

Pick a Better Snack

Eat Fruits and Veggies

Kiwi

Kiwis are small and oval shaped. They are fuzzy brown on the outside and bright green with tiny black seeds on the inside. The skin can be eaten or it can be peeled.

History

The kiwi originated in China over 700 years ago where it was called “Yangtao.” In 1906, seeds were sent to New Zealand and renamed the “Chinese Gooseberry.” In 1962, it was first shipped to the United States and renamed “Kiwifruit” after New Zealand’s national bird, the “kiwi.” In North America, South America and Europe, the “fruit” part of the name is usually dropped, and simply called “kiwi.”

Varieties

There are over 400 varieties of kiwi, including yellow or golden-flesh varieties. The Hayward is the most popular in the United States. Kiwis are available year-round.

Uses

Kiwis are usually eaten raw. They can be eaten whole like an apple or cut into quarters like an orange. Another way to eat them is to cut them in half and scoop out the flesh with a spoon. Add kiwi to fruit salads, salsas and smoothies. Blend them into homemade salad dressings or meat marinades.

Local Connection

Kiwis are not grown in Iowa. California produces around 98% of the kiwis grown in the United States. Other countries that grow kiwis are Italy, New Zealand and Chile.



Nutrition Facts

★ Fat free

★ Cholesterol free

★ Good source of fiber

★ High in vitamin C

★ High in vitamin K

★ Good source of folate

★ Good source of vitamin E

Kiwis are fruit that grow on vines (similar to grapes).

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Lettuce

The rule of thumb is, the darker the leaves, the more nutritious it is. Lettuce should have fresh, green leaves which are not wilted, brown or slimy. Wash under clean, running water.

History

Lettuce actually started out as a weed around the Mediterranean Sea. This vegetable has been eaten for over 4,500 years, and was known to the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. Christopher Columbus introduced lettuce to North America, and it has been grown here ever since.

Varieties

There are four main types of lettuce and each type has different varieties:

- Butterhead: forms a loose head and has a buttery texture.
- Iceberg: pale green with leaves packed in a tight head.
- Looseleaf: doesn't form a head, but instead the leaves are joined at the stem.
- Romaine: has a loaf-like shape with darker green leaves.

Uses

Lettuce is usually eaten raw. It's often used in salads, as a mix of a variety of lettuces. Add lettuce to all types of sandwiches and wraps, hamburgers and tacos.



Nutrition Facts

★ Good source of vitamin C

★ Good source of folate

★ High in vitamin A

★ High in vitamin K

Lettuce is a vegetable that grows as plant leaves.

Local Connection

Lettuce grows in Iowa. California raises more lettuce than any other state, followed by Arizona, Florida and Texas.

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Mango

Mangoes are red, orange and green on the outside, and a bright yellowish orange on the inside. They are sweet and juicy.

History

Mangoes were first grown in India 5,000 years ago. Mangoes have since traveled throughout Asia, the Middle East, East Africa, and South America, starting around 300 A.D.

Varieties

There are hundreds of varieties of mangoes. The most popular and widely consumed varieties of mangoes are Tommy Atkins and Haden.

Uses

Mangoes are usually eaten peeled and raw, and are a popular addition to fruit salads and desserts. Mangoes can also be made into jams, chutneys, sauces, and smoothies, and can be cooked into dishes.

Local Connection

Mangoes do not grow in Iowa. Most of the mangoes grown in the United States grow in Florida.



Nutrition Facts

★ Good source of vitamin A

★ High in vitamin C

★ Good source of fiber

★ Good source of vitamin E

★ Good source of potassium

★ Good source of folate

Mangoes are fruits grown on trees in tropical environments.

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Mushroom

Mushrooms can come in a variety of colors and shapes. Edible mushrooms commonly come in shades of white and brown.

Mushrooms tend to be smooth and fleshy, having an earthy taste and texture.

History

Mushrooms have been around since prehistoric times and have been consumed for thousands of years. They were once highly sought after by Egyptian pharaohs.

Varieties

The most common variety of edible mushrooms is white button. Other common edible mushrooms included portobello, baby bella, shiitake and oyster.

Uses

Mushrooms are usually sauteed and are a great addition to pizzas, pasta, burgers and quesadillas. They can also be eaten raw in salads!

