

Fruit of the Month

Pear



Pears (*Pyrus communis*) are a pome fruit relative of the apple. One of the earliest written histories or records comes from Homer's reference to them as "Gifts from the Gods." The first pears arrived in the United States by European settlers in the 1700s. Pears rank second to the apple as the most popular US fruit. They can be eaten and used in a lot of the same ways as the apple. One distinct feature of the pear besides the shape is the soft texture. This soft texture is the result of the starch converting to sugar after being picked from a tree to ripen. (Wellness Encyclopedia of Food and Nutrition, 1992).

The very shape of a pear speaks of its luscious nature. When ripe and ready to eat, the pear has a honeyed flavor and beckoning perfume that bewitch your senses. There are more than 3000 known varieties in the world. US production comes from states in the Northwest, plus New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and California. Imports come from South America, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa.

With the numerous varieties and extended growing seasons, pears of all sizes and colors are available year-round.

Varieties

There are several varieties of pear including Anjou, Bartlett, Bose, Comice, Forelle, and Seckel. These fruits have a sweet, rich flavor and come in a variety of colors including green, golden yellow and red. Among these varieties there are only subtle differences in flavor and texture.

Pear Varieties

Pears come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and colors from tiny Seckels to long-necked Boscs to colorful Red Bartletts. Check out their availability and use below.



Green Anjou — Available October through June

Firm and green, even when ripe; this large, thin-skinned yellowish-green pear is best eaten fresh. When slightly under-ripe, it can be baked or poached, but once it ripens, its sweet, mellow flavor and abundant juice make it an excellent choice for salads and snacks.



Red Anjou — Available October through May

Much the same flavor, use and texture as the green Anjou. Red Anjous (generally dark, maroon red in color) show little to no change in color as they ripen, which is another characteristic shared with their Green Anjou counterparts. Red Anjous are recognizable for their near egg-shaped appearance.



Yellow Bartlett — Available August through December

One of the most common and popular pears, this large, bell-shaped all-purpose pear has a yellow skin sometimes blushed with pale red. It is very sweet, juicy, aromatic and perfect for salads, eating fresh, and excellent for canning or cooking. It holds its shape and flavor in baking and cooking.



Red Bartlett — Available August through December

Firm, bright red skin, very sweet and juicy when ripe. This variety is a bit smaller, with the same flavor, texture, and use as yellow Bartletts. They make an excellent choice as a color accent in a fresh-fruit dessert or salad.



Bosc — Available August through April

The Bosc has a firm, dense, yet tender flesh with brown skin that hides a deliciously, sweet and spicy flavor. Its dense flesh makes it ideal for baking and cooking. Color doesn't change as it ripens, excellent for baking. Its mild, not-too-sweet flavor is great for microwave recipes, salads, and snacks.



Comice — Available August through March

Is hard, green, and rounder than a Bartlett, but similar in flavor and texture. One of the largest, sweetest and juiciest varieties. Best used fresh in salads, served as an elegant dessert pear, or as an excellent accompaniment with cheese.



Forelle — Available September through February

Slightly larger than a Seckel, with freckled skin and a red blush. For what they lack in size, Forelle pears make up in sweet flavor and beautiful appearance. They're an excellent snack or lunch-box pear...sweet, juicy, and crisp.



Seckel — Available August through February

Tiny pears with ultra-sweet flavor, so sweet in fact they are called "sugar pears." Maroon and olive green in color, with no color change when ripened. They are an excellent choice for children's snacks, pickling, or as a garnish.

Fresh Pears are a Healthy Choice!

