

FOOD

Watermelon

Watermelon is a fruit that is terrific all by itself. You've surely sat outside on a warm summer night, eating watermelon slices and maybe even engaging in childish contests to see who can spit the watermelon seeds the furthest. If you really like watermelon, you've probably tried different kinds of watermelon such as seedless varieties or yellow watermelon. But did you know that watermelon is not just a food that is good on its own? It's also a great ingredient for more complex foods that benefit from the hint of watermelon flavor and the water-based juiciness of the fruit.



One of your favorite summer foods has an ancient history. It's believed that watermelon first grew in the Kalahari Desert in Africa thousands of years ago. Ancient Egyptians depicted the harvest of watermelons in hieroglyphics and watermelons were placed in the tombs of kings as food for the afterlife.

Europeans got their first taste of watermelon in the 13th century. In America, watermelon was brought by European colonists in the 1600's.

Like the name suggests, watermelon is prized for its high water content - 92%. That's why watermelon was used as a transportable water source. It's actually a vegetable related to cucumbers and pumpkins. Not only do people eat the sweet flesh, but the seeds can be toasted and the rinds can be pickled.

Watermelon is eaten and produced nearly everywhere. The U.S. ranks fourth in watermelon production, with 44 states growing the fruit. It's also the most consumed melon in the country.

Watermelon comes in all sizes, shapes and colors. Besides the green rind and red flesh that most of us are familiar with, there are yellow and white varieties with different colored seeds. Watermelon is high in Vitamin A & C and is a good source of lycopene. Studies show diets high in lycopene could reduce the risk of prostate cancer. Nutritionists also say watermelon is a heart-healthy food.

Fun Fact: Raise a cold glass of watermelon beer. In Russia, watermelon juice is used to make a unique brew.



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Got Watermelon?

Watermelon ice cubes: All you need to do for this recipe is take a watermelon (seedless), blend it up into a thin juice in your blender (no additional water or juice needed) and then freeze the juice into cubes. Add to sodas and waters for a refreshing summer beverage.

Watermelon kabobs: You can add skewers to watermelon marinate them and grill them. They grill quickly so keep an eye on them. The watermelon taste isn't too strong when it's grilled so add vegetables and / or meats to fill the skewers.

Watermelon Chicken: The basic idea is to add the watermelon to the baking of the chicken to get the additional flavor in the meat. This can be done by adding in chunks and mixing them (do this only in the final few minutes of cooking the meat).

Watermelon Cranberry Glazed Pork Chops

- Ingredients**
- GLAZE:**
- 2 cups watermelon puree
 - 4 cups fresh or frozen cranberries
 - 1 cup sugar
 - 1 dash cloves
 - 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon



- CHOPS:**
- 8 pork chops
 - 2 cups pineapple juice
 - 1/2 cup soy sauce
 - 1 tablespoon rosemary leaves
 - 3 cloves minced garlic
 - 1 tablespoon black pepper

- Directions**
1. Simmer glaze ingredients together in a heavy saucepan, stirring frequently, for 20 minutes or until cranberries are tender and sauce is thick.
 2. Place pork in a large zipper lock bag with the rest of the ingredients (except the glaze) and seal tightly. Allow to marinate at least 2 hours or up to 12.
 3. Grill until cooked and arrange on a warm platter. Pour the glaze over the chops and serve immediately.



"Fantastic no-bake pie, bursting with watermelon's cool, refreshing summertime flavor."

Watermelon Pie

- Ingredients**
- CRUST:**
- 1 1/2 cups low fat graham cracker crumbs
 - 1/4 cup light margarine, melted
 - 3 Tbs. granulated sugar
- FILLING:**
- 12 ounces fat-free cool whip
 - 3 ounces watermelon gelatin powder
 - 1/4 cup water
 - 2 cups watermelon balls

- Directions**
1. In a medium sized bowl, combine crumbs, margarine and sugar. Press mixture firmly into a 9-inch pie plate. Chill for one hour or until the crust is firm.
 2. Meanwhile, prepare filling. Combine whipped topping, watermelon gelatin powder, and water. Fold in watermelon balls. Spoon mixture into pie crust.
 3. Chill two hours before serving.

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