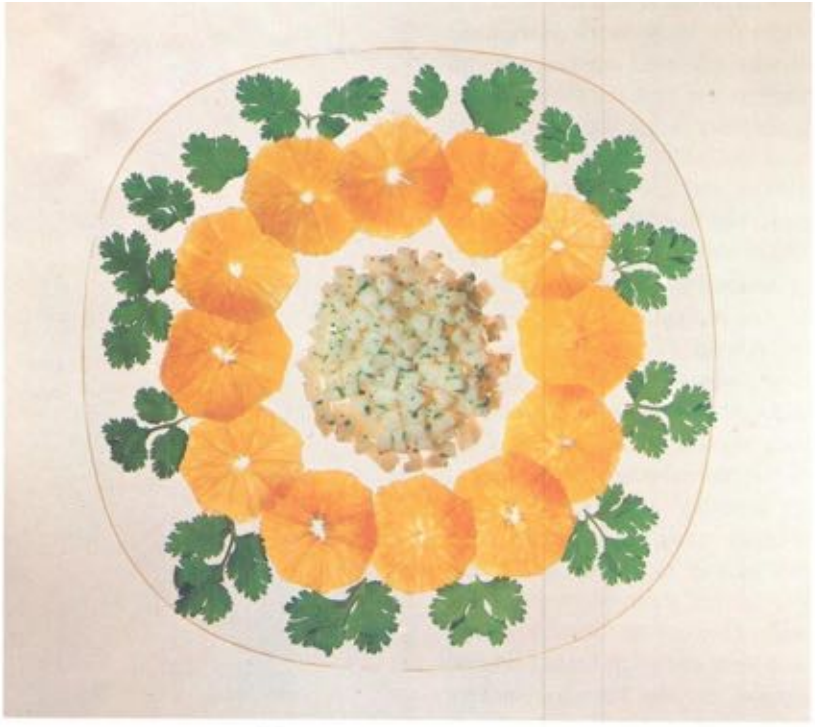

ORANGES

By Caroline Bates

Photographs by Ken Bates

IT MAY BE DIFFICULT nowadays to decide how and where to live one's life, but a century ago, when California entered its orange-growing era, there was little doubt where the good life lay. It was best personified by an orange crate label—an Arthur Rackham-like fantasy in which two aristocratic gold-and-white peacocks strolled on a carpet of flowers past a fairy-tale castle. The label bore the California Dream brand, and it was intended as an inducement not only to buy and eat oranges but to grow them as well, portraying vividly the material comforts that a grower could expect to attain in California.

Oranges and orange groves! To many an Easterner weary of slogging through a long winter's snows, the idea of waking in the morning to a vista of orange trees and the scent of orange blossoms seemed the most appealing and romantic life possible. That idealization of orange-growing country coupled with the promise of wealth lured thousands of settlers to California in the late 1800s, when large-scale orange cultivation began in the area around Los Angeles. For many the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow proved disappointingly fruitless, but luckier ones realized a measure of the California dream.

As orange groves proliferated, there arose a need to differentiate between the brands of the hundreds of growers competing for the Eastern market. The solution, orange crate labels, each with an individual, arresting design, resulted in a unique class of American graphic art—whose story John Salkin and Laurie Gordon tell in their book *Orange Crate Art* (Warner Books, 1976). As the abovementioned gold-and-white peacocks suggest, the subjects that the anonymous artists chose to illustrate the labels were provocative, fanciful, and, more often than not, only incidentally related to oranges. There were cats, birds, babies, sensual Nubian slaves, Indian chiefs and maidens, and mission fathers depicted as jolly friars, all attempting to persuade buyers of the superiority and desirability of one brand of oranges over another.

The orange era is captured humorously in the 1934 film *It's A Gift*, which starred W. C. Fields as the proprietor of a small-town grocery who after inheriting some money buys an orange ranch sight unseen through the mail and, uprooting his family, heads for California. Fields' dream is temporarily shattered when he discovers that his property, although surrounded by orange groves, is nothing but a worthless piece of desert with a tumbledown shack on it. In a typical Fields' plot twist, he recoups his loss and ends up

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Orange and *jicama* salad (above) and orange marmalade pie (opposite, both recipes on page 76).