They have no cholesterol, sodium, or saturated fat. They offer a natural, quick source of energy, due largely to high amounts of two monosaccharides: fructose and glucose, plus Levulose, the sweetest of known natural sugars, found to a greater extent in fresh pears than in any other fruit. A pear is a nutrient dense food, providing more nutrients per calorie, than calories per nutrient. Carbohydrates make up 98% of the energy provided by a pear, and carbohydrates are helpful in weight reduction diets because they contain half as many calories as fat.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size (166g)
Servings Per Container

Amount Per Serving

Calories 100 **Calories from Fat** 5

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 1g **1%**

Saturated Fat 0g **0%**

Cholesterol 0mg **0%**

Sodium 0mg **0%**

Total Carbohydrate 25g **8%**

Dietary Fiber 4g **16%**

Sugars 17g

Protein 1g

Vitamin A 0% • Vitamin C 10%

Calcium 2% • Iron 2%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

		Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g	
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g	
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg	
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg	
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g	
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g	

Calories per gram:

Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

Fiber

Fresh pears offer dietary fiber, much of it in the form of Pectin. A pear weighing 166 grams provides 2.32 grams of crude fiber, and 4 grams of dietary fiber, of which 41% is pectin. Fiber contains no calories, and is a necessary element of a healthy diet, helping to sustain blood sugar levels and promoting regularity. High fiber diets may also help reduce the risk of colon cancer and can help reduce serum cholesterol. Pears are a good source of natural fiber.

Potassium

Fresh pears offer potassium; 210 mg in a medium size pear. Although it is an element lost easily through dehydration or perspiration brought on by active lifestyles or strenuous exercise, potassium is necessary for maintaining heartbeat, muscle contraction, nerve transmission, as well as carbohydrate and protein metabolism. Replenish potassium by eating fresh vegetables, fruits or legumes containing high potassium content— pears are an excellent choice.

Vitamin C

Fresh pears contain Vitamin C. One medium size pear provides 7 mg, or 10% of the RDA for Vitamin C. As one of the antioxidant vitamins, Vitamin C is essential for normal metabolism and tissue repair, helping prevent free radical damage the destructive by-products of the body's metabolic process. Vitamin C improves the immune system and promotes healing of cuts and bruises and guard against a number of infectious diseases. Fresh pears are a good source for Vitamin C.

Selecting

Sweet, succulent pears are perhaps the most glorious of fall fruits. Selecting them can be easy if you consider the following: avoid pears with bruises or cuts and dark brown colors; purchase pears while slightly green because they ripen better and faster off the tree; look for pears with a smooth unblemished skin; ripe ones will yield slightly to gentle pressure at the stem end. If you plan to bake pears, select those that are fairly firm.

Storing

If pears are unripe, place them in a paper bag at room temperature for 2 to 3 days or store them in a ventilated fruit bowl in a cool, dark place, and refrigerate as soon as they ripen. Ripe pears should be stored in the refrigerator in a plastic bag up to 3 days. They continue to ripen after harvest.

Wash and Eat

There's no need to peel a pear... their tender, edible skin is an additional source of fiber. A medium sized pear provides 4 grams of fiber, or 16% of the recommended daily value. Always wash all fresh fruits and vegetables before serving.

Make Pears Part of Your 5 A Day Plan



It is easy to include pears in your 5 A Day Plan. Take a pear for lunch, either fresh, dried or in a flip top can. Snack with pears during the day. Use baked or broiled pears with a sauce as a light tasty dessert. Use pear slices dipped in lemon as a garnish to jazz up foods. Sliced thin wedges served with chunks of cheese, smoked turkey and seedless grapes on a skewer make a healthy appetizer or side dish.

Toss chopped pears into a chicken, tuna, green, fruit or cottage cheese salad. When roasting vegetables, add pear slices to the vegetable mix. Try using pear slices on your next grilled chicken sandwich. Use pears where you would use apples..... Enjoy!

Recipes

Poached Red Pear Zinfandel

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

4 large ripe red pears or other pear variety

1 1/2 cups white zinfandel or rose wine

1 teaspoon vanilla

1/3 cup sugar

4 tsp honey

fresh mint leaves (optional)

Core pears from bottom, leaving stem intact. Using a paring knife, peel a spiral channel from tip to bottom of fruit, if desired. Slice the bottoms off pears to allow them to stand upright. Stand pears up in the bottom of a large saucepan; add wine and vanilla. Bring mixture just to boiling. Reduce heat and simmer pears, covered, for 10 to 15 minutes or until pears are just tender.

