

HISTORY OF THE STRAWBERRY

- As early as 19th century, historical accounts show that the strawberry was brought in for production by the Spaniards to La Trinidad, then known as “Benguet”.
- During the American period (1900-1940), along with the other temperate highland vegetables, the strawberry was re-introduced to provide the Americans with the stable supply of their all-American salad.
- Right after World War II, a few Japanese farmers who intermarried with local lasses stayed continued to grow the strawberry along with highland vegetables.
- By the 1970’s, we became known as the “Salad Bowl of the Philippines” with small patches of strawberry production of the traditional variety in the garden. The main market then was all in the City of Baguio.
- During the early 1980’s, La Trinidad’s agricultural economy then was based on the production of highland vegetables, but the local government felt that they should diversify their efforts to cutflower and strawberry production since the nearby municipalities were starting to compete with commercially grown vegetables. Thus to invigorate the strawberry industry, new Japanese varieties were introduced during this decade. And the first Strawberry Festival was held in 1981, to showcase that the strawberry was being produced in La Trinidad.
- The Swamp area of Betag became the experimental and demonstration farms for strawberries. The production spread to other areas of Poblacion, Puguis, Pico and Wangal.
- By the early 1990’s, strawberry production became a mother lode of livelihood that has proved beneficial to the farmers and the municipality as a whole. This earned an added monicker for the town, from “SALAD BOWL” to “STRAWBERRY FIELDS OF THE PHILIPPINES”, an identity no other place can grab from La Trinidad.
- Strawberries are consumed fresh or as processed products(jams, preserves, ice cream flavoring, wine, pastry products, among others). Fresh strawberries are sold to the City of Baguio or shipped down to Manila and other areas in the country.
- By the turn of the 20th century, through various tie-ups, studies, research and technology transfer, strawberry varieties which were more resistant to disease, sweeter, aromatic and succulent were introduced to local farmers.

Sources: *William Henry Scott , History of the Cordillera, 1975*
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*f/n: strawberry
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