Selecting, Storing, and Serving Ohio Grapes

Ohio grapes are grown for winemaking, juice (including juice made into jelly), and for fresh table eating. There are many grapes suitable for winemaking, including some varieties raised exclusively for that purpose. The Ohio grape variety most popular for juice is Concord, with Niagara grapes suitable for white grape juice. There are several different table grape varieties. Besides Niagara and Concord, there are two popular seedless varieties—Himrod (green) and Reliance (red). Whether for wine or some other use, all grapes are suitable for fresh consumption. Table grapes are especially good for fresh consumption.

Selection
Ohio grapes are available from mid-August to October. Unlike some fruits, grapes will not improve or ripen after they have been harvested. Therefore, they must be at peak quality and sweetness when purchased.

Green grapes are the sweetest and best flavored when they are yellow-green in color; red varieties when the grapes are predominately red; and the blue-black varieties when the berries have a full rich color.

Grapes should be firm, plump, and well colored and firmly attached to green pliable stems. Dry and brittle stems usually cause grapes to drop from the stems. This is a sign of poor quality. Moldy and wet grapes indicate decay. Avoid grapes that are shriveled or soft at the stem attachment.

Storage
Grapes can be stored in the refrigerator, in a perforated plastic bag, or in a location with low temperatures (down to 31 degrees F) and high humidity. Wash just before use by holding under cool running water. Drain and dry. Grapes will keep well in storage for about 2 weeks but are best when eaten within 2 to 3 days.

Nutrition
Grapes are relatively low in calories; 10 grapes contain about 40 calories. Grape juice contains about 150 calories per cup. Grapes supply small amounts of potassium and vitamin C. Grapes contain a mix of phytonutrients (active substances that give fruits their color and flavor) that help support a healthy heart by potentially lowering blood pressure, reducing inflammation, and preventing clots from forming in the blood vessels. The phytonutrients in grapes have been shown to combat heart disease and many cancers, including breast, colon, stomach, oral, and leukemia. A phytonutrient called resveratrol is found in the skins of grapes of all colors and is known for its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties.

Yield
Due to the many variables such as moisture content, size, and variety, it is impossible to give specific recommendations as to quantities to buy. However, it can be estimated that 4 cups of grapes = 1½ pounds or 1 bushel = 48 pounds.
**Serving Ideas**

- Include grapes in tuna, shrimp, or chicken salad as well as leafy, green salads.
- Cut and freeze grapes as a quick, cool snack for children.
- Slice green, red, and blue-black grapes in half and arrange on top of a store-bought or homemade cheesecake.
- Top your favorite grapes in a crystal glass with plain yogurt and honey whipped together.
- Add grapes and pieces of cantaloupe, apple, or pineapple to a blunted wooden toothpick to create fruit kabobs.
- Grapes, a variety of cheeses, and Ohio dessert wine makes an elegant dessert. For children, pair grapes with string cheese and some crackers.
- Garnish appetizers, main dishes, and desserts with bunches of grapes.
- Serve grapes with cottage cheese for a low calorie light lunch. To the cottage cheese, add a dash of lime juice, cinnamon, and a few coarsely chopped toasted walnuts.
- Spread cream cheese on a bagel half and top with sliced grapes and chopped nuts.

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**Fresh Grape Parfait**

1 cup plain low fat yogurt  
⅓ cup light brown sugar, firmly packed  
1 teaspoon grated fresh orange peel  
⅓ teaspoon vanilla extract  
1½ pounds green grapes  
Ground nutmeg

Blend yogurt, sugar, orange peel, and vanilla extract. Remove grapes from stems and cut in half. Arrange alternate layers of grapes and yogurt in parfait glasses. Chill thoroughly. Garnish with nutmeg and a grape cluster.  
Makes 6 servings.

*For information on preserving grapes, contact your local OSU Extension office for these publications:*
  *Basics for Canning Fruit, HYG-5343-08*
  *Jams, Jellies, and Other Fruit Spreads, HYG-5350-09*
  *Drying Fruits and Vegetables, HYG-5347-09*
  *Growing Grapes in the Home Fruit Planting, HYG-1423-98*
  *Safe Handling of Fruits and Vegetables, HYG-5353-09*
  *Growing and Using Fruit at Home, Bulletin 591*

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