

RED GRAPES

Description/Taste

Red seedless grapes are small to medium in size and are round to slightly oblong in shape, growing in medium to large clusters. The hue of a Red seedless grape can vary widely depending on the variety and local growing conditions, but it usually ranges from a light red to a deep burgundy. The thin skin may also contain a dusty film, also known as a bloom, and this layer forms a natural waterproof barrier which prevents the delicate skin from cracking. The translucent flesh is juicy and is considered seedless, though a few small undetectable and undeveloped seeds may be present. Red seedless grapes are firm, crisp, and sweet with a mild, neutral flavor.

Seasons/Availability

Red seedless grapes are available year-round, with peak season in the summer through fall.

Current Facts

Red seedless grapes are grown around the world and can be of European (*Vitis vinifera*), North American descent (*Vitis labrusca*), or a hybrid of the two. Seedless grapes are propagated by cuttings, and each new variety is crossed with either Black Monukka, Thompson seedless, or Russian seedless to achieve the seedless characteristic. Red seedless grapes were introduced to market after the release of green seedless grapes, but they quickly surpassed them in popularity with the Red Flame grape being one of the most popular table grapes in the United States today. Red seedless grapes are favorable table grapes because of their resistance to shipping damage, long shelf life, and sweet taste.

Nutritional Value

Red seedless grapes contain significant amounts of vitamins A, C, and K, and contain flavonoids, such as resveratrol, which provide high antioxidant qualities that can help boost overall health.

Applications

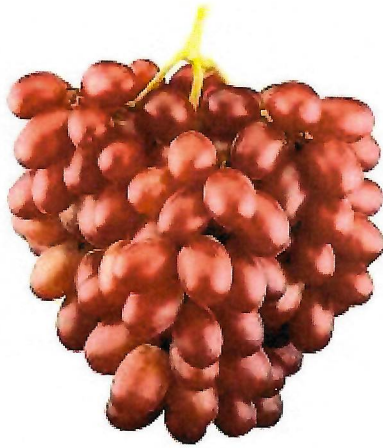
Red seedless grapes are best suited for raw applications and are most often eaten fresh, out-of-hand. They can be used in fruit salads, smoothies, sorbets, sandwiches, and on green salads. In addition to adding the grapes raw to dishes, they can also be roasted in curries, roasted and spread on toast with creamy cheeses, or cooked down into sauces, syrups, and jams. They can also be baked into tarts, cakes, and flatbreads. Red seedless grapes pair well with meats such as salami, chicken, and steak, shrimp, olives, rosemary, basil, mint, cheeses such as brie, swiss, and gruyere, and brussels sprouts, sweet potatoes, apples, walnuts, and pecans. They will keep up to two weeks when stored in a perforated plastic bag in the refrigerator. They can also be frozen whole for up to twelve months.

Ethnic/Cultural Info

Seedless grapes were produced in the United States in an effort to meet changing market demand. Consumers wanted grapes that were seedless, sweet, sizeable, and easy to consume. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) created many breeding programs in California to help meet this demand. California has thousands of acres dedicated to seedless grapes, and there are many different varieties that are sold under generic descriptors such as red, black, or green. Seedless grapes are also gaining in popularity globally, especially in Japan, where they are also creating their own programs to create new varieties with specific flavors and traits.

Geography/History

Specific varieties of seedless grapes are believed to have been grown since ancient times, but it wasn't until the success of the Thompson seedless grape in the 1870s that Red seedless grapes were created in California. Red seedless grapes are created from cross-breeding of several ancient cultivars including the Black Monukka, the Russian Seedless, and the Thompson Seedless and the majority of table grapes that are grown in California today are seedless. Red seedless grapes are being cultivated and are available at markets in Chile, Peru, the United States, China, Japan, Turkey, Spain, South Africa, and Australia.



