

A Rose By Any Other Name Can Be Peachy

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Looking for a low-calorie snack on a hot summer day? How about a sweet, juicy peach? The peach actually is a member of the rose family and originated in China. Spanish settlers brought the fruit to colonial America and it made its way to Georgia in the 1700s. The terms, Clingstone and Freestone, refer to how easily the edible part of the fruit pulls away from the stone, or pit.

A medium-sized peach averages 38 calories and is an excellent source of fiber (especially when eaten with the skin). A great source of vitamins A (beta-carotene), C, and E, along with potassium, peaches also contain flavonoids, which may prevent certain cancers and heart disease. Peaches are 87 percent water so they make a great thirst-quenching snack, too.

When shopping for fresh peaches, look for a creamy gold to yellow under-color. A portion of the fruit should display a bright red overcolor, or “blush,” however, the amount of blush will vary, depending on the variety. Avoid hard green or shriveled peaches, as they will not ripen. Ripe peaches should have a sweet, flowery “peachy” fragrance and be soft to the touch. Don’t squeeze the fruit to avoid bruising. Peaches with large, flattened bruises will have large areas of discolored flesh underneath. Decay in peaches begins as a pale tan spot which expands in a circle, then darkens. Keep peaches at room temperature on the counter top to allow ripening. Store ripe peaches unstacked in the refrigerator and eat within a week for best quality.

Peaches, like apples, pears, and bananas, contain a natural enzyme that reacts with oxygen in the air to turn cut fruit brown. To prevent this, apply ascorbic acid, a commercial ascorbic-citric acid mixture, or lemon juice to the fruit.

Peaches may be preserved by canning, freezing, and drying. They make a tasty base in a variety of home-preserved products, including butter, pie filling, chutney, conserve, honey, jam, jelly, marmalade, pickles, preserves, and relish. For directions, please contact your local county Extension Office.

Sources: *Ways with Peaches*, Louisiana State University Cooperative Extension Service
Georgia Peach Commission, <http://www.gapeaches.org/>
California Cling Peach, <http://www.calclingpeach.com/>

Have a question? Contact the University of Florida IFAS - Washington/Holmes Counties Extension office at (850)638-6265, weekdays 8 a.m. to noon or 1 to 5 p.m.

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