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## Eat, Learn, Sell – Eating by Example - 05.08.15

Drupes – fruit with a single stone or pit are also called Stonefruit because of the center stone.

Peaches, Almonds, Apricots, Nectarines, Plums, Pluots, Aprium and Cherries are all members of the same family. (There are two others that are mentioned – can you guess what?)

These fruit all supply beta carotene, vitamin C, potassium and fiber.

PEACHES and NECTARINES

Available from April - October

In addition to flesh color, peaches and nectarines are also classified as freestone or clingstone. This refers to if the flesh clings to the internal stone or not. Classically clingstone fruit are heirloom varieties and the freestone varieties are more modern hybrids, bred for easier eating.



**Peaches** originated in Asia but were introduced to North America in the 1700s; commercial production began in the early 1800s. Georgia is called the peach state but peaches now grow in more than 30 states and California has become the largest producer. There are two flesh colors of peaches: yellow-fleshed and white-fleshed. The flesh color does not determine the sweetness, the variety does.

**Donut Peach** The name 'Donut' is a trademarked name designated to a white peach variety that is of the same lineage as other flattened "doughnut" type varieties that possess essentially identical inherent physical and flavor attributes. Other common names for 'flattened' peaches include: Chinese peach, Jupiter peach, Saturn peach, Sweetcap and Saucer peach. (There are also 'donut' nectarines available.)

**Nectarines** Generally sweeter than peaches, nectarines are a smooth-skinned sub-species of the peach. Available in both white and yellow, 98% of the domestic crop is harvested in California. Nectarine flesh will oxidize, so slice when ready to eat. A nectarine seed is considered highly inedible as it can contain high levels of poisonous hydrogen cyanide. This toxin is readily detected by its bitter taste.

Choose stone fruit by aroma, there should be a slight sweetness to the fruit when it's ripe. Once the fruit is harvested, it will not become any sweeter, the sugar production is arrested. (This is why Chilean and south American stonefruit shipped by vessel in the winter is often tasteless. It was harvested early enough to endure the journey, but too early to manufacture fructose.) Peaches will soften at room temperature, but they will not sweeten. Ripe peaches can be stored in refrigeration to arrest any further ripening.

**Loquat** – Loquats often resemble an apricot in color but taste a bit like a cherry or plum. The Loquat is also commonly known as the Japanese plum. Loquats are a member of the *Rosaceae* family, (the rose family) along with apples, strawberries and pears. Loquat fruit, growing in clusters of 4 - 30, are oval or rounded, 1 to 2 inches long with either smooth or downy, yellow or orange, sometimes red-blushed skin. The succulent, tangy flesh is white, yellow or orange and sweet to sub-acid or acid, depending on the cultivar. Each fruit contains three to five large brown seeds.



The loquat is normally pollinated by bees. Thinning of flowers and young fruits in the cluster, or clipping off all or part of flower and fruit clusters is sometimes done to enhance fruit size. Under most conditions the loquat tends to develop an alternate-bearing pattern, which can be modified somewhat by cluster thinning in heavy production years. For the highest quality fruit the clusters are sometimes bagged to protect from sunburn and eliminate bird damage.

Loquats are a source of calcium, potassium, fiber and vitamin A. They are used in Chinese medicine for digestive and respiratory issues. The seeds contain *amygdalin*, which is used as the cancer drug laetrile. The seeds also contain toxic cyanide compounds.

**Red Corn** - Red corn is a member of the grass family *Gramineae* and is technically classified as a grain crop, though when harvested immature, it is considered a vegetable. Its stalks produce a cob of seeds, which are better known as the kernels, though botanically, they are the individual fruits of the plant. Red

corn is just one cultivars among thousands of corn varieties, heirloom, hybrid or genetically modified. Some names of Red corn varieties include: Bloody Butcher, Broom Corn, Strawberry Popcorn, and Ruby Queen.

Red corn is a type of sweet corn; there are more than 200 varieties of sweet corn. Its ears are wrapped in tightly bound lime hued husks with silks and a tassel that extend out from the tip. Red corn's kernels are stained with hues of ruby brick red and creamy pink tones,

depending on specific variety. Red corn is exceptionally sweet and nutty in flavor and that flavor is brought out by cooking. Its texture is semi firm and the kernels are juicy when young. It is very important to harvest Red corn at the proper stage of maturity.

Red corn provides twenty percent more protein than white corn or yellow corn. Anthocyanin, the pigment that creates the red color in this corn, are antioxidant flavonoids that protect many body systems. Besides chlorophyll, anthocyanins are probably the most important group of visible plant pigments. Red corn contains 350% more antioxidants than common white or yellow corn.

For corn to stay sweet, freshness is helped by the cold chain. When the harvested ears of corn get warm, the natural sugars convert to starch. The critical time is the milk stage, when the juice in the kernel appears milky when you puncture the kernel with your thumbnail. As with all sweet corn varieties, as the corn matures, it loses its moisture, starch content increases and the kernels become tough.