

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Grapes on the Table

It's still too hot to cook, isn't it? But the hungry mouths in the family are still expecting to be fed. Depending on the age, they might be happy with 2 or 3 meals a day, or may be raiding the refrigerator every couple of hours. How do you keep enough healthy stuff on hand to satisfy their hunger and their growing bodies? How do you provide the right stuff to balance food pyramid recommendations with a teen's need for quick and easy food on the go? How do you do it without standing over a hot stove?!

One solution that is plentiful and not too expensive right now is a bag of grapes. I've seen some under a dollar a pound, not bad for a bundle of nutrition. Which kind to buy? Which kind do you prefer? They are all good.

The green ones are lighter tasting, the reds have more flavor, the blacks have the strongest flavor. And while all grapes provide vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals, the darker ones possibly give us the most antioxidants and cancer protection. That's because a lot of these plant-protective chemicals are types of color pigments or are related to them. So, the more color the fruit has, the more protection it's likely to offer.

Several of these protective chemicals are looking very good in cancer studies. They seem to prevent or slow down cancer of the liver, breast and colon. Some of them also seem to protect our hearts and arteries against inflammation. There also seems to be some anti-clotting ability to keep our blood from getting thick or causing strokes.

So, what color do you want your daily dose? The most common green grape

variety is Thompson seedless. But there are at least 4 other green or yellow varieties. Some of the red ones are almost orange, some are deep dark red. And there are a couple of black or blue-black versions too. Some are round, some are oval, some are long. Some are almost as big as plums, some are quite small. Some are seedless, some still have that crunch in the middle if you aren't careful. All are good!

At the store, look for dry grapes with a bit of a white haze on them. Wet grapes will spoil faster. If a bag has been squashed the grapes will be bruised, spoil sooner, and draw fruit flies besides. The white haze is called bloom. It's a slightly waxy coat the grapes develop to help hold moisture in and bacteria and mold out.

Please don't feed children grapes in the store! Have you ever stopped to think about how much dust is floating around off the floor or off the boxes of other produce? Or how many people carrying how many bacteria, have walked by, stopped to look at or handle that fruit? Grapes need to be washed before being eaten.

Keep grapes ready to eat in the refrigerator for easy snacking. Wash as many at a time as you will use in a day. Shake the water off and spread them out a bit so that they're not sitting in a puddle. Clip the large bunches into smaller, hand-sized clusters so that the kids are more likely to grab them.

For a wonderful cold treat on a hot summer day, wash seedless grapes and pat them dry. Lay them out singly on a tray and freeze them. When you're too hot to move, grab a handful of frozen grapes and let them thaw in your mouth, one at a time! Slightly crunchy, slightly slushy, sweet and cold, yum!

Grapes will keep best in the coldest section of your refrigerator. They also like high humidity, so leave them in the bag until you wash them.

Here's a cool dinner salad for a hot summer evening. If you grill one night, stick

some extra chicken on the grill for this. Otherwise use half a rotisserie chicken from the grocery store to avoid cooking all together. If you have small children in the house, cut their grapes in halves or quarters. Serve with whole wheat rolls.

Gingered Grape Chicken Salad

1 large head romaine lettuce, rinsed	½ C plain low-fat yogurt
½ rotisserie chicken, skin removed	2 ½ Tbsp grated fresh ginger
2 C seedless red or green grapes, rinsed	½ C slivered almonds

Pull meat off chicken and chop into 1 inch pieces. Blend ginger and yogurt in large bowl. Add chicken and grapes. Toss until covered with dressing. Chill. At serving time, remove stem from lettuce and tear into bite-size pieces and divide onto 6 plates. Stir almonds into salad. Divide onto plates of lettuce. Serves 4.

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