

Food, Nutrition and Health

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This week's features include:

Food - Peach

Recipe - Grilled peach salsa

Activity - Softball

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Peaches were originally grown in China and have been around ever since prehistoric times. This delicious, fuzzy fruit was thought to symbolize long life and immortality. The peach was often the focus of Chinese paintings, porcelain figures, and poetry writing. It was not long until the peach seed reached other parts of the world. The peach first reached Persia and then Europe. In fact, the Romans thought the peach came from Persia instead of China and gave it the scientific name of *prunus persica*.

How did the peach get to the United States? Well, it is thought that Spanish missionaries carried peach seeds with them as they traveled to the United States and Central and South America. The first peach trees were planted in California, which is still the top producer of peaches in the US. Other states that produce peaches are South Carolina, Colorado, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Washington, Michigan, and New Jersey. Today, the US produces about a quarter of the world's peaches. During winter months in the US, peaches are flown in from Chile, Canada, and Mexico. The peach has now become the third most popular fruit in the US!

Availability / Selection / Storage

Availability – Peaches are usually available from May through October. Coastal states have the advantage of enjoying a lot of imported peaches through the winter season. Canned peaches are also available all year long.

Selection – To select sweet and juicy peaches, choose ones that have a sweet fragrance. The sweet smell indicates sweet taste. You also want to pay attention to the color, selecting peaches that have a yellow or cream skin. Some peaches also have a red/orange color too, but this is no indication of sweetness. If you select peaches at the grocery store that are already ripe, be sure to eat them right away. If the peaches need ripening, put them in a brown paper bag at room temperature for 2-3 days.

Storage – It is best to eat ripe peaches right away, but they can also be stored for 3-5 days. Peaches that are not quite ripe can be refrigerated for about 2 weeks. Peaches also taste best when they are at room temperature. So if you get a peach out of the refrigerator, you might want to try setting it on the kitchen counter for about an hour. This will bring out the wonderful, sweet flavor of the peach.

Nutrition

Peaches are a great source of vitamin C, which is an antioxidant that protects your body from free radical damage that could lead to heart disease and cancer. Peaches also provide about 2 grams of dietary fiber. It is recommended to consume 25-30 grams of fiber per day from foods to decrease risk of heart disease, diabetes, and some forms of cancer. One medium peach provides 8% of your daily value for fiber.

Adapted from: [Dole 5 A Day](#)

Nutrient analysis of 1 medium peach: calories: 40, fat: 0g, cholesterol: 0mg, protein: 1g, carbohydrate: 10g, sodium: 0mg, potassium: 193mg, calcium: 5mg, vitamin C: 6mg, fiber: 2g

[Recipe of the Week > Grilled peach salsa](#)

Makes 4 servings (about 3/4 cup each)

Ingredients:

- 1 1/4 pounds ripe peaches, halved and pitted
- 1 teaspoon canola oil
- 2 Tablespoons finely chopped red onion
- 1 small jalapeno, seeded and finely chopped
- Zest and juice of one lime (if you don't own a good zester, you can use the fine grates on a box grater)
- 1/4 to 1/2 cup chopped cilantro
- 2-3 Tablespoons chopped fresh mint

Instructions:

1. Brush the cut sides of the peaches with the oil
2. Grill them over medium heat for 3-5 minutes or until they just begin to brown
3. Grill them with the lid down so the peaches get cooked through a bit
4. Chop them into 1/4 inch pieces and toss with the other ingredients

Nutrition Information: 76 calories, 2 grams total fat, 16 grams carbohydrate, 1 gram protein, 2 grams fiber, 2 milligrams sodium, 10 milligrams cholesterol

Recipe modified from the Keiser Permanente website. For more recipes and access to the recipe's full nutritional profile, visit <http://recipe.kaiser-permanente.org>

Activity of the Week > Softball

One of the most popular sports in the country for both men and women is softball. Similar to baseball, softball requires a bat, a ball, and a glove, which can be found in many stores for a relatively low cost. The ball used in softball is larger than the one used in baseball. In addition, the pitcher throws the ball from underhand instead of over the shoulder seen in baseball. When selecting a bat, try to choose the heaviest one since it will propel the ball the farthest and fastest.

Softball can be enjoyed regardless of age and fitness level and all you would need is your equipment and a park or field to play in. Several workplaces and amateur leagues offer opportunities to try the sport. The benefits of participating in softball are increased flexibility, strength, and muscle tone. In addition, the hand-eye coordination will be improved. The calories burnt per hour for a 130 lbs person is 246 kcal, for a 160 lbs person is 300 kcal, and for a 200 lbs person is 365 kcal.

Before playing it is important to get a good warm-up. Walk, or jog around the field/park for at least 10 minutes, then try to carefully stretch your legs and arms to loosen up the muscle groups that you will use. These include your biceps, calves, hamstrings, quadriceps, shoulders, triceps, and upper and lower back. After the game is over, walk around for a few minutes and stretch your muscles again to prevent or minimize soreness. Remember, a cold muscle will easier get tight which could cause a pulled muscle, thus make sure to stay warm during the game by wearing warm clothing.

Note: always consult with a physician before starting a new exercise program.

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