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## Eat, Learn, Sell – Eating by Example - 2.12.15

Citrus is a late fall and winter crop and a wonderful way to brighten the long days of winter with a fresh flavor. The first fruits in October are generally the Rio Star Grapefruit and some early tangerines. By late November, the early mandarins can be counted on to provide sugar and flavor for both savory and sweet culinary applications and the kumquats should be returning to the marketplace.

The blood oranges don't start until there is a cold snap intense enough to provide a chemical reaction that changes the color of the fruit. Chefs should plan on adding blood oranges to their menu in January to be safe. By the New Year, a flood of winter citrus truly begins with all fruit available: Meyer lemons, Blood oranges, Makrut fruit, Pommelos, Mandelos and the whole Quat family are available through the spring and into the early summer.

An incredible source of vitamin C (3 ½ ounces = 95% RDA), oranges provide dietary fiber and are sodium-free. Oranges, along with other citrus, contain carotenoids, folacin, flavenoids, and coumarins that are considered powerful anticarcinogens. The antioxidants, glutathione and glucarate, are also present.



**Blood Oranges:** Deliciously sweet, this orange tends to be less acidic than 'normal' oranges. Its tasty, inviting pulp offers a raspberry overtone and its juice is quite dark. Having its very own unique personality, the Moro blood orange is quite distinct from other orange varieties. Being the most colorful, its orange-colored rough skin shows off an attractive red blush. Easy to peel and medium-size, they are usually seedless. The red pigment in this variety of orange does not develop until there has been sufficient cold in the groves, making this a late harvest citrus. Generally available January – May, the first harvest may be a lighter color of red if the weather has not been sufficiently cold.

The color of the blood orange is due to a pigment called *anthocyanin*, not usually present in citrus but common in other red fruits and flowers. Blood oranges have been slow to catch on commercially in the United States, perhaps because of their quirky need for cold weather and their unpredictable harvest commencement.

Nutritious blood oranges are an excellent source of vitamin C and dietary fiber. The peel may be used just the same as any other orange for adding flavor to relishes, salads and baked goods. A classic Mediterranean use of this orange is to combine it with sliced fennel in a salad. To store blood oranges, keep for up to two weeks refrigerated – though they store almost as well at room temperature.

Grown mostly in Mediterranean countries, this blood orange is the most common commercial variety. There are other varieties, including the elongated Tarocco and the egg-shaped Sanguinelli. Each type differs in climate preference, size and flavor. Temperature, amount of light and the variety seem to affect coloration and intensity of blood oranges. It is believed the first mutation of the blood orange occurred in Sicily in the seventeenth century.

**Murcott** - The Murcott tangerine can be distinguished from other varieties by its pebbled peel that clings to its segmented flesh. It is not easy to peel and can bear small seeds in numerous amounts. Its golden orange skin is thin and fragrant and its flesh is bright orange, juicy and sweet. Because its flesh is laden with seeds, it is preferred as a juicing tangerine.

The name Murcott was apparently the middle name of the Florida horticulturalist who developed this delicious fruit. The Murcott tangerine's origins began in the early 1900's at a breeding nursery in Florida. Murcott tangerine trees were created from budwood by Charles Murcott Smith. Commercial production of the Murcott tangerine would occur on a large scale in the 1940's and continues to grow as an important tangerine variety in citrus growing regions of Florida and California. Murcott tangerine trees are cold hardy though not frost resistant. When trees bear heavy crops in one season, they often do not bear fruit the following year.



### Is it a mandarin, a Clementine or a tangerine?

Mandarins refer to a group of cultivars and include the Clementine, Satsuma and many other mandarins. There are actually many selections of Clementine mandarins and some are more commercial than others with *Clemenules* Clementine being the most commercially grown of the Clementine mandarins. If you have heard of "Cuties" (now sold as Halos) they are a marketing name used to pack Clementine mandarins before Christmas generally and W. Murcotts and Tango mandarins after the holidays.

Tangerines and mandarins are sometimes mistakenly referred to as the same fruit but tangerines are actually a subgroup of the mandarins, so all tangerines are classified as a type of mandarin orange. However, not all mandarin oranges are tangerines. The primary difference between the two species is their skin color. The tangerine has a darker reddish orange skin and the mandarin is lighter orange in color. The tangerine is the most common mandarin orange available.

They're called mandarins because they were thought to be native to China; they're called tangerines because they were thought to have come from Tangiers. They are in fact native to southeast Asia someplace, and they did in fact come to this country from North Africa, so both origin myths are correct.

There are three basic citrus types (mandarin, citron and pummelo) and that others that we think of as basic types or species (sweet oranges, sour oranges, grapefruits) are actually ancient hybrids or backcrosses of these types.



*Passionfruit*: Purple passionfruit is available year round with a peak in season late winter through summer. Passionfruit, also known as Granadilla is of the family *Passifloraceae*.

Purple passionfruit is a small, oval to round shaped fruit, approximately two to three inches in diameter at maturity. The fruit's skin is smooth, yet dimpled and at peak maturity can be heavily wrinkled. The skin's color varies with hues of dark purple and red. Below the skin is a cottony white peel. The interior seed cavity is filled with edible yellow to green jelly and medium sized black seeds. Its pulp is highly aromatic and has a tropical sweet tart flavor with nuances of pineapple, papaya, mango, citrus and guava.

Look for slightly wrinkled skin and a deep purple color--these are the ones that have ripened the most and will be the sweetest. The softer the shell, the more ripe the fruit will be; The outer shell becomes brittle and wrinkled when fully ripe and if there is any mold evident, it can be wiped off – it does not impact the inside product or flavor.

Remember – this fruit is wrinkled and ugly when ripe!