

Fruit of the Month

Plums



There are more than 140 varieties of plum sold in the United States. The plum is a drupe—a pitted fruit—related to the nectarine, peach, and apricot, but it is far more diverse than its relatives, coming in a wider range of shapes, sizes and especially skin colors. Its flavors also vary from extremely sweet to quite tart. Some plum varieties are specifically bred so that they can be dried and still retain their sweetness, and these are used for prunes. (The Wellness Encyclopedia of Food and Nutrition)

Plums are high in carbohydrates, low in fat and low in calories. Plums are free of sodium and cholesterol. Plums are a good source of vitamin C.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size (66g)
Servings Per Container

Amount Per Serving

Calories 35 **Calories from Fat 5**
% Daily Value*

Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 0mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 9g	3%
Dietary Fiber 1g	4%
Sugars 7g	

Protein 1g

Vitamin A 4% • Vitamin C 10%

Calcium 0% • Iron 0%

*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

About twenty varieties dominate the commercial supply of plums and most are either Japanese or European varieties. Japanese are the nonprune plums or salicina plums. Originally from China, these plums were introduced into Japan more than 300 years ago. Most varieties have yellow or reddish flesh that is quite juicy and skin colors that range from crimson to black-red. They are also clingstone fruits—that is, their flesh clings to the pit. Santa Rosa and Red Beaut are two of the more popular varieties. Elephant heart is a large red-fleshed variety that is good for cooking. Plums are also used for their juice and often jam or a thick syrup is made out of it.

European-type plums are smaller, denser and less juicy than Japanese varieties; their skin color is always blue or purple and their pits are usually freestone, meaning they separate easily from the flesh. The flesh is a golden yellow color. These are the plums made into prunes; a few varieties are sold fresh and called fresh prunes or purple plums. Among the better known varieties are Italian, President, Empress, Stanley, and Tragedy. Damson plums are a small-tart European-type variety used mainly for preserves.

Availability

The domestic plum season extends from May through October, with Japanese types coming on the market first and peaking in August, followed by European varieties in the fall.

Good to know: Plums stimulate the bowel movement. Its skin contains a substance that is responsible for that effect so if you peel the fruit you won't be bothered with the well-known side effects of this lovely fruit.

Selection

Plums should be plump and well colored for their variety. Plums are usually about 3-6 cm in size. If a fruit yields to gentle pressure, it is ready to eat, however, you can buy plums that are fairly firm, but not rock hard and let them soften at home. They will not increase in sweetness. Ripe plums will be slightly soft at the stem and tip, but watch out for shriveled skin, mushy spots, or breaks in the skin.

Storage

To soften hard plums, place several in a loosely closed paper bag and leave them at room temperature for a day or two; when softened, transfer them to the refrigerator. Ripe plums can be refrigerated for up to three days.

Preparation

Plums are juiciest at room temperature, but always wash them before eating or cooking. To pit freestone types, cut the fruit in half, twist the halves apart, and lift out the pit. To slice or quarter clingstone plums, use a sharp paring knife and cut through the flesh towards the pit.

European plums are better than Japanese varieties for cooking. Cooked plums are usually eaten with the skins on, but if you need to peel them, first blanch them in boiling water for about 30 seconds.

Baking: Place halved, pitted plums in a baking dish and sprinkle with sugar and spices to taste. Try adding a few spoonfuls of fruit juice, instead of water, and cover. Cook until tender, check during baking and add more liquid, if necessary. Cooking time: about 20 minutes in a 400 degree oven.

Poaching: Plums can be cooked whole (prick them with a fork first), halved, or sliced. For serving whole, cook the fruit unpeeled to retain the shape. Place the fruit in simmering juice, wine, or a mixture of water and sugar and cook until tender. Cooking time: 3 to 8 minutes (European plums cook much faster than Japanese plums).

Make Plums Part of Your 5 A Day Plan



- Chop plums into your next fruit salad to add a hint of purple.
- Sliced plums add a unique flavor when added to grilled or broiled fish.
- Add plums, along with your favorite fruits, as a topping for frozen yogurt.
- Use baby food jars of prunes, or prune puree, as a fat substitute in baking (see blueberry-raspberry loaves recipe.)
- Mix together chopped plums, blueberries, nectarines, and strawberries to spoon over waffles and pancakes for a colorful and nutritious addition to breakfast.

