

What happens when you put a male pistachio tree together with a female pistachio tree? Of course, little baby pistachios. Isn't nature great?

Pistachio trees are dioeciously in nature, meaning that the sex of some trees is male and some female, and that both are needed for complete pollination. The female trees produce the nuts while the male produces the pollen.

Hmm, that seems not too unfamiliar from human procreation. One male tree is needed for every six female trees, a fact that could spark some interesting parallels, but, don't worry, we won't. Male and female pistachio trees are often grafted together to bring about pollination. The farmer also relies on the wind to aid in pollination in order for fruit to "set," or begin to develop. Waverly Root, in his book, *Food*, expounds, almost with adoration, on the distinctive green color of the pistachio being responsible for its popularity throughout the centuries. Referring to food in general, he explains that, "It can please the palate without pleasing the eye, but if it also pleases the eye; it will please the palate even more.

Taste is a mysterious phenomenon, to which psychological factors contribute largely; one of those factors is color. It is probably most potent at the beginning of a meal and at its end. Color in hors d'oeuvres stimulates the appetite; color in desserts harmonizes with their gay, festive nature. One light-hearted color is lacking for desserts: green." The pistachio certainly fills the gap and lends its warm green hues to many desserts, especially pistachio ice cream, a long-time American favorite.

If you've never experienced the delightful tastes and textures of pistachios, begin with purchasing the fresh, raw nuts in the shell. Then simply pull apart the half-opened shell and enjoy. A hint of sweetness comes through the rich nutty flavor. The texture, if they're truly fresh, will have a distinct crispness

. We, too, have to agree with Waverly Root that the pistachio's rich, slightly yellow-green color presents a pleasing invitation and beckons one to reach for another nut.

The pistachio tree bears a resemblance to an apple tree with its appealing round shape and a trunk that may be singular or multiple. Rather unique among nut bearing trees, pistachios grow in clusters like grapes, each nut enclosed in its own reddish-green hull instead of each nut growing singularly.

The female nut most commonly grown in California and revered for its large size is the Kerman, whose seed originally came from Iran.