Using a slotted spoon, transfer pears to four dessert dishes. Add sugar to liquid in pan; bring to boiling. Reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, for 12 minutes or until liquid is reduced to 2/3-cup and is the consistency of a thin sauce. Spoon sauce over pears. Drizzle honey on top. Serve warm or chilled. Garnish sauce on each plate with fresh mint leaves, if desired.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 250, protein 1g, fat 1g, percent calories from fat 2%, cholesterol 0mg, carbohydrates 49g, fiber 4g, sodium 5mg

Baked Pears with Lemon Sauce

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

Source: Produce for Better Health/Carol Withers

4 pears (medium-sized), peeled
3 Tbsp water
1 Tbsp honey
2 whole cloves
2 tsp cornstarch (for Lemon Sauce)
3/4 cup skim milk, divided (for Lemon Sauce)
1 cinnamon stick (for Lemon Sauce)
1/2 tsp grated lemon rind (for Lemon Sauce)
3 Tbsp lemon juice (for Lemon Sauce)
1 Tbsp honey (for Lemon Sauce)

Cut pears in half lengthwise and remove cores. Arrange pears, cut side up, in a glass baking dish. Combine water, honey and cloves and pour over pears. Cover and bake at 350° for 25 to 30 minutes. Serve warm pears with 1/4-cup chilled lemon sauce.

To make sauce combine cornstarch and 1/4-cup milk in a small saucepan, stirring until blended. Add remaining 1/2-cup milk and cinnamon. Simmer over medium heat 6 to 8 minutes, stirring constantly, until mixture is thickened. Reduce heat and stir in remaining ingredients until well blended. Remove from heat and cool to room temperature. Cover and refrigerate 3 hours or until thoroughly chilled. Remove cinnamon stick before serving.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 160, protein 3g, fat 1g, percent calories from fat 4%, cholesterol 1mg, carbohydrates 39g, fiber 5g, sodium 28mg

Pear Sauce

Makes 4 (1/2 cup) servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

Serve Pear Sauce warm with cream or cold with whipped topping, sour cream or low fat yogurt or over low fat baked goods.

6 cups pared, cored and cubed Pears, any variety

1/4 cup water

2 Tbsp sugar

1 teaspoon lemon juice

Touch of nutmeg

(Microwave Method) Combine all ingredients in 2-quart microwave-safe measure or bowl. Cover and microwave on HIGH (100%) 6 minutes. Stir pear mixture; rotate dish one-quarter turn and microwave at HIGH 6 to 8 minutes longer or until tender. Puree in blender or food processor.

(Conventional Method) Increase water to 1/2-cup with ingredients above; bring to a boil. Cook over medium heat 10 to 15 minutes or until pears are tender. Puree pears as above.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 171, protein 1g, fat 1g, percent calories from fat 5%, cholesterol 0mg, carbohydrates 44g, fiber 6g, sodium 1mg

Chicken & Pear Pockets

Makes 4 servings (8 half sandwiches)

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

4 pita pockets, cut in halves

1 medium pear, cored, halved and thinly sliced

1 Tbsp lemon juice

8 slices of Swiss cheese (to reduce fat use a low fat or part skim Cheese)

3 chicken breast halves, cooked, cooled and sliced

mayonnaise, as needed (to reduce fat use fat free mayo)

dijon-style mustard, as needed

lettuce leaves, as needed

salt and black pepper to taste

Spread mayonnaise and mustard inside each pita half and line with lettuce leaves. Toss pear slices with lemon juice to prevent browning. Arrange pear slices and cheese in pita halves. Season chicken with salt and pepper and arrange in sandwiches.

