



PEACH TALKING POINTS

2. A Slice of Peach History

- The peach tree originated in western China about 4,000 years ago.
- Alexander the Great introduced the peach to Greek and Roman society.
- From the Mediterranean and North Africa, the peach traveled north during the Middle Ages with the Moors to the Iberian Peninsula.
- Spanish and Portuguese explorers brought peaches to the Americas in the 1500s.
- Spanish missionaries in California planted the first peach trees in the mid-18th century.
- Russian immigrants brought peach seeds to San Francisco in the early 1800s and planted them near Fort Ross.
- Forty-niners began California's commercial peach production in 1849 after demand for peaches could not be fulfilled by eastern supply.
- In Queen Victoria's day, no meal was complete without a fresh peach presented in a fancy cotton napkin.
- Various American Indian tribes are credited with migrating the peach tree across the United States, taking seeds along with them and planting as they roved the country.
- Although Thomas Jefferson had peach trees at Monticello, United States farmers did not begin commercial production until the nineteenth century in Maryland, Delaware, Georgia and finally Virginia. Although the Southern states lead in commercial production of peaches, they are also grown in California, Michigan, and Colorado.
- Today, peaches are the second largest commercial fruit crop in the

States, second only to apples. Italy, China and Greece are major producers of peaches outside of the United States.

- The peach comes from a deciduous fruit-bearing tree of the rose family and is native to China. Its botanical name *persica* resulted from the original belief that peaches were native to Persia (Iran).
- Commercially, peaches and nectarines are treated as different fruits but they belong to the same species. The nectarine is a type of peach with a smooth, fuzzless skin.
- Peaches and nectarines are classified as stone fruit, or drupes, meaning that they possess a single large seed or stone surrounded by juicy flesh. Other common stone fruits include cherries, plums and apricots.
- Peaches are classified into two major cultivars — clingstone and freestone — depending on how the flesh sticks to the stone (or pit). Commercially, nearly all clingstone varieties are processed (pit removed), then canned, preserved, juiced or used in other food products (e.g., fruit cups, baby food). Freestone peaches are primarily marketed as fresh.

3. & 4. How do peaches grow?

- Peach trees are warm-weather deciduous trees that grow 15 to 25 feet high. Susceptible to drought and frost, peach trees grow best inland and in warmer, tropical to subtropical climates. Most commercial trees are grafted cultivars, bearing fruit after about three to five years. Healthy trees reach peak production when

about 10 years old and can live up to 20 years.

- Like most stone fruits, peach trees flower in early spring before the leaves are visible. Unlike most fruit trees, the flowers of peach trees are produced in early spring before the leaves. Pruning is necessary during the spring to ensure quality fruit production. This technique of thinning the trees increases the size and improves the taste of the fruit.
- The fruit is available to be harvested as the summer goes on and into the fall.
- Commercial growers use a machine to brush the peach skin after harvesting to remove most of the natural fuzz.
- The United States is the world's leading grower of peaches.

5. Why should we eat peaches?

- A source of vitamins including Vitamin A, Vitamin E, niacin, riboflavin and thiamin (B vitamins).
- A source of minerals
- Vitamin C?
 - A water-soluble vitamin.
 - Also known as ascorbic acid.
 - Acts as an antioxidant (attacks free radicals in the body).
 - Helps body make collagen (a substance that helps strengthen connective tissues and keep gums healthy).
 - Insufficient intake may result in disease known as scurvy.

6. Just the Facts

- Genetically, nectarines differ from peaches by a single recessive gene — the one that makes peaches fuzzy.
- Yellow-fleshed peaches are more popular among Americans and

Europeans, while Asians prefer the white-fleshed varieties.

- Members of the rose family, peaches are related to the almond.
- The peach is the state flower of Delaware and the state fruit of South Carolina. Georgia is nicknamed *The Peach State*.
- In World War I, peach pits were used as filters in gas masks.

How can we serve peaches?

- Slice fresh peaches over whole grain breakfast cereals.
- Use fresh or frozen peaches to make smoothies — blend with nonfat milk, yogurt or orange juice and ice.
- Combine peaches, low-fat yogurt and granola for a healthy snack.
- Eat rinsed, whole peaches with your child as a snack.
- Top low-fat ice cream or low-fat frozen yogurt with sliced peaches for dessert.
- Eat the skin! Fruit and vegetable skins contain fiber and many essential vitamins and minerals.

Produce Tips

- Choose peaches that are fragrant and firm to slightly soft when pressed.
- Look for fruits with a bright yellow background (not red). This indicates ripeness and flavor.
- Ripen firm peaches in a brown paper bag at room temperature. Store up to three days.

Food for Thought about Peaches

- In China, where peaches originated, the peach has mystical attributes, and supposedly brings luck, abundance and protection. Originally growing in North China in areas of erosion and overgrazing, peaches became a symbol of fertility and of affection. Peaches were reproduced in porcelain and sung about in verse.

Dumplings shaped like peaches were special for birthdays. Even the wood of the peach tree was carved into amulets. Today, brides in Japan and China carry peach blossoms, just as American counterparts would carry orange blossoms, and peach blossoms are used to celebrate the New Year.