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Peaches

Create Better Health Guide to Eating Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

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Utah Local Fresh Season: August to September

Availability: Peaches are available year round, but taste the best and are less expensive during the summer.

Eating: Peaches can be eaten fresh in salads and smoothies, as a topping for yogurt, ice cream, cereal, pancakes, or waffles, and as a filling for pies, tarts, cobblers, or strudels. They can also be grilled and served as a unique side dish with meat, fish or poultry. Peaches are also available dried, frozen, canned, and as nectar, jam or jelly

Selecting: For best quality, select peaches that are firm to slightly soft and free from bruises. The best sign of ripeness in a peach is a creamy or golden undertone, often called “ground color.” The rosy “blush” on a peach is not a good indicator of ripeness and differs from one variety to another. Fresh peach fragrance also indicates ripeness. Avoid peaches with a green ground color as they lack flavor and usually shrivel and become tough rather than ripen. Peaches that are picked green may develop more juice, but they will not become sweeter.

Peaches are classified either as clingstone or freestone according to how difficult it is to remove the pit. It is easier to remove the pit from freestone peaches.

When selecting canned peaches look for those that are labeled “packed in its own juice,” “lite,” or “no sugar added.” These are healthier choices.

Variety: There are a number of different varieties of peaches grown in Utah. Some of the more common are:

- Canadian Harmony (used fresh and for freezing)
- Elberta (excellent for fresh eating and canning)

- Early Elberta (excellent for fresh eating and canning)
- J. H. Hale (great for canning)
- Red Haven (excellent for canning, freezing and fresh eating)
- Glohaven (superior for canning and freezing)
- Red globe (excellent for fresh eating, canning, or freezing)

Cleaning and Preparing: Wash peaches by rubbing them gently under running water.

If a recipe calls for peeled peaches, dip peaches into boiling water for about 30 seconds, then plunge them immediately into iced water. The skins will slip right off.

Fresh peaches darken quickly when exposed to air. Prevent browning of fresh cut peaches by dipping fruit into a mixture of 1 cup water and 1 tablespoon lemon juice. A commercial ascorbic acid mixture like Fruit Fresh can also be used to prevent browning.

Peach Puree: To prepare peach puree, peel and slice peaches. Combine 1 cup sliced peaches, 1 tablespoon water and 1 teaspoon sugar (optional) in a blender and blend until smooth. Peach puree can be stored in a covered container in the refrigerator for a few days. Add one of the anti-browning solutions described above if the puree will not be eaten immediately.

Pureed fresh peaches can be used in fruit punch, milkshakes, as a mix-in for warm oatmeal, a topping for pancakes or French toast, and as a basting sauce to brush on grilled meat or poultry.

To make peach ice cubes, puree 1 cup peaches with 1 tablespoon of lemon or orange juice and freeze in an ice cube tray. When frozen, transfer cubes to a freezer bag

and store in the freezer. Add frozen cubes to lemon-lime soda to make a slush or place them in a blender with milk to make a smoothie.

Cooking: Fresh peach halves are delicious barbecued. Sprinkle peaches with ginger and brown sugar, thread on skewers and grill until the sugar caramelizes. Serve with meat, fish or poultry.

Storing: Firm ripe peaches, with good ground color, will become fully ripe and soft in 3 to 4 days when kept at room temperature in a loosely closed bag. Peaches are ready to eat when they give to gentle palm pressure. Peaches bruise easily if squeezed. Store fully ripe peaches in the refrigerator, and for the best peachy taste, serve ripe peaches at room temperature.

Nutrition Highlights: Peaches are high in calcium and are good sources of vitamins A and C.

Growing: Success in growing a peach tree in Utah requires some preparation and considerable maintenance. Peaches prefer well drained soil, and while most of Utah's heavy clay soils are not ideal for fruit trees they can work. Peaches require full sunlight and should not receive shade from buildings or tall trees. If possible, select a site with a high elevation so that cold air can drain away from the tree on a cold night during bloom. The best site will have well drained sandy loam type soil. Peach tree roots or rootstocks will not tolerate soils where water remains on or near the surface for more than 1 hour after a heavy rain.

Preserving: Peaches may be canned as halves or slices, jams or pie filling, frozen or dried to preserve them for future use. Visit the National Center for Home Food Preservation website, <http://nchfp.uga.edu/>, for instructions.

Peach Splash

Yield: 4 servings

1½ cups peaches peeled and sliced or 1½ cups frozen peach slices
2 tablespoons sugar
¼ teaspoon nutmeg or cinnamon
2 cups milk
8-10 ice cubes (omit ice is using frozen peaches)

Combine all ingredients in a blender and mix well. Gradually add ice cubes and mix until finely crushed. Garnish with a dash of nutmeg.

Peach Parfaits

<http://www.pickyourown.org/peachrecipes.htm>

1-3 ounce package fat free cream cheese
1 cup plain, non-fat yogurt
6-8 medium peaches
2 tablespoons chopped almonds

Pit and slice peaches. Sprinkle with ¼ cup sugar and refrigerate for 1 hour. In a small mixing bowl beat together cream cheese, yogurt and ¼ cup sugar until smooth.

Spoon alternate layers of the yogurt mixture and peaches into parfait glasses. Top with almonds. Serves 6.

Warm Peach Gingersnap Sundaes

Washington State Dairy Council, http://www.havemilk.com/client_images/warm_peach_gingersnap_sundaes.pdf
Prep time: 10 minutes Cook time: 5 minutes

1 tablespoon butter
2 cups chopped (¾-inch) peeled fresh peaches or frozen, thawed peaches
2 tablespoons packed brown sugar
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
12 gingersnap cookies
4 containers (6-ounce each) fat free or low-fat peach yogurt
4 cinnamon sticks, for garnish (optional)

Melt butter in medium skillet over medium heat. Add peaches, brown sugar, and cinnamon. Cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes or until peaches are hot. Remove from heat. Place cookies in plastic bag and seal the bag. Crush cookies to coarse crumbs with mallet or rolling pin. To serve, spoon yogurt into the bottom of four dessert dishes. Sprinkle with gingersnap crumbs, dividing evenly. Top with warm peaches. Garnish with cinnamon sticks, if desired. Makes 4 servings

References

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