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UC honors Santa Barbara farmer Jay Ruskey and UC apiculturist Eric Mussen



Jay Ruskey

The University of California has presented the 2010 Pedro Ilic Award for Outstanding Farmer to Jay Ruskey of Santa Barbara, and the 2010 Pedro Ilic Award for Outstanding Educator to UC Davis apiculturist Eric Mussen.

The awards are named for Fresno County small-scale farm advisor Pedro Ilic, whose untimely death in 1994 prompted UC to annually honor those who carry out his legacy of personal commitment to small-scale and family farming. The annual awards honor an educator and a farmer who embody characteristics that helped make Ilic a success.

Ruskey owns Condor Ridge Ranch, where he has 22 acres of rolling hills under fruit tree cultivation. He runs <http://Calimoya.com>, a Web site committed to offering sustainably produced, delicious and satisfying fruit to consumers throughout the country. In addition, Ruskey markets his products at natural food stores, local farmers markets and restaurants.

Ruskey was nominated for the honor by UC Cooperative Extension farm advisors Mark Gaskell of Santa Barbara County and Ben Faber of Ventura County. They wrote that Ruskey recognizes the importance of using market signals to guide farm decisions. He routinely collaborates with UC farm advisors on production and marketing projects to develop new crop alternatives. He was a cooperator in Gaskell's lychee and longan research trials and he recently planted more than a dozen coffee varieties at Condor Ridge Ranch on a trial basis.

The nominators said Ruskey has willingly shared his knowledge with other growers and opened his farm to a variety of visitors, including community groups, the California Rare Fruit Growers, and agribusiness and crop science students from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.

"Overall, Jay is a valuable role model for small farm agriculture in California as he constantly searches the horizon for new innovations on his farm," Faber and Gaskell said.

The outstanding educator recipient, Mussen, served with Ilic on the Small Farm Work Group in the 1990s, said nominators UC Davis entomologists Larry Godfrey and Michael Parrella.

"They were alike in many ways: their dedication, enthusiasm, high energy, friendliness, their commitment to small-scale and family farming, and the easy-going way they imparted information on a diversity of projects, solving a multitude of problems—and sometimes at a moment's notice," they wrote.

Mussen educates the beekeeping industry and general public with his bimonthly newsletter, *from the UC Apiaries*, which he launched in 1976. Since 1976, he has also written *Bee Briefs*, addressing such issues as diseases, pesticides and swarms. Both publications are on the UC Davis Department of Entomology Web site.

"Eric is a worldwide authority on honey bees, but no problem is too small and no question too involved for him to answer," the nominators wrote. "He devotes his research and extension activities to the improvement of honey bee health and honey bee colony management practices. Eric helps growers, consumers, UC farm advisors, agricultural commissioners, scientists, beekeepers, researchers, pesticide regulators, 4-H'ers, and state and national agricultural and apicultural organizations. He ignites their interest in maintaining the health of bees, cultivates their friendship, and

generously gives of his time and intellect.”



Eric Mussen