

BUY FRESH - BUY LOCAL

Food of the Week: Grapes

History tells us that grapes have been around since prehistoric times and were first cultivated in Asia around 5,000 BC. The fruit was highly regarded back then, as many biblical stories referred to grapes as “the fruit of the vine” and Egyptian tombs contained hieroglyphics with grapes.

New Mexico was the first state in America to grow grapes, which were brought over by European settlers during the 17th century. However, some years later it was discovered that California was a better location for growing grapes because California did not have the insects that destroyed grapes. Now, the United States, Italy, France, Spain, Mexico, and Chile are among the major grape producers.

Grapes that we eat as a snack or in fruit salads are called table grapes, as opposed to wine grapes (used in wine making) or raisin grapes (used to make dried fruit). Today, there are thousands of varieties of grapes but only 20 are typically used in food and wine production.

Availability - Grapes can be found at the grocery all throughout the year. American varieties are available during the months of September and October, and European varieties are available all year long. Both varieties are grown in the US.

Selection - Grapes should be free of wrinkles; they should be plump and have skin that is intact. Sweet grapes will be full of color. Green grapes should have a green and yellow hue, red grapes should be red all over, and purple and blue-black grapes should have a deep, rich color.

Storage - Grapes can be refrigerated for four to five days. Grapes keep well in the refrigerator when they are left unwashed, wrapped loosely in a paper towel, and placed in a perforated plastic bag. Grapes should never be left on the counter, as they will ferment at room temperature. A delicious alternative to refrigeration is to place grapes in the freezer. Frozen grapes make a refreshing snack, especially during warm weather. Just wash grapes under running water, pat dry, remove grapes from stem, place in a single layer on a cookie sheet, and freeze for one or two hours. Once frozen, just pop them in your mouth or place in a plastic bag and put back in the freezer.

Nutrition - Grapes not only taste good but are a good source of vitamin C and fiber. Red grapes, in particular, are very high in flavonoids which give red grapes their color. Flavonoids have many important biochemical and antioxidant effects such as decreasing the formation of harmful blood clots and protecting arteries from free radical damage.

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Studies have also shown that drinking grape juice and red wine can benefit our heart and blood vessels. However, grape juice is probably a better alternative because it is alcohol-free, as risks of excessive alcohol consumption (i.e.: liver problems, alcohol poisoning, higher blood pressure, irregular heart beats, and alcoholism, etc) far outweigh its benefits. Another flavonoid found in red grapes, called resveratrol, has been shown to help fight against certain forms of cancer such as prostate, lung, liver, and breast cancer. The evidence is clear, including grapes as part of a nutritious diet is a great idea!

Above information adapted from The World's Healthiest Foods. For more, please visit: <http://www.whfoods.com/foodstoc.php>

Nutrient analysis per 1 cup of grapes: calories: 114, carbohydrate: 28g, protein: 1g, fat: 1g, saturated fat: <1g, cholesterol: 0mg, potassium: 296mg, vitamin C: 17mg, vitamin A: 117 IU, folate: 6mcg, fiber: 2g

Recipe of the Week: Fruity Tuna Salad Wraps

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon curry powder
- ½ cup low fat lemon yogurt
- 1 12-oz can solid white tuna in water, drained
- 1 ½ cups seedless red grapes, cut in half
- 1 stalk celery, diced
- ¼ cup chopped dates
- 2 tablespoons minced red onion
- 2 tablespoons slivered almonds, toasted
- 6 large green or red leaf lettuce leaves, washed and patted dry

1. In a medium bowl, combine first three ingredients, mix well.
2. Stir in remaining ingredients except lettuce. Mix together well.
3. Place about 1/2 cup of tuna mixture into center of each lettuce leaf and roll up. Garnish with additional red grapes, if desired. Makes 3 servings.

Nutrient analysis per serving: calories: 326, protein: 32g, carbohydrate: 35g, fat: 7g, saturated fat: 2g, cholesterol: 50mg, fiber: 4g, sodium: 476mg

Recipe source: Produce for Better Health Foundation: 5 A Day the Color Way. For more, please visit: <http://www.5aday.com/index.php>

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