

the healthy swimmer



J. Carillet

In Season: Peaches

Prunus persica, more commonly known as the peach tree, is a deciduous, fruit-bearing tree originally cultivated in China, Persia and the Mediterranean region. The peach was brought to the United States by 16th century Spanish explorers. Colonial horticulturist George Minifie was among the earliest to attempt serious cultivation. Minifie planted peaches from England on his estate, Buckland, in Virginia. Native Americans helped spread the peach across the United States, and Thomas Jefferson had peach trees at Monticello – but the United States began commercial production much later, in the 19th century.

The peach tree grows 6 to 15 feet tall and produces juicy, edible fruit with a yellow or off-white flesh. Peaches with white flesh typically are very sweet with little acidity, while yellow and orange-fleshed varieties are sweet, tangy and more acidic. All varieties often have some red on their skin.

Peaches have a delicate aroma and velvety skin. Their relative, the nectarine, has smooth skin and a similar flavor. The fruit has a delicate, easily bruised flesh when ripe. Peaches are considered stone fruits or drupes because each contains a large, oval-shaped, stone-like seed. Cultivated peaches are divided into clingstone and freestone varieties, depending on whether or not the flesh sticks to the stone.

The peach is low in calories, high in fiber and potassium, and supplies about 8 percent of the recommended daily value of vitamin C. Depending on climate and variety, the peach harvest occurs from late May into August. <<<

Yoga Regulates Stress Response

New research on yoga suggests that performing this ancient practice may be helpful for both anxiety and depression, according to the April issue of the *Harvard Mental Health Letter*. Yoga has been studied since the 1970s as a possible treatment for depression and anxiety, but it has been hard to say how well the practice works. Many of the studies evaluating its therapeutic benefits have been small and poorly designed.

Yoga appears to blunt harmful effects of heightened stress by influencing the body's response. This is reflected in slower heart and breathing rates and lower blood pressure, all of which are good for the body. There is evidence that yoga helps increase heart rate variability, an indicator of the body's flexibility in responding to stress.

In 2008, researchers presented preliminary results from a study of yoga and pain. Their subjects were 12 yoga practitioners, 14 people with fibromyalgia (a condition many researchers consider a



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stress-related illness that is characterized by hypersensitivity to pain) and 16 healthy volunteers. When the three groups were subjected to external pain (pressure on a thumbnail), the yoga practitioners had the highest pain tolerance and the lowest pain-related brain activity on a brain scan.

For people dealing with depression, anxiety, stress or pain, yoga may be a relaxing and appealing way to manage symptoms. But although many forms of

yoga practice are safe, some are strenuous and may not be appropriate for everyone, notes Dr. Michael Miller, editor in chief of the *Harvard Mental Health Letter*. Older patients and those with mobility problems should check with a doctor before starting a yoga program. <<<

>>> **For more information on stress, visit Harvard Health Publications Stress Resource Center at www.health.harvard.edu/stress.**

World Aquatic Health Conference

The National Swimming Pool Foundation is promoting the World Aquatic Health Conference, scheduled for October 28-30, adjacent to and in partnership with the biennial National Environmental Public Health Conference. Bringing these conferences together creates networking and learning opportunities for recreational water leaders to learn more about emerging issues and to interact with public health, healthcare, advocacy and academic professionals. <<<

>>> For more information, visit www.nspf.org/WAHC_2009.html.



Value Meals Have Hidden Health Costs

As the stock market fluctuates and unemployment rises, more American consumers are pinching pennies and looking for bargains. According to the Cancer Project, which recently published "Cheap Eats for Hard Times: The Five Most Unhealthy Fast Food 'Value Menu' Items," many of these bargain items carry a hidden cost.

The high-fat, high-cholesterol items that dominate value menus can increase the risk of heart disease, diabetes and some types of cancer. To determine which items posed the greatest risk to public health, The Cancer Project's dietitians analyzed foods served at five popular fast food restaurant chains. They found that most items advertised on value menus are high in fat, saturated fat, calories, sodium and cholesterol.

The Cancer Project promotes cancer prevention and survival through a better understanding of cancer causes, particularly the link between nutrition and cancer. <<<

>>> To learn more about the unhealthiest value menu items, visit The Cancer Project website at www.cancerproject.org.

New Study on Preventing Pool Germs

A recent study by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte suggests that swim diapers will somewhat reduce but not prevent the spread of a type of recreational water illness caused by the microorganism cryptosporidium. Scientists from the university reported at the Swimming Pool & Spa International Conference in London that swim diapers help by slowing down the release of disease-causing germs, but the benefits are short lived. Crypto is spread by diarrhea from infected people or mammals and is the single largest illness threat to pool users. To prevent the spread of Crypto, officials advise that people should not get in the water if they have diarrhea.

Researchers measured the amount of microsphere released from swim diapers worn by children. The microspheres were plastic particles that have a similar size (five microns) to that of Crypto. Normal swim trunks, common disposable diapers and reusable diapers with and without vinyl diaper covers were tested. Swimming trunks without a swim diaper of any kind had the poorest performance – almost 90 percent of the microspheres were released into the water within one minute.

Crypto, a parasite that causes diarrhea and dehydration, is one of the most common causes of documented recreational water illness outbreaks. <<<

>>> For additional information, visit www.nspf.org.

Health Network – Professionals Wanted

The Sports Medicine and Science Committee serves to educate USMS members and the public on topics of sports medicine and science. The committee maintains a network of health professionals willing to serve as resources to Masters swimmers. Members of the network respond to questions sent to the Healthy Swimmer section of SWIMMER magazine. We would like to continue to expand the network. <<<

>>> If you or someone you know is a medical or science professional and would like to join the network, please contact Sports Medicine and Science Committee Chair Jane Moore at SportsMedicine@usms.org.

reader recipe

The easiest way to poach peaches is with the skins on. The skins give a wonderful peachy color to the syrup. This recipe is infused with fragrant coriander, pepper and fresh mint. Delicious served over vanilla frozen yogurt or ice cream.

Poached Peaches

- 2 cups water
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 3 strips lemon zest (1- by-2-inch strips)
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 4 whole black peppercorns
- 4 whole coriander seeds
- 4 ripe but firm medium peaches, halved lengthwise and pitted
- 1/4 cup packed fresh mint leaves, roughly chopped

Combine water, sugar, lemon zest, lemon juice and spices in a nonreactive saucepan. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat, stirring until the sugar dissolves. Add peaches, return to a low boil, cover the pan and simmer. Turn the peaches occasionally, until tender when pierced and the skins are loosened – approximately 20 minutes. Transfer the peaches to a plate with a slotted spoon, return liquid to a boil and cook until reduced to about 3/4 cup, 10 to 12 minutes. Remove from the heat, stir in mint and cool to room temperature. Peel off and discard the peach skins. Place the peaches in a storage container and strain the cooled syrup over them. Cover and chill for four hours.

Servings: 6

Calories per serving: 85

Fat calories per serving: 0

>>> Do you have a recipe our readers would enjoy? Send it to editor@USMS.org, or mail to: USMS/Reader Recipe, 655 North Tamiami Trail, Sarasota, FL 34236.

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