

# BUY FRESH - BUY LOCAL

## Food of the Week: Plum

**History** Amazingly, there are over 2,000 varieties of plums originating from different parts of the world. The most common plums seen in the United States are from American, European, and Japanese origins. The European variety was discovered more than 2,000 years ago off of the coast of the Caspian Sea. American lands were first introduced to the European plum during the 17th century when the European settlers brought the seeds with them. China is actually where the Japanese plums originated. However, Japan became the major cultivator of the fruit – although China is now one of the largest plum producers in the world, along with the United States, Russia, and Romania.

In addition to all of the varieties, plums also come in an array of beautiful colors – ranging from bright red, deep purple, green, yellow, and orange. The flesh of the fruit also comes in colors ranging from pink to yellow to orange.

Plums are actually related to the peach, nectarine, and almond. This family of fruits goes by the name of “drupes” – meaning they have stone-like pits surrounding their seeds. Plums can also be dried. In this case, they are referred to as prunes which also make tasty treats!

**Availability** Plums are available at the grocery store from May through October. The Japanese plums are available first and peak in August, with the European varieties following in the fall.

**Selection** If you are looking for ripe, ready-to-eat plums, select ones that yield to gentle pressure, particularly at their tip. You can also choose plums that are not yet ripe and ripen them at room temperature for one to two days. Avoid plums that are extremely hard, as they will not ripen well and will have a dull taste. The skin should be a vibrant color and should have a “bloom” (silvery) coating – indicating that the fruit has not been over handled.

**Storage** Ripe plums should be eaten right away or stored in refrigeration for a few days. Plums ripen well at room temperature. They can also be frozen by removing the pit and freezing.

**Nutrition** Plums have a high content of antioxidants known as phenols which function to protect against harmful free radicals that could lead to heart disease or cancer. Plums are also a good source of vitamin C, vitamin A (in the form of beta-carotene), and fiber while being very low in calories. Studies have also shown that including fruit in your diet, such as plums or prunes, can help your vision! A recent study published in the Archives of Ophthalmology showed that including 3 or more servings of fruit everyday could decrease your risk of developing age related macular degeneration, the leading cause of blindness in older adults. So bite into a plum today and enjoy that sweet, juicy flavor!

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### Recipe of the Week: Fresh Fruit Kebobs

- 4 Plums (fresh, ripe) halved and pitted
- 4 Peaches (fresh, ripe) halved and pitted
- 4 Nectarines (fresh, ripe) halved and pitted
- 2 Lemons, juiced
- 1 t Cayenne pepper
- Mint sprigs (optional)

Cut each half of fruit into thirds. Place fruit in a medium bowl, add lemon juice and cayenne pepper; mix well. Marinate fruit for 1 hour. On a skewer, alternate fruit wedges; chill. Garnish with mint sprig, if desired. Makes 24 kebobs.

Nutrient analysis of 1 fruit kebob: calories: 25, fat: <1g, saturated fat: 0g, carbohydrate: 6g, protein: <1g, vitamin C: 6mg, fiber: 1g, vitamin A: 291IU, sodium: <1mg, potassium: 105mg

Nutrient analysis of 1 medium plum: calories: 36, fat: <1g, saturated fat: <1g, carbohydrate: 9g, protein: 1g, vitamin C: 6mg, fiber: 1g, vitamin A: 213 IU, sodium: 0mg, potassium: 114mg

Recipe Source: Aboutproduce.com and Produce for Better Health Foundation

For more recipes, visit: [www.aboutproduce.com](http://www.aboutproduce.com)

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