

## Enjoy the Benefits of Citrus Fruits

The grocery stores have an abundance of citrus fruits this time year. The prime harvest time for most is in late fall and early winter months. Right now is the peak season to enjoy the juiciness of a clementine, grapefruit or orange.

Citrus fruits are full of vitamin C, which helps maintain a strong immune system and helps protect against scurvy. Citrus fruits promote heart health and reduce the risk of some chronic diseases. They can also aid in cancer prevention and are useful in diabetes sugar level control. Citrus fruit skin is high in essential oils used in flavorings or as fragrant essences in aromatherapy oils, cosmetics and soaps. Other important nutrients found in citrus fruits are fiber, folate, lycopene, potassium and vitamin B6.

Citrus fruits are also objects of beauty and décor. A bowl of fresh fruit makes a great center piece. It can also remind you that selecting a piece of fruit rather than candy or cookies is a wise choice. It is smart to keep fresh fruits within reach to encourage daily consumption. USDA's MyPlate recommends eating 1 ½ to 2 cups of fruit every day. This may be in the form of fresh, canned, frozen or juice.

There are many ways to increase fruit in your daily diet. Add oranges or lemons to water to allow infusing overnight. Add fresh lemons and limes to drinks. Eat half a grapefruit every morning for breakfast. Have a citrus snack every day. Prepare salads using citrus fruit with lettuce and spinach. Try topping entrees with fruit.

As the peak season for citrus fruits level off, you may want to try home canning oranges and grapefruits. This simple fast process provides you with home-canned fruit that makes a good breakfast fruit mix and prevents the waste of fruit. Begin by selecting firm, sweet grapefruit and oranges. Peel and remove the white tissue. Break the fruit into sections and fill in sterilized canning jars with the fruit. Next, fill jars with water or hot syrup. Water works well, but a light syrup of 1 cup sugar to 4 cups of water provides an enriched flavor. Pour the liquid over the fruit in the jars, leaving one half inch headspace. Apply the lids and rings and process pints or quarts in a water bath for 10 minutes at an elevation under 1,000 feet and 15 minutes at an elevation over 1,000 feet.

Source: Utah State University Extension