

Item of the Week: PLUMS & PRUNES



There are few fruits that come in such a panorama of colors as the juicy sweet tasting plum. The plum season extends from May through October with the Japanese varieties first on the market from May and peaking in August followed by the European varieties in the fall.

Plums belong to the *Prunus* genus of plants and are relatives of the peach, nectarine and almond. They are all considered "drupes," fruits that have a hard stone pit surrounding their seeds.

Prunes are the dried version of European plums. In the United States, through, you may not see the term "prunes" used as frequently as before, as this fruit items recently had its name officially changed to "dried plum." Sweet with a deep taste and a sticky chewy texture, prunes are not only fun to eat but they are also highly nutritious. As with other dried fruits, they are available year round.

Health Benefits

Significant Antioxidant Protection from the Phenols in Plums and Prunes

The fresh version (plums) and the dried version (prunes) of the plant scientifically known as *Prunus domestica* have been the subject of repeated health research for their high content of unique phytonutrients called neochlorogenic and chlorogenic acid. These substances found in plum and prune are classified as phenols, and their function as antioxidants has been well-documented. These damage-preventing substances are particularly effective in neutralizing a particularly dangerous oxygen radical called superoxide anion radical, and they have also been shown to help prevent oxygen-based damage to fats. Since our cell membranes, brain cells and molecules such as cholesterol are largely composed of fats, preventing free radical damage to fats is no small benefit.

Better Iron Absorption plus More Antioxidant Protection from Vitamin C

The ability of plums and prunes to increase absorption of iron into the body has also been documented in published research. This ability of plums and prunes to make iron more available may be related to the vitamin C content of this fruit. Our food ranking system qualified plums as a very good source of vitamin C.

In addition to assisting with absorption of iron, vitamin C is needed in the body to make healthy tissue and is also needed for a strong immune system. Getting a little extra vitamin C around cold and flu season is a good idea, and may also be helpful for people who suffer from recurrent ear infections. Vitamin C also helps to protect cholesterol from becoming oxidized by free radicals. Since oxidized cholesterol is the kind that builds up in the arteries and causes damage to blood vessels, some extra vitamin C can be helpful for people who suffer from atherosclerosis or diabetic heart disease. In addition, vitamin C can help neutralize free radicals that could otherwise contribute to the development or progression of conditions like asthma, colon cancer, osteoarthritis, and rheumatoid arthritis, so vitamin C may be able to help those who are at risk or suffering from these conditions. Owing to the multitude of vitamin C's health benefits, it is not surprising that research has shown that consumption of vegetables and fruits high in this nutrient is associated with a reduced risk of death from all causes including heart disease, stroke and cancer.

Prunes' Potential for Normalizing Blood Sugar Levels and Helping with Weight Loss in Plums and Prunes

Prunes' soluble fiber helps normalize blood sugar levels by slowing the rate at which food leaves the stomach and by delaying the absorption of glucose (the form in which sugar is transported in the blood) following a meal. Soluble fiber also increases insulin sensitivity and can therefore play a helpful role in the prevention and treatment of type 2 diabetes. And, prunes' soluble fiber promotes a sense of satisfied fullness after a meal by slowing the rate at which food leaves the stomach, so prunes can also help prevent overeating and weight gain.

Prunes' Fiber for Regularity, Lower Cholesterol, & Intestinal Protection

Prunes are well known for their ability to prevent constipation. In addition to providing bulk and decreasing the transit time of fecal matter, thus decreasing the risk of colon cancer and hemorrhoids, prunes' insoluble fiber also provides food for the "friendly" bacteria in the large intestine. When these helpful bacteria ferment prunes' insoluble fiber, they produce a short-chain fatty acid called butyric acid, which serves as the primary fuel for the cells of the large intestine and helps maintain a healthy colon. These helpful bacteria also create two other short-chain fatty acids, propionic and acetic acid, which are used as fuel by the cells of the liver and muscles.

The propionic acid produced from prunes' insoluble fiber may also be partly responsible for the cholesterol-lowering properties of fiber. In animal studies, propionic acid has been shown to inhibit HMG-CoA reductase, an enzyme involved in the production of cholesterol by the liver. By lowering the activity of this enzyme, propionic acid helps lower blood cholesterol levels.

In addition, prunes' soluble fibers help to lower cholesterol by binding to bile acids and removing them from the body via the feces. Bile acids are compounds used to digest fat that are manufactured by the liver from cholesterol. When they are excreted along with prunes' fiber, the liver must manufacture new bile acids and uses up more cholesterol, thus lowering the amount of cholesterol in circulation. Soluble fiber may also reduce the amount of cholesterol manufactured by the liver.

Lastly, the insoluble fiber provided by prunes feed friendly bacteria in the digestive tract, which helps to maintain larger populations of friendly bacteria. In addition to producing the helpful short-chain fatty acids described above, friendly bacteria play an important protective role by crowding out pathogenic (disease-causing) bacteria and preventing them from surviving in the intestinal tract.

Selection and Storage

Plums

If you want to purchase plums that are ripe and ready to eat, look for ones that yield to gentle pressure and that are slightly soft at their tip. While you can also purchase plums that are firm and ripen them at home, avoid those that are excessively hard as they will be immature and will probably not develop a good taste and texture profile. Good quality plums will feature a rich color and may still have a slight whitish bloom, reflecting that they have not been over handled. They should also be free of punctures, bruises or any signs of decay. Plums are generally available in the marketplace from May through the early fall.

Plums that are not yet ripe can be left at room temperature. As this fruit tends to mature quickly, check on them in the next day or two to ensure that they do not become overripe. Once they are ripe, plums can be stored in the refrigerator for a few days. While plums can be frozen, to ensure maximum taste remove their stone pits before placing them in the freezer.

Prunes

Prunes are sold either with their pits or already pitted. The form you choose should depend upon your personal preference and recipe needs.

Ideally, you should purchase prunes that are sold in transparent containers so that you can evaluate them for quality. They should be plump, shiny, relatively soft and free of mold. If the packages are opaque, ensure that they are tightly sealed so that the prunes will not have lost any moisture. As with any other dried fruit, try to purchase prunes that are not processed with food preservatives such as sulfites.

Prunes should be stored in an airtight container in a cool, dry and dark place where they will keep for several months. Storing them in the refrigerator will extend their freshness, allowing them to keep for about six months. Regardless of where you store them, make sure that when you open the container, you reseal it tightly to prevent the prunes from losing moisture.

Recipe (Source: Allrecipes.com)

PLUM PUDDING

Ingredients:

12 plums, pitted and halved	2 1/4 cups all-purpose baking mix
1 cup white sugar	3 tablespoons white sugar
1/2 cup water	2/3 cup milk
2 tablespoons tapioca	3 tablespoons margarine, melted
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon	



Directions:

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C).
2. In a 2 quart baking dish, stir together plums, 1 cup sugar, water, tapioca and cinnamon. Bake in preheated oven for 25 minutes. (You can also cook the plum mixture in the microwave for 15 minutes.)
3. Raise oven temperature to 450 degrees F (230 degrees C).
4. In a medium bowl, stir together baking mix, 3 tablespoons sugar, milk and melted margarine to form a biscuit dough. Drop dough by spoonfuls onto plum mixture. Bake in preheated oven 10 minutes, until golden brown. Let cool slightly before serving.



Crosset Company's Annual Produce and Floral Conference will be held on **Wednesday, August 22, 2018**

Organic Produce

BEETS: Beets still remain a challenge due to curly top virus that impacts the plant leaves and bulb. Supplies will be limited for a few more weeks until growers move to lower elevation new fields that should be clean.

BROCCOLI: Supply has leveled off on broccoli and has become stable. Pricing is starting to come off and we are going to see promotable volume over the next several weeks.

BUNCH CARROTS: Supply has rebounded quite well and we are seeing much better quality.

CABBAGE: Supply has been stable and we are moving up to supply from Kentucky, Maryland and Ohio.

CAULIFLOWER: Supplies are starting to stabilize as new fields have come online for growing. Cost has remained high, but showing good quality.

CELERY: Supply has been greatly affected by insect pressures out west. Supply has become very limited and the price is starting to rise. We are starting to see pitting to the product that will affect shippable supply.

CUCUMBERS: Supply is stable throughout the industry and we are starting to see more product come across from Georgia and Florida. We will see some Ohio product available in a limited way as well.

GREEN PEPPERS: Steady supplies are available between Florida and growers out west.

KALES: Great supplies of kale currently, plenty of regional product from all over the Midwest available. We are currently sourcing from Georgia but we will see product coming on next week from Ohio and will have Michigan starting a few weeks behind that.

LETTUCES: Inbound quality on leafs have suffered due to the growing transition out west. We will rely heavily on the programs we have out of Vermont and Pennsylvania.

RADISHES: Supplies are impacted by weather out west as rains and the growing transition has affected the tops. We have moved to using product out of Florida to remain in good shape as the quality is far superior.

YELLOW SQUASH & ZUCCHINI: Like cucumbers, temps have really affected supply in the Nogales growing region. We will see very limited supply on organic yellow squash.

Western Vegetables

ARTICHOKEs: We are seeing good supplies out of our Castroville and Salinas farms. Quality has been nice with a majority of production trending to medium sizes.

AVOCADOS: Great supplies; promotable opportunities.

BROCCOLI: Production is below budget and demand is off as well. Due to multiple growing regions, we are expecting light numbers for the next couple week. Quality has been fantastic.

CAULIFLOWER: Same as broccoli, production forecast is at budget and with different growing regions fighting for business. Quality remains to hold steady.

CELERY: Oxnard is done and Salinas's numbers are good. We have seen a dip in harvest numbers, but expecting this to be a quick turnaround.

ICEBERG LETTUCE: Supplies have remained steady with strong demand. Weights are averaging 42-44lbs (little heavy) but overall quality has been nice. Production will remain steady for the next several weeks while others seem to be light for the next couple weeks.

ROMAINE/ROMAINE HEARTS/MIXED LEAF: Plenty of Romaine and hearts out there. Quality has been very nice and demand is finally coming back around after the scare. Promotable volumes available. Green and butter leaf are steady. Volumes have increased on both with plenty to sell. Red leaf numbers are still light but getting better.

Value-Added

Improving weather in the California growing areas have helped raw product supply going to the processors. However, there are some problems with supply on Romaine, butter lettuce, Mache and various other leafy items used as ingredients in different salad blends.

Local Vegetables

We are beginning a great time of the year as local and regional produce is finally coming into season. On the conventional vegetable items, we deal with 4 terrific family farms.

MICHAELS FARMS located in Urbana Ohio is the premier grower in the Midwest of sweet corn, beans and cabbage.

CABBAGE: Started cutting this week and we are loading on Friday.

GREEN BEANS: Also harvesting; beginning this week and we are also loading on Friday.

SWEET CORN: Harvest will begin July 11-13.

HOLTHOUSE - WALCHER FARMS located in Willard, Ohio; 3rd generation family farm specializing in leafy veggies, peppers, cucumbers and fall squash and ornamentals.

CUCUMBERS: Scheduled to begin picking this weekend.

GREEN PEPPERS: Expected harvest around July 25.

RADHISHES: Have been loading Ohio radishes this week.

YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH: Harvesting has begun and we have been loading this week.

RUHLIG FARMS located in Carlton, Michigan; second generation family farm. Growing row crops on 1200 acres of fertile soil as well as melons.

CABBAGE: First order will be in Thursday.

CUCUMBERS: Harvest will begin this weekend.

MICHIGAN BROCCOLI: Will begin loading next week.

MICHIGAN CAULIFLOWER: We can load cello wrap and well as bin jacket next week.

MUSTARD, COLLARD, TOPS & KALE: Have already started loading.

SWEET CORN: Approximate start date July 20.

YELLOW & ZUCCHINI SQUASH: Also loading this week.

LEITZ FARMS - family farm growing 1000 acres of romas, grape tomatoes, rounds, cucumbers, squash and melons - packed under the NONE BETTER LABEL. Leitz is the best tomato grower in the Midwest.

CUCUMBERS & SQUASH: Will begin shipping this weekend.

TOMATOES: Not available until end of July.

Asparagus

Domestic grown asparagus is quickly wrapping up as Washington has finished and Indiana and Michigan will fall in the next week. As these regions finish, new Central Mexican asparagus is picking volume, coupled with good solid production out of Peru will keep stable pricing for good promotions through June and into July. Pack will switch back into 11# cartons from 28# crates. Organic asparagus continues to be steady but market is inching upward.

Fruits

APPLES & PEARS: Supplies and quality of apples coming from Washington remain good and should continue for the foreseeable future. Organic apples and pears are going strong on the East Coast. Imported organic Jazz apples have arrived and look fantastic. We also have Lemonade apples in stock and they are very promotable. Supplies and quality remain strong on all varietal apples including Koru, Pazaaz and Smitten.

BLACKBERRIES: Blackberries continue to be very tight as Mexico closes out their season; coupled with weather issues impacting the southern U.S. blackberry crop, major shortages have continued and costs have climbed steeply. California offering some relief but not enough to offset short fall. Organic blackberries in same situation with virtually no product available to load.

BLUEBERRIES: Good production has returned to blueberries and major pushes happening to promote. With New Jersey harvest entering the picture along with North Carolina and resurgent of Georgia, blues have great volume going into market place; large packs are being pushed for value. Organic blueberries mirroring the conventional blues.

CANTALOUPE & HONEYDEW: Cantaloupes fully shifted out of western U.S. peaking on large sizes; quality is outstanding. Honeydews have also totally shifted to western product, but dewes remain snug on supply. Full selection of specialty melons have been added over last weeks with Kiss melons and Gold honeydews part of the offerings. Organic production just starting and large sizes (9ct) is bulk of production.

CHERRIES: Washington cherries moving quickly in high volume; markets adjusting downward quickly to reflect the surge of cherries coming available. Large sizes peaking toward 9.5 to 10.5, with outstanding quality. Sweet Rainier cherries have come onto the scene for the limited window they have. Organic production picking up and market will fall quickly like conventional.

CLEMENTINES: New crop South American clementines finally in regular arrivals at the ports out of Uruguay and Chile. Pricing remains strong; 3# bag popular for reasonable retail price point.

GRAPES: Mexican and Southern California Coachella grapes remain tight keeping market costs high compared to last year at same time. Red seedless quality and sizing has improved and fruit tastes outstanding but overall is still below normal standards. Green seedless varieties are struggling to reach necessary brix levels for shipping and issue is keeping supply low and markets strong. Organics improving but still suffering some limitations. Central California districts look to start about 2 week of July, little later than previous years.

PINEAPPLES: Steady supplies.

RASPBERRIES: Supply has hit a small Gap and will be very limited over the next week to two weeks. Both Conventional and Organic product will be affected by this limited inbound supply.

STRAWBERRIES: The Strawberry market has rebounded nicely and we are seeing much better quality and pricing that is allowing for promotional activity.

WATERMELONS: Supplies remain tight. Florida is all but finished and George is just starting in a small way.

California Stone Fruit

Stone fruit season finally getting rolling out of California; peaches, nectarines, along with white flesh varieties in house. First Pluot arrived (black) with some other colors (Dapple-Dandy and red) loading this week for mid-week arrival. Apricots steady with good size and color. Organics still limited, but new crop peaches, along with nectarines are here. Organic donut peaches, black plums and white peaches will arrived in middle part of next week. Look for continue increased variety in coming weeks.

Tropical Fruit

BABY FRENCH BEANS: Good volume; market is down.

KIWI: New crop from New Zealand is underway. Gold kiwi is not available.

LIMES: Prices has firmed up and increased on some sizes, with better demand this week. Size 200 and large remained limited. Overall quality is very nice.

MANGOES: Steady supplies.

MARIDOL PAPAYAS/ GOLD PAPAYAS: Supplies have become very limited as strike in Brazil has effected volume.

SUGAR SNAP PEAS/SNO PEAS: Better availability; pricing moving downward.

Merchandising Tips

Now's the time to really gear up for summer melon sales. The weather is warming, the variety is available and most importantly, your customers are hungry for them. Carry plenty of variety and highlight them with up front displays. Honeydews, western and Athena cantaloupes, watermelon and mini watermelon, should all be part of your mix. Don't forget Honey Kiss melons for a nice change that your customers will enjoy. Have cuts, slices and chunks of melon available, and watch you're sales and profits grow. Inform your customers on how to pick and ripen their melons, and sample, sample, sample. Nothing says summer like melons, and nothing can help drive sales like your melon category. Be ready.

CROSSET NEW ITEM & DELETION SHEET

W/B: 6/28/18

ITEM #	NEW ITEMS	SIZE
2112	Watermelon Sugar Baby OG	65#
2115	Watermelon Seedless OG 5/6CT	65#
2102	Watermelon Seedless OG 700#	45ct
78035	Stem Strawberries Driscoll	4/16oz
78045	Strawberry	4/2#
18790	Enjoya Pepper	11#
500126	Melissa Ruby Gold Potato	12/24oz
500335	Purple Potato	10#
500133	Asaki Melon	11/12ct
500144	Korean Melon	10/14ct
500642	Jack Fruit	2/3ct
6020	Corn OG	45ct
96710	Gold Kiwi	8/1#
26240	Brussel Sprout Cup	9/12oz
40020	Navel Orange Imported 33#	40ct
39555	Navel Orange Imported 33#	64ct
68110	Rainier Cherries Wash OG	15#
1555	Santa Claus Melon	25#
16540	Asparagus	11#
231	Cantaloupe OG	9ct
68082	Cherry Wash 10r/lg	18#
DELETIONS		
770124	EBF Bright Herb Salad OG	8/5oz
31060	Ruby Frost Apple	27#
774002	Taylor Farms Caesar Salad Bowl	6/6.25oz
774003	Taylor Farms Cobb Salad Bowl	6/7.25oz
87008	Biggin Russet	6/8#
87010	Russet Potato	5/10#

87055	Russet Potato	10/5#
39075	Navel Orange	72ct
39055	Navel Orange	7/6#
41425	Navel Orange	10/4#
41410	Navel Orange	14/3#
89411	Ruby Sensation Potato	20/5oz
89412	Honeygold Stem Potato	20/5oz
101010	Blood Orange	18#
230	Cantaloupe OG	12ct
16533	Asparagus	28#
68010	Cherry Wash	18#
60205	Ugli Fruit	14ct