CAULIFLOWER FLORETS

Description/Taste

Cauliflower consists of a medium to large head, averaging 15 to 30 centimeters in diameter, and is surrounded by many elongated, dark green leaves that bear a thick, fibrous midrib. The heads are comprised of tightly closed, branching florets that are firm, slightly crumbly, and range in color from bright white to ivory. The clustered floret tops also give the Cauliflower head a textured and bumpy, tree-like appearance. Underneath the surface, the white flesh has a crisp and dense, snap-like consistency. Cauliflower contains a light, vegetal scent and has a mild, sweet, and subtly nutty flavor. When cooked, the heads develop a chewy, semi-firm, and tender texture and readily absorb accompanying flavors. In addition to the heads, all parts of the plant, including the stems and leaves, are edible. Cauliflower leaves will bear a slightly stronger, green, and grassy flavor, reminiscent of collard greens.

Seasons/Availability

Cauliflower is available year-round.

Current Facts

Cauliflower, botanically classified as *Brassica oleracea* var. *botrytis*, is a well-known vegetable cultivated worldwide, belonging to the Brassicaceae family. The name Cauliflower is derived from a combination of the Latin words *caulis*, meaning "cabbage," and *flos*, meaning "flower." The cruciferous species is an ancestor to an ancient wild cabbage and is a plant comprised of several large and wide-spreading, ribbed basal leaves that grow up to 1.5 meters in height. Cauliflower is considered an everyday vegetable, commercially produced, but despite its availability, the plant is notoriously difficult to cultivate, requiring specific growing conditions. White Cauliflower is the most common type, and the signature white heads are created by tying the leaves to block out sunlight approximately 3 to 10 days before harvest. In addition to white Cauliflower varieties, orange, purple, and green hybrid cultivars were also developed and released to commercial markets in the late 20th century. Colored Cauliflower varieties are not genetically modified and were created from traditional breeding techniques and natural mutations. Cauliflower is highly favored among chefs for its versatility, neutral flavor, nutritional properties, and filling nature.

Nutritional Value

Cauliflower is an excellent source of fiber to stimulate the digestive tract and vitamin C to strengthen the immune system and reduce inflammation. The florets also contain vitamin K to assist in faster wound healing, folate to develop red blood cells, vitamin B6 to maintain a healthy metabolism, and provides lower amounts of potassium, magnesium, and phosphorus.

Applications

Cauliflower has a neutral flavor well suited to raw and cooked applications, including steaming, blanching, roasting, sautéing, baking, grilling, and frying. The cruciferous vegetable can be used whole, sliced, chopped, crumbled, or pureed. When used whole, the Cauliflower's head can be roasted and served as a centerpiece dish, or it can be sliced into thicker pieces and paired with toppings, sauces, and spices as a savory meat replacement. Cauliflower can also be divided into smaller parts, and the florets can be tossed into salads, displayed on appetizer plates with creamy dips, stir-fried with other vegetables, baked into casseroles and gratins, or steamed and served as a simple side dish. Beyond cutting the heads into florets, Cauliflower can be crumbled and incorporated as a simple carb substitute for rice, pasta, and other grains, or it can be mixed with binding ingredients to make pizza crust. It can also be pureed and blended into soups,



PINEAPPLE CHUNKS

Description/Taste

Pineapples have the shape of a pinecone, and can reach up to 30 centimeters in length. They have a rough, waxy, hexagonal-patterned rind that is covered in small, soft spikes and topped with a compact grouping of narrow, green, pointed-tipped leaves that extend upright. The rind can range in color from green to yellow or reddish-orange when ripe. The flesh varies in shades of white or yellow, depending on the variety, and modern cultivated varieties are known to be seedless. The loosely fibrous and juicy flesh offers a sweet flavor with mild acidity, while the edible core is firmer, more leathery, and less sweet.

Seasons/Availability

Pineapples are available year-round with a peak season in the spring and summer months.

