



COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

MELONS



Melons grow on large sprawling vines with blooming flowers that can develop into fruit. They are divided into two categories - melons and watermelons - and are part of the Cucurbitaceae family. Melons include muskmelons like Honeydew, Casaba, Crenshaw, and hybrids like the Howell melon. Watermelons are one of the largest edible fruits grown and come in a variety of shapes, sizes, textures, and colors. Melons likely originated in North Africa and Southwest Asia about 5,000 years ago, then migrated across merchant trade routes to Asia and the Mediterranean region of Europe. They were first documented in Massachusetts in the early 1600s. The sweet, juicy flesh of the melon is commonly consumed fresh and used in juices, salads, salsas, smoothies, sorbets, soups, and syrups. Melons can also be boiled, baked, and grilled and added to casseroles, pizza, stews, and stir-fries. Melons can be made into preserves like jams and jellies, and the rinds can be candied and pickled. In Michigan, most melons are hand harvested from August through September.



MELONS ARE

Depending on the type, melons are:

- An excellent source of vitamin C*. Vitamin C is important to the body's tissues and supports a healthy immune system.
- A source of potassium. Potassium helps maintain healthy blood pressure.
- A source of vitamin A. Vitamin A plays an important role in the healing process and eye health.

**Foods that are high in vitamin C, calcium, and/or iron can help protect you from lead absorption.*

MICHIGAN MADE

Michigan farmers grow watermelon, cantaloupe, and honeydew melons statewide. Muskmelon varieties include the Honey Rock cantaloupe, Honeydew (green flesh), and the Crenshaw (orange flesh). Popular watermelon varieties include Sugar Baby, Crimson Sweet, Black Diamond, and Jubilee. Melon production is high in the lower half of the Lower Peninsula and along the Lake Michigan and Lake Huron shorelines due to the longer growing season and sandy soil.



FUN FACTS

- Melons need sun, well-drained sandy soil, bees, and water to grow.
- The color of the flesh inside melons can be shades of red, pink, orange, yellow, green, or white.
- Watermelon is used as a fruit and a vegetable in cuisines around the world.
- Americans eat more watermelon than any other type of melon.
- Cantaloupes do not ripen after they are picked.
- Honeydew is the sweetest tasting muskmelon.
- Seedless watermelons were invented over 50 years ago.
- Melons are over 90% water. In addition to drinking water, eating melon can help us stay hydrated.
- Michigan's Howell Melon Festival began in 1961 and celebrates a locally grown cantaloupe hybrid every August.
- Many Michigan growers offer Pick-Your-Own or U-Pick opportunities where people can pick their own melons in select areas of their fruit farms and orchards.

BUYING AND STORING

- Select melons that smell fresh, feel heavy, sound hollow when tapped, and have dull skin with no bruising, soft spots, or cracks.
- Store whole melons at room temperature until ripe. Store ripe melons in refrigerator up to 14 days.
- Store cut melon in refrigerator covered with plastic wrap or in an airtight container up three days or freeze (remove seeds and rinds) in an airtight container or freezer bag up six months.
- Wash the outside of melons under cool running water and scrub with a produce brush before cutting.





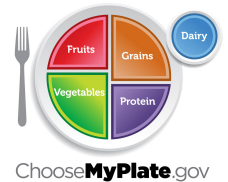
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MORE THAN FRESH

In addition to fresh, melons are available canned, frozen, and juiced. When buying packaged melons, be sure to read labels and choose items that are reduced or low-sodium (salt), or no salt added, low in saturated fat, with no added sugar, and juices that are pasteurized, unsweetened, and 100% juice. Unpasteurized juices may contain harmful bacteria that can make you sick.

EAT WITH MYPLATE

MyPlate focuses on whole grains, lean protein, low-fat dairy, and half the plate being fruits and vegetables. Melons are part of the Fruit Group. Most people need 1–2 cups of fruit per day. For more information visit: myplate.gov.



IT ALL COUNTS

Fresh, frozen, canned, dried, and 100% vegetable and fruit juices count toward your daily MyPlate goals.

WATERMELON SALAD

Time: 15 minutes | Makes: 8 servings | Serving Size: About 1 cup

Nutrition Information Per Serving: Calories 73, Carbohydrate 13g, Dietary Fiber 1g, Protein 2g, Total Fat 2g, Saturated Fat 1g, Cholesterol 8mg, Sodium 146mg

Always wash hands before preparing food. Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables before using.



INGREDIENTS

- 8 cups watermelon, cubed
- 4 basil leaves, thinly chopped
- ½ cucumber, sliced
- ½ cup feta cheese, crumbled
- ⅛ teaspoon kosher salt
- Zest of ½ lemon (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Place watermelon, cucumbers, salt, and basil in a large bowl. Mix gently.
- Top with crumbled feta and lemon zest (optional).
- Serve cold.

CHANGE IT UP

- Add ½ jalapeño pepper, seeded and finely diced.
- Add fresh mint and thyme.
- Add cubed cantaloupe and sliced peaches.

TRY THIS

- Add melons to salsas or cold soups like gazpacho.
- Top sliced melons with a little hard or dry crumbly cheese (Cotija, feta, bleu, Gouda, Parmesan, Irish cheddar, etc.), chopped nuts, and a drizzle of citrus juice or vinaigrette.
- Make a slush with melons, ice cubes, and a little honey.*

**Avoid giving honey to infants under 1 year of age.*

