

PENNY SAVER NEWS

FAX: 932-5261

July 5, 2007

BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.
Food, Nutrition and Health Agent**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776

e-mail:makeith@ifas.ufl.edu

Star fruit Season Starts Now

Star fruit season starts in July and goes through September. Also known as Carambola, the fruit was introduced from China in the early 1900's, and has been growing in popularity ever since. The season arrives just in time for lots of star-shaped decorations on our 4th of July dishes. Slices of star fruit form perfect little gold, five-pointed stars. They are gorgeous for layering in a gelatin salad, or lining the sides of clear glass bowl of trifle or fruit salad. They're delicious for just eating as is!

The skin of a golden star fruit is thin and slightly waxy. After washing, there is no need to try to peel it. The flesh is rather crisp, and very juicy. If you eat it like an apple, be prepared for dripping juice. Some fruits will have a few dark seeds in the center, but those are easily avoided. If you don't care for the fibers in the middle you can eat around them, but they certainly won't hurt you. If you need more fiber in your diet, munch away!

Some star fruit are only about 4 inches long, some varieties today produce fruit six or seven inches long and over 4 inches across. Some varieties are rather sour, others are very sweet. You can't tell the difference by looking, but even the 'sour' ones are sweet enough to eat raw.

For the diet and weight-minded, a medium sized star fruit only has about 30 calories! Along with them, you get 500 IU of vitamin A, half an adult's needs for a day. There is also some vitamin C and potassium, and only 2 tiny mg of sodium.

With all that good nutrition, there is one group of people who should NOT eat

star fruit. Anyone with kidney disease, kidney failure, or who is on dialysis should not eat the fruit or even drink the juice. Recent medical reports indicate that star fruit contains a nerve toxin that, especially when combined with its oxalic acid, can damage the kidneys. One symptom of star fruit intoxication seems to be persistent hiccups. Small amounts have also caused vomiting and insomnia. Larger doses lead to agitation, numbness, and mental confusion. High doses can cause severe intoxication that can lead to coma, seizures and death. There have been several reports of death from eating as little as half a fruit or a cup of juice.

To pick a ripe fruit, look for one that has lost almost all of its green tinge and is fully golden yellow, but before it starts getting brown stains. If you choose some that are still partly green they will ripen further if kept at room temperature. However the flavor won't be quite as fine. Put them in a plastic bag or a covered fruit ripener or plastic bowl. Don't seal it completely.

Some people say star fruit tastes like a cross between peaches and oranges. Others insist it has a flavor all it's own. Whichever description you prefer, it's best when fresh, not frozen or canned. Once picked, star fruit will keep for a week or maybe more in the refrigerator.

Canning sometimes creates a slightly bitter flavor, but slices or pureed fruit can be frozen. Sweetened, frozen star fruit puree makes a special tropical treat when served over slices of cake, as a dressing for fruit salad, or simply drizzled over a dish of ice cream. Slices can be packed in a freezer container and covered with a simple sugar syrup for freezing.

This week's recipe is for a super easy star fruit pie. You could add some blueberries and dried cranberries in the pie lattice to make a patriot July weekend

dessert. Happy 4th to all!

Star Fruit Pie

4 - 8 star fruit, depending on the size 1 cup sugar or Splenda® sweetener

1/4 cup quick cooking tapioca 2 Tbsp butter or margarine

nutmeg to taste Pie crust for a 2-crust pie

(1/4 cup lemon juice if fruit is very sweet)

Wash star fruit and pare the tips off the 5 ridges. Slice crosswise into half-inch stars, to make about 4 -5 cups of fruit. Remove seeds if present. Combine tapioca, sugar or sweetener and fruit. Add lemon juice if fruit is very sweet. For a 9 inch pie line pie plate with one crust. Spread fruit over pastry. Dot with butter and sprinkle with nutmeg. Roll second crust, place on top of fruit, seal and cut several gashes. Bake at 425° F for 35 min. For deep dish pie (and fewer calories), transfer fruit to casserole dish. Roll out 1 crust, cut in strips and place criss-cross over fruit. Add a few blueberries and dried cranberries in some openings in the lattice and make sure some perfect stars show through others. Bake at 400° F oven about 40 minutes or until fruit is tender.