

PEPINO – PLU 4333



Description/Taste

The Pepino has a light-yellow to light-green skin, streaked with purple vertical striping. The flesh, when ripe is golden yellow with a narrow seed cavity. The Pepino is entirely edible: skin, flesh, pulp and seeds. The yellow interior is fine-grained and sweetly aromatic, intensifying as it ripens. Its flavor can be described as a mix of banana and pear, with a slightly bitter bite. Its size is inconsistent and can be as small as a plum or as large as a papaya. For optimum sweetness Pepino should be picked at peak of ripeness. Care must be taken when handling Pepino fruits as once ripe they are delicate and easily prone to bruising.

Seasons/Availability

Pepino make sporadic appearances in the marketplace beginning in spring.

Current Facts

The word "Pepino" is Spanish for cucumber and appears to be universal with slight variations of spelling or added epithets, such as "Pepino Dulce" or Sweet cucumber. Other names include tree melon and melon pear. This name "Pepino" is also used in parts of South America for the cassabanana. It is the fruit of a small evergreen shrub. In fact, it is commonly mis-labeled as a melon, when it actually is classified as a berry within the Solanaceae or nightshade family, ie: tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants.

Applications

The skin of the Pepino is edible but if tough and unpalatable it can easily be peeled away. Ripen at room temperature. Pair with lemons or limes, sweet basil, honey, chiles, chayote and coconut. Serve in fresh salads and sauces. Halve and serve fresh as a dessert or breakfast dish. Store ripe Pepino in a plastic bag in the refrigerator up to three days.

Geography/History

Native to temperate Andean areas of Chile and Peru, Pepino are also cultivated in other regions of South and Central America, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. Pepino is documented as being grown in California in San Diego prior to 1889 and in Santa Barbara in 1897. Pepino will do well in fertile, well drained soils and in sunny, frost free climates.

Pepinos Add Melon-y Sweetness to Salsa



Feel free to play around with ingredients here: If you're not that into mint, switch it out for fresh parsley or basil leaves. Use walnuts, pistachios or almonds – toasted, please – as a stand-in for pecans. Adjust this to coordinate with the other components of your meal and to suit your individual taste.

Serves | 4 to 6 |

- ¼ cup **clover** or **orange blossom honey**
- 2½ tsp **balsamic vinegar**
- ½ tsp **chile flakes**
- 2 to 3 **ripe pepinos**, flesh scooped from skin, seeds removed, chopped into ½-inch cubes
- ½ cup seedless **red grapes**, halved lengthwise
- 1/3 cup quartered dried **black Mission figs**

- 2 **scallions**, white and light green parts only, sliced into thin rings
- ½ cup toasted and roughly chopped **pecans**
- 10 to 12 fresh **mint leaves**, sliced into very thin ribbons
- **sea salt** and freshly ground **black pepper**

| **Preparation** | In a small bowl, whisk together honey, balsamic vinegar and chile flakes. Set aside.

In a medium bowl, add pepino, grapes, figs, scallions and pecans and stir to incorporate. Add fresh mint to taste; add honey-balsamic mixture, toss to coat and season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve immediately.