Current Facts

Pineapples are botanically classified as *Ananas comosus*, and are the only plant in the Bromeliaceae family with edible fruit. They are generally grouped into four main types: Smooth Cayenne, Red Spanish, Queen, and Abacaxi, with hundreds of sub-varieties. Pineapple isn't technically a single fruit, but rather a collection of many small berries. As those individual berries develop from the plant's flowers, they fuse together around the fruit stem in the center of the plant to form the pineapple, while the stem itself serves as the fruit's core. This occurrence of clustering fruits is known as a syncarp, with other familiar syncarps including raspberries and mulberries.

Nutritional Value

Pineapple is a good source of dietary fiber and vitamin C, as well as some iron and calcium. The pineapple's core contains high levels of an enzyme called bromelain, which is said to be an effective anti-inflammatory, muscle relaxant, and digestive aid. Bromelain even has chemicals that have been shown to interfere with the growth of tumor cells.

Applications

Pineapples can be used raw or cooked. To prepare the pineapple for use, cut off the top and the base, stand the pineapple upright and slice away the skin in a downward vertical motion. The core can be left in or removed depending on preference, though it is edible, and can even be pressed for juice. Raw pineapple can be eaten as is, and also juiced or pureed for smoothies and fruit cocktails, like a pina colada. Fresh pineapple can be roasted, grilled, or baked for desserts, including pineapple upside-down cake. It can also be cooked and sweetened as a topping for custards and cheesecakes. Try dicing and pairing fresh pineapple with tomato, herbs and chilies for a salsa to accompany seafood. The enzyme, bromelain, contained in pineapples helps break down proteins, and hence pineapple juice is often used as a marinade for meats, especially pork. Fresh pineapple is highly perishable, and if kept at room temperature it should be eaten within a couple days. Store in the refrigerator to extend its shelf life up to 5 days. Fresh, cut pineapple can be covered in its natural juice and stored in an airtight container in the refrigerator for 5 to 7 days, or frozen for up to about 6 months.

Ethnic/Cultural Info

In the American colonies in the 1700s, pineapples were imported from the Caribbean islands at a very high cost due to the perishability, novelty, and scarcity of the fruit. Only the fastest ships with the best weather conditions could deliver ripe, whole pineapples. They were mainly used for decoration, and affluent colonists would throw dinner parties with pineapple centerpieces to symbolize their wealth and their hospitality. The fruit would only sometimes be eaten once it

started to go bad. Pineapples were so sought after that there was even a pineapple rental market, where merchants would rent the fruit for a night to people who couldn't afford to purchase it, before recollecting and selling the pineapple to another customer.

Geography/History

Pineapples are believed to be native to South America, specifically inland areas of what is now Brazil and Paraguay. They made their way via explorers or traders to Central America and Mexico, where the Aztecs and Mayans cultivated them. They were also brought to the Caribbean islands, where Christopher Columbus came upon them in 1493 on the island of Guadeloupe, and later introduced the fruit into Spain. By the 1600s, the pineapple also found its way to the Philippines and China. Captain James Cook introduced the pineapple to Hawaii circa 1770, although commercial cultivation didn't fully start until the 1880s when steamships made transportation of the fragile fruit possible. Today, Costa Rica, Brazil and the Philippines are among the top producers of pineapples across the globe, with additional cultivation occurring in China, South Africa, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Hawaii, and more.



CUCUMBER SLICES

Description/Taste

There are many different varieties of Cucumbers that can be divided into two different groups: pickling and slicing. Pickling cucumbers are smaller, can be oblong and short to long and cylindrical, and have thin, green skin which is ideal for pickling. Slicing cucumbers are large and cylindrical, averaging 15-20 centimeters in length, and have thick skin. The skin can be smooth or ribbed with small bumps and nodes depending on the variety. Slicing cucumbers are most commonly seen in the local market's produce section and can range in color from dark green, to yellow or white. The inner flesh is light green with pale, edible seeds and has a crisp, aqueous texture and mild floral and grassy flavor.

Seasons/Availability

Cucumbers are available year-round.

