

Chapter 6. Obtaining and Using Fruits

It is hard to grow all the fruits that you need for home consumption. Fortunately, much high-quality fruit is produced in Ohio and is seasonally available, depending on the types of fruits (Table 24). In addition, Ohio's fruit supplies are supplemented by tropical and sub-tropical fruits shipped into the state. Although fruit is particularly available during the summer months, we are fortunate that we can enjoy fruit throughout the year because of modern transportation, refrigeration, processing, and distribution systems.

| | |
|-------------------------|---|
| June-Bearing Strawberry | Late May, June, and early July |
| Everbearing Strawberry | June, August to October |
| Currant | July and early August |
| Sour Cherry | Late June to late July |
| Gooseberry | Late June to mid-July |
| Black Raspberry | Late June to late July |
| Red Raspberry | Late June and July, and September with some cultivars |
| Blueberry | Mid-July to early October |
| Sweet Cherry | July |
| Apple | July to early November |
| Peach | Late July and late September |
| Pear | Mid August to late October |
| Plum | Late August to late September |
| Grape | Early September and mid-October |

If you are lucky enough to live near an orchard, you should make a point to take your family there to experience what fresh fruits should taste like.

Children and many adults might be surprised by how much better fresh fruits can taste.

Purchasing high-quality fruit requires some knowledge. Desired quality attributes of fruit are given in Table 26. Fruit properly ripened prior to harvest will give the most satisfaction. Fruit harvested improperly may be hard, poorly colored, sour, and lack aroma. Some poor-quality fruits usually have not developed enough for best dessert quality. Fruit harvested when over-ripe may be soft, poor textured, and off flavored.

Ways to determine when fruit are properly matured for harvest, whether from your own home garden or from pick-your-own situations, may be found in Table 25. Use this information to get more enjoyment from the fruit used in your family meals.

Pick-Your-Own Fruit

Consumers who want to enjoy fresh fruit without growing their own may take advantage of pick-your-own opportunities, usually available in most localities. Such fruits as apples, strawberries, cherries, raspberries, and blueberries are available from fruit farms on a pick-your-own basis. The customer can personally select and harvest all the fruit that he/she purchases and, at the same time, can involve the entire family in a recreational excursion to the country. Look for pick-your-own fruit harvesting opportunities in your area.

When to Harvest

Nothing can beat the ripe fruits grown at home or at local fruit farms. Some fruits need to be picked when fully ripe on the plant while other fruits ripen after they are harvested and stored for a while. Listed in Table 25 are the ways to determine when to harvest various fruits. Experienced consumers will get to pick the best fruits of highest quality; this will help to maximize the entire experience of growing and consuming fresh fruits.

Table 25. Ways to Determine When to Harvest Various Fruits.

| Type of Fruit Crop | Indication of Maturity | Further Ripening for Quality Improvement off the Plant |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| Apple | Fruit increases in size with full color development. Ground color becomes straw yellow to creamy in color in red cultivars. Yellow cultivars develop a golden color upon ripening. | Yes, if fully mature prior to harvest. |
| Blackberry | Berries, upon ripening, become dull black in color and begin to become soft and sweet. The small depression in each druplet should be well filled. The small fruits or drupelets are harvested on the central core of the receptacle. Harvest every two or three days. | No |
| Cherry, Red Tart | Cherries increase in size and develop full color as they ripen. They should be left on the tree until juicy and fully flavored. Bird protection is generally necessary. | No |
| Cherry, Sweet | Cherries increase in size and develop full color as they ripen. They should be left on the tree until fully colored and sweet. Bird protection is generally necessary. | No |
| Currant | Currants for jelly making should be harvested prior to full ripeness. At this stage of development, the pectin content is high. Fully ripe currants are of full size and color, juicy, and beginning to get slightly soft. | No |
| Elderberry | Fruit should be plump, of full color, and just beginning to soften. | No |
| Gooseberry | Pick gooseberries at their full size and still firm, but before they turn reddish-brown and become fully ripe. | No |
| Grape | Grapes change color long before they are fully ripe. Therefore, it is possible to pick the clusters before they have reached their peak in flavor, size, and sweetness, if berry color alone is used as a guide to harvest. For best results, taste the grapes prior to harvest. If grapes taste good, it is time to harvest. If not, wait for a few days. Grapes need to be protected from loss to birds. | No |
| Peach | Harvest yellow-fleshed cultivars when the ground color is changing from green to yellow. Harvest white-fleshed cultivars when the ground color changes to white. Correlate this color with a taste sample prior to harvesting many fruits. | Yes |
| Pear | Pears should be harvested before they are tree ripe. However, they must not be harvested too green or they will shrivel in storage and have a poor flavor. Some signs of pear ripening include the change of ground color from green to yellow, change of lenticels (small spots on the fruit surface) from white to brown in color. Ripe pears are also more rounded and develop a waxiness on the skin. They also easily separate from the fruit spur. The shoulder of the fruit (the side that is attached to the fruit stem) also becomes soft to the touch. | Yes, but for best dessert quality, most cultivars of pears should be ripened at 60 to 70F, and a relative humidity of 80 to 85%. |
| Plum | It is difficult to detect by color alone when a plum is ripe. The best guide to plum ripeness is to apply gentle pressure to the fruit with the thumb and determine if the flesh is beginning to soften. If so, the fruit should be ready for consumption. | Yes |

