



By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

Pineapples, native to Brazil and Paraguay, with their pinecone shape and leafy green tops have long been displayed as signs of friendship and hospitality. Their botanical name, Ananas aptly means fragrant excellent fruit.

Our desire for excellent fruit in late winter and early spring coincides with harvest time in the tropics for the sweetest pineapple of the year. After growing for 15 months, pineapples have a final surge of sugar production just before harvest. Once cut from the stalk, they do not ripen more. To be good, pineapples must be picked ripe and ready to go to the cannery or to the market.

The color of the skin, whether green or golden, has nothing to do with ripeness. Look to the leaves—deep green, not dried out or brown—as a sign of freshness. To choose a good pineapple, pick it up, squeeze it gently and smell it. It should give slightly and the aroma should be fragrant. If it has soft spots or mold on the stem end or if it smells fermented, try another one. At home, store your pineapple at room temperature for only a day or two before preparing it.

Canned pineapple is fine for use in baked goods and preferable if you want to use pineapple in a gelatin salad. For eating plain, in a salad with other fruit or to caramelize as in Chef's recipe, you can't beat fresh! The flavor difference will reward your effort although cutting one up is not difficult when you use a sharp knife and a cutting board.

Begin by laying the pineapple on its side; slice off the crown and base. Sit the fruit on its flat end and cut from top to bottom, thinly slicing off the rind. Remove the "eyes" by using the point of a paring knife or vegetable peeler; or by cutting shallow grooves that follow the natural spiral pattern of the eyes. Next, cut the peeled pineapple into wedges. Lay each wedge flat on the cutting board and slice off the fibrous core. Ready to enjoy!

RECIPE for health

APRIL 2014

featured food:
PINEAPPLE

Pineapple & Shrimp Banh Mi

A Vietnamese-style sandwich

Recipe by Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski. Serves 4-5.

Marinade

- 1 can (13.5 ounce) coconut milk
- ½ cup vegetable broth
- 1 Tablespoon minced garlic
- 1 Tablespoon minced ginger
- 1 star anise
- 4 Thai chile peppers, sliced in rings
- ½ cup sliced white onion
- Zest from ½ lime
- Juice of 1 lime
- 2 teaspoons sea salt
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper

Sandwich Ingredients

- 1 whole pineapple, prepared and cut into 8 wedges
- 1 pound 41/50 count peeled and deveined shrimp
- 1 or 2 baguettes, cut into 8" sections and then split in half
- 3 heads of baby bok choy, chopped
- 3 green onions, thinly sliced
- 3 Tablespoons chopped cilantro

Mix together the marinade ingredients. Place pineapple wedges in a container and add half of the marinade; mix well. Place shrimp into a separate container and add the rest of the marinade; mix well. Refrigerate both pineapple and shrimp for 18-24 hours.

Preheat grill. Remove shrimp from the marinade; discard marinade. Skewer shrimp; cook on grill for 2 to 3 minutes per side until done.

Remove pineapple from marinade; reserve marinade. Place pineapple wedges on hot grill and cook for 2 minutes on each side until caramelized (evenly light brown surface with darker grill marks). Place on cutting board and cut into ½" chunks.

Toss the pineapple and shrimp together and place on a baguette. Top with bok choy, green onions and cilantro. Drizzle with a little reserved marinade if desired.

Try Pineapple & Shrimp Banh Mi for lunch at The Gallery at Snyder/Phillips, Brody Square and Riverwalk Market at Owen on April 9.