Current Facts

Cucumbers, botanically classified as *Cucumis sativus*, are technically a fruit and belong to the same family as zucchini, pumpkin, watermelon, and summer squash. Cucumbers are well-known around the world, and approximately 84 billion pounds are produced each year. The phrase "cool as a cucumber" is prevalent in American slang and is a direct reference to the soothing and cooling effects that Cucumbers have on body temperature when consumed.

Nutritional Value

Cucumbers are an excellent source of vitamins K, A, and C, folic acid, potassium, and silica, which is a trace mineral that helps strengthen connective tissue.

Applications

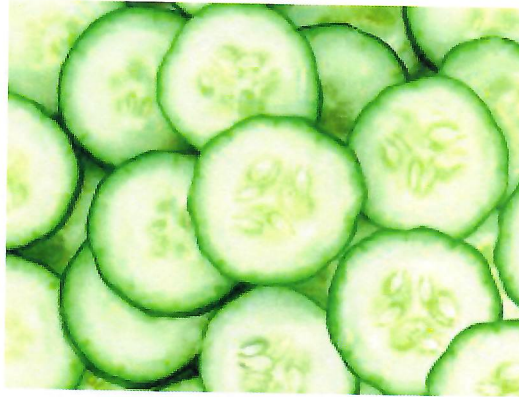
Cucumbers are commonly consumed raw. Slice cucumbers and add to salads or a crudité plate. Marinate Cucumbers in oil, vinegar, and spices and serve with sugar snap peas and mint leaves. Shred Cucumber into a cheesecloth and squeeze to remove as much moisture as possible and then mix with yogurt and dill for a tatziki sauce. It can also be sliced lengthwise, diced, and added to quinoa or bulgur wheat salad. Cucumbers pair well with mint, dill, tuna fish, chicken salad, tomatoes, green peppers, and onions. Cucumbers will keep for a few days when stored in the refrigerator. If only a portion of the Cucumber is used, wrap the remaining piece tightly in plastic and store in the refrigerator to prevent dehydration.

Ethnic/Cultural Info

In France, Cucumbers were not only used for food but also for its anti-aging properties. King Louis XIV used Cucumbers to hydrate and nourish his skin. He valued them so much that he invented greenhouses to ensure he had a Cucumber supply all year long.

Geography/History

Cucumbers are believed to have originated in India over 10,000 years ago, where a wide range of Cucumbers and melons are still grown today. Cucumbers then spread to Europe and made their way to the US with the European colonists in the 1500s. Today, Cucumbers are grown all over the world and can be found in farmer markets, grocers, and specialty stores in the United States, Iran, Turkey, Russia, China, Spain, Mexico, Indonesia, and Egypt.



WATERMELON CHUNKS

Description/Taste

Watermelons vary in size, appearance, and flavor, depending on the specific variety, and generally have a small to large, oblong, oval, to round shape. The rind is thick, smooth, hard, and waxy, showcasing solid light to dark green hues or a base green coloring with darker green, broken, and mottled stripes. Underneath the surface, the flesh has a soft, granular, crisp, and aqueous consistency, encasing dark brown-black or white oval seeds. The flesh also ranges in color from pink, red, white, green, orange, to yellow. Watermelons are typically sweet with moderate sugar content, averaging from 9 to 12 Brix, a unit of measurement for sugar, contributing to the flesh's mild, sweet, and subtly fruity, earthy flavor. Ripe Watermelons should feel firm and heavy for their size and display a yellow spot on the rind where they sat in the field. While not always a reliable indicator, some consumers select Watermelons based on the sound they make when tapped. Ripe Watermelons are rumored to have a dull, hollow, and muffled sound.

Seasons/Availability

Watermelons are grown in the Southern and Northern Hemispheres, providing year-round availability, with a peak season in the summer.

Current Facts

Watermelons, botanically classified as *Citrullus lanatus*, are flowering and fruiting plants belonging to the Cucurbitaceae family. There are over 1200 varieties of Watermelon grown worldwide, divided into several general categories, including seeded, seedless, mini, and uniquely colored types such as orange and yellow. Watermelons have been extensively cultivated since ancient times, and despite "melon" being in its name, Watermelons are botanically a type of large berry also known as a pepo or false berry. The fruits grow on sprawling vines and generally ripen in 85 to 100 days, some varieties taking longer at 130 days, and the entire Watermelon is edible, including the rind, flesh, and seeds. In the modern-day, Watermelons are commercially cultivated and grown in home gardens. There are many different commercial cultivars sold through seed retailers, and each variety ranges in size, appearance, and flavor, with Crimson Sweet being one of the most popular. Watermelons are primarily consumed fresh, but the fruits are also utilized by chefs in a wide variety of savory and sweet, raw, and cooked preparations.

Nutritional Value

Watermelons are a source of potassium to balance fluid levels within the body, vitamin A to maintain healthy organ functioning, vitamin C to strengthen the immune system, and fiber to regulate the digestive tract. The fruits also contain vitamins B6, B1, and lycopene, a nutrient that naturally gives the flesh its red or pink hue. Lycopene provides antioxidants that protect the cells against free radical damage. Beyond vitamins and minerals, Watermelons are over 90% water and are consumed as a supplementary source of hydration on warm days. The seeds are also edible and contribute beneficial nutrients, including magnesium, zinc, iron, and healthy fats.

Applications

Watermelons have a sweet, juicy nature well suited for fresh and lightly cooked preparations. The entire fruit is edible, including the rind, flesh, and seeds, and the flesh can be cubed, balled, sliced into wedges, blended, or pureed. Watermelon flesh can be consumed fresh, out of hand, sprinkled with salt to enhance the flavor, displayed on appetizer plates, sliced into wedges and topped with other fruits and cheeses, or tossed into green salads and fruit bowls. The flesh can also be combined with herbs as a side dish to roasted meats, blended into smoothies and juices, or chopped and topped over toast as a variation of bruschetta. Watermelons can be pureed and frozen into popsicles, granitas, and sorbet, tossed into herbal pasta or blended into Italian ice. In addition to fresh preparations, Watermelons can be lightly grilled, marinated as a poke substitute, or smoked and prepared as a ham replacement. The rinds are also popularly pickled in China, the United States, and Russia, containing a flavor similar to cucumber. In China, the rinds are stir-fried and stewed as a vegetable, and the seeds are roasted as a snack food. Watermelon rinds can also be carved into edible bowls as a unique serving piece. Watermelons pair well with fruits such as pomegranate, kiwi, strawberry, and grapes, jicama, arugula, cucumber, herbs including mint, basil, and cilantro, and cheeses such as mozzarella, feta, and goat. Watermelons last approximately 3 to 4 weeks after harvest. It is important to keep Watermelons cold if they are chilled when purchased. If the fruits are bought at room temperature, they can be left on the counter. Once sliced, Watermelon pieces should be stored in the refrigerator in a sealed container, where they will keep for 2 to 3 days. Watermelons can also be frozen for extended storage, used in smoothies, or as ice cubes in beverages such as lemonade and tea.

Ethnic/Cultural Info

In Japan, Watermelons are famously grown into unique shapes as a novelty. The first curated Watermelon was developed in 1978 and was created by Tomoyuki Ono, a graphic designer and horticulturalist in Tokyo. Ono showcased square Watermelons at a gallery in Ginza and said his inspiration for the shape was to create a Watermelon that would not roll around in the fridge and was easier to cut. The practical Watermelons attracted international attention for their stacking ability, making them easier to ship, and Japanese consumers appreciated the square shape to fit into compact refrigerators. Uniquely shaped Watermelons are grown by placing a tempered glass form around the developing fruit, allowing the Watermelons to eventually develop into the shape of the mold. In the modern-day, breeders have created heart-shaped, pyramid-shaped to Watermelons that look like faces. These unique fruits are much more expensive than conventional Watermelons, ranging from \$80 to \$1000, and most of the crafted Watermelons are harvested before they are fully ripe. Unusually shaped Watermelons are primarily given as gifts to friends, family, and business partners and are used as centerpieces and for decorative purposes. Crafted-shaped Watermelons are also exported to other countries, including China, Hong Kong, and Russia, where the fruits are sold at even higher prices for their novelty. In addition to commercial companies, there are now do-it-yourself websites that educate home gardeners on how to grow square Watermelons, and gardeners worldwide are attempting to create their own masterpiece.

