

The dryland orchard in the Algarve

Language

English

Nowadays, the Algarve's image is associated with citrus fruit orchards, but in dry and sunny land many fig trees, almond trees and carob trees grow and constitute the “dryland orchard”.

With large areas of fig trees the Algarve exported dry figs for centuries, with high impact on the regional economy. The almond trees, blossoming at the beginning of spring, covered wide areas and were depicted in postcards of the Algarve region in the first half of the 20th century, attracting people from all over the country to visit the south.

Its fruits, the almonds are used for cooking purposes, especially for confectionery, but also for therapeutic purposes and in cosmetics. The fruit of the carob tree, the carob, is used as flour in animal feed, a substitute for the manufacture of chocolate, in brandy, syrups, gums, pharmaceutical products and for gardening. In popular tradition, the dry fruits, particularly the fig and the almond are linked to All Saints Day. According to the Tora the fig is one of the seven foods which grow in the Promised Land. According to the Bible Adam covered himself with the fig leaf. The citrus fruit orchards are widely spread in the Algarve.

The sweet orange was brought in the 16th century from China to Europe by the Portuguese. They are called “*portuguesas*” in various countries, especially in the Balkans.