Ohio melons can be divided into two groups—muskmelons and watermelons. Muskmelons include cantaloupe, honeydew, Persians, and crenshaws.

**Muskmelons**

**Selection**
- **Cantaloupe**—Make sure the melon has no bruises or discolorations. A “bleached” side where the melon rested on the ground is acceptable. Look for a cantaloupe with a prominent, evenly distributed corky “netting.” The “netting” will be either buff or light tan color on either a green, yellow, or grey background. The stem end should be smooth, slightly sunken, and well rounded. The blossom end should yield slightly when pressed. The sign of a ripe melon is a sweet, musky aroma. The flesh is usually orange, but some varieties have a green flesh.
- **Honeydew**—The melon should have a creamy yellow color when picked. If the melon is green, it will never ripen. The skin should have the feeling of velvet and the blossom end should feel slightly springy. The flesh should be green, juicy, sweet, and have a “melting” quality in the mouth.
- **Persian**—The Persian melon looks like a large flattened cantaloupe. When ripe, the blossom end is soft and the shell is mauvish with netted skin. The flesh is orange.
- **Crenshaw**—Select a crenshaw melon that is globe-shaped with a pointed, slightly wrinkled stem end. The smooth green skin changes to yellow-gold in color when it is ripe. The flesh is very sweet with a slightly spicy aroma.

**Storage**
Muskemelons can be held a day or two at room temperature until they ripen. Store in the refrigerator when the blossom end yields to gentle thumb pressure. Melon must be refrigerated after cutting. Place chunks in a bag or container or place plastic wrap over the exposed part of the melon. The melon may be stored in the refrigerator for up to one week.
Wash with cool, running water before slicing. The rind may be scrubbed with a soft-bristled brush while rinsing.

**Nutrition**
A cup of cantaloupe has 60 calories and is rich in vitamins A and C. A cup of honeydew has 64 calories and is very rich in vitamin C and potassium, and provides B vitamins.

**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. As a rule-of-thumb, 3 pounds of muskmelon yields about 5 cups of diced melon.

**Serving Ideas**
- For a colorful appetizer, serve your favorite muskmelon with thinly sliced prosciutto (Italian style ham).
• Combine melon with lemonade or ginger ale in a blender for a refreshing summer drink.
• Other fruits combine beautifully with muskmelons in chilled salads or desserts.
• Hollow out a melon and fill with sherbet, cottage cheese, or vanilla ice cream.
• Top cubes of melon with fruit yogurt and sprinkle with granola for a different one-dish breakfast.

**Watermelon**

**Selection**

- It is extremely difficult to tell if a watermelon is ripe from its outside appearance.
- Examine the spot where the melon has been resting on the ground. A yellow-white spot indicates ripeness—white or pale green suggests 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.
- Some experts recommend a “hollow” sound when tapped indicates ripeness. Others feel that “thumping” will not necessarily get you a ripe melon.
- Many people purchase cut melons to judge ripeness from inside appearance. The more red flesh and less white rind, the riper the melon. Watermelons like the Yellow Crimson have yellow-colored flesh and have been described as “sweeter” or more “honey” flavored than red flesh watermelon.
- White seeds usually indicate the melon was picked too early.

**Storage**

- Watermelons, if not too mature, can be ripened for a few days at room temperature.
- Wrap melons in waxed paper or in secured plastic bags before storing in the refrigerator, as melon aroma readily mingles with other foods.
- Watermelons can be stored uncut for 2–3 weeks. Covered, cut melons will keep several days but must be refrigerated.

• Soft spots do not affect melon flavor, but decayed spots should be cut out before refrigerating.
• Wash with cool, running water before slicing. The rind may be scrubbed with a soft-bristled brush while rinsing.
• Freezing or canning watermelon flesh is not recommended, but the watermelon rind may be made into preserves using this recipe: [http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/how/can_07/watermelon_rind_preserves.html](http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/how/can_07/watermelon_rind_preserves.html).

**Nutrition**

- Watermelon is 93 percent water and 1 cup has about 45 calories.
- Watermelon has significant amounts of vitamins A and C.
- Red watermelon is a good source of lycopene, a phytonutrient that gives watermelon its color. Lycopene appears to protect the body against a growing list of cancers, which include prostate cancer, breast cancer, endometrial cancer, lung cancer, and colorectal cancers. Lycopene helps to protect cells in the body from damage associated with heart disease as well.

**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. As a rule-of-thumb, 3 pounds of watermelon yields about 4 cups of diced melon.

**Serving Ideas**

- Invite friends in on a hot summer day for a “watermelon bust.” People get together and enjoy cool, crisp watermelon without the aid of spoon, fork, or plate.
- Cut watermelon into strips that resemble French fries for a fun children’s snack.
- Use cookie cutters to cut shapes out of a ½–⅜ inch thick slice of watermelon. Frost with vanilla yogurt. Sprinkle with granola.
- Make watermelon kabobs with cubes of watermelon, cheddar cheese, and smoked turkey breast.
- Try a watermelon salsa recipe.
Melon Sorbet

3 cups cubed, seeded watermelon, cantaloupe, or honeydew
2 tablespoons lemon juice
½ cup sugar
1 envelope unflavored gelatin
½ cup water

Place melon, about a half at a time, in a food processor or blender. Whirl until smooth and liquid. Pour into a medium-sized bowl and stir in lemon juice. Mix sugar and gelatin in a small saucepan; stir in water. Heat slowly, stirring constantly until the gelatin dissolves. Cool slightly; stir into melon mixture. Pour into a 9 X 9 X 2 inch cake pan. Freeze about 1½ hours until firm around edges. Spoon into a large bowl; beat until smooth. Return to pan and freeze until firm.

Makes 4 servings.

Serving idea: Make three melon sorbets: cantaloupe, honeydew, and watermelon. Place a little scoop of each in a crystal wine glass. Serve with a thin, crisp cookie.

For information on freezing melons, contact your local OSU Extension office for these fact sheets:
Safe Handling of Fruits and Vegetables, HYG-5353-09
Jams, Jellies, and Other Fruit Spreads, HYG-5350-09
Growing Muskmelons in the Home Garden, HYG-1615-93
Growing Watermelon in the Home Garden, HYG-1626-95


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