Geography/History

Watermelons are descendants of wild varieties native to the deserts and savannahs of Southern Africa, specifically the Kalahari, and have been growing wild since ancient times. The wild types had a less sweet, bitter flavor and were utilized as one of the few water sources, allowing indigenous peoples to travel long distances under the hot desert sun. Watermelons were spread in the Early Ages to North Africa, where they have been depicted in drawings in Egyptian tombs, dating back over 5,000 years. Experts also believe that Watermelons were placed in tombs of pharaohs as a source of nutrients for the deceased kings in the afterlife. The Ancient Egyptians were the first civilization to cultivate Watermelons for a sweeter flavor, and over time, the Watermelons were transported along trade routes into the Mediterranean. Watermelons were introduced to India in the 7th century and eventually arrived in China sometime during the 10th century. By the 17th century, Watermelons were common home garden crops in Europe, and explorers used the water-dense fruits as canteens on expeditions. Colonists and the slave trade brought Watermelons to the New World, where they were planted in the Southern United States and in Thomas Jefferson's Monticello Garden. Today Watermelons are grown worldwide in over 96 countries, with China being the top producer. The United States is the 7th highest producer, and most of the Watermelons are cultivated in California, Florida, Texas, and Georgia. Oklahoma also declared Watermelons to be their official state vegetable in 2007. Watermelons can readily be found in local markets, grocers, and distributors worldwide.



SUGAR SNAP PEAS

Description/Taste

An All American Gold Medal Winner, Sugar Snap Peas are a group of edible podded peas that were developed by breeding a Chinese snow pea with a mutant pea plant. The result is a snappy sweet pea with thicker walls and plump pods.

Seasons/Availability

Sugar Snap Peas are available year-round.

Nutritional Value

Sugar snap peas provide an excellent source of protein.

Applications

The best way to know if sugar snap peas are fresh and sweet is simply by tasting them. A versatile culinary delight, sugar snap peas are welcome in a myriad of dishes. A healthy side dish, serve with main entrées. Toss into fresh mixed green salads. Make a scrumptious chilled fresh pea salad. Peas pair well with cheese. Enhance stews and soups. To store, refrigerate in a plastic bag. For optimum quality and flavor, use within one week.

Geography/History

Locally grown at 2 Peas in a Pod, Arroyo Grande, California, this reputed farm specializes in premium peas and beans and has since 1988. An ideal climate compatible for these two very popular culinary vegetables is credited for superior yields harvested on twenty acres of fertile land. Sugar snap peas are harvested year round, unlike English peas which are susceptible to frost damage which causes a delay in this pea's harvest resulting in a lower volume of English peas. Specialty Produce strongly supports and endorses the California farming industry and our local growers, ranchers and farmers.



KIWI SLICES

Description/Taste

About the size of an egg, kiwifruit is wrapped in a russet-brown thin skin with short rather stiff hairs. The kaleidoscope-like almost glistening emerald green firm pulp is dotted with a large amount of dark nearly black tiny edible seeds that create this fruit's characteristic interior starburst pattern. Sometimes the flesh may be yellow, brownish or off-white. Sweet tart with a slightly acidic edge, this decorative fruit's succulent flavor is mainly sweet.

Seasons/Availability

Kiwifruit is available from California during the winter months. New Zealand kiwifruit is available in spring and supplies arrive from Chile during the summer months.

Current Facts

According to the California Kiwifruit Commission, kiwi fruit were the fastest-growing fruit in sales and distribution from 1987 to 1995.

