

Farmer in the Field



CALIFORNIA, THE #1 PEACH STATE

By Bonnie Swank

Peaches, like so many other fruits and vegetables have quite a history and have traveled over many continents before settling in California. Peaches started in China (BC) as a small bitter fruit and cultivated over the years into larger much sweeter fruit. They soon became a valued commodity and were traded throughout the Mediterranean regions. In the 1500's they were brought to the Americas by the Spanish. When the Spanish landed in Florida in 1513 the climate was perfect for growing this sweet delectable fruit. The popularity grew and they soon spread throughout the thirteen colonies reaching as far as the Mississippi River. In 1524 the Spanish also introduced peaches from across the Mississippi. In 1849 California's population grew due to the gold rush and the demand for peaches could no longer be met by the eastern suppliers. Taking matters into their own hands the Californians started producing and supplying their own peaches turning California into today's number one principle peach growing state.

We all love a fresh juicy peach but like so many other delicious fruits and vegetables the season is short and a good peach is not always available. The good news is canned peaches are available year round and are actually more nutritious. Yes, it may be hard to believe but canned peaches have higher levels of vitamin C, vitamin A and antioxidants thanks to the canning and cooking process. Canned peaches are actually ten times higher in folate than fresh and to top it off the levels don't go down over time.

There are two types of peaches, freestone and clingstone with many varieties to choose from. Unlike the nectarine all peaches have a fuzzy skin. The color of a ripe peach can range from creamy white-white to light pink, yellow orange and red. The flesh also ranges from pinkish

white to yellow gold. Fresh peaches can also range in juiciness and firmness depending on the variety and degree of ripeness. Fresh or canned peaches are good and good for you!