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with a thriving orange grove after selling his land to a racetrack promoter. In the last scene of the movie Fields is seated at a table on an outdoor patio, plucking oranges from a tree at his elbow and squeezing juice into a glass, which he passes ceremoniously to the other side of the table where his dog sits in an oversized garden chair. Nearby are orange crates whose labels bear the unmistakable visage of Fields himself.

Those of us who live in California usually nurture a few backyard orange trees as tangible blessings of the good life. Our small efforts are repaid with the ineffable fragrance of their flowers and the year-round beauty of the crops of gold. But, if the orange is lovely to look at, it is even lovelier to eat, and eating oranges is everyone's privilege and pleasure. The recipes below illustrate a few ways of using this generous, golden-hearted fruit.

Orange and Jicama Salad

Peel and dice a 1-pound *jícama* (available at Hispanic markets), in a small bowl combine it with ½ cup orange juice, 2 tablespoons minced coriander leaves, and ½ teaspoon salt, and chill the mixture for at least 4 hours. Peel and slice thinly 2 large navel oranges. Transfer the *jícama* with a slotted spoon to the center of a platter and arrange the orange slices around the *jícama*. Garnish the edge of the platter with sprigs of coriander. Serves 4.

Orange Marmalade Pie

Make glazed orange sections in orange syrup, using 5 small oranges, and transfer the sections with a slotted spoon to paper towels to drain.

Make 1½ recipes *pâte brisée* (page 100), substituting 1 tablespoon sugar for the salt. Roll the dough into a round ⅛ inch thick on a floured surface and fit it into a 10-inch pie pan. Form a decorative edge and chill the shell, covered with plastic wrap, for at least 1 hour.

Cut and mince the peel from 4 large oranges and cut the oranges into sections, removing the pith, seeds, and membranes. In a large saucepan combine the peel and the sections with ¾ cup orange juice, ½ cup water, ⅓ cup sugar, and 2 tablespoons lemon juice and bring the liquid to a boil. Simmer the mixture for 15 minutes, or until it is reduced slightly and thickened, let the marmalade cool, and stir in 2 tablespoons orange-flavored liqueur.

In a large bowl cream together 1 stick (½ cup) butter, softened, and 1¼ cups sugar mixed with 3 tablespoons cornstarch and beat in 5 eggs, 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Stir in the marmalade and pour the filling into the pie shell. Cover the rim of the pie with strips of foil to keep it from browning too quickly and bake the pie in the middle of a preheated hot oven (425° F.) for 10 minutes. Reduce the heat to moderate (350° F.) and bake the pie for 30 to 35 minutes more, or until the filling is set, removing the foil strips during the last 10 minutes of baking. Transfer the pie to a rack and let it cool. Arrange the glazed orange sections in concentric circles on the pie, covering the surface completely. Serves 6 to 8.

Glazed Orange Sections in Orange Syrup

In a saucepan combine ½ cup each of sugar and orange juice and ⅓ cup water, bring the mixture to a boil over moderately low heat, stirring and washing down any sugar crystals clinging to the sides of the pan with a brush dipped in cold water until the sugar is dissolved, and boil the syrup, undisturbed, for 5 minutes. Let the syrup cool and transfer it to a bowl. Add 3 large navel oranges, peeled, cut into sections, and membranes removed, and chill the mixture for at least 2 hours.

