



Using Local Food -- Melons

Summertime means melons. The local melons are starting to appear in stores and markets. Here is some information to guide you in your melon purchases.

A quarter of a cantaloupe melon contains just 40 calories. It is rich in vitamins A and C; it is a good source of potassium and folate. Select cantaloupe without a stem; it should have nice netting or webbing on the outside.

A quarter of honeydew contains only 20 calories. It is rich in vitamin C and potassium and provides B vitamins, calcium and iron. Honeydews should have a golden, ivory color to their skin. Select a firm melon; heavy for its size. If picked green, it will not ripen on its own.

Two cups of watermelon contains only 80 calories. It is rich in potassium, vitamins A and C and contains the phytochemical lycopene, which has beneficial properties for your health. Look for a melon that is free of blemishes; heavy for its size with a yellow spot on its belly from sitting on the ground and ripening in the sun. Store whole watermelon in a cool dry place in your kitchen until cutting. Once cut, it must be refrigerated. Give yellow watermelon a try – it comes in both seeded and seedless varieties and tastes identical to its red counterpart.

People should eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Add more fruit to your day with a Watermelon Pizza. Cut watermelon into wedge shaped pieces about 2 inches thick. Spread with a thin layer of flavored yogurt. Top with assorted bite size pieces of fruit such as fresh grapes or berries. Top with coconut or nuts.

The Northeast Iowa Food & Farm (NIFF) Coalition and the Food & Fitness Initiative are working together to create community environments that support access to fresh, locally grown, healthy, affordable food and safe environments for physical activity and play. More information about these programs can be found at www.niffcoalition.org.