Nutritional Value

Kiwifruit is rich in vitamin C, having ten times more than the equal weight of a lemon. Two fruits have almost twice the vitamin C of an orange and more potassium than a comparable serving of bananas. High in fiber, it also offers vitamin A, Vitamin E, calcium and iron. Credit goes to all those little black seeds, as they act much like grains, providing lots of nutrition.

Applications

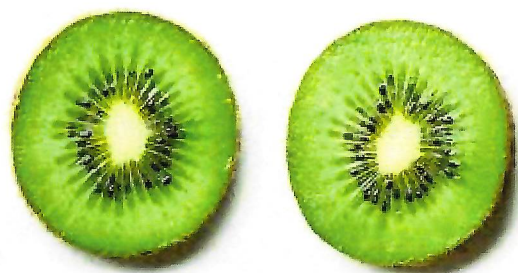
Puree; enhance juices and beverages. Even though the skin is edible, the fruit is usually peeled. Slice for garnish. Containing a meat-tenderizing enzyme, place sliced peels with some flesh attached directly on meat; marinate thirty minutes for each inch of the meat's thickness. To make a kiwifruit salsa, blend four peeled kiwis, one teaspoon minced jalapeño pepper, one tablespoon orange juice, one tablespoon chopped fresh mint and a pinch of salt. Serve with grilled swordfish, grilled poultry and roast pork. Bananas, berries, mangoes, strawberries, raspberries and oranges are especially partial to kiwifruit. To store, refrigerate ripe fruit up to ten days. Refrigerated unripe fruit lasts up to one month.

Ethnic/Cultural Info

The French word, *souris* vegetable, for this fruit translates to "vegetable mouse".

Geography/History

Native to the Yangtze River Valley of northern China and Zhejiang Province on the coast of eastern China, this fruit was first grown commercially in New Zealand. England received their very first kiwifruit shipment in 1953. Not frost-tolerant, the vigorous woody twining vine or climbing shrubby plants require a long growing season. Only fully dormant plants can survive temperatures around ten degrees Fahrenheit. The rambling vines are capable of stretching to cover an area ten to fifteen feet wide, eighteen to twenty-four feet long and nine to twelve feet high. Producing deep green leathery-textured oval to round leaves that can grow seven to ten inches in diameter, fragrant one to two inch wide white to cream colored flowers appear in the leaf axils. In the United States, California produces about ninety-nine percent of the nation's kiwifruit supply.



GREEN PEPPERS

Description/Taste

Green bell peppers are medium to large in size and have a rounded, blocky, square shape with 3-4 lobes and a thick green stem. The dark green skin is smooth, glossy, and firm, and the flesh is pale green, juicy, crisp, and succulent. Inside the thick flesh, there is a hollow cavity filled with a white membrane and many small, flat, and cream-colored circular seeds. Green bell peppers are crunchy with an aromatic, green, less sweet and almost bitter flavor than the other colored varieties.

Seasons/Availability

Green bell peppers are available year-round, with a peak season in the late summer through fall.

Current Facts

Green bell peppers, botanically classified as *Capsicum annuum*, are the young, edible fruits of the perennial or annual plant that is a member of the Solanaceae family. Green bell pepper plants can grow up to one meter in height and lack capsaicin, which is the element that causes the tongue to taste spice or heat. Also known as Capsicum and Paprika in Europe, Green bell peppers are harvested prematurely when they are still young, approximately seventy days after planting. These peppers are favored by chefs and home cooks for their mildly bitter flavor and juicy, crunchy texture.

Nutritional Value

Green bell peppers are an excellent source of vitamin C and also contain vitamins A, B6, and K, potassium, folic acid, fiber, and beta-carotene.

