

FRUIT

Botanically speaking, a fruit is the ovary or seed bearing part of any growing plant. Many varieties of fruit are edible and are eaten all over the world, either raw or cooked in any number of ways. Many of the soft fruits such as strawberries, traditionally associated with the warmer months of the year, can now also be bought in the winter months, thanks to improved methods of growing and transportation.

Nutritionally fruit is very important as it is a rich source of fibre (especially if the skin is eaten), and energy in the form of natural fruit sugar (Fructose). Many fruits also contain vitamins and minerals. It is a popular snack food as many varieties can conveniently be eaten with no preparation at all and nearly all fruit is comparatively low in calories.

BUYING AND STORING FRUIT

Most fruits should be bought when ripe and eaten as soon as possible, but such as, bananas can be bought when unripe and safely left to ripen for a few days at home. Hard fruits, such as apples and pears will not ripen after picking and should be bought ready to eat. Soft fruits, such as raspberries, strawberries & red currants have very poor keeping qualities & should be eaten soon after buying. Peaches, nectarines & other stone fruits should be firm but ripe when bought and will not ripen further.

Choose fruit that looks & smells fresh & ripe with no bruises or damaged skin. Stone fruit should yield only slightly when gently squeezed. Berries & other soft fruits should be plump & dry; check that punnets are not stained with juice & that the underneath fruit is not squashed.

Many fruits will keep well at room temperature & it is common to see a fruit bowl in the kitchen or living room containing a ready supply of apples, pears, bananas & citrus fruits. Bananas will quickly become over ripe if left for too long & the skins of citrus fruits will become dry & wrinkled after a few days, although the fruit will remain edible for upto 2 weeks. Fruit stored in the refrigerator will keep for a longer period but may lose flavor.

Fruits can be divided into three main groups:

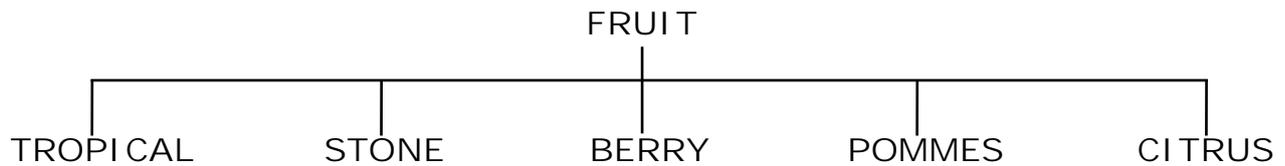
1. Fleshy fruits with a high water content upto 90% include citrus fruit, pears, pineapples, apples, peaches, mangoes & strawberries; some are rich in vitamin C (Especially citrus fruits) and minerals; their calorific value depends on their sugar content.
2. Fleshy fruits with high sugar content – include dates and dried fruits; they are a good energy source, containing 200 – 300 Calorie per 100gms.
3. Dry fruits with a high fat content and low water content – include walnuts, hazelnuts, almonds etc., these are rich in calcium and B vitamins, contain around 650 Calorie per 100gms. and are usually considered in a separate category.

SERVING AND COOKING FRUIT

Fruit can be served at any meal, and may be included in any course. Simple starters include fruit cocktail and Parma ham served with fresh figs or slices of melon, meat, poultry and game are often served with a fruit accompaniment, such as pork with apple, gammon with pineapple and turkey with cranberries, lemon wedges are served with any number of fish and meat dishes as well as with many desserts, countless desserts such as mousses, soufflés, fools, trifles, ice-creams, sorbets, tarts, cheesecakes and pavlovas are made with fruit, grapes are often served with the cheeseboard at the end of a meal.

Basic method of cooking fruit includes stewing or poaching and baking. It can also be used in countless other ways, either singly or in a combination, to make any number of desserts, from the simplest fruit salad or compote, to the most elaborate gateaux and pastries. Fruit is also used to make preserves, such as jams, jellies, marmalades and fruit butters and cheeses. It is also a main ingredient in many drinks and frequently forms part of a garnish or decoration.

CLASSIFICATION OF FRUITS



1. Tropical - Most tropical fruits are treated alike, being ideal candidates for salads, whether of fruit or combined with shellfish, fish or poultry. Often special techniques are needed for peeling and extracting the flesh of tropical fruits. However, all puree well for sauce and make a rich base for sorbets and ice creams. When they are green and unripe, mango and papaya may even be cooked like a vegetable. Example includes Yellow Passion Fruit, Purple Passion Fruit, Guava, Papaya, Pineapple, Kiwi Fruit, Mango etc.
2. Stone - It is those kinds of fruit which have soft flesh and single hard seed inside. It can be any category of fruit. Example includes Cherry, Apricot, Plum, Walnut, and Avocado etc.
3. Berry - It is those kinds of fruit which can grow in any region. Plant category is basically shrub type and fruit forms a hanging strings. It might contain a single seed or a multiple one. Example includes Blackcurrant, Redcurrant, Blackberry, Pomegranate, Grapes, and Gooseberry etc. Melons are also considered as a berry variety although in some cases we had different opinion about it. There are two kinds of melon – the dessert melon and the watermelon. Dessert melons have tan, green or yellow rind and dense, fragrant flesh. Depending on their variety, the skin is either netted (covered with brown, fibrous net-like markings) or furrowed. The watermelon has thick, dark green skin flecked with yellow, which surrounds red, pink or yellow watery flesh. There are several varieties of melons available out of what some most familiar varieties are Charentais, Cantaloupe, Honeydew, Canary, Galia, Watermelon etc.
4. Pomes - In the days when fruit was a luxury, pomes fruits were the only fruits that could be stored for more than a week or two, which meant that they were available for more than half the year. Today there are numerous pomes fruit varieties, some developed by accident and others by careful crossbreeding, and many dating back to the 18th or 19th century. However, of these, barely a hundred are exploited commercially and far fewer are grown as a common crop. Example includes Apple, Pears, Anjou, Quince etc.
5. Citrus - Members of the large citrus group include the lemon, lime, orange, tangerine and grapefruit as well as more exotic fruits such as the ugli fruit, shaddock, citron and kumquat and hybrids such as the Clementine, tangelo, ortanique and limequat. With their aromatic acidity, citrus fruits are used in soups, savoury stews and salads and often from the main flavour in desserts such as soufflés and mousses. Invaluable as decoration, their vivid colours complement almost all foods. Citrus fruits are covered in a thick rind, mainly white pith properly called ALBEDO, which has a thin colourful outer layer of zest or rind, where citrus oil and most of the vitamins are concentrated.