



By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

There's no better way to end a satisfying meal than with a perfect piece of fruit. Perhaps the most perfect fruit is a perfectly ripe peach. That's a lot of perfection but we are, after all, speaking of peaches with their smooth almost creamy texture, their heady aroma, and their sweet juices dripping with flavor.

The window of opportunity for this perfect scenario is near. Fresh Michigan peaches begin their season in early July, hit their stride in August, and finish up in mid-September.

The price you pay for perfection is not money per se. Rather it's about paying attention to details. Here are a few things to know in pursuit of the perfect peach:

- Peaches are delicate and do not ship well. The trip from the orchard to the consumer has many potential pitfalls. The most common problem is storing at the wrong temperature. Once chilled, peaches will not ripen and the texture will remain mealy. Buying close to the grower makes a big difference in getting quality peaches. [Michigan peach orchards](#) are most abundant in west central and southwest Michigan. If you can, it's worth the drive. Otherwise, watch for peaches at your local farmers' market.

- You'll know a ripe peach by its aroma! Also, look at the peach's color. While red patches make the peach look ripe, the true ripeness coloration is in the background—look for yellow, not green. Peaches get round (less prominent suture line) as they ripen and give slightly to a gentle squeeze.

- Keep peaches at room temperature until they soften along the suture line that runs from stem end to blossom end. If you're enjoying a perfectly ripe peach, move the rest of them to the refrigerator where they will keep well for a few days. They'll keep a little longer in a container covered loosely with plastic wrap.

Extend their refrigerator shelf life even further by pickling a batch or two following Chef Kurt's recipe.

RECIPE for health

JULY 2017

featured food:
PEACHES

Pickled Peaches

By Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski, Residential Dining Services

Makes 1 1/2 to 2 quarts

Pickling is a technique used to preserve all kinds of foods. This refrigerator pickled peach is heated, but not cooked, when the hot liquid is added. The acid from the vinegar allows the peaches to keep for an extended time in the fridge while the texture of the fruit remains fresh.

- 3 1/2 to 4 pounds ripe fresh peaches
- 1 1/2 T. whole cloves
- 1 1/2 t. allspice
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 2 t. kosher salt
- 1/2 c. white vinegar
- 1/2 c. apple cider vinegar
- 1/2 c. brown sugar
- 1 1/2 c. water
- 1 t. vanilla extract

Blanching peaches loosens their skin making them easy to peel. Bring a stockpot of water to a boil. While the water is coming to a boil, use a paring knife to score the bottom of each peach with an X. Next, prepare a large bowl with ice water. Carefully place the peaches in the boiling water for about a minute. Move the peaches to the ice bath; shocking them in ice water stops the cooking. Slip off the loosened peach skins. Cut in half and remove the pit. Slice into 3/4" wedges. Place peach slices in quart canning jars or other tall slender container with tight fitting lid.

Stir water, vinegars, and brown sugar together in a heavy-bottomed saucepan over low heat. Add the cloves, allspice, cinnamon sticks, and vanilla. Bring just barely to a simmer to dissolve the sugar then remove from the heat.

Pour liquid over the peaches and let sit at room temperature for 20 minutes. Refrigerate for 24 to 48 hours before using. Keeps refrigerated for 4 to 6 weeks.

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