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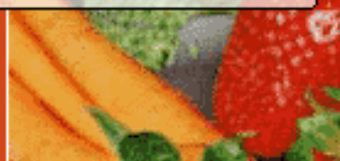
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fruits: figs

Many of today's most popular foods, including olive oil, beans, grain and figs to name a few, date back to the beginning of history. They are believed to be one of the first fruits to be dried and stored by mankind. Figs originated in the Mediterranean areas of Europe and were first brought to the United States, around 1575, by the Spanish settlers.



Fresh figs are still produced in great quantities all along the Mediterranean basin. Today, California's hot and dry Central Valley produces the largest amount of figs in the United States. California is also the number two largest fig producer in the world. Even though California is a large producer, figs are not very popular in the United States. When I was growing up in Sicily, figs were common in most dishes during the fig season, however, when I ate figs in the United States people always wondered what I was eating.

When most Americans think of eating figs, they are probably planning to open a package of Fig Newtons. This dried fig cookie is very popular and probably the most common way people enjoy eating figs.

Selection & Storage

It is important to handle figs carefully because they are extremely fragile and can bruise easily. Select plump, fragrant figs that have a little give when touched. Avoid those that are hard, mushy, or show signs of mold. Also avoid figs that are dry or have splits on their skins. Occasionally figs will have some scarring as a result of the fruit brushing against the leaves of the tree, however this does not damage the quality of the fruit.

Figs that are not fully ripe when purchased can be ripened on the counter at room temperature. Ripe figs are quite perishable and should be used as soon as possible. They can be refrigerated for up to three days. To prevent bruising, place figs in a single layer on a plate lined with paper towels and cover with plastic wrap. Figs can also be frozen for up to six months.

Preparation

One of the best ways to eat figs is fresh out of

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 3 medium figs (153 grams)	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 120	Calories from Fat 0
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 0mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 28g	9%
Dietary Fiber 4g	16%
Sugars 11g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 4%	Vitamin C 6%
Calcium 6%	Iron 2%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

Eight large or twelve to sixteen small figs will equal a pound.

hand, skin and all, after thoroughly washing them. Figs are also popular wrapped in prosciutto, eaten as a first course or an hors d'oeuvre. Another great hors d'oeuvre is to stuff figs with nuts or mascarpone, the luxurious Italian sweetened cream cheese. Figs can also be wrapped in thin sheets of pancetta, the Italian unsmoked bacon, cooked until the bacon just crisps and served as you would raw figs and prosciutto.

Figs take well to poaching or stewing, by themselves, with summer fruits, or with dried fruits. They also bake well. It is recommended that you bake them just until they soften which will concentrate their sugars even further. Although it's not well known, fresh figs, like fresh pineapple, contain enzymes that prevent gelatin from setting and, therefore, are not recommended in gelatin based desserts.

Tony's Tip

Black Mission figs should have a slight cracking or shriveling, particularly near the stem end. This is not a sign of age but merely a reaction to the sun.

Tony's Favorite Recipe

[Basmati Rice with Figs, Mustard Seeds, and Ginger](#)

Varieties

Although there are more than a hundred varieties of figs, only a few are produced commercially.

Black Mission figs are the best-known variety grown in California. Despite the name it is more of a deep purple than black, with a pear or teardrop shape. Inside, the Black Mission fig has a crimson flesh loaded with tiny, edible seeds.

Kadota fig is rounder with a firmer, thicker, yellow-green skin and a pale interior that has a reddish-brown center.

Brown Turkey figs have a brownish-purple skin and rich red flesh.

Brunswick is a large dark brown fig with a mild flavor.

Celeste is violet skinned, and has a rose-colored, tasty flesh.

Calimyrna figs are one of the larger varieties that become a pale yellow color when fully ripe. The figs amber flesh drips with syrupy juice from the bottom or stem end of the fruit, when totally ripe. They have a sweet, slightly nutty flavor but are rarely seen fresh, particularly outside of California, because they are so perishable.





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