

PENNY SAVER NEWS

FAX: 932-5261

March 22, 2012

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:mkeith@ufl.edu**What's a Cutie?**

No, it's not a cutie-pie, and no I'm not referring to a person! If you've been looking around the produce section in the grocery recently you've probably seen bags of Cuties. They're tiny little tangerines. Or are they mandarins? Maybe they're Clementines! Are they any different from a Satsuma? As sweet and delicious as they are, they might even deserve a name of their own. But right now they are simply the target of a fantastic advertising campaign. And there are actually two fruits being sold as 'cuties'.

At the simplest level, cuties are mandarin oranges, or the citrus known as mandarins. To be a mandarin the citrus needs to be small, sweet and have a thin, loose skin that is easy to peel off. There are many varieties of mandarins, and that's where the story gets more complex. There are too many names!

Tangerines are one group of mandarins that are distinguished by their darker red-orange skins. Clementines are another type of mandarin. They're usually very sweet with a slightly distinct flavor of their own. But, clementines are sometimes called clementine tangerines, seedless tangerines or seedless mandarins! Another variety of mandarins that are often recognized on their own are Satsumas. These too are very sweet and have a slightly different flavor. Satsumas are sometimes called emerald tangerines. And there are many more commercial varieties of mandarins, each bred for their own special growth or production ability.

All these names just go to show you how well our ancestors, here in Florida and

in other parts of the world where citrus grows, could recognize the subtle differences among varieties. There are probably not many people today who could go into a grocery store, pick up and taste an orange or a tangerine, and tell you right off the bat what variety it is. Most of us who are graced with citrus trees in our yards, inherited from a previous home owner, don't even know what variety we have! But those early growers could tell the differences. And as they kept growing the ones they liked the best, they gave them different names. But the same fruit, grown in 3 different states, could and often did end up with 3 or 4 or 6 different local names!

They all tasted great, they were all super-easy to peel, they all became popular. Eventually the citrus growers and breeders developed standardized varieties and names. Now one of the big citrus growers has gone one step further, marketing them under the nickname of 'cutie.'

Depending on the month you buy a cutie, you could get either of two different varieties. From November to January, what's being sold as a cutie is probably a Clementine. That's when Clementines are ripe and harvested. From February to April, the fruit in a bag of cuties is probably a Murcott mandarin. Have you ever heard of a Murcott? Probably not! They're a different variety, but are still small, sweet and easy to peel. They taste great, so there's no need to worry about which variety. Just enjoy!

There are no big nutritional differences among the varieties either. One of the nice things is that all of these are small enough that one fruit is just a perfect serving, enough for a snack or dessert. They're not like grapefruit or even bananas that are so large each one is 2 or 3 servings of fruit and carbs. With the littlest cuties, you could even have 2 for dessert!

Here's a delicious Florida variation on an old traditional recipe - Cole slaw. You can use tangerines, clementines, mandarins or cuties, whichever you have on hand. Any one will be delicious. Remove as much of the white fibers as you can. They're easier to peel and remove the fibers if you chill them first. This recipe would be great served with barbeque chicken or pulled pork.

Mandarin Cole Slaw

2 cups mandarin sections

3 cups shredded Cole slaw mix

½ cup raisins

1/3 cup low fat mayonnaise

½ tsp salt

2 tsp sugar

½ tsp celery salt

Use kitchen scissors to remove the fiber that runs down the straight edge of each section (the part that was in the center of the fruit). Cut sections in half and combine with cabbage and raisins. Combine mayo (or salad dressing), salt, sugar and celery seed in small bowl. Add to cabbage and mix well. Chill about half an hour. Serves 6.