

Placer County farmer's produce a hit in Santa Monica

David Karp, NW32 TV

Jeff Rieger's commute each week to the Santa Monica farmers market from his farm in Placer County— 924 miles round trip — is probably the longest regularly undertaken by any vendor at a Southern California certified market. He is driven by a passion to grow and market rare and high-quality fruits, all the more remarkable since he got into farming almost by accident.

It was the mandarins that hooked him. For 23 years he had lived near Lake Tahoe, first skiing, then painting houses, then building them on speculation. When Rieger and his girlfriend at the time bought a 4.3-acre property in Penryn, in the Sierra foothills northeast of Sacramento, in November 2002, he intended to fix up the house and flip it for a profit. But the owner had left the crop of satsuma mandarins on the trees, and Rieger started picking them and bringing them to a local store. Soon he split with the girlfriend and fell in love with the farm, which he named Penryn Orchard Specialties.

Read the whole story