

# Fruit of the Month

## Apricots



### History

In Latin, apricot means "precious," a label earned because it ripens earlier than other summer fruits. A relative of the peach, the apricot is smaller and has a smooth, oval pit that falls out easily when the fruit is halved.

Apricots originally came from China. This golden fruit has been around for more than 4,000 years. Apricots progressively made their way through the Persian Empire to the Mediterranean where they were fondly adopted. Spanish explorers introduced the apricot to the New World, and they were planted in the gardens of Spanish missions all over California. The first recorded major production of apricots in America was in 1792 south of San Francisco.

### Nutrition Facts

|  |                            |         |         |
|--|----------------------------|---------|---------|
| Serving Size (114g)  |                            |         |         |
| Servings Per Container   |                            |         |         |
| <b>Amount Per Serving</b>  |                            |         |         |
| <b>Calories</b> 50   | <b>Calories from Fat</b> 5 |         |         |
| % Daily Value*   |                            |         |         |
| <b>Total Fat</b> 0g  | <b>0%</b>                  |         |         |
| Saturated Fat 0g   | <b>0%</b>                  |         |         |
| <b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg   | <b>0%</b>                  |         |         |
| <b>Sodium</b> 0mg  | <b>0%</b>                  |         |         |
| <b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 13g  | <b>4%</b>                  |         |         |
| Dietary Fiber 3g   | <b>12%</b>                 |         |         |
| Sugars 10g   |                            |         |         |
| <b>Protein</b> 2g  |                            |         |         |
| Vitamin A 60%  | • Vitamin C 20%            |         |         |
| Calcium 2%   | • Iron 4%                  |         |         |
| *Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs: |                            |         |         |
|  | Calories:                  | 2,000   | 2,500   |
| Total Fat  | Less than                  | 65g     | 80g     |
| Saturated Fat  | Less than                  | 20g     | 25g     |
| Cholesterol  | Less than                  | 300mg   | 300mg   |
| Sodium   | Less than                  | 2,400mg | 2,400mg |
| Total Carbohydrate   |                            | 300g    | 375g    |
| Dietary Fiber  |                            | 25g     | 30g     |
| Calories per gram:   |                            |         |         |
| Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4   |                            |         |         |

## Apricots Today

In the United States, 95% of apricots grow in the San Joaquin Valley and other parts of northern California. More than 400 growers produce many varieties of apricots, the most common of which are featured in the table below. Growers continually experiment with new varieties that deliver sweet flavor and ship or process well.

| <b>date</b>  | <b>Apricot variety</b><br><b>General size</b> | <b>Average maturity</b><br><b>Profile/Flavor</b> |                  |
|--------------|---|--|------------------|
| Pattersons   | June 15                                       | Medium   | Firm/Good Flavor |
| Blenheims    | June 19                                       | Medium   | Firm/Good Flavor |
| Tiltons      | June 25                                       | Large  | Firm/Tart Flavor |
| Castlebrites | May 28  | Medium   | Firm/Full Flavor |

Source: <http://www.califapricot.com/>\*

## Selection and Storage

Look for plump apricots with as much golden orange color as possible. Stay clear of fruit that is pale yellow, greenish-yellow, very firm, shriveled, or bruised. Apricots that are soft-ripe have the best flavor, but they must be eaten immediately.

Apricots will ripen at room temperature. To help them ripen, place them in a paper bag with an apple. When they yield to gentle pressure, they are ready to eat. Refrigerate ripe apricots, unwashed, in a paper or plastic bag up to 2 days. Wash them before eating. They are a perfect fast food anytime. To cut fruit, slice around its seam, twist it in half, and lift out the pit.

Apricots are available throughout the year from different regions:

- Mid-February through mid-March from Chile
- Mid-June through mid-July from California
- Mid-July through mid-August from Washington

## Preparation

Apricots are great to eat raw, but they are also terrific cooked. These are some common cooking methods:

**Broiling or grilling:** Try threading the apricots (whole or halved) on skewers. Brush them with a little honey, and grill until semi-soft. Broiling apricots is easy. Simply halve the apricots, place them on a cookie sheet  $\rightarrow$ skin  $\rightarrow$ cut side up, and heat for 7 to 10 minutes.

**Poaching:** It's a great method for making a delicious sauce. Simply place the apricots with their skins intact into simmering water or fruit juice, and cook until tender. Adding spices such as cinnamon or cloves enhances the apricot taste. When the apricots are tender, the poaching liquid can be used as a sauce. Poaching takes about 6 to 8 minutes.

## Quick Facts on Apricots

- No saturated fat, sodium, or cholesterol
- Low fat
- High in vitamins A and C
- Good source of potassium.

