

Plum

History

There are thousands of varieties of plums grown across the world. The varieties have unique sizes, colors, shapes, and flavors. The varieties of plum we see today originated from two main types of plum: Japanese and European. Japanese plums originated in China and were introduced to Japan only 300 years ago.

Most varieties have juicy, yellow or reddish flesh. Their skin colors can range from crimson to black-red. They are classified as clingstone fruits because their flesh clings to the pit at the center of the fruit. The Japanese plum was introduced to the United States in 1870 and became very popular.

The origin of the European plum is unknown.

They were grown in Europe since ancient times.

Alexander the Great spread plums throughout the Mediterranean and orchards were planted in Rome as early as 65 B.C. European plums were brought to America by the earliest settlers, but upon arrival, they discovered wild plums growing along the eastern coast of the United States. The European plum crop replaced the native wild plum and is still grown commercially there today.



Dried Plums

Dried plums are sometimes called prunes and are a great snack to enjoy when fresh plums are not available. The European plum is the ideal variety to use to make dried plums because they are smaller, denser, and less juicy than Japanese varieties. European plums always have a blue or purple skin color, and their pits are usually freestone, meaning they separate easily from the flesh. These traits make European plums easy to process into a relatively uniform size, and they remain similar in coloring. While they may be less juicy than the Japanese varieties, when dried, the flavors become concentrated, so they are as flavorful, if not more flavorful, than the fresh Japanese plum.

Fun Facts

- There are over 140 varieties of plums sold in the US.
- Plums are closely related to peaches, nectarines, and apricots.
- Plums do not sweeten after being picked, but they will soften.
- The plum is mentioned in the nursery rhyme “Little Jack Horner.”
- Plums are eaten fresh, dried, canned, as juice, and jam/jelly.
- Mature plums may have a waxy, dusty, white coating.



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