



ALABAMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM/ LIMESTONE COUNTY OFFICE

**The Garden Spot
For week of September 7, 2009**

Pears

Pears and apples are versatile in that they can be used in many different ways. Most of us are familiar with the many uses of apples, so let's look at pears, especially since we are starting on their early fall harvest.

Several varieties of pears grow well in this area. The harder varieties, such as the Kieffer and Pineapple, or sand pear, are excellent for making preserves, pickles, relishes, marmalade, and for drying. When properly ripened, these pears also become soft and sweet and can be eaten fresh and used for pies and cakes.

The large Orient, the LaConte with the reddish color, the Baldwin and similar varieties are dual purpose pears. They are soft, fine-grained, sweet and juicy when ripe. They are good for eating fresh and for canning, preserving and freezing. The popular commercially grown Bartlett eating pear does not grow well in Alabama.

Pears are usually plentiful in backyards and home orchards from late August through October.

Nutritive Value

Pears have a refreshing, sweet flavor but are relatively low in calories. A medium-sized pear contains about 100 calories. They contribute small amounts of calcium, iron and niacin

Picking and Storing Pears

Unlike most fruits, pears should be picked from the tree before they ripen for best flavor and texture. If left to ripen on the tree, pears become coarse and gritty. Pick pears when they are mature but still firm, and before they fall to the ground. Buy fresh pears that are fairly firm but not hard.

Undersized fruit that's not mature may shrink or shrivel during storage. Color is not always an indication of ripeness. Cool pears immediately after picking if they are to be stored. To ripen, keep pears in a cool, humid place (60-70 degrees) for a few days. Store in a brown paper bag, box or similar container. Pears become over-ripe and break down quickly at temperatures above 85 degrees F.

How much to use

- ✓ 1 pound of fresh pears = about 3 medium pears
- ✓ 1 pound of fresh pears = about 2 cups sliced pears
- ✓ 1 bushel (50 pounds) fresh pears = 16 to 25 quarts canned pears

Using Pears

There are many ways to enjoy fresh pears – as a snack, low-calorie dessert, with a cheese tray or in delicious pies and cakes. They may be canned for salads and desserts or made into excellent preserves, pickles, mincemeat, chutney, marmalade, honey or jam, or dried for snacks and cookies.

Pear Facts

- Pick pears when mature but before they fall to the ground.
- Pears darken quickly when cut surface is exposed to air.
- Place peeled pears in a mild salt solution (1 1/2 teaspoons salt per quart water) during preparation to prevent darkening.
- For a pretty pear half, remove core from soft pears with the tablespoon from your set of metal measuring spoons.
- In canning pears, add ascorbic acid, a commercial color control mixture or lemon juice to the syrup to keep the bright, light color.

Hearty Pear Breakfast Muffins

2 ripe pears
1/3 cup brown sugar
1/2 cup skim milk
1/4 cup vegetable oil
1 egg (or egg substitute)
1/2 cup raisins
1 cup flour
3/4 cup whole wheat flour
2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/2 cup old-fashioned oatmeal

Peel and chop pears to measure 1 1/2 cups. Combine pears, sugar, milk, oil, egg and raisins. In a separate bowl, sift together remaining ingredients except oats. Stir in oats; add liquid mixture and stir just until blended. Spray 16 muffin cups with cooking spray. Bake in a preheated oven at 375 degrees F about 20-25 minutes or until golden brown. Serve warm. Makes about 16 muffins.

###



Pear Muffins