Stapleton Technical Bulletin

Pit Tolerance Standards

Background

All pitted prunes in the prune industry are mechanically pitted (eg. Pitted using some type of machine). There are several types of machines commonly used in the prune industry. The most popular are the Ashlock pitter and the Elliott pitter.

The Ashlock pitter operates by holding the fruit in place using a "cup" then punching the pit out with a "knife"

The Elliott pitter works by squeezing the pit out the fruit. Elliott pitted fruit is generally deformed and exclusively used for industrial reprocessing.

The Sunsweet corporation has also developed their own pitter which they call the "Sunsweet Pitter". It is their own proprietary design and no one outside of Sunsweet knows how the pitter works. It does however deform the fruit and may therefore be a hybrid of an Ashlock and Elliott pitter.

Regardless of the pitting method, none of these machines can pit fruit to zero pit tolerances. This is due to the fact that the pit may not be perfectly centered in the fruit or that the pit may fragment prior to or during the pitting process.

The Dried Fruit Association has published guidelines as to acceptable limits for pit and pit fragments. These standards are attached. These requirements were legal standards until recently. In the past year, the Federal Marketing Order for prunes was disbanded and there is now no legal standards or requirements for pit fragments in prunes.

Stapleton-Spence Standards

As mentioned above the Federal Marketing Order for prunes was recently disbanded, the standard for pit or pit fragments in prunes had been changed from 2% to 0.5%. While this is no longer a federal requirement it is the standard we use. We do continuous checks for pit incidence and generally exceed this standard.

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