

BUY FRESH - BUY LOCAL

Food of the Week: Peaches

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.

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 – 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,

<http://www.dole5aday.com/ReferenceCenter/Encyclopedia/Peaches/index.jsp?topmenu=1>

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Recipe of the Week: Peach Crisp

Makes 8 servings

Ingredients:

- 2/3 c rolled oats
- ½ c oat bran
- ¼ c maple syrup
- 1 t vanilla
- ¼ c all-fruit peach preserves
- 2 T cornstarch
- 1 T lemon juice
- ¼ t almond extract
- 8 c peaches, peeled and sliced

Preparation: In a 9" glass pie plate, combine the oats, oat bran, maple syrup and vanilla. Mix well to distribute the liquid ingredients and to break up the clumps of oats. Spread the mixture evenly in the pan. Microwave on high, stirring every 45 seconds, until the mixture is almost dry to the touch, a total of 5 to 6 minutes. Set aside. Place the preserves in a large bowl and microwave on high for 25 seconds to soften. Stir in the cornstarch, lemon juice and almond extract. Add the peaches and mix well. Place the peaches in a 9" x 9" or 7" x 11" baking dish. Microwave on high for 3 minutes. Stir well then microwave on high for 3 minutes. Stir. Continue microwaving at 1-minute intervals until the mixture is thick and bubbling. (The exact time will depend on the size and shape of the pan, the ripeness and initial temperature of the peaches and the thickness of the slices). Sprinkle with the oat mixture. Serve warm or chilled.

Nutrient analysis per serving: calories: 255, fat: 1g, cholesterol: 0mg, protein: 4g, carbohydrate: 64g, sodium: 5mg, potassium: 761mg, calcium: 33mg, vitamin C: 24mg, fiber: 8g

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

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IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
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