

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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**Have a Papaya Today**

It's National Papaya Month, so try a slice today! If you've ever seen what looks something like a palm tree with a cluster of green melons hanging up high, right underneath the leaves, you've seen a papaya tree. They are an original American fruit that now are grown in tropical areas around the world. Unfortunately they are very sensitive to frost and cold, so we regularly lose our trees in this area. Some trees survive if they are protected from frosts by other trees or nearby buildings. The lucky ones who live in a frost-free area can have ripe papayas every month of the year.

If you've never enjoyed a slice of fresh, sweet papaya there's no better time to start than now. Papaya is a good source of vitamin C and several of the B vitamins. The pale yellow forms are decent sources of vitamin A and the dark orange fruits are super-good vitamin A foods. There's even a little bit of iron in them.

That gives you an idea that there are different types. All are shaped rather like a melon with a bit of a point at one end. But some are almost watermelon-sized and others are 'personal', barely the size of softball. Some are long and slender, others almost round. The inner flesh is pale green, almost white, before it ripens, and changes to pale yellow to deep orange to almost a reddish color when it's ripe.

The outer skin is thin and smooth and usually a pale yellow to green color. It is easily damaged, so handle them gently. A little bit of a pink blush on the skin lets you know it's getting ripe. A ripe fruit will also be slightly soft, you can feel it 'give' if you squeeze it too hard.

Once you bring it home try to use it fairly soon. Refrigerator temperatures are too cold for this tropical fruit. Cold will keep an unripe fruit from getting fully ripe, and could damage a ripe one, making it mushy or watery.

When you slice a papaya in half you'll find it full of little BB size shiny grey- black seeds. If you munch on a few you'll get a peppery tang. Some people enjoy the pepper-flavor and mix the seeds into salad dressing. However, some people get an upset stomach or diarrhea from them. So try a few and wait a day to see what happens before you decide to eat more.

One of the more interesting things about papaya is it's ability to tenderize meat. Both the leaves and the fruit contain an enzyme that breaks down protein. This enzyme, papain, is used commercially in some meat tenderizers. Tough meat can be wrapped in leaves or marinated with fresh papaya cubes to soften it. But too long a stay can leave the meat mushy and too tender, so be careful.

The sweet fresh fruit can be eaten raw, baked, blended or chilled. The simplest way is to drizzle half a fruit with lemon or lime juice and scoop it out of the shell, right into your mouth! It makes a good substitute for mango or peach in many recipes. Blended with bananas or other fruit and orange juice, papaya makes a great breakfast smoothie. A recipe for peach pie works very well for papaya pie. Or you can just slice one in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds. Drizzle with honey and lemon or lime juice, add a dash of cinnamon if you want. Bake it 'in the half shell' for a 20 minute quick dessert. Slices can be sweetened with brown sugar and butter and baked like a sweet potato casserole. Cooked, pureed papaya can be used in applesauce cake recipes. Cubes can be frozen for future use, or made into sauce, butter, pickles or sweet preserves. The unripe fruit can be grated and used in Asian-style salads or slaw.

This recipe is similar to last week's ambrosia, but the papaya adds a some super nutrition and an exotic twist to the flavor. Mix it up, stick it in the refrigerator to chill, and then pretend you're on the islands for dinner. Enjoy!

### Royal Hawaiian Delight

1 cup reduced fat whipped topping, thawed	½ cup diced orange
1 cup miniature marshmallows	½ cup shredded coconut
1 ½ cups peeled, cubed ripe papaya	2 tsp lemon juice

Fold all ingredients into whipped topping. Chill 1-2 hours before serving. Garnish with more shredded coconut and maraschino cherries for serving. Serves 4 - 6.

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