

Genetics and selective breeding create better blueberry

At the Flavors of Florida — a cornucopia of science-enhanced produce, seafood and meat recently held at the University of Florida president's mansion — the blueberries stood out, not only for their eye-popping color but also their mouth-watering flavor.

Pureed “Kestrel” blueberries swirled through a lemon-lime canape topped off with vanilla ice cream. “Chickadee” blueberries dotted a “limone” basil and tapioca parfait swirled with a strawberry liqueur and topped with a crunchy streusel.

Both varieties are the result of decades of painstaking research by University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences faculty and graduate students dedicated to figuring out how to build a better blueberry.

These aren't frankenberries, transgenic mutations altered by the insertion of genetic material of other organisms. The blueberries offered for public consumption are varieties produced the same way people have been cultivating plants for 14,000 years — through selective breeding.

“This is good, old-fashioned plant sex,” said Kevin Folta, chairman of the horticultural sciences department at UF and a professor of photobiology and strawberry genomics.

For years, nearly three dozen plant breeders, biochemists, human sensory analysts, and geneticists at IFAS formed a loose association of colleagues devoted to building a better blueberry, among other things.

“(They) had the desire to turn plant breeding on its head to create healthy, good looking and really tasty plant varieties,” said Jackie Burns, dean of research at IFAS. “They start with the consumer and work backwards to the underlying genetics and genomics.”

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [University leads the way in building a better blueberry](#)