

SHARE article  
July, 2007

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

## Tasting Tropical Fruit

Florida summers are hot. We crank up the AC and stay inside more during our steamy, humid summer months. But for our tropical fruits, summer is their best time. In July and August many fresh, exotic fruits that our northern cousins only see as imports are growing fresh in our backyards. Here are a few super-healthy ones to try.

Avocados, the main ingredient in guacamole, are in season now. They don't ripen until after they are picked, so plan to hold one for several days after purchase before you use it. An avocado should be evenly dark and have a slight give, but not be really soft or have soft spots on it.

Carambola, or star fruit, have the most interesting shape. Crosswise slices produce beautiful golden 5 pointed stars. The taste has been describes as a cross between a peach and an orange. Some varieties are sweet, others tend to be tart. Pick one that has lost its green tinge. The waxy skin is edible, just wash and eat. There are some recent medical reports out that people with kidney disease or failure and anyone on dialysis should not eat starfruit.

Guavas come in pink or yellow varieties with plenty of seeds. Some people don't mind the crunch, others only eat the fleshy shell. The pink variety is a good source of lycopene, one of the phytonutrients associated with disease prevention. Guavas can have a strong aroma which some people don't like. You might have to freeze them if you can't get them all into a pie or fruit salad fast enough.

Mangos are a tropical favorite, except for those poor people who are allergic to

them. Their sweetness blends well with hot peppers, which is why mango salsas seem to be a favorite side dish in many cooking magazines and shows. Look for unblemished skin that feels evenly soft to the touch. Some varieties are mostly yellow or red when ripe, others are edible when still showing a lot of green.

Papayas come in all sizes, from 5 inch to 15 inches long. When ripe they'll be yellow on outside and anything from pale yellow to deep red inside. Some people eat the peppery black seeds, others get indigestion from them. Eat papayas raw in salads or drinks, or bake unripe ones like a vegetable. They're a super source of vitamin A.

Passion fruit are another seedy one, but they make delicious juice. Passion fruit vines put out gorgeous huge flowers too, but if you want the fruit you might have to fight the squirrels for it. Just scoop the pulp out of the fruit and add to other fruit in the blender for a quick nutritious drink.

Summer is the end of watermelon season for us, so find a local source and enjoy before they disappear. A watermelon should feel heavy for its size, and sound hollow when you thump it. Recently developed varieties now ripen when very small, so you can get a delicious 'personal' melon and not have to share it with anyone.

Watermelons are another very good source of lycopene, which might help prevent prostate cancer. Eat up, men! Eat up, everyone!



*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