Nutritional analysis per serving using 2 teaspoons mayonnaise and 1 teaspoon mustard per serving: calories 488, protein 42.3g, fat 16g (fat can be reduced by using fat free mayo & part skim cheese), percent calories from fat 29%, cholesterol 98g, carbohydrates 43g, fiber 3g, sodium 473mg

Indonesian Chicken and Pear Salad

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

Source: Produce for Better Health/California Tree Fruit Agreement

1-1/2 cup cold cooked chicken breast, cubed

3 fresh pears, halved and cored

1/4 cup peanuts, coarsely chopped

1/2 cup cucumber, thinly sliced

3 Tbsp crystalline ginger, slivered

2 Tbsp green onions, thinly sliced

lemon juice

iceberg lettuce cups or leaves

1/2 cup low-fat yogurt (for Curry Dressing)

1/2 tsp curry powder (for Curry Dressing)

1/4 tsp dry mustard (for Curry Dressing)

1/4 tsp ground allspice (for Curry Dressing)

1/4 tsp garlic powder (for Curry Dressing)

Place chicken in bowl. Cube 1 pear. Add to chicken along with nuts, cucumber, ginger and onion. Add curry dressing; gently mix. To make curry dressing, combine yogurt, curry powder, dry mustard, ground allspice and garlic powder; mix well. Make about 30 minutes before using for flavor to develop. Makes about 2/3-cup. Dip pear halves in lemon juice and arrange each half in lettuce cup or lettuce leaves on individual salad plate. Spoon salad onto pear halves.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 226, protein 5g, fat 6g, percent calories from fat 20%, cholesterol 2mg, carbohydrates 44g, fiber 4g, sodium 33mg

Curried Celery with Pears and Onions

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals

Source: Produce for Better Health/California Tree Fruit Agreement

- 1 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 3 cup celery cut in 1/2" pieces
- 1 cup sweet red bell pepper cut in 1/2" pieces
- 3/4 cup onion, cut in 1/2" pieces
- 1 1/2 - 2 tsp curry powder
- 1 1/2 cup peeled and cored ripe pears cut in 1 1/2" pieces
- 3/4 cup apple juice
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 cup steamed brown rice (3/4 cup uncooked)

In a large skillet heat oil until hot. Add celery, red pepper and onion; cook and stir until barely crisp-tender, about 5 minutes. Add curry powder; cook 1 minute. Add apple juice, pears and salt; simmer, covered, until vegetables and pears are tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in steamed rice.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 245, protein 4g, fat 5g, percent calories from fat 19%, cholesterol 0mg, carbohydrates 48g, fiber 7g, sodium 322mg

Microwave Breakfast Cobbler

Makes 6 servings

Each serving equals one and three quarters 5 A Day servings

Source: PRODUCE FOR BETTER HEALTH

1 can (16 ounces) peaches, sliced and drained

1 can (16 ounces) pears, halves and drained

1 cup (6 ounces) prunes, pitted and halved

1 tsp orange peel, grated

1 1/2 cup granola cereal, low fat

1/3 cup orange juice

In a 6-cup shallow microwave bowl toss peaches, pears, prunes, orange peel and orange juice. Top with granola. Microwave on HIGH 5 minutes. Let stand 2 minutes. Spoon into bowls. Serve with plain yogurt if desired. Can substitute 2-16 oz. cans fruit cocktail for peaches & pears.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 256, protein 3g, fat 2g, percent calories from fat 6%, cholesterol 0mg, carbohydrates 59g, fiber 5g, sodium 38mg

Pear Nog

Makes 1 serving (1 1/2 cups)

Each serving equals one 5 a Day serving

Source: Produce for Better Health

1 pear, peeled, cored, cut in chunks

1/2 cup 1% milk

1/4 cup Egg Beaters or other egg substitute

1 tsp brown sugar

large pinch cinnamon

2 ice cubes, cracked

Place all ingredients in blender. Blend at high speed for 15 seconds.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 191, protein 11g, fat 1g, percent calories from fat 3%, cholesterol 2mg, carbohydrates 37g, fiber 4g, sodium 193mg