

Florida Food Fare

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Figs

Description: A native of western Asia and the Mediterranean area, the fig is one of the earliest fruits known to man. It is estimated that they have been around for at least 6,000 years. The fig, a member of the mulberry family, is one of the sweetest fruits when fully ripe. Figs are not generally grown commercially in Florida because they are so perishable, but rather enjoyed as a dooryard fruit. The common varieties in Florida include; Celeste, a small purplish-bronze to light brown fruit with closed "eye"; Brown Turkey, a moderate sized bronze fruit with medium "eye"; and Green Ischia, a green color with a closed "eye".

Availability: Fresh figs are available from June through October. They do not ship well so local fruit will most likely be found in the markets. Celeste figs ripen from mid July to mid August, while Brown Turkey ripens late July until late fall and Green Ischia late July to early August. Figs are sold dried and candied in the supermarket, particularly around the holidays.

Nutritional Value: Figs are high in dietary fiber and are a rich source of magnesium and potassium. They are also relatively high in vitamins A, B, and C and low in calories, about 50 calories each. One large raw fig, approximately 65 grams is 77.5 percent water, yields .8g protein, .2g total fat, 23mg calcium, .4mg Iron, 50 IU vitamin A, 2.1g dietary fiber, 3.8mcg folate, .3mg niacin, and 1mg vitamin C.

Selection and Care: Fresh figs must be fully ripe to be of good quality. Green ones will shrivel when cooked. Ripeness or maturity cannot be judged by size. A ripe fig is rather soft and varies in color according to variety. Pick just as the skin begins to break. Be careful not to bruise the fruit, as this will make it spoil very quickly. Avoid overripe figs detectable by their sour odor, a sign of fermentation.

appetizer or salad. Yield 4 servings.

Fresh Fig Fruit Salad

1 cup bananas, sliced	2 oranges, sectioned
1/4 cup orange juice	1/2 cup pecans, chopped
1 cup cantaloupe balls	1/2 cup celery, diced
3 cups fresh figs, peeled, sliced	

Cover sliced bananas with orange juice. Combine bananas, cantaloupe balls, sliced figs, orange sections, nuts and celery. Mix lightly. Chill thoroughly. Garnish with whole ripe fig. Yield 6-7 servings.

Fig Sauce

12 to 15 fresh ripe figs, peeled	1 tablespoon butter
1/2 cup sugar	1 tablespoon cornstarch
1 cup water	3 tablespoons lemon or orange juice

Combine figs, sugar, water, and butter in saucepan. Bring to boil, simmer until figs are tender, 5 to 8 minutes. Combine cornstarch and fruit juice. Mix until smooth. Stir into fig mixture; cook over low heat, stirring constantly until thick. Serve warm over ice cream, pound cake, angel cake or bread pudding. Yield 3 1/2 cups.