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Fig Focus – July/August/September 2007

Great Grilling with Kebabs

Summer's here and it's time for cooking outdoors on the grill. Colorful and delightfully simple kebabs with Mission and Calimyrna figs, offer something tasty and healthful for everyone.



Bamboo skewers are inexpensive and easy to use. Soak skewers in water ahead of time for about 30 minutes to keep them from burning on the grill. Kebabs provide endless possibilities for healthy meals when made with a variety of fruits and vegetables and laced with pieces of firm fish, chicken, turkey or lean red meats. Thread skewers with about 2/3 fruits and vegetables and 1/3 lean meat for a meal rich in fiber, vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients. Let your imagination run wild with different combinations and marinades!

Mission and Calimyrna figs with their plump, teardrop shape and firm texture make great additions to kebabs. Soaking the dried figs in tasty liquids gives them an additional flavor twist and minimizes burning. The greatest challenge in grilling kebabs is getting everything done at the same time with optimal flavor and texture. To help, cut ingredients in similar sizes and choose vegetables that taste good even when slightly undercooked.

Try the [Mediterranean Fig Kebabs on Mixed Greens](#) and the [Salmon-Fig Kebabs with Orange-Balsamic Glaze](#). One is vegetarian and served over salad greens, while the other features fish and is served over brown rice. Chicken or turkey can be substituted for the salmon. Leftover kebabs are excellent cut up and stuffed in pita pocket bread for lunch the



Fig Information

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Fig Recipes

Awesome Fig Recipes

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- Breads

next day.

New Feature Focus on Nutrition

Nutrition Expert and Registered Dietitian, Cherryl Bell, RD, MS

Talks About Healthy Snacking

August and September signal back to school. More than ever, parents are interested in encouraging their kids to eat well. Challenging? Certainly. Achievable? Definitely.

A recent survey conducted by the International Food Information Council found that 93 percent of Americans consume at least one snack per day. That same *Food & Health Survey* also found that more and more Americans are changing their meal and snack patterns as a way to improve the healthfulness of their diet. Adults can be good role models for children; kids look to their parents to set the example.

Make snacks an important part of a healthful diet by substituting fruits, vegetables and whole grains for more traditional high fat, high calorie snacks. Try to think out of the box, or bag in this case. While I like whole figs stuffed with toasted almonds and a little piece of chocolate, my children don't. So, I solicited the help of my kids and turned those figs and almonds into Back to School Fig Bon Bons. Now, I use the bon bons for after school snacks and in their lunches instead of cookies; they're thrilled and so am I. Kids who help prepare foods are much more likely to eat those foods.

Back To School Fig Bon

8 oz. Blue Ribbon Orchard Choice or Sun-Maid Figs, stems removed

2/3 cup toasted almonds

2/3 cup toasted oat cereal, any flavor

1/3 cup fat free dry milk powder

1/3 cup honey

1/3 cup chocolate morsels

1/4 cup orange juice

1 teaspoon vanilla

Process figs, almonds and cereal in food processor until finely ground. Add remaining ingredients and process until well mixed. Dampen hands and shape mixture into 1 1/4-inch balls. Chill. Store in airtight container in refrigerator. May be a bit sticky. Makes about 25 bon bons.

Encourage your friends and relatives to offer fruits and vegetables to your children for snacks. Have your kids help choose their snacks with the idea they should include at least one fruit and/or vegetable. Suggest snacks that pair familiar foods with a new fruit or vegetable; figs and cheese are great snack partners. For more tips on healthy snacking and eating, visit www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov.

Have some ideas for healthy snacks or ways to include dried figs in a healthful diet? Send us your tips and if we use them in our newsletter, we'll send you some figs.

News from the Growers' Store

Looking for healthy snacks for the kids as they start back to school? The Growers' Store offers a case of "sample bags" that are single serve snack bags of Mission Figs. These portion-controlled snacks are also perfect to put in lunch bags or take to work. The snack bags come 200 to a case for \$46.19 and can easily be split with a couple friends.



Alternatively, if you prefer to pack your own figs in a re-useable container for lunch, buy the 5-pound box of loose figs for \$14.49. A serving would be about 3-5 figs.

Coming soon--Organic Mission Figs.

Grown by Valley Fig Growers who follow earth-friendly growing practices, and certified organic by the USDA and the California Certified Organic Farmers, these organic Mission figs will be available at the Growers' store in convenient 7-ounce, re-sealable, stay-fresh bags.

"Demand for organic fruits and vegetables is reaching new heights," says Linda Cain, vice president of marketing.

"Consumers are looking for good tasting, healthful products that also are good for the environment. California-grown organic Mission Figs, with their exceptionally high fiber content, nutrient-dense composition, portability and sweet, satisfying taste, are meeting this demand."

Summer Brings Plenty of Sun and A Good Crop

The 2007 fig crop is developing right on schedule and about 3 weeks ahead of last year. The weather is cooperating nicely with May and June temperatures near normal. The cold weather experienced last winter should provide the chilling hours needed to kill *overwintering* insects. This year's crop looks at this point to be good quality and early. The first crop was a bit lighter than normal, the second crop appears normal in size. Baring any bad weather, the 2007 crop should be good.



Fig Fest 2007 is just around the corner in Fresno, California. Saturday, August 11, from 9 am until noon, fig lovers and want-a-be fig lovers gather at the Vineyard Farmers Market, corner of Shaw and Blackstone Avenues, to sample all that is figalicious! There will be samples galore of delectable fig food items from a number of restaurants, along with fresh and dried figs to buy, and jazz music to enjoy. Admission is \$5.00 per person with the proceeds going to local charities. Visit the California Fig Advisory Board Web site, CaliforniaFigs.com, for more information.

Holiday

Labor Day, September 3

Celebrate Labor Day with a few friends and a co-op barbecue! Labor Day, the first Monday in September, is a tribute to the contributions workers have made to the strength, prosperity, and wellbeing of our country. Make it easy on everyone and have each person bring his own meat or other food to grill. Have ready a big bowl of [Fruit Salsa with Figs, Pineapple and Mango](#)—it's the perfect accompaniment to grilled meats. Don't forget the horseshoes, badminton and pool volleyball to work up an appetite. Have a great Labor Day!

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