

CORPUS CHRISTI PRODUCE CO.

July 2009 Newsletter

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It's July – Let's Celebrate Our Independence!

Time to cool off at the beach, or have a picnic, maybe a backyard BBQ, or watch some fireworks, and most importantly – "Stay Cool"! This

month's featured produce is an all star for the ages – the Fig! Most folks only see or eat Figs that have been processed and dried. But since we are in the heart of the Fig season, we will explore a little information about this highly perishable fruit which doesn't store well fresh. Fresh ripe Figs are sweet, with a taste that some say resembles a cross between two all-time favorite fruits – the Peach and Strawberry. What an awesome treat by itself and a great treat in the hands of talented Chef.

Figs have been around since before the beginning of recorded time. Fossil evidence shows that Figs may have been one of the first fruits actively cultivated by early humans. In fact, they appear to have been cultivated almost 1,000 years before wheat and rye grains. Their large five point leaves were used



to cover Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and as a dried fruit they sustained lives during long, blistering, treks across barren deserts in early history. Figs have one of the highest

natural plant levels of calcium and fiber. The USDA data for the Mission variety of dried figs show them as the richest in fiber, copper, manganese, magnesium, potassium, calcium, and vitamin K as it relates our needs as humans. Figs also contain many antioxidants. They are good source of flavonoids and polyphenols, both known cancer fighting compounds. One study, shows that two medium size figs produced a significant increase in blood plasma antioxidant levels.

California and Texas figs are typically available throughout the summer months with the exact timing varying with the variety. If you buy dried figs, make sure that they are still relatively soft, mold free, and have a fresh sweet smell. Dried figs are usually available most of the year. Ripe figs need to be kept refrigerated where they will stay fresh for only about two to four days. Since they are considered very delicate and can bruise easily, they should be stored on a paper towel covered plate or shallow dish. It's a good idea to cover or wrap them to help keep them from drying out, getting crushed or picking up the odors of fragrant neighbors (onions really like to share their personality).

Figs grow on a thick branched tree or shrub called Ficus Carica. They can be grown in most areas with hot summers resembling Mediterranean climates. The largest commercial Fig producing country is Turkey followed by Egypt. In the United States, California and Texas are the largest producers.

Fig trees produce flowers like all fruit producing trees, but we never actually see the flowers. They are internal to the fruit. As you know, flowering fruit trees have to pollinate to actually produce the fruit. They are able to do this with the assistance of Fig loving wasps. The wasps actually enter the end of the bulb (immature fruit) to collect and spread pollen. Many times, in later development of the fruit the wasp actually becomes caught in the fruit. Believe it or not, we eat the wasp without knowing this ever happened. The fruit enzymes actually breakdown the insect until it becomes part of the fruit. Wow, talk about amazing....



Ready to boost your brain power!

(Answers at the end of the page – don't peak!)

- Figgy Pudding is mentioned in which Christmas carol:
a) We Wish You a Merry Christmas
b) I'm Dreaming of

- a White Christmas; c) God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen; d) Here We Come A-Wassailing
- Which is correct: a) You eat Fig seeds in fresh fruit but not in dried Figs; b) You never eat Fig seeds; c) You eat Fig seeds in fresh and dried Figs.
- True or False. Figs are related to Mulberries.
- The oldest dried Figs ever found were how old?
a) 500 – 1000 years; b) 5,000-7,500 years; c) 10,000-12,000 years; d) less than 500 years.



Recipe of the month: Big Kahuna Fig and Walnut Bars

Ingredients: Bars -

- *16 Ounces coarsely chopped dried Figs (remove stems)
- *1/2 Cup chopped walnuts
- *1/3 Cup sugar
- *1/4 Cup dark Rum or Orange Juice
- *2 Tbls hot water
- *1/2 Cup softened butter
- *1 Cup packed brown sugar
- *1 Large egg
- *1 1/2 Cups all-purpose flour

- *1/2 Tsp baking soda
- *1 1/4 Cups old fashioned oats
- Glaze -**
- *1/2 Cup powdered sugar
- *4 Tsp Rum or Orange Juice

Directions:

Pre-Heat oven to 350° F. Coat 13 x 9-inch baking pan with non-stick cooking spray. Combine figs, walnuts, sugar, rum and hot water and set aside. Beat together butter and sugar until creamy. Add egg to the butter/sugar mixture and mix until smooth. Stir in flour and baking soda then blend in oats to make a soft dough. Reserve 1 cup dough in a separate dish. Press thin layer of remaining dough in bottom of prepared pan (a little flour on the fingers will help). Spread fig mixture over dough. Drop reserved dough by teaspoonfuls all around the top, making sure the fig mixture shows through. Bake 30 minutes or until golden brown. Cool completely in pan. Drizzle with rum glaze (Rum Glaze: Stir together 1/2 cup powdered sugar and 3-4 teaspoons rum or orange juice until smooth).

If YOU would like to share a favorite recipe, please email Margaret@ccproduce.com, or call Margaret Jataine. Next month's featured produce will be Avocado! Get your recipes in quick!!



Margaret's Message:

1st – Congratulations to Karlene Lewis, Chief Operating Officer of Corpus Christi Metro Ministries to be the first with the answer to last month's bonus question. We hope they enjoy the free case of Kiwifruit.

2nd – Thanks to all of you who emailed the answer via our web-site. The answer was either Macaque Peach or Chinese Gooseberry.

We wish all of you a happy and safe Fourth of July. Remember to stay cool and to drink lots of water. Stock up with lots of Fruits and Veggies for your July 4th celebration. A great tray full of Watermelon, Cucumber, Cantaloupe and Kiwifruit just to mention a few, really make the backyard barbecue or picnic seem even more special. And, for goodness sakes, don't forget the home-made ice cream. What could be better than fresh ice cream flavored with juicy, sweet Strawberries!"

**Answers to the Riddles:

- a) "We Wish you a Merry Christmas!"
- c) The seeds are lightly crunch and they are always eaten. The skin is also eaten.
- True.



- c) 10,500-amazing years.

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