



Meet California Asparagus Grower Eileen Nichols

Victoria Island Farms, Holt, California



Growers:
Eileen and Graydon Nichols

Industry:
Asparagus Holt, California



"We're proud of our premium grade asparagus, the expertise and enthusiasm of our employees, and the attention to quality that we devote to both farming and processing. For us, Victoria Island Farms is a labor of love. We think it shows in the excellence of our produce and the reliability of our shipments."

-Eileen Nichols

Nestled in the San Joaquin Delta, where the swampy soil and temperate climate are ideal for growing high quality asparagus, Victoria Island Farms is the largest grower of premium asparagus in California. For three generations, the Nichols family has tended to the land here since 1964.

In the beginning, most of the land was leased to tenant farmers who grew potatoes and beans. As their contracts expired, the Nichols family took over the farming operations and in 1987 they packed their first box of asparagus. Today, Controller and Partner Eileen Nichols runs the business with her partner and brother Chuck Nichols, who also farms and processes California pistachios in Hanford, California, and their parents Graydon and Virginia Nichols.

During crop rotations, the family also grows blueberries, tomatoes, onions, alfalfa, corn and wheat. The main crop is asparagus since the lightness and airiness of the peat soil allows the spears to shoot up easily – in peak growing season the asparagus has been known to grow at a rate of 10 inches per day!

With fifty employees year round and an additional 50-100 employees added during peak seasons, the Nichols family grows, packs and ships all their own crops to ensure absolute quality control, freshness and food safety. "Buying California Grown products gives consumers assurance that strict food safety, pesticide and worker safety regulations have been followed," said Eileen Nichols. "We strive to provide a top quality product while at the same time maintaining a safe and stable workplace for our employees."

For Eileen, her most memorable moments as a grower are seeing Victoria Island Farms products displayed at grocery stores and when shoppers chose them for their carts. "We have seen our label on several menus in restaurants from San Francisco to Modesto, like 'fresh delta asparagus', 'Victoria Island asparagus pizza', even 'delta asparagus mashed potatoes'," said Eileen.

Eileen is happy to see a growing awareness of buying locally grown fruits, vegetables and dairy products. "Supporting California Grown products supports the local economy and will help ensure that we continue to have a viable domestic food supply," she said.

To learn more about the California asparagus industry, visit www.calasparagus.com.