Local Connection

Mushrooms grow in Iowa. Most of the white button mushrooms consumed in the United States come from Pennsylvania. California also produces button mushrooms.



Nutrition Facts

★ Very low in sodium

★ Fat-free

★ Cholesterol-free

★ Good source of selenium

★ High in vitamin D

★ Good source of phosphorus

Mushrooms are the fleshy, spore-bearing fruiting body of a fungus, growing either on the ground or its food source.

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Orange

The outer peel is usually a yellow orange color. Oranges range in size from small to large. The fruit inside is orange and made of several easily separated segments (usually about 10 segments). Do not eat the peel or seeds.

History

It is believed oranges originated in Southeast Asia. Christopher Columbus and other explorers brought orange seeds and seedlings with them to North America. By the 1820's, there were orange groves growing in St. Augustine, Florida.

Varieties

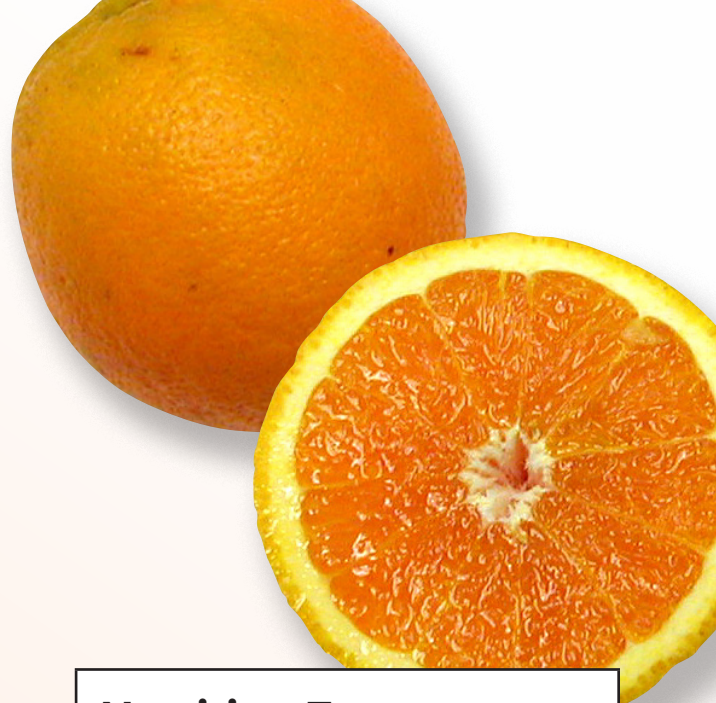
Varieties include the sweet orange, the sour orange and the mandarin orange (or tangerine). The United States mostly produces sweet orange varieties, including Hamlin, Parson Brown, Valencia and Navel. Some oranges have seeds and some are seedless.

Uses

Peel and eat as a whole fruit or add to fruit salads. Drink 100% juice or use the juice in dips, sauces, smoothies and baked goods.

Local Connection

Oranges are not grown in Iowa. Oranges are a member of the citrus family. Florida is the number one producer of oranges in the United States. However, California, Texas and Arizona also grow and sell oranges. 90 percent of Florida's oranges go into juice.



Nutrition Facts

★ Fat free

★ Cholesterol free

★ High in vitamin C

★ Good source of potassium

★ Good source of fiber (not the juice)

★ Good source of folate

Oranges are fruit that grow on trees.

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Papayas

Papayas are similar to melons, but they are not in the melon family. The thin skin varies from green to orange to rose. The skin is not eaten. The flesh inside is yellow-orange. The center has seeds which are scooped out before eating.

History

It is believed papayas originated in southern Mexico and Central America.

Varieties

Two common types of papayas include:

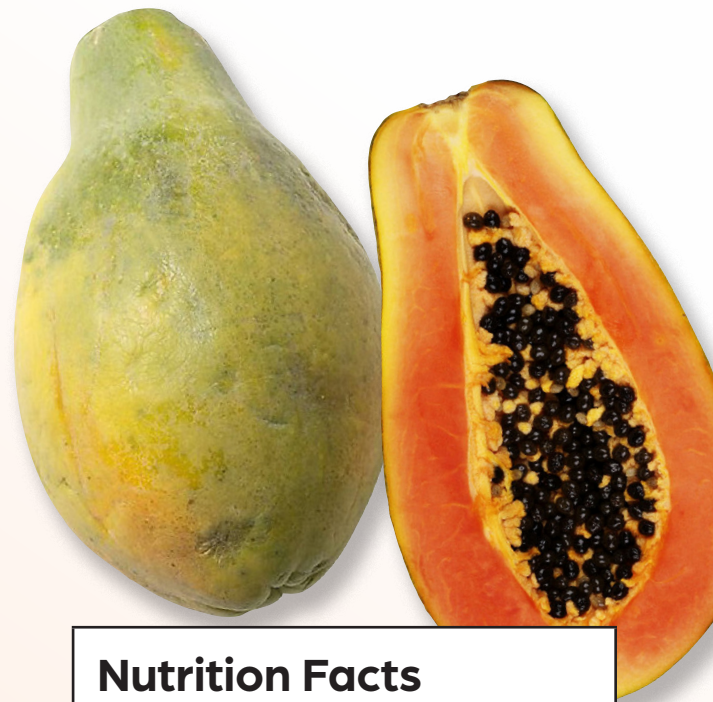
- Hawaiian: the Hawaiian varieties are found most often in grocery stores. They are pear shaped, weigh about 1 pound and have a yellow skin when ripe. The flesh is bright orange or pink depending on the variety.
- Mexican: the Mexican varieties are much larger. They can be more than 15 inches long and weigh up to 20 pounds.

Uses

Papayas are usually eaten raw. They can be eaten plain or added to smoothies, salsa and fruit salads.

Local Connection

Papayas are not grown in Iowa. Most of the papayas grown in the United States are grown in Hawaii. Some are also grown in Florida and California. Papayas are available year-round.



Nutrition Facts

★ Fat free

★ Cholesterol free

★ Good source of vitamin A

★ Good source of folate

★ Good source of potassium

★ Good source of fiber

★ Very high in vitamin C

Papayas are tropical fruits that grow on trees.

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Peach

Peaches have yellowish orange skin, often blushed with red depending on the variety. The skin is slightly fuzzy. The flesh inside is usually yellow but depending on the variety, may also be white. Peaches are a type of stone fruit because of the stone-like pit in the center, which is not eaten.

History

Peaches originally came from China and have been grown for thousands of years. In the early 1600's, Spanish explorers brought the peach to the new world.

Varieties

Common varieties of peaches include:

- Freestone: the flesh does not stick to the pit, so it is easy to remove the pit by hand. These varieties are usually sold fresh.
- Clingstone: the flesh “clings” or sticks to the pit. These varieties are usually used for canning.
- Nectarines are a type of peach that have smooth skin without fuzz.

Uses

You can buy peaches fresh, canned or frozen. Peaches are sweet and juicy and are a great snack. Add peaches to yogurt, smoothies and fruit salads. Peaches can also be baked or grilled.



Nutrition Facts

★ Fat free

★ Cholesterol free

★ Sodium free

★ Good source of vitamin A

★ Good source of fiber

★ Good source of vitamin C

Peaches are fruit that grow on trees.

Local Connection

Some peaches are grown in Iowa. In the United States, most peaches are grown in California and the southern states. Georgia is known as the “Peach State.” Peaches are in season in the summer.

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Pear

Pears are sweet and juicy and come in a variety of shapes, sizes and colors. Skin colors include green, golden yellow and red. The peel is good to eat and has many nutrients. Do not eat the seeds.

History

One of the world's oldest fruits, pears were known to both the Greeks and the Romans. Early colonists brought pears to the United States in the 1700's.

Varieties

There are several varieties of pears including, Anjou, Bartlett, Bosc, Comice and Asian. Pears are available most of the year. Choose pears with no bruises or dark brown spots. Wash under clean, running water before eating.

Uses

Pears can be eaten raw or cooked. They are great to eat as a quick snack. Chop and add to fruit salads. They can also be baked, broiled or grilled. Use pears where you would use apples.

Local Connection

Pears grow in Iowa and are in season in August and September. Pears are a relative of the apple. Washington, Oregon and California produce the majority of the pears in the United States.



Nutrition Facts

★Cholesterol free

★High in fiber

★Good source of vitamin K

★Good source of vitamin C

Pears are fruit that grow on trees.

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Pineapple

Pineapples are oval shaped and up to 12 inches long. Some weigh more than ten pounds. The tough skin is typically green, yellowish-orange or yellowish-brown. The flesh ranges from nearly white to yellow. The leafy top (known as the crown), skin and core are cut off before eating.

