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My siblings and I craved cherries and, I shamefully admit, that for the first thirty minutes we ate more cherries than we put in the buckets. At dusk, we'd clamor back into the Willy to return home to make dinner. Around 9 p.m., the stomachaches began and our one tiny bathroom became the communal vomitorium. Although my parents commiserated with our suffering, secretly they were happy that we learned a valuable lesson on the first day of harvest. Don't eat the profits!

For years I couldn't eat cherries remembering that awful night. As farmers, during the fruit season, we would set up roadside stands selling freshly picked fruits and vegetables at a fraction of the cost posted at the local supermarkets. When we had an overabundance of produce, especially grapes, we'd make "U-Pick" signs offering people the opportunity to go into the orchards and fields to pick their own at even lower prices. We'd have a chuckle about the "city slickers" who'd arrive from San Francisco or the Peninsula with men in suits and women in high-heeled shoes with a desire to go picking. They, too, would eat as much of the fruit as possible in the vineyards and arrive back at our paying station covered in dirt with only a small amount of grapes and a visage green with nausea. When they asked where the restroom was, we'd point to the decrepit old outhouse or the tree behind a barn. There is a price to pay for eating the profits!

Until I was 18, I was a farm laborer, working on our own farm as well as many others picking, cutting, drying, sorting and selling fruit. All of us kids drove tractors, cut wood, branded cattle, pulled fences, planted vegetables, tilled the earth, and helped in any way requested. Since I had my own business raising chickens, I also sold fresh eggs. This fortunate upbringing was the foundation for my work ethic and love of nature that I have nurtured until this day.

As the fruit frenzy continues in the mulberry tree, I have blissfully plucked a basket of luscious ripe cherries that my family will eat fresh. Perhaps if the birds remain focused on the mulberries, or almost ripe plums, I'll be able to pick another bushel to become the ingredients for a Fourth of July pie.

Welcome to the summer bounty of local and fresh.

History repeats itself. I am eating the profits!



**Bing cherries make great pies, jams, and brandied cherry desserts.**



**Pink geranium and purple Nelly Moses clematis are excellent bed partners.**