

Title Sensory evaluation of the main loquat cultivars in Spain
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Citation ISHS Acta Horticulturae 750:159-164. 2007.
Keywords *Eriobotrya japonica*; fruit quality; appearance; taste; flavor; texture

Abstract

The most important Spanish cultivars of loquat (*Eriobotrya japonica* Lindl.) were evaluated and characterized based on sensorial analyses with the aim to obtain information about their intrinsic fruit quality values, to detect consumer's preferences, and to identify differences among cultivars. Twenty five panelists, male and female of different ages, scored five visual and six flavor/texture attributes. They added their global appreciation based on the external appearance and flavor of each cultivar on a five-point scale. The analyses detected significant differences ($p < 0.05$) in size, shape, color, defects skin, firmness in fingers, sweetness and sourness among the cultivars. Panelists did not distinguish cultivars based on their aroma and astringency attributes nor in their juiciness/hardiness perceptions in mouth. Panelists preferred the visual appearance of the fruits of 'Golden Nugget', 'Tanaka' and 'Algerie' cultivars due to their larger size and more rounded shape. They also showed preference for the flavor of 'Golden Nugget' and 'Magdal' fruits due to their sweeter taste. Results suggest that a further recruitment of new consumers for the enlargement of loquat market in Spain will depend on the offer of large, sweeter, attractive well-coloured and oval-rounded shaped fruits. Our results also justify the expanding area of 'Golden Nugget' in Spain in detriment of 'Tanaka' and 'Magdal' crop area.