| Type of Fruit Crop | Indication of Maturity | Further Ripening for Quality Improvement off the Plant |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| Raspberry | Ripe raspberries are of full color and separate easily from the receptacle (torus) or center part of the fruit. Harvest frequently, as berries continue to ripen over a period of several days. Pick the berries by gently lifting them with the thumb and fingers. | No |
| Strawberry | Ripe strawberries are uniformly red in color, firm, but beginning to soften. Harvest fruit with the calyx (cap) on so that it will keep better. Do this by pinching the stem off about 1/4 inch above the cap. | No |

| Fruit | Quality Attributes |
|--------------|---|
| Apple | Firm, solid, and well-colored. Not overripe; free of bruises and deep external blemishes due to insect, disease, or mechanical injury. |
| Blackberry | Solid, dull black color with plump, juicy fruitlets. |
| Blueberry | Plump, firm berries of dark blue color with a silvery bloom (waxy covering). Ripe fruits should be sweet and juicy and come off the plant easily with a light tickle. |
| Cherry | Bright, glossy, plump-looking surfaces and fresh-looking surfaces. Mature so as to be juicy and of good flavor. |
| Grape | Well-colored, plump, and firmly attached to the stem. White or green cultivars should have fruit of yellowish cast or straw color with a tinge of amber. Red cultivars should have all berries of the cluster predominantly red. |
| Peach | Fruit fairly firm or becoming a bit soft. Ground color yellow or creamy with bright red over color. Fruit free of bruises and decay. |
| Pear | Fruit firm, not overly soft. Color depends upon the cultivar. Generally, pears are considered mature when the small spots (lenticels) on the fruit are brown rather than white. |
| Plum | Fruit firm to slightly soft stage of ripeness. Color varies with the cultivar. With experience in matching skin color and firmness with taste and consistency, one can learn to select quality plums. |
| Raspberry | Fruit firm and of bright, clean appearance without attached caps. Fruitlets should be plump and juicy but not mushy. Berries should be of uniform color and ripeness. |
| Strawberry | Berries should be firm, plump, and shiny with full red color and an attached dark green attractive cap. Well-developed berries have small seeds well scattered over the fruit surface. Berries should not be overly soft and should be free of decay. |

Table 27. Nutritive Value of Selected Fruits.

