

Eating in Season // Citrus Fruit



EATING IN SEASON:

CITRUS FRUIT

LIVE WELL UTAH

It's citrus season! Grab some oranges, grapefruit, lemons or limes the next time you're at the grocery store and give yourself a health boost for the new year. Read up on the amazing health benefits of citrus fruits in today's post.

You may have noticed the abundance of citrus fruits in stores this time of year. The prime harvest time for most citrus fruits is in the late fall and early winter months. Fruits have been consumed for thousands of years and the health benefits of these foods are continually showing that eating a piece of fruit is a wise lifestyle choice. Now is the peak time for enjoying plenty of these healthful foods.

Health Benefits

Citrus fruits can have a positive effect on your life. They are full of vitamin C that is needed to maintain a strong immune system and they help protect against scurvy. They promote heart health and reduce the risk of some chronic diseases. Citrus fruits can help in cancer prevention and are also useful in diabetes sugar level control. Citrus fruit skin is high in essential oils that are removed to be used in flavorings or as fragrant essences in aromatherapy oils, cosmetics and soaps. Even the acidity of lemons is a good remedy for the alkaline bee sting, and a few drops of a lime are squeezed by martial artists into the corner of their eyes to help their vision. Other important nutrients found in citrus fruits are fiber, folate, lycopene, potassium, Vitamin B6, polynutrients and more.

The color of the fruit is very important. Each color provides different nutrients that our bodies need. It is important to include a variety of colors every day for these important nutrients. Consider this information.

- Red contains antioxidants that help fight heart disease,

cholesterol and some cancers.

- Green provides phytochemicals to help protect eyes and prevent cancerous tumors. Greens have essential vitamins including folate, minerals and fiber.
- Orange and yellow contain beta-carotene that is essential for a good immune system. It is rich in Vitamin C, folate and Vitamin A.
- Blue and purple provide phytochemicals which are antioxidants for the body that protect against cancer and disease. The blue and purple also provide Vitamin C, folic acid and fiber.
- White provides allicin, sulfaforaphanes, polyphenols and phytochemicals that help in fighting cancers, lowering blood pressure and cholesterol.

Citrus on Display

Citrus fruits are also objects of beauty and decor. A bowl of fresh fruits as a centerpiece can brighten the day while also reminding you that selecting a piece of fruit instead of candy or a cookie for a snack is a wise choice. It is an excellent idea to keep fresh fruit within reach to encourage daily consumption. The food guide pyramid recommends that you have at least four servings of fruit a day. This may be in the form of juice, fresh, canned and dried fruits.

Increase Your Daily Intake

There are many ways to increase fruits in your daily diet. Add oranges and lemons to water and allow infusing overnight. Add fresh lemons and limes to drinks. Eat half a grapefruit every morning for breakfast. Have a citrus snack every day. Prepare salads using citrus fruit with lettuce and spinach. Top meal entrees with a fruit sauce.

Preserving Citrus

As the peak fruit season begins to level off, you may want to try home canning your own grapefruits and oranges. This simple and fast process provides you with home canned fruit that makes a wonderful breakfast fruit mix and prevents the waste of fruits. Begin by selecting firm, sweet fruit (grapefruits and oranges). Peel and remove the white tissue from the fruit. Break the fruit into sections and fill jars with the fruit. Next, fill the jars with water or hot syrup, according to your taste. Water works well, but a light syrup of 1 cup sugar to 4 cups of water provides an enriched flavor. Pour the liquid over the fruit in the jars leaving one-half inch headspace. Apply the lids and rings and process pints or quarts in water for 15 minutes for an elevation of 2,000 to 4,000 feet (adjustments will need to be made for other elevations). Further information can be found in the Blue Ball book or from your county Extension office.

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