

Harvesting Tuna: Lessons from Watching* Prieto Ochoa of Banámichi, Sonora, México

(*Throughout this entire 45-minute process, Prieto never said a word)

By Bill Doolittle and Bill Steen, 2021

Lesson 1: Preparing your tool



Using wire, attach a small can at a 90° angle to a long pole, and a sickle to the same pole

Lesson 2: Harvesting en masse



Stab the fruit-bearing nopal pad with a pitchfork



Using the sickle on the pole, cut off the entire nopal pad



Drop the sickle pole and lower your harvest with the pitchfork



Using a piece of cardboard, remove each fruit and drop them in a bucket

Lesson 3: Harvesting individual fruits



Using the pole with can and sickle, place the can over an individual fruit and twist to remove



Drop the fruit into a bucket

Lesson 4: Removing the spines



Place a mesh sack over the mouth of the bucket and transfer the fruit from the bucket to the sack



Carry the sack bearing fruit to an irrigation canal



Dip the sack into the irrigation canal and lift it out



Holding each end of the sack, keeping the open end closed, rock the sack back and forth repeatedly, thereby allowing the fruit to rub together in an abrasive manner

Repeat the dipping and rocking steps five or six times until all the *albuates* or tiny spines are removed.

Lesson 5: Peeling the fruit



Cut off both ends with a sharp knife. Then cut a slit in the peel from end to end. With the knife holding one side of the slit, roll the fruit out of the peel