A fruit that is as decorative as it is healthy, the pomegranate has been around for centuries. Native to southeastern Europe and Asia, it also was grown in ancient Egypt, Babylon, India, and Iran. Today, California is the leading producer of pomegranates in the U.S. Pomegranates are about the size of an apple and the most common variety, Wonderful or Red Wonderful, has a leathery deep red to purplish red rind. A rich source of vitamins C and B6 and potassium, the fruit’s center, a bundle of over 800 scarlet red, juice-filled seeds, provides a healthy serving of dietary fiber.

Select pomegranates that have thin, shiny, tight, and unbroken skin. The fruit should seem heavy for its size. Late October through December is the peak season for pomegranates. Store them in a cool, dark place for up to one month or in the refrigerator for up to two months.

To prepare a pomegranate, cut off the crown end and lightly score the rind in several places with a knife. Soak the fruit in a bowl of water for about 5 minutes. Holding the fruit under water, break it into chunks, separating the seeds from the spongy white membrane. The seeds will sink, while the rind and membrane will float. Use a slotted spoon or strainer to skim off the membrane and rind; discard. Pour water and seeds into a strainer. You may eat the seeds immediately or store in the refrigerator for up to three days or in the freezer for up to six months. An average pomegranate will yield approximately 3/4 cup of seeds or 1/2 cup juice. The seeds can be added to cereal, salads, pancakes, and pudding. While some people prefer to discard the seeds after enjoying the juice, the majority of the fruit’s fiber is found in the seeds so just swallow them.

Pomegranate Yogurt Dip

1 large pomegranate  
2 cups chilled plain yogurt  
2 scallions, finely chopped  
1/4 cup pomegranate juice  
1/4 cup fresh cilantro, finely chopped  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
Fresh mint sprigs

Separate seeds from the pomegranate. In a medium mixing bowl, combine the yogurt, pomegranate juice, scallions, cilantro, and salt. Gently fold in all but 2 tablespoons of the pomegranate seeds. Place in serving bowl and garnish with mint and seeds. Chill for 30 minutes. Makes 2 cups.

Pomegranate and Banana Salad

2 pomegranates, chilled  
3 bananas  
1 tablespoon palm sugar or brown sugar  
2 limes (or 1/4 cup freshly squeezed lime juice)

Mix together the juice of the limes and the tablespoon of sugar. Adjust sweet and sour to taste. Score and seed both pomegranates, freeing the seeds. Mound the pomegranate seeds in the center of the salad plates.
and slice the bananas around the perimeter of the seeds. Drizzle with the prepared lime dressing and serve. Serves 4.


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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