Applications

Green bell peppers are best suited for both raw and cooked applications such as baking, sautéing, roasting, and grilling. When used fresh, the pepper can be chopped and tossed into green salads, sliced as an appetizer for dips and spreads, chopped for salsa, or layered on sandwiches for an added layer of crunch. Green bell peppers can also be roasted and served over pasta, baked into casseroles, chopped into stews, cooked into a frittata, mixed into curries, or halved, stuffed, and baked with cheeses, meats, and grains. Green bell peppers pair well with tomatoes, corn, red onion, onions, garlic, potatoes, black beans, chickpeas, cilantro, peaches, coconut milk, ground beef, pork, turkey, shrimp, eggs, rice, quinoa, faro, and couscous. The peppers will keep 1-2 weeks when stored in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator.

Ethnic/Cultural Info

In Louisiana in the southern United States, Green bell peppers are one of the major ingredients used in the "holy trinity" of Cajun or Creole cooking along with celery and onions. The holy trinity is a variant of the French mirepoix, which is a combination of onions, celery, and carrots and these three ingredients are the base of stews, soups, gumbos, jambalaya, and crawfish étouffée, providing flavor and depth to the southern style of cooking.

Geography/History

Green bell peppers are native to tropical America and have been growing since ancient times. They were then introduced to Asia and Europe via Spanish and Portuguese explorers around 1493, and since then new varieties and heirloom varieties have been cultivated across the world. Today Green bell peppers can be found at supermarkets, farmers markets, specialty grocers, and grown in home gardens in North America, Central America, South America, Africa, Europe, Asia, and Australia.



YELLOW PEPPERS

Description/Taste

Yellow bell peppers are medium to large in size, averaging seven centimeters in length and five centimeters in diameter, and are rounded, square, and blocky in shape with 3-4 lobes and a thick green stem. The smooth skin is firm, glossy, and pale green when young, transforming to bright yellow with age. Underneath the skin, the vibrant yellow flesh is thick, crisp, and succulent, with a hollow cavity that contains very small, flat and bitter cream-colored seeds and a thin, spongy membrane. Yellow bell peppers are crunchy and juicy with a mild, sweet flavor.

Seasons/Availability

Yellow bell peppers are available year-round, with a peak season in the summer.

Current Facts

Yellow bell peppers, botanically classified as *Capsicum annuum*, are the sweet, edible fruits of a plant that can be grown both as an annual or perennial and belongs to the Solanaceae or nightshade family. There are several varieties of bell peppers that are grown specifically for their yellow stage of maturity, as temperatures during coloring play a major role in the uniformity and rate of color development. These varieties include Golden Belle, Golden Cal Wonder, Astro, Klondike Bell, Honey Bell, and Marengo. Yellow bell peppers are favored by chefs and home cooks for their sweet flavor, crunchy flesh, and bright color.

Nutritional Value

Yellow bell peppers are an excellent source of vitamin C and also contain vitamin A, fiber, calcium, iron, and potassium.

Applications

Yellow bell peppers are best suited for both raw and cooked applications such as roasting, baking, grilling, and sautéing. The peppers can be used fresh and chopped into salsa, sliced and served on vegetable trays with dips, layered into sandwiches, wraps, and burgers, or diced and tossed into fresh green salads. They can also be roasted and mixed into sauces for pasta or vegetable side dishes, grilled and served with roasted meats, sautéed and mixed into stir-fries, or layered in tacos. Yellow bell peppers pair well with potatoes, onions, garlic, fennel, leeks, spinach, beets, basil, bok choy, tomatoes, saffron, raisins, almonds, pine nuts, sunflower seeds, black sesame seeds, blue cheese, goat cheese, soy sauce, grapefruit vinaigrette, red wine vinegar, béchamel sauce, lentils, sausage, salmon, poultry, eggs, and cornbread. The peppers will keep up to one week when stored unwashed in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator.

Ethnic/Cultural Info

Bell peppers are often thought of as a vegetable, but they are actually a fruit because they contain seeds and grow on a flowering plant. In the United States, the month of November is considered national capsicum or national pepper month and is celebrated by chefs and home cooks to raise awareness and to promote the many different colors of the sweet peppers. Bell peppers are also the only capsicum that does not produce capsaicin, which is the chemical that causes the brain to think the pepper is hot or spicy.

Geography/History

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