

AGRIBUSINESS



TOMAS OVALLE/THE FRESNO BEE

Marcy and David Mas Masumoto like to share their story of growing 80 acres of peaches, nectarines and grapes at their farm in Del Rey.

Masumoto Family Farm

By Dennis Pollock

The Fresno Bee

Shopping for organic fruit at Masumoto Family Farm starts and ends with a story.

"We grow peaches, we don't manufacture them," said David Mas Masumoto, a master storyteller.

"An important part of what we do is telling the story."

Masumoto and his wife, Marcy, reach their customers through stories — and not just the ones in award-winning books that Masumoto has written, including "Epitaph for a Peach."

They use unorthodox means of connecting with customers. An example: an Adopt An Elberta Peach Tree program that has brought hundreds of people — some from as far away as New Mexico and Montana — to the Masumoto farm in Del Rey for the harvest of the heirloom peach.

"It's not purely a monetary transaction of 'You give me the money, I give you the peaches,'" Masumoto said. "It's experiencing the story."

Masumoto has talked of using e-mails or newsletters to update shoppers on what's happening in his orchards or vineyards, calling it "a high-touch method

with a high-tech medium."

Doug Hansen, assistant professor of graphic design at Fresno State, said Masumoto's tree-adoption program is a way of "personalizing his produce."

"He's genuine," said Hansen, who illustrates Masumoto col-

umns that appear monthly in The Bee. "He's forward-thinking, not someone who simply reaches back to kinder, gentler times. He embraces difficult issues and is open-minded about the possibilities."

Marcy Masumoto, a project manager in education, has a hands-on role at the farm, helping manage, packing fruit, hanging out pheromone traps for insect pests and sometimes driving a tractor.

She said she believes the farm's success stems from the family limiting its efforts to its 80 acres of peaches, nectarines and grapes for raisins.

"Mas is out there every day. He touches every tree a couple times a year," she said. "Some farmers are lucky if they even see their trees."

► The reporter can be reached at dpollock@fresnobee.com or (559) 441-6364.

- **Founded:** 1948
- **Headquarters:** Del Rey
- **Number of employees:** Four family members, 12 seasonal workers
- **Principal officers:** Owners David Mas and Marcy Masumoto