

Gooseberry

History

Gooseberries have quite the history and popularity in Europe. They were first cultivated in the 16th century in English and Dutch gardens and used to treat victims of the plague. Later, colonists brought them to the United States where they gained popularity. In the 1800s “Gooseberry Clubs” formed in England, where gardeners gathered to cross strains of their beloved fruits and create new varieties. The ultimate goal of each club member was to grow the largest gooseberry. In 1905, disease infected many gooseberry plants in Europe and the US. The gooseberry’s popularity swiftly declined. Of England’s once 170 “Gooseberry Clubs,” only two remain. The oldest operating Gooseberry Club, Egton Bridge, began in 1801 and is still active. It is a prestigious and competitive club.

Gooseberries grow on thorny bushes. They are related to currant fruit and are a part of the ribe family. The bush blooms with pink flowers in a line underneath the branch, which is later where the fruit will grow. The fruit is smaller than a plum and larger than a grape, and it comes in shades of green, yellow, red, pink, and purple. Some wild varieties have a spiky skin on them, but most look similar to grapes. Each bush produces 8-10 pounds of fruit, which drops when it is ripe. Under ripe fruits are used for tarts, whereas ripe fruit can be used for baking or desserts. Like most fruits, gooseberries are a good source of vitamin C and fiber, but they also contain an excellent amount of vitamin A, which is important for eye health.

Language Lesson

We know it as a gooseberry in English, but this fruit goes by other names around the globe:

- *Stachelbeere* in German.
- *Groseille a Maquereaux* in French.
- *Uva spina* in Italian.



Fun Facts

- Gooseberry treats are favorite desserts among some US presidents- John Adams enjoyed gooseberry fool (stewed fruit in custard), Abraham Lincoln enjoyed gooseberry pie, and James Buchanan enjoyed gooseberry tart.
- Fresh gooseberries can be stored in the fridge for 1-2 weeks and can also be frozen.
- The Egton Bridge annual Gooseberry Contest is the first Tuesday of August.



This institution is an equal opportunity provider.