

July is National Peach Month

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George du Maurier once said, “An apple is an excellent thing – until you have tried a peach.” Peaches are the third most popular fruit in America, so well loved that July has been declared National Peach Month. While peaches may be purchased year-round, everyone knows that they are best eaten right out of the orchard or fresh from the farm.

Peaches are members of the rose family, which explains that delicious sweet scent that makes one’s mouth water. That tell-tale fragrance is one of the ways we can know that a peach is ripe. When selecting peaches, choose peaches that are yellow or creamy. While some varieties will also have a hint of red or pink, that is not a good indicator with all varieties. Peaches don’t get sweeter after they are harvested, although they may get softer and juicier. Avoid any that are hard or have a green undertone.

Peaches don’t just taste good, they are good for you, too. Peaches contain antioxidants and phyto-chemicals, which may help reduce our risk of cancer. One medium peach packs in about 75% of our daily recommendation for Vitamin C! They are rich in iron, potassium, and Vitamin E and because they are 80% water, they are naturally low in calories and are a good source of fiber.

Peaches don’t require special treatment. Simply rinse and enjoy – the perfect “grab and go” snack. But they can easily become the star of a variety of desserts or special treats.

For a quick dessert, top flour tortillas with sliced peaches and a sprinkle of cinnamon and sugar. Bake until heated through.

To grill, cut a peach in half and remove the pit. Spray the cut edge with low-fat butter spray and sprinkle with brown sugar. Grill over medium heat, cut side up for several minutes. Turn and grill until the peach is soft, but still holds its shape. Serve warm.

CREAMY PEACH SMOOTHIES

1 cup frozen sliced peaches

1 cup orange juice

1 banana, thickly sliced

1 Tablespoon honey

1 cup low-fat vanilla yogurt

Combine all ingredients in a blender until smooth. Makes 3 servings.

PEACH CRUMBLE

3 large sheets of graham crackers

1 Tablespoon soft margarine

2 teaspoon sugar

1 – 15 ounce can of peaches – sliced or chunked (in their own juice or no sugar added!)

1 ½ cup plain or vanilla non-fat yogurt

Place graham crackers in a zip-top plastic bag and crumble (use the unopened canned of peaches as a rolling pin). Melt margarine. Add graham cracker crumbs and sugar to melted margarine. Stir to mix. Open can of peaches and drain off liquid. Heat peaches to warm, 1-2 minutes. Pour yogurt into 3 one-cup bowls. Top with warm peaches. Sprinkle with 1/3 graham cracker crumb mixture. Serve.
Makes 3 servings.

For more information, contact the Oconee County Cooperative Extension Office at (706) 769-3946 or stop by our office located behind the Oconee County Courthouse.