



Nutrition News

Pineapple: The Most Versatile Fruit There Is?

Despite its name, pineapple has no relation to apples or pine. Spanish settlers coined the name "piña de Indes" for the fruit's resemblance to a pine cone. English speakers translated this to "pineapple," but in the Tupi language of the Amazon basin where pineapples originate, it was called "anana," meaning "excellent fruit."

Pineapple is not a single fruit but rather a cluster of berries fused to a core. Growing and harvesting pineapples requires patience. A plant may take three years to mature from a seed, and will produce only one pineapple per year. That's why a single pineapple could cost the equivalent of several thousand dollars in colonial America, and it was common for party hostesses to rent a pineapple just for display purposes, as a symbol of hospitality. Now, pineapple is available year-round in the United States, grown in Hawaii and imported from Costa Rica and Brazil.

Pineapples For Grilling and Marinades

When grilled, pineapple caramelizes, which condenses sugars and intensifies its sweetness. The enhanced flavor complexity balances saltier ingredients, such as the classic pairing with ham or mixed into salsa to serve with tortilla chips. Bromelain, a mixture of enzymes in fresh pineapple, acts as a meat tenderizer — especially for tougher, less expensive cuts such as flank steak. Pair pineapple juice with teriyaki or soy sauce for a sweet and savory marinade. The meat's thickness determines soak time, ranging from 10 to 30 minutes. Timing is important; marinating meat too long can alter its color and taste, and the texture can turn to mush.

Pineapples are a nutrient powerhouse, loaded with vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants — including the enzyme bromelain — which is directly linked to reducing inflammatory pain in rheumatoid arthritis and osteoarthritis. Interest in the health effects of bromelain is growing. Although more research is needed, data shows the enzyme may reduce inflammation, blood clots and cancer progression. In vitro cell studies show bromelain's ability to boost immunity by altering cell function to promote cell death in tumor cells, thereby slowing the progression of cancer.

Nutrition Info

One cup of pineapple chunks has 82 calories, is an excellent source of vitamin C and a good source of thiamin and vitamin B6. (percentages refer to the recommended daily intake).

Fiber: 2.3 grams • Potassium: 5%
Vitamin C: 131% • Magnesium: 5%
Manganese: 76% • Niacin: 4%
Vitamin B6: 9% • Pantothenic acid: 4%
Copper: 9% • Riboflavin: 3%
Thiamin: 9% • Iron: 3%
Folate: 7%

Pineapple does not ripen after being picked. The color of pineapple skin ranges from all green to all yellow; this is not necessarily a sign of ripeness but it does indicate sweetness. A deeper yellow color indicates a higher sugar content. Choose a pineapple with fresh leaves and a plump body that slightly gives when squeezed.

Check the back page for three tasty pineapple recipes!

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Recipe: Grilled Pineapple Spears

Ingredients

3 tablespoons butter, melted - vegan butter will also work
 ¼ cup light brown sugar
 1 whole pineapple, peeled, cored and cut lengthwise into 10 to 12 spears

Directions

1. In a large bowl, mix together melted butter and light brown sugar with a fork.
2. Add the pineapple spears and coat on all sides with butter-sugar mixture.
3. Grill on medium-high heat for 3 to 4 minutes on each side, until grill marks appear.

Recipe: Pineapple Black Bean Salsa

Makes about 4 cups

Ingredients

1½ cups diced pineapple (fresh or canned)
 1 can black beans, rinsed & drained
 ¼ cup red onion, finely diced
 1 jalapeño, deseeded & minced
 ½ lime, juiced
 ½ cup cilantro, chopped
 Salt and pepper, to taste

Directions

1. If using fresh pineapple, dice into small pieces.
2. Combine all ingredients in a large bowl. Mix to combine.
3. Serve with tortilla chips or over meat. Keep refrigerated.

Note: You can use fresh or canned pineapple tidbits instead of cutting up a whole pineapple. Be sure to use gloves when mincing the jalapeño!

Recipe: Alcohol-free Piña Colada For Two

Ingredients

½ cup cream of coconut
 ¾ cup pineapple juice
 2 cups ice

Directions

1. Add about 1 cup of ice to a blender.
2. Open the cream of coconut and stir; it will be slightly separated in the can, so stir it together. Once combined, add the cream of coconut to the blender.
3. Add in the pineapple juice.
4. Blend for 20-30 seconds until ice is blended. If watery, add more ice to get desired consistency.

Garnish with cherries and/or pineapple chunks.

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