Orange-Marinated Flank Steak

Score lightly a 2- to 2½-pound flank steak on both sides. In a large ceramic or glass bowl combine 1 cup orange juice, 1 small onion, coarsely chopped, 2 tablespoons ground coriander seed, 1 tablespoon olive oil, and 3 garlic cloves, minced. Add the steak, turn it to coat it with the marinade, and let it marinate, covered with plastic wrap and chilled, turning it occasionally, for at least 6 hours. Pat the steak dry with paper towels, reserving ⅓ cup of the marinade, and broil it under a preheated broiler about 3 inches from the heat, turning it once, for 10 minutes for medium-rare meat. Transfer the steak to a heated platter, cut it into thin slices across the grain, and sprinkle the slices with the reserved marinade. Garnish the platter with orange slices and sprigs of coriander. Serves 6.

Orange Pork

Have the butcher bone a 4- to 5-pound loin of pork. Tie the pork crosswise at 1-inch intervals with kitchen string and with a sharp knife make small slits over the surface. In a mortar crush 8 garlic cloves with 1 tablespoon salt and 2 teaspoons each of orégano and ground cumin and rub the pork with the mixture. Put the pork in a large ceramic or glass bowl with 1 small onion, minced, and add 1½ cups orange juice from Seville oranges. (If Seville oranges are not available, use orange juice acidulated with the juice of 1 lime.) Let the pork marinate, covered with plastic wrap and chilled, basting it and turning it occasionally, for at least 24 hours. Transfer the pork to a rack set in a roasting pan, reserving the marinade, and roast it in a preheated hot oven (400° F.) for 15 minutes. Reduce the heat to moderately slow (325° F.) and roast the pork, basting it frequently with the reserved marinade, for 3 hours to 3 hours and 30 minutes more, or until a meat thermometer registers 170° F. Remove and discard the string and transfer the pork to a heated platter. Serves 6.

Orange Lamb Stew

Cut 3 pounds boneless lean lamb shoulder into 1½-inch cubes and in a bowl dredge it in flour, shaking off any excess.

In a large flameproof casserole cook 3 carrots, sliced into 1-inch pieces, 2 leeks, well washed and coarsely chopped, 2 stalks of celery, coarsely chopped, and 2 garlic cloves, minced, in ¼ cup olive oil over low heat for 10 minutes, or until the vegetables are soft and golden, and transfer the vegetables with a slotted spoon to a dish. Add the lamb to the casserole in batches and sear it over high heat, adding more olive oil if necessary and turning the pieces frequently, for 2 minutes, or until it is well browned. Add 1½ cups each of dry white wine and orange juice and bring the liquid to a boil. Return the vegetables to the casserole, season the mixture with salt and pepper to taste, and add a cheesecloth bag containing 3 sprigs of parsley, 2 bay leaves, and several julienne strips of orange peel. Simmer the stew, covered, over very low heat for 1 hour.

In a small heavy saucepan cook 4 teaspoons sugar over low heat, stirring, until it is caramelized and add ½ cup of the cooking liquid from the stew in a stream, stirring until the mixture is smooth. Pour the mixture into the casserole and cook the stew, covered, for 1 hour more, or until the lamb is tender. Transfer the lamb with a slotted spoon to a plate and keep it warm. Strain the cooking liquid into a saucepan, pressing hard on the vegetables, simmer it for 5 minutes, and skim off the fat. Return the liquid and the

lamb to the casserole and add 3 large navel oranges, peeled, cut into sections, and membranes removed. Bring the stew to a boil, simmer it for 2 minutes, and sprinkle it with a mixture of 2 tablespoons minced parsley, 1 tablespoon minced orange peel, and 2 teaspoons minced garlic. Serves 6.

Orange Sangría

In a saucepan combine 1¼ cups orange juice and 1 cup sugar and bring the mixture to a boil over moderately low heat, stirring and washing down any sugar crystals clinging to the sides of the pan with a brush dipped in cold water until the sugar is dissolved. Simmer the syrup, undisturbed, for 5 minutes and let it cool. Add 2 large oranges and 1 lime, all thinly sliced, and let the fruit macerate, chilled, for at least 4 hours. Fill a large pitcher one third full with crushed ice, spoon in the fruit, mashing it slightly to release some juice, and pour in the syrup and 2 bottles of dry red wine such as California Pinot Noir or Zinfandel, stirring the mixture well. Makes about 2½ quarts.

