



PACIFIC COAST  
FARMERS' MARKET  
ASSOCIATION

## THE BIG BOYS OF CITRUS - POMELO AND GRAPEFRUIT



The season for citrus is here, and in California, that means a chorus of quintessential, show-stopping fruit, from itty-bitty kumquats, tangy lemons, and red-fleshed blood oranges, to easy-peel mandarins, tart grapefruit, and giant pomelos. We grow it all!

This month the spotlight is on the differences between grapefruit and pomelos. These are the understudies of the citrus culinary playbill. Ever since the 1950s, grapefruit has been available on restaurant menus and family tables, but pomelos have not been mentioned very often.

The funny thing is, is that the non-hybrid pomelo is an oldie but a goodie! It's what's called an "ancestor fruit." A pomelo is a whole separate species from grapefruit. Mandarins and lemons are also ancestor fruits. Crosses between these three citrus varieties are the foundation of almost all citrus seen today. For example, pomelos crossed with mandarins give us oranges. Pomelos crossed with oranges give us grapefruit. The old pomelo has been on stage for hundreds of years!

The most obvious difference between pomelos and grapefruits is the scene-stealing size. The pomelo is larger at first, but once peeled, the fruit itself is about the same size as a grapefruit. Pomelos can have almost a 1/2 - to 3/4- inch thick rind and pith! Pomelos taste similar to grapefruit but are slightly sweeter. The membrane between the segments is thicker and tends to be bitter. The Oro Blanco, Chandler, and Tahitian are some of the more common pomelo varieties you'll find at the farmers' market.

Grapefruit is a hybrid formed by a long-ago accidental cross between a sweet orange and a pomelo. It is called grapefruit because of its tendency to grow in groups or bunches. They hold more moisture and are denser than a pomelo. Audience-pleasing grapefruit

varieties include Ruby Red, Marsh, and Valentine.

Another citrus showstopper is the grapefruit-pomelo hybrid, for an interesting plot twist! The Melogold hybrid was developed here in 1958 at the University of California Riverside's Citrus Breeding Program. It is seedless with a delicious, sweet-tart flavor and is a bigger and heavier fruit with thinner skin than a pomelo.

There are striking similarities and dubious differences between these two citrus giants. However, they do have one thing in common – they're both delicious! Buying citrus from your farmers' market is a special treat because of the fruit's freshness and the abundance of variety. You can also converse with the farmer who wrote the script on his fruit.

For information on how to select and store, please visit [Grapefruit](#) and [Pomelos](#) on this website.

This winter, pick up some of the stars of the citrus world and enjoy their tart and sweet flavor.

TAGS