Recipes

Fresh Fruit Kebobs

Makes 12 kebobs

Each serving equals two 5 A Day servings

Source: Produce for Better Health

- 4 Plums (fresh, ripe) halved and pitted
- 4 Peaches (fresh, ripe) halved and pitted
- 4 Nectarines (fresh, ripe) halved and pitted
- 2 Lemons, juiced
- 1 tsp Cayenne pepper
- Mint sprigs (optional)



Cut each fruit into thirds. Place fruit in a medium bowl, add lemon juice and cayenne pepper; mix well. Marinate fruit for 1 hour. On a skewer, alternate fruit wedges; chill. Garnish with mint sprig, if desired.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 51, protein 1g, fat 0g, percent calories from fat 6%, cholesterol 0mg, carbohydrates 13g, fiber 2g, sodium 0mg

Bruschetta with Plums and Fresh Basil

Makes 12 bruschettas, serving size equals 2 bruschettas

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

Source: California Tree Fruit Agreement/Produce for Better Health

1 sourdough baguette (24 inch)

4 oz fat-free cream cheese, whipped

6 cups fresh California plums, sliced

1 cup fresh basil

Slice baguette into 24 inch-thick pieces. Toast in a 350-degree F oven until golden brown. Spread each slice of bread with reduced fat cream cheese. Slice plums into thin slices. Place several slices of plum on each piece of bruschetta. Garnish with fresh basil leaf.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 77, protein 3g, fat 1g, percent calories from fat 10%, cholesterol 1mg, carbohydrates 16g, fiber 2g, sodium 100mg

Plum-Raspberry Dessert Soup

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals two 5 A Day servings

Source: Northwest Cherry Growers

1½ lbs (8 medium) fresh California plums

1 cup fresh or frozen raspberries

3 (3-inch) cinnamon sticks

1½ cup red dinner wine

1 Tbsp corn starch

2 Tbsp sugar

Combine plums, berries, cinnamon and red wine in saucepan. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Whisk cornstarch with 1/2 cup water. Add to soup and cook, stirring until thickened. Add sugar to taste. Cool. Discard cinnamon then puree in electric blender. Chill until ready to serve.

To serve, portion soup into shallow bowls. Add small scoop of low-fat frozen yogurt to the center of each bowl and garnish with mint, if desired. (frozen yogurt is not included in the Nutritional analysis per serving).

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 183, protein 2g, fat 1g, percent calories from fat 5%, cholesterol 0mg, carbohydrates 30g, fiber 4g, sodium 5mg

Plum Ginger Chicken Salad

Makes 4 servings, each serving equals three 5 A Day servings

Source: Northwest Cherry Growers



- 1 (6-ounce) package long grain and wild rice mix
- 2 cups cooked boneless chicken breast cubes
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sliced green onions
- 4 plums, sliced
- 2 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp soy sauce
- $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp ground ginger

Prepare rice mix as directed; cool to room temperature. Combine rice, chicken, green onions and sliced plums in large mixing bowl. To prepare dressing, combine oil, lemon juice, soy sauce and ginger; pour over rice mixture and toss lightly. Chill until served.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 347, protein 24g, fat 10g, percent calories from fat 24%, cholesterol 49mg, carbohydrates 43g, fiber 3g, sodium 156mg

Blueberry-Raspberry Mini Loaves (using prunes)

Makes 6 servings

Each serving equals four 5 A Day servings

Source: Northwest Cherry Growers

1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup unbleached flour

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup prune puree

2 cups blueberries

1 whole eggs

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup granulated sugar

2 cups raspberries

3 tsp baking powder, low sodium

2 Tbsp canola oil

1 Tbsp lemon peel, grated

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup fat-free milk

$\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt

Preheat oven to 375. Prepare 16 mini loaf pans with cooking spray and flour; set aside. In a mixing bowl, combine flour, blueberries, raspberries, sugar, baking powder, lemon peel, and salt; set aside. In another mixing bowl, combine prune puree, eggs, oil, and milk. Fold into flour mixture, stirring until moistened. Spoon each loaf pan with three ounces batter or about half cup of batter. Bake for 20 minutes, or until tops are browned.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 339, protein 6g, fat 6g, percent calories from fat 16%, cholesterol 41mg, carbohydrates 67g, fiber 6g, sodium 185mg