

Apricot

Grow

A Heart of Stone

An apricot is a fruit that grows on a tree. It is known as a “stone fruit” because it has a single pit inside. It is a cousin to the peach, plum, nectarine and cherry. An apricot is about the size of a golf ball and is yellowish orange in color with a rosy pink blush.^{1,2}

Apricots are a member of the *Rosaceae* family and the genus *Prunus*. The apricot tree has white or pink flowers. The flowers bloom in early spring, when they can be damaged by frost if temperatures drop. Apricots grow best in a sunny location with well-drained soil. Apricot trees naturally grow to about 35 feet tall but are usually trimmed to 12 feet.¹⁻³

Fun Fact: A mature, full size apricot tree can produce 150-200 pounds of fruit per year.²

The apricot was originally grown on the mountain slopes of China about 4,000 years ago. It was brought to Europe by trade route travelers and eventually made its way to the United States by French and Spanish explorers in the late 1700's.^{3,4}

Fun Fact: Over 90% of all apricots grown in the U.S. come from California. Apricots are grown in other places as well including North Carolina.²

Choose

Take your pick...gently

Apricots are harvested during late May, June and July.^{2,5} When ripe, the fruit will be plump and slightly soft, and the skin will have changed from green to yellow, orange or red depending on the variety. The fruit should be picked from the tree by twisting and gently pulling.

A number of different varieties of apricots are grown in the United States, each with slightly different shapes, sizes, colors, and flavors. Popular varieties are the Patterson, Blenheim, Tilton, Moorpark, and Goldrich.^{2,4}



Store

Handle carefully as apricots are delicate. Refrigerate ripe fruit immediately. An apricot that is not quite ripe can be placed in a paper bag on the counter to speed up ripening. If to be stored for longer, apricots can be frozen or dried. To freeze, wash and cut in half, then place in the freezer on a baking sheet in a single layer until frozen. Then, transfer to a resealable freezer safe bag. Since apricots are so perishable, growers send much of the harvest to be dried, canned, or made into jams, jellies, or juice for a longer shelf life.^{2,6}

Fun Fact: The apricot tree is a host to the Eastern Tiger Swallowtail butterfly.¹

Use

A fresh apricot is juicy, sweet and tart, all at the same time. The skin is soft and thin and can be eaten along with the inner pulp. Wash under running water before eating. Remember to remove and do not eat the pit.

Apricots are very versatile and are used in many different cultures and cuisines including Asian, African, Middle Eastern, Cuban, and Latin American. They can be added fresh or dried to salads, yogurt, smoothies, pancakes, trail mix, rice pilaf, or salsa. They can also be an ingredient in savory dishes, jams, or desserts as well.⁶

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Teach

Dried to Perfection

Due to its delicate skin and short growing period, much of the apricot harvest is dried in order to preserve them in their most flavorful state. After picking from the trees, the apricots are washed and sliced in half, the pits are removed, and the apricot halves are placed on a large tray to dry in the sun for three days. Afterwards, they are washed again, dried for one more day in the sun, and then are ready to be eaten. A dried apricot has a very intense and sweet flavor.⁵

Fun Fact: It takes 6 lbs. of fresh apricots to make 1 lb. of dried fruit.⁷

Class Activity - Taste Test and Nutrition

Materials Needed:

- Apricots in three forms - fresh, dried and canned
- Cutting board and knife
- Paper plates, forks and napkins
- Nutrition Facts labels for fresh, dried and canned apricots

Steps: *Use food safety steps. Wash hands and produce.

1. Assign students to working groups. Provide each group with a whole fresh apricot, sliced fresh apricots and samples of dried and canned apricots.
2. Have each group observe the appearance, feel, smell, and color. List their findings.
3. Have students sample each form of apricot and note the taste. Make sure to discard the pit and do not eat it, as it is poisonous.
4. Compare similarities and differences as a class and take a poll of their preferred form.
5. Review the Nutrition Facts labels and compare and contrast the ingredients, serving sizes and nutrients.

Fun Fact: Astronauts ate apricot bars on the Apollo 15 moon mission in 1971.⁷

Eat

Apricots are my jam!

One fresh apricot has about 20 calories and is cholesterol free and low in fat and sodium. Apricots are a good source of vitamin A and vitamin C and a source of fiber and potassium. One cup of fresh sliced apricots has about 74 calories, 11% of the Daily Value of vitamin A, 10% of the Daily Value of vitamin C and 6% of the Daily Value of potassium. It is also a source of lutein and zeaxanthin.

Vitamin A promotes normal vision, supports the growth and health of cells and tissue, protects us from infection, and helps regulate the immune system. Vitamin C helps our body absorb iron and folate from plants, protects us from infections and bruising, aids in healing, keeps our gums healthy, helps form collagen to hold muscles, bones and tissues together, and acts as an antioxidant to prevent cell damage. Potassium helps maintain normal blood pressure, regulate fluids and mineral balance, transmit nerve signals and contract muscles. Soluble fiber helps lower blood cholesterol. Insoluble fiber aids in digestion. Phytochemicals act as antioxidants preventing or repairing cell damage. Lutein and zeaxanthin are carotenoids that may help maintain normal vision.^{6,8-9}

Fun Fact: January 9th is National Apricot Day.³

Find

For more apricot info and resources, visit:

1. North Carolina State Extension, <https://plants.ces.ncsu.edu/>
2. Utah State Extension, <https://extension.usu.edu>
3. Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, <https://dpi.wi.gov/school-nutrition/programs/fresh-fruit-vegetable>
4. Nebraska Extension, <http://lanaster.unl.edu/nep/fruitveggie.shtml>
5. Apricot Producers of California, <https://apricotproducers.com>
6. Fruits & Veggies For Better Health, <https://fruitsandveggies.org/>
7. South Dakota Department of Health, <https://healthysd.gov/apricots/>
8. USDA FoodData Central, <https://fdc.nal.usda.gov/index.html>
9. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, www.eatright.org