History

The pineapple originated in southern Brazil and Paraguay. Christopher Columbus may have carried it back to Spain.

Varieties

There are many varieties of pineapple, with the most common type sold in stores being Smooth Cayenne. Pineapple is sold fresh, canned, frozen, dried and as 100% juice.

Uses

Pineapple can be eaten in many forms. Cut it up and eat fresh for a sweet snack, or choose canned or frozen pineapple for convenience. Add pineapple to fruit salad, yogurt, pizza, smoothies or stir-fries. It can also be grilled or broiled with meat.

Local Connection

Pineapples are not grown in Iowa. The name pineapple in English (or piña in Spanish) comes from the similarity of the fruit to a pinecone. In the United States, most pineapples are grown in Hawaii.



Nutrition Facts

★ Fat free

★ Cholesterol free

★ High in vitamin C

★ High in manganese

Pineapple is a tropical fruit that grows on short-stemmed plants. The stem attaches to the bottom of the pineapple. Each plant produces one pineapple in the center of the plant.

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Plums

Plums have red or very dark purple skin and a dusty white wax coating. The flesh is usually yellow or red. They are a kind of stone fruit because of the stone-like pit in the center. Choose plums that are slightly soft, heavy and blemish free.

History

Plums originated in the Middle East. Many believe that plums are one of the first fruits domesticated by humans.

Varieties

There are many different varieties of plums, which come in colors such as green, red, yellow and purple. Common varieties include Japanese Plum, Mexican Plum, American Plum and Cherry Plum. Worldwide, European Plum Tree varieties are the most common.

Uses

Plums are commonly eaten fresh or dried. Dried plums are called prunes. Prunes can be eaten plain, as an ingredient in recipes or as 100% juice.

Local Connection

Plums can grow in Iowa and are in season August and September. California is the largest grower of plums in the United States. Other growers include Washington, Oregon and Idaho.



Nutrition Facts

★ Good source of vitamin C

★ Good source of fiber
(prunes)

★ Fat free

★ Cholesterol free

Plums are fruits grown on trees.

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Potato

Most potatoes have a light brown or red skin with white flesh. Some of the new varieties have purple/blue skin with yellow flesh. The peel is good to eat and has many nutrients. Cut off any green spots or sprouts.

History

Potatoes were first grown in the Andes Mountain of South America over 7,000 years ago. Spaniards brought potatoes to Spain in the 1500's, which then gradually spread to the rest of Europe. Irish immigrants introduced potatoes to North America in the 18th century.

Varieties

There are thousands of varieties of potatoes. Common ones include Russet, Idaho, Red Potatoes, New Potatoes and Yukon Gold. Sweet potatoes are not a variety of potatoes.

Uses

There are many ways to cook potatoes, including roasting, baking, microwaving, boiling and air frying. Potatoes are nutritious, especially when eaten with the skin, and can be prepared in healthy ways. Choose healthy toppings for baked potatoes, like cooked vegetables, chives, green onions, salsa or plain yogurt.

Local Connection

Potatoes grow in Iowa. Washington and Idaho produce the majority of the potatoes eaten in the United States, with Idaho growing the most. North Dakota, Wisconsin and Colorado are other top growers of potatoes. Potatoes are inexpensive and available year-round.

Nutrition Facts

★Fat free

★Cholesterol free

★Good source of fiber

★Good source of potassium

★Good source of iron

★Good source of vitamin C

Potatoes are vegetables that grow in the ground as tubers (fleshy, underground stems).

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Spinach

Spinach should have fresh, green leaves that are not limp, damaged or spotted. Leaves should be dull green on top and bright green on the underside. Wash under clean, running water.

History

Spinach is believed to be of Persian origin and was introduced into Europe in the 15th century. Spinach was not commonly eaten in the United States until the early 19th century.

Varieties

There are three basic types of spinach:

- Flat or smooth leaf: has unwrinkled, spade-shaped leaves (usually used for canned and frozen spinach or in other processed foods)
- Savoy: has crinkly, dark green curly leaves (usually sold fresh)
- Semi-Savoy: has slightly curly leaves (usually sold fresh)

Uses

Spinach tastes good raw or cooked. Serve raw in salads or on sandwiches. It can be steamed, boiled, microwaved, sautéed or stir-fried. It can also be added to soups, lasagna or other vegetable dishes. You can even add fresh spinach to smoothies!

Local Connection

Spinach grows in Iowa. The top spinach-producing states in the U.S. are California, Arizona, Texas, New Jersey and Colorado. Spinach is available fresh, frozen or canned and is available year-round.



Nutrition Facts

★ Fat free

★ Cholesterol free

★ Good source of potassium

★ High in vitamin C

★ High in vitamin K

★ Good source of magnesium

★ High in vitamin A

★ Good source of fiber

Spinach is a vegetable which grows as plant leaves.

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Squash

Squash come in many different colors, sizes and shapes. Winter squash have a rind (thick skin) that protects the fleshy part of the vegetable. The center has seeds that are usually scooped out before eating.

History

Squash originated in North America over 5,000 years ago. It was one of the “three sisters” planted by Native Americans, along with maize (corn) and beans. Squash was grown and eaten by early Europeans that settled in America.

Varieties

Squash is commonly divided into two groups:

- Summer squash: the rinds are nutritious and can be eaten. Zucchini is the most popular variety in the United States.
- Winter squash: usually have a hard rind that is not eaten. Some popular varieties are pumpkin, butternut, acorn and spaghetti squash.

Uses

Squash is often cooked, but some summer squash may be eaten raw (try with vegetable dip or add to salads). You may steam, sauté, roast or bake squash. Add to stir-fries, soups and casseroles. Bake in breads, cakes and pies. You can save the seeds from winter squash and roast them for a crunchy snack.



Nutrition Facts

★ Fat free

★ Cholesterol free

★ High in vitamin A (winter squash)

★ Good source of fiber

★ High in vitamin C

Squash are vegetables. Depending on the variety, they either grow on vines or bushes.

Local Connection

Squash are grown in Iowa. Squash are in the same gourd family as melons and cucumbers.

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Strawberry

Strawberries are bright red, juicy and sweet. The average strawberry has 200 tiny seeds on the outside. The green leaf “cap” or “hull” is removed before eating.



History

Wild strawberries have been known since the times of the Greeks and Romans. The strawberries native to the Americas were bigger than European strawberries.



Varieties

There are many varieties of strawberries. Strawberries are usually available almost year-round, with peak season from April to July.



Uses

Strawberries are usually eaten raw. Eat whole as a great snack. Add to fruit salads, smoothies and spinach salads. Use as a topping for yogurt, cereal or pancakes.



Local Connection

Strawberries grow in Iowa and are in-season in June. Most of the strawberries in the United States are grown in California and Florida. Strawberries are available fresh or frozen.



Nutrition Facts

★ Fat free

★ Cholesterol free

★ High in vitamin C

★ Good source of fiber

Strawberries are fruit that grow on plants.

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Eat Fruits and Veggies

Sugar Snap Peas

Sugar snap peas are often eaten fresh because of their sweet taste and satisfying crunch. Look for sugar snap peas that are firm and free of blemishes. Eat them in the pod.

History

The exact origin of sugar snap peas is unknown, but they likely originated in Asia. The sugar snap peas we eat today were developed in the '60s by crossing snow peas with green peas.

Varieties

There are a lot of different varieties of sugar snap peas available. The most common are Sugar Ann and Sugar Snap. The only heirloom variety is Amish Snap.

Uses

Sugar snap peas taste best eaten right away. Store in the refrigerator if needed. They have edible pods. Eat them fresh, with your favorite dip, steamed or stir-fried.

Local Connection

Sugar snap peas grow in Iowa. They grow best in the early spring or late fall. They are part of the legume family, which includes plants with seeds inside pods.



Nutrition Facts

★ High in vitamin C

★ Good source of vitamin K

★ Good source of fiber

Sugar snap peas are climbing plants and need a support system, such as a trellis, while they grow. The plant can grow as tall as 6 feet high!

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Eat Fruits and Veggies

Sweet Potato

Sweet potatoes are usually the size of regular white potatoes. They are long and tapered. Sweet potatoes have smooth, thin skins that can be eaten.

History

Sweet potatoes originated in the tropical Americas at least 5,000 years ago. Christopher Columbus introduced sweet potatoes to Europe, and later explorers introduced them to Asia. China is now the world's largest grower of sweet potatoes.

Varieties

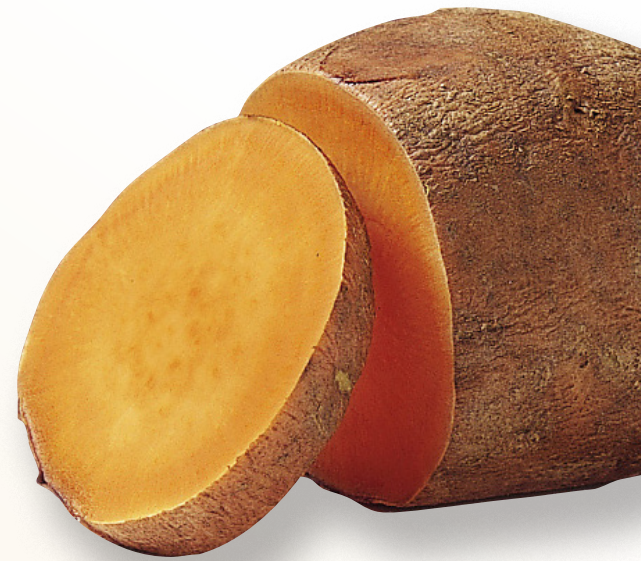
There are hundreds of different kinds of sweet potatoes. They can be generally classified based on the color of their skin and flesh. Orange skin with orange flesh sweet potatoes are a common variety. Some varieties have red, yellow or purple skin. The color of the flesh also varies and can be orange, white or purple.

Uses

Sweet potatoes can be eaten raw but are usually cooked (boiled, baked, microwaved, mashed, roasted or fried). Add to stir-fries, soups and casseroles. Sweet potatoes are popular at Thanksgiving and Christmas meals. They are available fresh, canned or frozen.

Local Connection

Sweet potatoes can grow in Iowa, but they are mostly grown in southern states. Most sweet potatoes are grown in North Carolina, Mississippi and California. Sweet potatoes are often called yams, but they are not actually yams. True yams can be hard to find in the U.S. The sweet potato has only a very distant relationship with the potato, but because both vegetables grow underground, they are often confused.



Nutrition Facts

★ Fat free

★ High in vitamin C

★ High in vitamin A

★ Good source of potassium

★ Good source of fiber

Sweet potatoes are vegetables that grow in the ground as tuberous roots (fleshy, side roots).

Pick a Better Snack

Eat Fruits and Veggies

Tomato

When ripe, the skin and flesh of most tomatoes are red or orangish-red. They are usually round or oval shaped. Tomatoes range in size from 1 to 6 inches. Small seeds on the inside can be eaten.

History

The tomato originated in the Andes Mountains in South America. Maya and Aztec people grew tomatoes. Its name is derived from the Aztec word “tomatl”. Spanish explorers introduced the tomato to Europe in the 1600’s where it was embraced by Spaniards and Italians.

Varieties

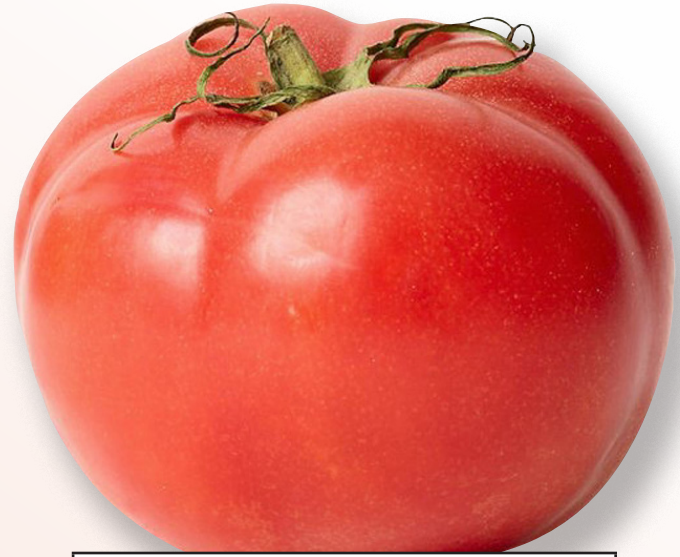
There are thousands of tomato varieties. The most widely available varieties are classified into three groups: cherry, plum and slicing tomatoes. Besides red, tomatoes can also be yellow, orange, green or purple.

Uses

Tomatoes can be eaten raw or cooked (baked, stewed, grilled or stir-fried). They are wonderful to eat alone. Add to salads and sandwiches. Other popular ways to enjoy tomatoes are in soups, salsas and sauces. Tomato sauce is used in many pasta dishes, such as spaghetti, and on pizza.

Local Connection

Tomatoes are grown in Iowa. Tomatoes are in the fruit family, but they are served and prepared as a vegetable. They are one of the most popular vegetables eaten by Americans.



Nutrition Facts

★ Fat free

★ Cholesterol free

★ Good source of fiber

★ Good source of vitamin A

★ High in vitamin C

Tomatoes are vegetables that grow on plants.

Pick a Better Snack

Eat Fruits and Veggies



Watermelon

Watermelons are usually round or oblong and weigh 5 to 30 pounds. They have a smooth, green rind (thick skin) that is not eaten. Most watermelons have red flesh but there are orange and yellow-fleshed varieties. Some have seeds and some are seedless.



History

Watermelon originated in Africa over 5,000 years ago. By the 10th century, watermelons were being grown in China, which is today the world's largest watermelon producer. Americans eat more watermelon each year than any other melon.



Varieties

There are hundreds of varieties of watermelon. Common varieties include: seeded, seedless, mini, yellow and orange. Seedless watermelon are the most popular due to the how easy they are to eat.



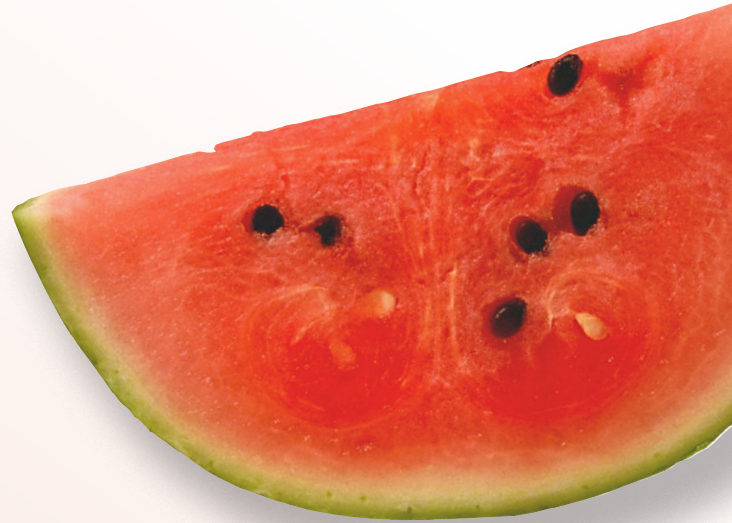
Uses

Watermelon is wonderful eaten alone; it is sweet, juicy and popular to eat in the summer. Add to fruit salads, salsa, cool drinks or desserts.



Local Connection

Watermelons are grown in Iowa. The top producers in the United States are Florida, Georgia, California and Texas. Watermelons are a melon. Melons are in the same gourd family as squash and cucumbers.



Nutrition Facts

★ Fat free

★ Cholesterol free

★ Good source of vitamin A

★ High in vitamin C

Watermelons are fruit that grow on vines.

Pick a Better Snack

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Zucchini

Zucchini is a type of summer squash. The skin is soft. All parts—skin, seeds and flesh—can be eaten. Look for zucchini with slightly prickly but shiny skin. Zucchini should be free of any bruises or cuts. They should be firm.



History

Zucchini, like all squash, has its ancestry in the Americas. However, the zucchini that we are familiar with today originated in Italy.



Varieties

The two most common types of zucchinis are yellow zucchini and green zucchini. Zucchini is closely related to Lebanese summer squash, or kusa.



Uses

Zucchini can be eaten raw in a salad, sauteed in a dish, grilled or baked into breads. The flowers of zucchini plants can be stuffed with cheese and other ingredients and baked.



Local Connection

Zucchini can grow in Iowa and is in season July through September. Zucchini can be very long but are best when picked at about 6-8 inches. Zucchini is very easy to grow, and a single plant can produce a lot of zucchinis.



Nutrition Facts

★ Good source of Vitamin C

★ Fat free

★ Good source of fiber

★ Good source of folate

★ Cholesterol free

Zucchini are the fruit of the plant. However, since they do not have a sweet taste we eat them as vegetables.