

RECIPE for health

AUGUST 2010 In partnership with Health4U and Culinary Services

Featured Food:

WATERMELON



By Peggy Crum, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

If buying a watermelon was like buying a car, you'd check under the hood. Since no produce monger is likely to let that happen, shoppers have resorted to a thumping ritual. It turns out that thumping a watermelon is about as helpful as kicking a tire! No amount of thumping, tapping, sniffing or shaking will give you a clue as to a watermelon's ripeness. So how do you pick out a tasty one?

Begin by choosing a watermelon with a firm green rind that has yellow undertones and is free of bruises and soft spots. Next, pick it up. A watermelon should be unexpectedly heavy for its size. If it meets these criteria, turn it over. Since watermelons stop ripening as soon as they're plucked from the vine, you want yours to have a creamy yellow spot where it sat on the ground while it ripened in the sun.

The number one selling watermelon in the United States is the seedless. Growers claim the seedless is all "heart" with sweet, crunchy, tender fruit from rind to rind. Seeded watermelons are definitely larger, weighing 15 to 45 pounds with seedless coming in at 10 to 20 pounds. Taste comparisons have them in a dead heat.

Whether you choose one with seeds or without, take your ripe melon home and place it on the countertop. Watermelon not only stores well for a few days at room temperature, but its lycopene and beta-carotene (antioxidants) increase significantly, right up until the time it spoils.

Once you cut the melon, it needs to be refrigerated. Leave it in its rind and cover it with plastic wrap, or cut it up and store it in a covered bowl. To avoid water-logged fruit, set a colander inside the bowl, or use your salad spinner as the storage container.

Chunks of watermelon work well in a mixed fruit salad, or serve slices sprinkled with lemon or lime. But eating it with the juice running down your arm is truly a joy of summer!

Watermelon Salad with Mint-lime Dressing

Recipe developed by Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski and featured in Residential Dining Services. Serves 4 – 6

- 1 ½ Tablespoons Rough-chopped Fresh Mint Stems
- 2 cups Water
- ½ cup Sugar
- ¾ cup Fresh Lime Juice, divided
- 2 Cloves Garlic, minced
- 4 ounces Salad Oil
- Salt and Pepper to taste
- 5 ounces of Baby Spinach
- 4 cups ¾-inch Dice Watermelon
- ½ cup Fine Diced Red Onion
- 4 ounces Feta Cheese, crumbled
- 6 Tablespoons Chiffonade (French for ribbons) Fresh Mint
- Pinch of Kosher Salt

In a sauce pan, mix mint stems, water and sugar; heat until sugar dissolves. Set aside and allow mint syrup to cool. Reserve four ounces for dressing. Remaining mint syrup may be used to sweeten ice tea or fruit salads.

Mix reserved mint syrup with ½ cup lime juice and garlic. Whisk in salad oil. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Place spinach in a bowl; toss with mint-lime dressing. Divide dressed spinach onto four to six plates.

In a separate bowl, combine watermelon, red onion, feta cheese and mint. Toss together with ¼ cup lime juice, sprinkle with kosher salt and arrange on top of plated spinach.

Watermelon Salad with Mint-lime Dressing will be served at the Gallery at Snyder/Phillips on Thursday, August 19 for lunch. Visit www.eatatstate.com for dining hall hours and menus.