Pomegranate

Ingredient of the Month

Presented by ACFEF Chef & Child Foundation and Clemson University
As one of the oldest cultivated and most labor-intensive fruits, pomegranates have been a popular subject for many fables and folklore. In fact, one Greek myth proclaims the delectable pomegranate is responsible for winter. According to the myth, pomegranate was the guilty pleasure of Persephone, and Hades tricked Persephone into eating some of its seeds while imprisoned in the underworld. This act of indulgence would force Persephone into spending several months each year in the underworld. During this time, her mother, Demeter goddess of the harvest, mourns her absence and allows nothing to grow on Earth. So, it seems only natural for this fruit’s availability to stretch from August into the winter months.

While pomegranates have been cultivated in Mediterranean countries since ancient times, today they are also grown throughout Asia, Africa and India, as well as California. Roughly the size of a large orange, pomegranates comprise a leathery skin that ranges from deep pink to rich red and surrounds hundreds of sweet-tart seeds. Separated by bitter, cream-colored membranes, the edible seeds can be eaten as a fruit, used to garnish sweet and savory dishes or pressed to extract the juice.

**Healthy ingredient contribution**

**• ANTIOXIDANTS:** