

Fruit Facts

Fruit is a necessary part of any nutritious diet. Fruits are an excellent source of vitamin C and fiber, they contain no cholesterol, and they are low in fat.

Nutritional Value

The best sources of vitamin C are citrus fruits (oranges, lemons, grapefruit, tangerines), melons, and berries. A little more than ½ cup of orange juice and about ¾ cup of fresh strawberries will supply all of the vitamin C most adults need in one day. Ten apples or 7½ bananas would be needed to supply the recommended daily allowance of vitamin C. By eating fruits rich in vitamin C, you are also helping your body absorb iron—a common deficiency in most American diets.

You can reduce the amount of sugar you eat by substituting fruit or fruit juice for cakes, cookies, candy, and soft drinks. Dried fruits offer a nutritious alternative to candy. They are high in sugar, but they also boost the iron in your diet. For example, ¼ cup of raisins, five or six prunes, three figs, or six dates contain as much iron as one egg or two slices of bread.

Table 1. Fruit Harvest Times in Alabama

Fruit	Growers Marketing Season												
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
Strawberries				■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
Peaches					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Nectarines					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Plums, green					■	■	■	■	■	■			
Blackberries						■	■	■	■	■	■		
Plums						■	■	■	■	■	■		
Blueberries, highbush						■	■	■	■				
Blueberries, rabbiteye							■	■	■	■	■		
Apples, green							■	■	■				
Grapes, bunch							■	■	■	■	■		
Apples, summer								■	■	■	■		
Pears, hard type									■	■	■	■	
Apples, fall									■	■	■	■	■
Grapes, muscadine									■	■	■		

Fruit Harvest in Alabama

Table 1 shows when harvest begins in the southern areas of production and when it ends in the northern sections of the state. Thus, a fruit may be available in the state for two to four months, but in a given area it may be available for only three to six weeks.

The solid line in Table 1 shows the harvest period for each crop. The dotted line shows when stored fresh fruit (refrigerated) continues to be available beyond the harvest period.

Buying Fresh Fruit

The best time to buy fresh fruit is when it is in season. Seasonal fruits offer a wider selection, are priced lower, and are more plentiful than out-of-season fruits. The following list of fruits gives the times when they are most plentiful:

- Apples—August through May
- Avocados—Year-round
- Bananas—Year-round
- Blackberries—May through July
- Blueberries—June through August (especially June and July)
- Cranberries—October through December (especially November)
- Grapefruit—November through May
- Bunch Grapes—July through November (especially August through October)

- Muscadine Grapes—August through October
- Honeydew—May through November (especially August and September)
- Lemons—Year-round
- Limes—June through August
- Oranges—October through June
- Peaches—June through September (especially July and August)
- Pears—August through November
- Pineapples—March through June
- Plums-Prunes—June through September (especially August and September)
- Rhubarb—May
- Strawberries—March through July (especially April through June)
- Tangerines—November through January
- Watermelons—May through August (especially June and July)

Ripening Fruits

Some tree fruits (apples and pears) are picked before they ripen on the tree. This permits the storage and transportation of higher quality fruit that will complete ripening by the time of purchase or slightly thereafter. Peaches and nectarines to be shipped are picked firm, shortly after they begin ripening on the tree but before ripening is completed. They develop maximum flavor when they are allowed

to ripen on the tree. Alabama producers usually harvest peaches at a riper stage than do growers who ship long distances. Small fruits such as strawberries, blueberries, and blackberries must be picked after they have ripened on the plant. Otherwise, flavor will be greatly reduced.

Ethylene gas is produced by ripening fruit. This natural growth regulator helps to complete ripening. When you want to speed up the ripening process of tree fruits such as apples, pears, peaches, plums, or nectarines, place the fruits in *ripening bowls* or inside a paper or plastic bag with holes punched in it and maintained at room temperature. This procedure traps ethylene gas and maintains an ideal temperature, thereby promoting rapid ripening. Fruits are usually ready to eat in one or two days.

Canned Fruits

Improved processing methods have reduced the amounts of nutrients lost in canned fruits. Vitamin C is usually lost in the greatest amounts; however, vitamin C is sometimes added to canned juices to restore or enrich the product.

Name brand canned fruits usually cost more than store brands, generic, or plain label products. Non-brand name canned fruits may be less uniform than the more popular brands, but the product is still safe and wholesome. The amount and type of sugar used in non-brand name

canned fruits may also be different from the more expensive brands.

Fruit canned in heavy syrup is higher in calories than fruit canned in light juice, water, or in its own juice.

Fruit and Juice Can Sizes

Table 2 can help save you time and money. It shows how many cups and how many 1/2-cup servings can be found in the different sizes of canned fruits and juices. Use it to compare products and to find the best buy.

Table 2. Fruit and Juice Can Size Comparisons

Ounces	Cups	1/2-Cup Servings
5	5/8	1
6	2/3	1
8	1	2
10 1/2 to 12	1 1/4	2 1/2
12	1 1/2	3
14 to 15	1 3/4	3 1/2
16 to 17	2	4
20 (1 pound 4 ounces)	2 1/2	5
29 (1 pound 13 ounces)	3 1/2	7
46	5 3/4	11 1/2

Choosing the Best Buy

Frozen and canned fruits are good buys when they can be found on sale. When fresh fruits are not in season, their frozen and canned counterparts are usually less expensive.

Frozen orange juice concentrate is the best buy when compared with fresh orange juice, unless you squeeze your own juice from very inexpensive oranges.

You may want to buy fresh fruit when it is in season and reasonably priced. You can freeze or can it for later use.

Cooking with Fresh Fruit

When cooking with fresh fruit, you can avoid buying too much or not enough by knowing how much fruit will supply the cup, tablespoon, and teaspoon measurements needed for a recipe. Use Table 3 as a guide.

Table 3. Fresh Fruit Equivalents

Fruit	Measured Amounts
Apples	1 pound (3 medium) = 3 cups
Bananas	1 pound (3 or 4 medium) = 1 3/4 cups mashed
Blackberries	1 quart = 1 1/4 pounds = 3 to 4 cups
Blueberries	1 pound = 2 cups
Cherries	1 pound = 2 1/3 cups
Cranberries	1 pound = 4 cups
Dates	1 pound = 2 1/2 cups pitted
Grapes	1 pound seeded = 2 cups; seedless = 2 1/2 cups
Lemons	1 medium = 1 to 3 tablespoons juice and 1 to 1 1/2 teaspoons grated peel
Limes	1 medium = 1 1/2 to 2 tablespoons juice
Oranges	1 medium = 6 to 8 tablespoons juice and 2 to 3 tablespoons grated peel
Peaches and Pears	1 pound (4 medium) = 2 cups sliced
Pears	1 pound (4 medium) = 2 1/3 cups halves
Plums	1 pound (8 to 20 plums) = 2 cups halves
Prunes	1 pound = 2 1/4 cups pitted
Raisins	1 pound = 3 cups
Rhubarbs	1 pound fresh = 2 cups cooked
Strawberries	1 quart = 4 cups sliced



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