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Cantaloupe

Food \$ense Guide to Eating Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

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Utah Local Fresh Season: Summer, May through September

Availability: Cantaloupe melons can be found May through September in most stores, farmers markets or roadside stands. Cantaloupe melons are also imported from Central America and New Zealand.

Eating: Cantaloupe can be purchased as a whole melon or pre-cut. It has a sweet taste and is usually eaten cold/raw.

Selecting: Cantaloupes are also referred to as muskmelons and are members of the melon family. Melons come in many varieties, shapes and sizes. Cantaloupes do not get sweeter after they are harvested, but do continue to soften. They are best when picked at the peak of ripeness, yet still firm. Select round well shaped fruit that is free of bruising or discolorations. It is okay if there is a “bleached” side where the melon rested on the ground. Look for a cantaloupe with evenly-distributed, corky “netting.” The “netting” will be either buff or light tan color on either a green, yellow or grey background. Look for a clean smooth break at the stem. It should be slightly soft to the touch, but not be spongy. A sweet smell or aroma may or may not be a good indicator of ripeness. Chilled cantaloupes will not have much smell.

Cleaning: Clean before cutting with warm soapy water to get rid of impurities on the rind that might be transferred from the knife to the flesh.

Storing: Cut cantaloupes are perishable, bruise easily, and spoil at room temperature. Refrigerate in a covered container for up to 3 days. Uncut cantaloupes should not be kept at room temperature for more than 2 to 4 days or until fully ripe, then refrigerate for up to 5 days. Melons are aromatic and their smell will penetrate other foods.

Preparing: Wash the cantaloupe and dry the skin. Cut the cantaloupe open and remove the seeds and strings. It can be served in many attractive ways: cut into halves, quarters, wedges, or cubes; or the flesh can be scooped out with a melon baller. Slice the cantaloupe and run a knife between the flesh and the skin to remove the rind.

Highlighting Nutrition in Cantaloupe: Cantaloupe is a great source of Vitamin C and Vitamin A, and is high in folate.

Growing Cantaloupe: “Cantaloupe (Muskmelon) in the Garden,” by Dan Drost contains tips and how-to for growing cantaloupe, and can be found at:
http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/factsheet/HG_2004-06.pdf

Preserving Cantaloupe: Freezing is the most recommended method for preserving cantaloupe. After freezing, the melons are best when still frosty. To freeze, select melons that are fully ripe but firm; cut into slices, balls, or cubes. Freeze layers of melon between wax paper. Once frozen, store

cantaloupe in plastic bags or containers. Frozen melon should be used within 1 month.

References:

1. Food Stamp Nutrition Connection Recipe Finder.
http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov/index.php?mode+display&rec_id=30
2. CDC Fruit & Veggies Matter: Fruit & Vegetable of the Month: Melon
<http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/month/melon.html>
3. NEP University of Nebraska Extension.
4. University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources,
<http://ucanr.org/freepubs/docs/8095.pdf>
5. Produce for Better Health Foundation,
http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/?page_id=174

Southwest Cantaloupe Salad

- ½ cup cantaloupe, thinly sliced
- ½ cup jicama, peeled and sliced thinly sliced
- ¼ cup red bell pepper, roasted, sliced
- ¼ cup yellow bell pepper, roasted, sliced
- 1 Tbsp fresh basil, chopped
- 2 Tbsp fat free Italian salad dressing

In a medium bowl combine cantaloupe, jicama, red and yellow bell peppers, and basil. Add salad dressing. Mix well.

Cantaloupe Salsa

- ½ cantaloupe (large, ripe)
- ¼ cup red bell pepper, finely diced
- ¼ cup cilantro, finely chopped
- 3 Tbsp scallions, finely chopped
- Juice of 1 lime
- Pinch of salt and hot pepper flakes

Remove seeds and rind from cantaloupe. Chop cantaloupe into very small cubes. Put in bowl. Add diced red pepper, cilantro, scallions and lime juice. Stir. Add pinch of salt and pepper flakes. Chill. Serve with grilled chicken, fish or baked tortilla chips.

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