



# PEACHES

## Varieties

Peaches are generally classified into one of two categories: “freestone” or “clingstone,” although some are also considered “semi-freestone”. Freestone peaches, the ones more commonly available, are those whose pits are easily removed, whereas the pit of clingstones is enmeshed within the flesh. Both freestone and clingstone peaches have numerous varieties that differ in skin color, flesh color, firmness, and juiciness. Two of the most popular varieties of yellow-fleshed freestone peaches are Elegant Lady and O-Henry. Other varieties include the Hale, RioOso Gem and Elberta.

## Nutrient Content

Peaches are a tasty treat with modest calories, a good source of potassium, vitamins A & C, low sodium, and no saturated fat. Peaches are a healthful snack and a smart, low calorie way to end a meal.

## Uses

Peaches that are slightly soft to firm when pressed and are free of blemishes or spots should be chosen. To hasten the ripening process, under-ripe peaches can be left in a loosely close paper bag at room temperature for 2 to 3 days. Once ripe, they can be kept at room temperature for about 3 to 4 days or slightly longer in the refrigerator.

## Description

Peaches are round to oblong with a slight tip. Because of the hard seed, or “stone” at their core, they are known as a “stone fruit” or drupe. The fuzzy skin of peaches is the only characteristic that distinguishes them in appearance from the smooth-skinned nectarine. Ripe peaches can assume a range of colors from creamy-white to light pink, yellow, orange, and red. The flesh also can range from a pinkish white to an intense yellow-gold. The firmness and juiciness of a peach depends largely on the variety and on the degree of ripeness.

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## Availability

Peaches are considered an early summer fruit with some varieties available in June. These varieties are generally of the cling varieties. July brings the most flavorful peaches such as Sunhighs, Red Havens and Georgia Belles. In August we find the Blakes, Monroes and Elbertas ready for picking.

## Origin

Peaches are native of China, where they have grown for more than 2,500 years. Peaches were once revered as a symbol of longevity and immortality. The plant was brought to the new world, by Spanish missionaries who planted the trees in California. Since the early 1800’s peaches have been grown commercially in the United States, which now produces one-fourth of the world’s market-crop. Georgia was one the largest producer of peaches in the United States, earning it the nickname “Peach State;” Today, the fruit is grown in more than 30 states and California is the largest producer

Peaches are related to other deciduous flowering fruit trees, including plum, cherry, apricot and almond. Although originally grown only in moderate climates, the many new varieties make it possible for peaches to be grown throughout much of the United States. An 8 to 10 year old tree can produce up to 6 bushels of fruit annually.

## Recipe

**Fresh Peach Shortcake**  
 4 cups all-purpose flour  
 8 teaspoons baking powder  
 1/2 teaspoon salt  
 2/3 cup solid vegetable shortening  
 2 eggs  
 about 1 1/4 cups milk  
 softened butter  
 4 to 6 cups peeled and sliced fresh peaches, sweetened to taste.  
 Cream  
 In a large bowl combine flour, baking powder and salt. Cut in shortening to form coarse crumbs. Beat eggs and transfer to glass measuring cup. Add enough milk to measure 1 1/2 cups. Blend into flour mixture. Press half of dough onto bottom of 13 x 9 inc pan. Lightly spread with softened butter. Top with other half of dough, pressing into pan or first rolling out onto well flowered surface. Bake at 375 degrees for 20 minutes. While warm, cut into squares, top with sliced sweetened peaches and cream. Serve immediately. Serves 8.