

Selecting the Right Melon

Along with peaches, watermelons have always been a Parker County favorite. Some of the best watermelon seeds and watermelons are produced and grown right here in Parker County. Many years ago, there was a large metal Watermelon at the Parker County Courthouse square. It has been gone for along time. Also, Willhite Seed Inc. in Poolville has been a leader in producing a variety of Watermelon Seeds since the early 1900s.

Whether it is watermelon, cantaloupe, honeydew or other melons, summer days or any day is the right time to enjoy eating these sweet, delicious and nutritious fruits.

Not only are these fruits wonderful in taste, they are healthy low-calorie treats that are packed with vitamins. For example a cup of cantaloupe has 60 calories and is rich in vitamins A and C. A cup of honeydew has about 64 calories and is rich in vitamin C and potassium and provides B vitamins. A cup of watermelon has about 45 calories and significant amounts of vitamins A and C.

Watermelon is 93 percent water, and the red variety is a good source of lycopene, a phytonutrient that gives watermelon its color. Lycopene helps to protect the body against a growing list of cancers which include prostate cancer, breast cancer, endometrial cancer, lung cancer and colorectal cancers. Another benefit is that lycopene helps protect cells in the body from damage associated with heart disease.

When choosing a good cantaloupe, it is important to make sure the melon has not bruises or discolorations, a smooth, slightly sunken and well-rounded stem end, a sweet, musky aroma and a prominent, and evenly distributed corky web-patter that is buff or a light tan color on either a green, yellow or gray background

Ripe honeydew should have a creamy yellow color when picked. If the melon is green when picked, it will never ripen. The skin should have the feeling of velvet, and the blossom end should feel slightly springy.

For watermelons, here are some tips for selecting them:

- Look at the spot where the melon has been resting on the ground. A pale yellow or cream spot indicates ripeness, while a pale green or white spot indicates immaturity.
- Scratch the surface of the rind with your thumbnail. If the outer layer slips back with little resistance showing the green-white under the rind, the watermelon is ripe. Scratching unripe melons only leaves a darker depressed line.
- Choose a melon with a smooth surface, dull sheen and well-rounded ends.
- Choose a melon that doesn't have bruises, cuts or dents.
- Pick up the watermelon – it should be heavy for its size. As a watermelon is 93 percent water, most of the weight is water.
- If you are choosing pre-cut watermelons, the more red flesh and less white rind, the riper the melon.

Even though you don't typically eat the outside of most melons, it is important that you wash the melon under running water before cutting into them. Melons are grown on the ground and can sometimes harbor harmful bacteria. Peeling or cutting unwashed produce can transfer dirt or other contaminants from the surface of the produce to the portion of the fruit or vegetable you plan to eat.

All firm produce such as melons should be scrubbed with a clean produce brush before peeling or cutting into them. They should then be dried off with a clean paper towel or cloth to further reduce harmful bacteria that may be on the outside of the melon.