

SHARE article
July, 2006

Mary A. Keith, PhD, LD/N
Hillsborough County Extension Agent
(813) 744-5519, ext. 136
email: makeith@mail.ifas.ufl.edu

Florida's Summer Specialties

Summer in Florida, besides the thunderstorms, heat and humidity, is also the season for some of our freshest tropical fruits. Most people who have backyard fruit trees are usually happy to share their excess bounty with neighbors. If you don't have a local source you might have to check out the roadside fruit stands for the best seasonal choices. Here are some to be looking for:

Carambola, more popularly known as starfruit, are coming into season now. They taste like lemon with some hints of peach, plus their own special flavor. They don't need to be peeled, just washed. There might be a few seeds to remove. Of course the star-shaped slices are great additions to fruit salad, especially for any Fourth of July themes. Or blend them into a smoothie, or add some pureed pulp to lemonade.

Papaya and mango are two more summer specialties. Besides eating fresh, they're both very popular these days for fruit salsas. Chop the fruit finely, add some onion, lemon juice, cilantro and as much bell or jalapeno pepper as you like. Some people add a bit of honey or sugar, but Splenda is a lower-calorie option. Salsas are great on grilled meat or fish, adding a bit of sweet and spice, lots of vitamins, minerals and fiber, and practically no fat. Just be careful, because some people are allergic to mangos.

You can do a lot more with our fresh avocados than just make guacamole dip. Slice them on top of a green salad or mix with sliced tomatoes for high-vitamin salad. For fruit salad lay slices out with grapefruit sections and drizzle with poppy seed

dressing. Use halved small avocados to hold crab or tuna salad. Some people will remove the seed from half an avocado, stir a squirt of lemon juice and a pinch of sugar into the pulp and eat it right out of the skin. It's a dessert, like pudding.

Another nutritious addition to fruit salad can be a pomegranate. Pull off the outside skin and separate all the little bright red sections. They'll look like jewels scattered over a bowl of fruit or of greens. If you don't like the seeds they can be mashed and the juice drained off to drink.

There are lots of others to try. Sapote, cherimoya, sapodilla are less well known. Passion fruit is more common a juice, but the fresh fruit can be scooped out of the shell and eaten too. If you get a chance, take a chance on tasting any or all of these. They'll brighten up your taste buds with a fresh new flavor, and give you a nutrition boost too.

Hillsborough County Extension is a cooperative service of the Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners and the University of Florida.

The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences is an Equal Employment Opportunity - Affirmative Action Employer authorized to provide research, educational information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to race, color, sex, age, handicap or national origin. COOPERATIVE EXTENSION IN AGRICULTURE, HOME ECONOMICS, STATE OF FLORIDA, IFAS, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, AND BOARDS OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS COOPERATING