## What About Dried Apricots?

Eating dried apricots is a great way to get your 5 to 9 A Day. The nutrients (e.g., beta-carotene and niacin) are more concentrated in dried than in fresh apricots. Dried apricots also have a higher sugar content, which makes them more likely to stick on your teeth. Your dentist will remind you to brush or rinse your teeth after eating any dried fruit or sticky foods. If you're allergic or sensitive to sulfites, remember to look on the label of the package to see if the apricots were treated with sulfur dioxide for color preservation. Look in health-food stores for apricots that were not treated with sulfites. They'll be brown, not orange.

## Make Apricots Part of Your 5 A Day Plan



It's easy to include apricots in your meals. Try these great short cuts to getting your 5 to 9 A Day.

- Slice them up for fruit salads.
- Purée apricots for sauces. The sauces are especially good on pancakes, desserts, or meat.
- Use apricots whenever a recipe calls for peaches or nectarines.
- Add apricots to your favorite baked desserts.
- Pack them for your lunch, or have them as a snack.
- Add apricots to low fat cottage cheese and your fruit smoothies.
- For a great tasting snack when hiking, add dried apricots to your trail mix

## Recipes

### Savory Fresh Apricot Bites

Makes 12 servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

Source: California Fresh Apricot Council

4 oz fat-free cream cheese, softened

12 fresh apricots, halved

1/4 cup pistachios, finely chopped

Stir cream cheese until smooth; pipe or spoon into apricot halves. Sprinkle tops with pistachios. Serve as an appetizer, snack, or dessert.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 44, protein 2g, fat 2g, percent calories from fat 30%, cholesterol 1mg, carbohydrates 5g, fiber 1g, sodium 52mg

## **Apricot Bavarian**

Makes 6 (4-ounce servings)

Each serving equals one and a half 5 A Day servings

Source: California Fresh Apricot Council

8 fresh apricots (1 lb)

1½ envelopes plain gelatin

¼ cup water

2/3 cup sugar

2 cups non-fat vanilla yogurt

Drop apricots into boiling water to cover. Return to boil; simmer 5 minutes or until skins begin to split. Drain; rinse under cold water. Halve fruit; discard skins and pits. Puree apricots in blender or food processor; set aside. Combine gelatin and water in small saucepan; stir over low heat until dissolved. Mix sugar, apricot puree, and yogurt with a wire whisk until smooth; mix in dissolved gelatin. Chill until firm.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 189, protein 6g, fat 1g, percent calories from fat 2%, cholesterol 1mg, carbohydrates 42g, fiber 1g, sodium 60mg

## **Apricot-Stuffed Chicken**

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

Source: California Fresh Apricot Council

2 whole chicken breasts, boned, skin on

1 cup dry stuffing mix

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup chopped onion

2 Tbsp unsalted butter, melted

1 tsp ground ginger

4 fresh apricots ( $\frac{1}{2}$  lb), halved

1 cup apricot jam

1 Tbsp cider vinegar

Place chicken skin side down, and pound it with a mallet to flatten slightly. Combine stuffing mix, onion, butter, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp ginger. Spoon stuffing mixture in a strip along center of each breast. Place apricot halved on top of stuffing. Wrap chicken around filling; tie each chicken roll with a string every 2 inches. Barbecue on rack about  $5\frac{1}{2}$  inches above medium-hot coals 15 minutes, turning once or twice. Mix apricot jam, vinegar, and remaining  $\frac{1}{4}$  tsp ginger.

Brush jam mixture over chicken rolls; continue cooking until done, about 5 to 10 minutes.

Nutrition information per serving: calories 434, protein 17g, fat 12g, percent calories from fat 23%, cholesterol 49mg, carbohydrates 69g, fiber 3g, sodium 260mg

## Apricot Cherry Cobbler

Makes 8 servings

Each serving equals one and a half 5 A Day servings

Source: California Fresh Apricot Council

8 fresh apricots (1 lb), sliced  
1/3 cup sugar  
2 cups pitted fresh cherries (½ lb)  
1 tbsp flour  
1 cup all-purpose flour  
½ cup yellow cornmeal  
¼ tsp salt  
1½ tbsp plus 1 tsp sugar  
2 tsp baking powder  
½ tsp grated orange peel  
4 Tbsp unsalted butter, chilled  
¾ cup non-fat milk



Heat oven to 375°F. Combine apricots and 1/3 cup sugar; set aside. Combine cherries and 1 Tbsp flour; set aside. Combine dry ingredients; reserve 1 tsp sugar. Stir in orange peel. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse meal. Add milk; stir just to moisten dry ingredients. Combine fruit in buttered 1½ quart baking dish; spoon batter over top. Sprinkle with remaining sugar. Bake 25 to 30 minutes or until golden brown. Cool slightly and serve.

Nutrition information per serving: calories 186, protein 3g, fat 6g, percent calories from fat 30%, cholesterol 15mg, carbohydrates 31g, fiber 2g, sodium 219mg