Farm to School Month – Week Five: Fruits of Alaska

What Are the Various Types of Fruits You Eat?
Some of the plants we grow to eat the fruits love growing in Alaska. There are too many to mention here so I tried to just hit a sample from a category you may have eaten! Here are a few to try. . .

- Apples
- Cherries
- Pears
- Apricots
- Plums
- Raspberries
- Currants
- Gooseberries
- Strawberries
- Blueberries
- Kiwifruit
- Cranberries
- Salmonberries
- Cloudberries

Fruits are defined by two different sciences: botanically and culinarily. In botany, a fruit is the ripened ovary or carpel that contains seeds and in culinary terminology, a fruit is usually any sweet-tasting plant part, especially a botanical fruit. In common language usage, "fruit" normally means the fleshy seed-associated structures of a plant that are sweet or sour, and edible in the raw state, such as apples, bananas, grapes, lemons, oranges, and strawberries.

There are three classifications of fruits that botanists use to describe how the flower organs are arranged and how the fruits developed: simple fruits, aggregate fruits, and composite (multiple) fruits.

- **Simple Fruit** - Simple fruits can be either dry or fleshy, and result from the ripening of a simple or compound ovary in a flower with only one pistil.
  - Dry fruits may be either dehiscent (they open to discharge seeds), or indehiscent (they do not open to discharge seeds). Types of dry, simple fruits are
    - Strawberry, dandelion, coconut, legume (e.g., pea), nut (e.g., acorn), and samara (e.g., maple)
  - Fruits in which part or all of the pericarp (fruit wall) is fleshy at maturity are simple fleshy fruits. Types of simple, fleshy, fruits are
    - Berry (e.g., cranberry), pome (e.g., apple), and stone fruit (e.g., cherry)
- **Aggregate Fruit** - Aggregate fruits form from single flowers that have multiple carpels which are not joined together, i.e. each pistil contains one carpel. The raspberry, whose pistils are termed drupelets because each is like a small drupe attached to the receptacle. In some bramble fruits (such as blackberry) the receptacle is elongated and part of the ripe fruit, making the blackberry an aggregate-accessory fruit.
• **Composite Fruit** - A multiple fruit is one formed from a cluster of flowers (called an inflorescence). Each flower produces a fruit, but these mature into a single mass. Examples are the pineapple, fig, mulberry, osage-orange, and breadfruit.

**Shopper’s Tips**
You have found yourself ready to pick up delicious fruits for you and your family at the store/market/garden. Here are some ideas to keep in mind to find the right bunch:

• As a general rule, whole fruit is preferable to highly processed, since processing can reduce the level and effectiveness of the compounds that make fruits so important for good health.
• When selecting fruit, give each piece a very slight squeeze (it should give a bit under pressure) and smell it (a sweet fragrance indicates ripeness).
• Choose smaller-sized pieces of fruit—they’re typically sweeter. If you plan on eating the fruit the same day, be sure it’s ripe and ready.
• If you’re buying in advance, there should still be a very mild fragrance, but no fruit except apples should be rock-hard.
• Some fruits, including pears, bananas and avocados, continue to sweeten and soften after picking if left at room temperature.
• Others will not ripen further once you bring them home—that is, what you see is what you get with cherries, citrus (oranges, lemons, limes, grapefruit), grapes, pomegranates, soft berries (blackberries, raspberries, strawberries) and watermelons.
• Don’t buy damaged fruits or vegetables even if they’re a bargain—they’ll be less nutritious (and less tasty) than fresh.
• For the best flavor, buy fresh fruits in season, when you can.

**Food Safety to Keep in Mind**
When we think about fresh fruit, food borne illness isn’t the first thing that comes to mind. However, fruit has been known to be the source of some food borne illness. But you can follow a few guidelines and make sure your fruit is safe and ready for you to eat.

• When picking out fresh fruit be aware of cuts and bruises to the skin of the fruit. The skin is the fruit’s natural barrier to keep harmful bacteria out.
• Before handling your fruit be sure to wash your hands with warm water and soap for 20 seconds. This prevents you from introducing anything harmful on your hands onto the fruit.
• If your fruit doesn’t state “triple rinsed” or “ready-to-eat” then you should rinse your fruit with cool running water to help wash away anything harmful on the outside of your fruit.
• Wash all utensils you will use to prepare your fruit and be sure to not use any dirty utensils you might have used for raw meat preparation.
How Do You Store Fruit?
Fruit can be eaten jellied, dried, sautéed, roasted (apples), grilled (stone fruits), stewed (strawberries), poached, or most commonly raw. Once you get them home from the store/market/garden, what do you do next?

- Fruits that are bruised or damaged ripen faster, so eat them first.
- Wait to wash your fruits and veggies until you’re ready to use them.
- Fruits that kept in plastic will ripen faster, usually too fast. Store them loose.
- Non-cherry stone fruits, avocados, tomatoes, mangoes, melons, apples, and pears will continue to ripen if left sitting out on a countertop, while items like bell peppers, grapes, all citrus, and berries will only deteriorate and should be refrigerated.
- Bananas in particular ripen very quickly, and will also speed the ripening of any nearby fruits.
- All fruits benefit from proper post harvest care, and in many fruits, the plant hormone ethylene causes ripening. Therefore, maintaining most fruits in an efficient cold chain is optimal for post harvest storage, with the aim of extending and ensuring shelf life.
- All cut, peeled, or cooked fruits should be refrigerated within two hours.
- Frozen veggies stay good much longer than fresh and are a perfect back up to have on hand for those busy weeknight dinners.

Reasons to Eat Fruits
- Fruits are naturally sweet to taste, low in calories, fat, sodium and cholesterol.
- Fruits are rich in fiber which is very essential for the smooth movement of the digestive system.
- There are some fruits that give body energy as they contain carbohydrates which are the main source of energy. Carbohydrates in fruits are mainly sugar which actually breaks down easily and make a quick source of energy.
- Fruits contain at least 90 to 95 percent water which is also an important nutrient.
- Basically, fruit benefits a healthy lifestyle by giving us carbohydrates, fiber and micro-nutrients which aids our bodies to function properly.
- Fruits give you more energy than sugar or sweets as they contain natural glucose and fructose.
- USDA’s MyPlate encourages making half your plate fruits and vegetables for healthy eating.
- Fruit are important sources of many nutrients, including potassium, fiber, vitamin C and folate (folic acid).
- Foods that are rich in potassium like oranges and bananas may help you maintain a healthy blood pressure.
- And finally, here’s a great reason to eat more fruits – the variety of colors, flavors, and textures that fruits bring to meals and snacks.
How Do You Prepare Fruit?
Many hundreds of fruits, including fleshy fruits (like apple, kiwifruit, mango, peach, pear, and watermelon) are commercially valuable as food, eaten both fresh and as jams, marmalade and other preserves. Fruits are also used in manufactured foods (e.g., cakes, cookies, ice cream, muffins, or yogurt) or beverages, such as fruit juices (e.g., apple juice, grape juice, or orange juice).

Here are some more ideas to get more fruits into your diet:

- **Snack smart**: Instead of snacking on chips or cookies, make sure to have healthier alternatives on hand like a piece of fruit. Remember that a ½ cup of most raw fruits equals one serving.
- **Leave fruit in obvious sight**: Passing by the kitchen? You're more likely to grab a handful of grapes or cherries if they are sitting on the counter displayed in a nice bowl. Or perhaps, if they're in your view, you'll grab a banana or orange on the way out the door.
- **Never go fruit-less**: Make sure every meal or snack you eat is paired with a fruit. For instance, add fruit to your cereal or pair string cheese with a handful of grapes with peanut butter, instead of crackers.
- **Always include salad before or after dinner**: And this doesn't have to mean just boring lettuce and tomato—try spicing it up, by making a chopped salad with fruit and nuts.
- **Freeze your fruit**: Looking for a sweet snack after dinner? Sometimes the perfect simple dessert consists of a handful of frozen grapes or strawberries (1/2 a cup equals one serving).
- **Boost your breakfast**: Stir berries (fresh or frozen), dried fruit, or banana slices into yogurt, cereal, or oatmeal.
- **Be a sneaky chef**: Bribe yourself with baked goods. Both vegetables and fruits are healthy, delicious, and fabulous additions to breads, cakes, biscuits, and pies. Both savory and sweet, what better way to add a vegetable serving to your day?
- **Make ahead meal idea**: Make a large batch of fruit salad to have on hand for meals and snacks.
- **Salute to the snack**: Keep dried fruit in your car or purse for busy days when a breather is just not an option.

**How Much Do I Need?**
According to the USDA 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines, a serving of cooked fruit is ½ cup and a serving of raw fruit is 1 cup. The best way to think about portion sizes of fruit we eat is to fill ¼ to ½ of your plate with fruits.

**Recommended Daily Amounts of Fruits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kids, Ages 5-12</th>
<th>Teens and Adults, Ages 13 and up</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Males</strong></td>
<td>2½ - 5 cups per day</td>
<td>4½ - 6½ cups per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Females</strong></td>
<td>2½ - 5 cups per day</td>
<td>3½ - 5 cups per day</td>
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Recipes for Classrooms, Cafeterias, and Home Kitchens

Blueberry BBQ Sauce

Makes 1 ½ cups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blueberries, fresh or frozen</td>
<td>2 cups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balsamic vinegar</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar</td>
<td>3 Tablespoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ketchup</td>
<td>3 Tablespoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garlic cloves, minced</td>
<td>2 cloves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt</td>
<td>½ teaspoon</td>
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</tbody>
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1. Place all ingredients into a medium saucepot. Stir to combine.
2. Cook on low to medium heat on the stove. Simmer for 20 to 25 minutes, stirring occasionally, until slightly thickened.
3. Let cool slightly. Blend in a blender for a smooth consistency or smash with potato masher for a rustic consistency.
4. Serve with salmon, pork, chicken or anything to your liking.

Overnight Oats with Berries

Serves 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rolled oats</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole milk</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yogurt, vanilla flavored (try to get one with the least added sugar)</td>
<td>½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berries: i.e. cloudberrries, raspberries, blueberries, etc.</td>
<td>1 cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honey or birch syrup</td>
<td>2 teaspoons</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1. Combine oats, milk, and yogurt in medium bowl. Transfer mixture equally into 2 containers. Top mixture with berries and top berries with honey.
2. Cover and refrigerate overnight.
3. Mix everything together and serve cold the next morning for breakfast.

Fruit Infused Water Ideas

Berries and Basil Water

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>1 gallon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berries, ex) strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, etc.</td>
<td>1 ½ cup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basil, fresh</td>
<td>5 medium leaves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Combine ingredients in a pitcher. Chill for 1 to 2 hours. Serve water with the berries in it.

### Citrus Ginger Water

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>1 gallon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oranges, sliced</td>
<td>2 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lime, sliced</td>
<td>1 each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ginger, sliced</td>
<td>1 Tablespoon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Combine ingredients in a pitcher. Chill 1 to 2 hours. Serve water, keeping fruit inside pitcher.

### A Slice of Fruit History

- The apple has been grown for thousands of years. It was well known to the Ancient China and Egypt. Apples were also known to the Greeks and Romans and they were popular through all the centuries to the present day.
- Apricots originally came from China. In ancient times, they spread across Persia to the Mediterranean region and the Romans knew them. Later the Arabs grew apricots.
- Bananas are native to Southeast Asia. However, by 500 BC they were being grown in India. Alexander the Great ate them and his men took them back to the Western World. By 200 AD bananas were also grown in China. Bananas were probably taken to Madagascar by the Arabs and spread from there to mainland Africa. In the 16th century the Portuguese took bananas to the New World. The first recorded sale of bananas in England was in 1633 however they were expensive until the end of the 19th century.
- Blueberries are native to North America. They were eaten by Native Americans (sometimes with meat). They were also used as a medicine. Europeans learned how to grow blueberries and from the late 19th century they were canned.
- Cherries are native to Asia. They were eaten by the Chinese, the Greeks and the Romans. However, in Northern Europe cherries only really became popular in the late Middle Ages. In the 17th century colonists took cherries to North America.
- Gooseberries are native to Europe and Western Asia. They were first mentioned in England in the 16th century when they were grown as a medicine. However, in the 19th century they were a popular food. The name gooseberry may simply be goose berry because they were eaten with goose or it may be a corruption of the Dutch word kruisbes, which means cross berry.
- Pears are native to Europe and North Asia. Pears were grown by the Greeks and by the Romans. Pears were grown in England in the Middle Ages and many new varieties were grown in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. As well as being eaten pears were used to make perry.

### Just the Facts

- In the U.S., the apples sold at stores can be up to a year old.
- A strawberry isn't an actual berry, but a banana is.
- Grapes explode when you put them in the microwave.
- Apples, peaches and raspberries are all members of the rose family.
- Oranges are not even in the top ten list of common foods when it comes to vitamin C levels.
- The World's Most Popular Fruit is the TOMATO.
• Coffee beans aren't beans. They are fruit pits.
• Square watermelons are grown by Japanese farmers for easier stack and store.
• Cucumbers are fruits.
• The color orange is named after the orange fruit, but before that, it was called geoluread (yellow-red).
• The Coco de Mer palm tree has the earth's largest fruit, weighing 92 lbs, and seeds weighing 37 lbs.
• There is a tree called Fruit Salad Tree that sprouts 3 to 7 different fruits in the same tree (I want one of these!!)
• Tomatoes have more genes than humans.

• The pineapple is actually a berry.
• Strawberries have more vitamin C than oranges.
• Pineapples were very expensive in the 1700s, so American colonists would rent a pineapple and carry it around a party to show their wealth.
• Iceland has Europe's largest banana plantation.
• The Durian fruit, known as the world's smelliest fruit, is so stinky that in parts of Asia is not allowed to be taken on buses or into hotels.
• Watermelons contain an ingredient called citrulline that can trigger production of a compound that helps relax the body's blood vessels, just like Viagra.