

Eating in Season //
Pomegranates



EAT IN SEASON:
POMEGRANATES

LIVE WELL UTAH

If you like the sweet and tangy flavor of pomegranates, now is the time to incorporate them into your menu plan, because they are in season through November. Read on to learn some of the nutritional benefits of pomegranates, and for a few recipes to try while they are in season.

As fall arrives we can enjoy the sweet, tart, juicy taste of pomegranates. These native Mediterranean and Middle Eastern fruits used on anything from salads to desserts are an excellent source of the phytochemicals, making them one of the best antioxidants. The edible seeds of these yellow-orange to a deep red colored fruits have a citrus flavor and make a delicious juice.

The last few years, the health value of the pomegranate has been under study. Research is now showing us that the pomegranates may be one of the best antioxidant fruits that can fight cancer, slow down the aging process, increase heart health and help with Alzheimer's disease. True, not all the research is in, but several studies from UCLA and USDA indicate that pomegranates are a major stabilizer of cancer. The naturally occurring antioxidants in this fruit fight the free radicals that do promote disease.

One average pomegranate contains about 100 calories and 25 grams of sugar. They are also a good source of potassium.

Opening a pomegranate can be messy; however, if you cut the blossom end off and score through the skin marking the fruit in quarters, you can submerge the pomegranate in ice cold water and rub the seeds off the skins. The skin will float to the top, the seeds to the

bottom and then drain off the fruit.

To store pomegranates, keep at room temperature for a week, refrigerate in an air tight bag for up to 3 months, or freeze the seeds for 6 months to a year.

Most pomegranates are imported into Utah markets and grocery stores from California and Arizona; however two varieties are produced in Washington County, Utah. The light pink seeded Dixie Sweet is native to the Southern Utah warm climate with soft and sweet seeds. Other southern Utah-grown pomegranates and those imported may have darker and harder seeds. If you have an opportunity to travel to southern Utah, take the time to consume these locally grown fruits. No matter where you consume them, a pomegranate could be one of the best foods you can give your health. The harvesting time for pomegranates is October through November; you will find them in most Utah grocery stores during October into December. Pomegranates are a treat, enjoyable as a salsa, in salads, with main dishes, as jelly and syrups, or just by the hand full, so eat up and enjoy.

Pomegranate Salsa

- 1 pomegranate, seeded
- 2 oranges, peeled and cut into small pieces
- 1 bunch cilantro
- 1 Chile jalapeño, chopped
- 1 tomato, diced
- ½ tsp ground cumin
- 1-2 Tbsp lime juice

Score, and break pomegranate apart in ice water. Drain the

pomegranate seeds. Add all ingredients and chill for 2 hours before serving.

Pomegranate Jelly

- 3 1/2 cups pomegranate juice, fresh, frozen and thawed, or bottled
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 package (2 ounces) powdered pectin
- 4 1/2 cups sugar

Combine pomegranate juice, lemon juice, and pectin in a 4 or 5-quart pot. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Stir in sugar until well blended; return to a boil and continue boiling, uncovered, and stirring occasionally, for 2 minutes. Remove jelly from heat immediately.

Process in hot water bath 15 minutes. Cool for 24 hours and then remove the ring before storing on the shelf.

This article was written by Carolyn Washburn, retired Utah State University Extension associate professor,