

# Ask The Expert

## No Difference, Only Positives For Crops Produced Through Plant Biotechnology

(NAPSA)—“Ask the Expert” provides the answers to frequently asked questions about food biotechnology. This month, Mary Lee Chin, a registered dietitian in Denver, will answer the question, “What is the difference between food enhanced through biotechnology and food created through traditional plant breeding?”

### What is the difference?

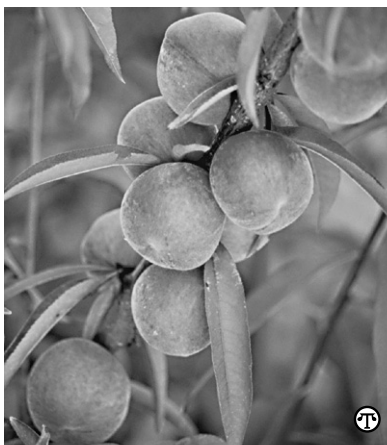
The basic science behind plant biotechnology and traditional plant breeding is the same. However, biotechnology is a faster, more precise tool that develops better-tasting, high-quality foods for consumers. While biotech gene transfer is quicker than conventional development, each product also undergoes a thorough review process, taking up to eight years, to ensure food and environmental safety at each step of development.

The National Research Council has concluded “no strict distinction exists” between the health and environmental aspects of plants enhanced by biotechnology and those developed through conventional breeding practices. Unlike traditional plant breeding methods that often can take decades to develop a new variety, modern plant biotechnology allows the selection of certain genetic traits to occur more rapidly and accurately, making possible new varieties of vegetables and fruits, such as peaches.

For example, when peaches are picked from the tree at maturity, they have a distinct ripened flavor. However, consistently finding that flavor in the grocery store bin is a challenge.

“Tree ripening is the only way to get full peach flavor, but ripe peaches do not usually travel well to market,” says Gail McPherson, who, with her husband Paul, runs Maple Lawn Farms, a fourth-generation pick-your-own orchard in New Park, Pa.

On the bright side, firm yet flavorful peaches from the grocery store are not far away,



**Here's a peachy idea: Plant biotechnology is helping produce better-tasting fruit.**

thanks to biotechnology research being conducted at the University of Florida.

Dr. Wayne Sherman and his colleagues at the University of Florida have transferred a gene from a canning peach known for its firmness to a top-quality, fresh-market peach known for its great taste. The improved peach now can be left on the tree longer, allowing it to develop full flavor and still get to the grocery store in good condition. Try as farmers and researchers might, traditional breeding methods simply could not produce this peach.

The first improved trees were planted in Florida this year and will bear fruit in two years. “We are excited about the advancements that biotechnology promises for the peach industry,” McPherson said. “What used to take decades to develop and produce will now be possible in five to seven years and will truly result in a better peach for the consumer.”

Tastier produce also should make it easier to get children—and everyone else—to eat the recommended five servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

For more information about plant biotechnology, visit the Web site at [www.whybiotech.com](http://www.whybiotech.com).