

Yummy Peaches!

Did you know that peaches originated in China? They have been cultivated since at least 1000 B.C.E. The peach tree is considered to be the tree of life in Chinese culture and peaches are symbols of immortality and unity. Peach blossoms are often carried by Chinese brides. Peaches traveled west by way of the silk roads to Persia, earning them the name *Prunus persica*. The story goes on from there. In Persia, Alexander the Great introduced them to the Greeks. By 50 to 20 B.C.E. the Romans called the peach, Persian apples and grew them to sell. Once the Romans cultivated the fruit, they were able to transport it north and west.

The Spaniards brought peaches to South America. The French introduced them to Louisiana. The English took them to their Jamestown and Massachusetts colonies. Columbus brought peach trees to America on his second and third voyages.

Today, China is still the largest world producer of peaches, Italy is second and California produces more than 50% of the peaches in the United States. So many peaches are grown in Georgia, it is known as the Peach State.

Peaches can be either clingstone, where the flesh of the fruit clings to the stone (pit). This type is generally used for canning. Freestone, where the stone quickly twists away from the fruit is the other type. These are usually found in the grocery stores. There are over 700 varieties of peaches around the world.

- Peaches are a good source of vitamins A, B and C. A large peach has less than 70 calories and contains 3 grams of fiber.
- Nectarines are a variety of peach with a smooth skin.
- The juice from peaches can make a moisturizer. Peach can be found in many brands of cosmetics.
- Like the plum and apricot, the peach is a member of the rose family. It is classified as



a drupe (a fruit with a hard stone).

- The term "you're a real peach" comes from the tradition of giving a peach to the friend you liked.
- Peaches are best from June to the end of August.
- True wild peaches are only found in China. Unlike the cultivated fruit, the wild fruit is small, sour and very fuzzy.
- A peach pit contains hydrocyanic acid, which is a poisonous substance.
- Peaches are the third most popular fruit grown in America.
- Many stories have been written about Peaches including James and the Giant Peach, which was eventually made into a movie.

Peach Crisp

- 6-8 peaches, peeled and sliced
- 2 Tablespoons lemon juice
- 1/2cup sifted all-purpose whole wheat or regular flour
- 3/4 cup rolled oats
- 1/2cup brown sugar, packed
- 1/3 cup butter

Slice the peaches (throw away the pit) and put in a shallow 2 quart baking dish. Sprinkle peaches with the lemon juice. In a separate bowl, mix the flour, oats and brown sugar together. Then cut in the butter with a pastry blender. Spread the mixture over the peaches and bake at 325 degrees for 30 minutes or until peaches are tender. Serve warm with ice cream, whipped topping or plain!