Broccoli with Orange Sauce

In a large saucepan cook 2 pounds broccoli, rinsed and trimmed, in 1 inch boiling salted water, covered, for 10 to 12 minutes, or until it is tender, and drain it. Transfer the broccoli to a serving dish and keep it warm. In a small heavy saucepan cook ½ cup minced scallion and 2 large garlic cloves, minced, in 1 tablespoon each of olive oil and butter over low heat for 5 minutes, or until they are soft and golden. Add ¾ cup orange juice, ½ cup dry white wine, and 2 tablespoons grated orange rind, cook the sauce over moderate heat, stirring frequently, for 5 minutes, or until it is reduced slightly, and spoon it over the broccoli. Serves 6.

Orange Currant Scones

Into a bowl sift together 2 cups flour, 1 tablespoon each of sugar and double-acting baking powder, and ½ teaspoon salt, blend in ½ stick (¼ cup) cold butter, cut into bits, until the mixture resembles meal. Make a well in the center, add ¼ cup each of orange juice and heavy cream, 1 egg, lightly beaten, and the grated rind of 1 orange, stirring the mixture until the dry ingredients are just moistened, and stir in ½ cup dried currants. Turn the dough out on a floured surface, knead it gently for 1 minute, and roll it into a rectangle ¾ inch thick. Halve the rectangle lengthwise and cut each half into 5 triangles. Arrange the triangles 1 inch apart on ungreased baking

with a scoop of orange ice cream. Spoon the strawberry purée over the ice cream and top it with a generous dollop of sweetened whipped cream flavored with orange-flavored liqueur. Serves 4.

Orange Ice Cream

In a saucepan heat 3 cups unstrained orange juice, 1 cup sugar, and 2 tablespoons grated orange rind over moderately low heat, stirring frequently, until the mixture is hot and the sugar is dissolved. Chill the mixture for at least 3 hours and stir in 2 cups half-and-half or heavy cream. Freeze the mixture in an ice-cream freezer according to the manufacturer's instructions until it just begins to thicken. In a bowl beat 1 cup heavy cream until it holds stiff peaks, fold it into the mixture, and freeze the ice cream until it is firm. Makes about 2 quarts.

Orange, Date, and Black Walnut Cake

Into a large bowl sift together 4 cups sifted flour and 1 teaspoon salt. In a small bowl stir 1 teaspoon baking soda into 1¼ cups buttermilk. In a bowl combine 2 tablespoons of the flour mixture with 2 cups finely chopped pitted dates, tossing the dates with a fork to coat them thoroughly, and stir in 1½ cups finely chopped black walnuts. In another large bowl cream together 2 sticks (1 cup) butter, softened, and 2 cups sugar until the mixture is light and fluffy, beat in 4 eggs, 1 at a time, beating well after each addition, and stir in 3 tablespoons grated orange rind and 1 teaspoon orange extract. Add the flour mixture alternately with the buttermilk mixture, beginning and ending with the flour mixture, fold in the date mixture, and pour the batter into a buttered and lightly floured 10-inch tube pan. Bake the cake in the center of a preheated moderately slow oven (325° F.) for 1 hour and 15 minutes to 1 hour and 30 minutes, or until a cake tester inserted in the center comes out clean.

In a saucepan combine 1½ cups sugar, ¾ cup orange juice, and 2 tablespoons grated orange rind and bring the mixture to a boil over moderately low heat, stirring and washing down any sugar crystals clinging to the sides of the pan with a brush dipped in cold water until the sugar is dissolved. Transfer the cake in the pan to a rack and pierce the surface at 1-inch intervals with the cake tester. Spoon the glaze over the cake, letting the cake absorb it. Let the cake cool and chill it, covered with plastic wrap, for 24 hours. Invert the cake onto a plate and let it ripen, wrapped in plastic wrap or foil and chilled, for 3 or 4 days. The cake will keep for about 3 weeks. ✤