| Fruit (Raw fruit) | Approximate measure | Wt. in grams | % Water | Calories | % Fiber (gm) | Carbohydrates (gm) | Fat (gm) | Folate (mcg) | Protein (gm) | Iron (mg) | Calcium (mg) | Potassium (mg) | Vitamin A (IU) | Vitamin C (mg) | Vitamin E (mg) |
|---|---------------------|--------------|---------|----------|--------------|--------------------|----------|--------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Apples | 1 cup | 125 | 86 | 65 | 3 | 17 | 0.2 | 3.8 | 0.3 | 0.1 | 7.5 | 134 | 68 | 5.7 | 0.2 |
| Blackberry | 1 cup | 144 | 88 | 62 | 8 | 14 | 0.7 | 36 | 2.0 | 0.9 | 41.8 | 233 | 308 | 30.2 | 1.7 |
| Blueberry | 1 cup | 145 | 84 | 83 | 3 | 21 | 0.5 | 8.7 | 1.0 | 0.4 | 8.7 | 112 | 78 | 14.1 | 0.8 |
| Cherry, Sour | 1 cup | 155 | 86 | 77 | 2 | 19 | 0.5 | 12.4 | 1.6 | 0.5 | 24.8 | 268 | 1,988 | 15.5 | 0.1 |
| Cherry, Sweet | 1 cup | 117 | 82 | 74 | 2.5 | 19 | 0.2 | 4.7 | 1.2 | 0.4 | 15.2 | 260 | 75 | 8.2 | 0.1 |
| Elderberry | 1 cup | 145 | 80 | 106 | 10 | 27 | 0.7 | 8.7 | 1.0 | 2.3 | 55.1 | 406 | 870 | 52.2 | ~ |
| Grape, American | 1 cup | 92 | 81 | 62 | 0.8 | 16 | 0.3 | 3.7 | 0.6 | 0.3 | 12.9 | 176 | 92 | 3.7 | 0.2 |
| Ground Cherries | 1 cup | 140 | 86 | 74 | ~ | 16 | 1.0 | ~ | 2.7 | 1.4 | 12.6 | ~ | 1,008 | 15.4 | ~ |
| Kiwi | 1 cup | 177 | 83 | 108 | 5 | 26 | 0.9 | 44.2 | 2.0 | 0.5 | 60.2 | 552 | 154 | 164.0 | 2.6 |
| Mulberry | 1 cup | 140 | 88 | 60 | 2 | 14 | 0.5 | 8.4 | 2.0 | 2.6 | 54.6 | 272 | 350 | 51.0 | 1.2 |
| Pawpaw ¹ | 1 fruit | 100 | 73 | 80 | 2.6 | 19 | 1.2 | ~ | 1.2 | 7.0 | 6.3 | 345 | 87 | 18.3 | ~ |
| Peach | 1 cup | 170 | 89 | 66 | 2.5 | 16 | 0.4 | 6.8 | 1.5 | 0.4 | 10.2 | 323 | 554 | 11.2 | 1.2 |
| Pear | 1 cup | 165 | 84 | 96 | 5.1 | 26 | 0.2 | 11.6 | 0.6 | 0.3 | 14.8 | 196 | 38 | 6.9 | 0.2 |
| Persimmon, American | 4 fruit | 100 | 64 | 127 | ~ | 33 | 0.4 | ~ | 0.8 | 2.5 | 27.0 | 310 | 3,640 | 66.0 | ~ |
| Plum | 1 cup | 165 | 87 | 76 | 2.3 | 19 | 0.5 | 8.3 | 1.2 | 0.3 | 9.9 | 259 | 569 | 15.7 | 0.4 |
| Quince | 1 fruit | 92 | 84 | 52 | 1.7 | 14 | 0.1 | 2.8 | 0.4 | 0.6 | 10.0 | 181 | 37 | 13.8 | ~ |
| Raspberry | 1 cup | 123 | 85 | 64 | 8 | 15 | 0.8 | 25.8 | 1.5 | 0.8 | 30.7 | 186 | 41 | 32.2 | 1.1 |
| Strawberry | 1 cup | 152 | 90 | 49 | 3 | 12 | 0.5 | 36.5 | 1.0 | 0.6 | 24.3 | 233 | 18 | 89.4 | 0.4 |
| Antioxidants: Though most fruit are considered to be good sources of antioxidants, a USDA study found blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, strawberries, apples, sweet cherries, and plums (highest to lowest, respectively) are considered to be exceptionally high in antioxidants. (<i>Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry</i> , June 9, 2004.) | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ~—Information not available | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Source for all fruits other than those noted otherwise: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Research Service. 2005. USDA Nutrient Database for Standard Reference, Release 18. Nutrient Data Laboratory Home Page, http://www.ars.usda.gov/ba/bhnrc/ndl | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ¹ Source: Kentucky State University Extension, http://www.pawpaw.kysu.edu/pawpaw/cooking.htm#Table%202 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |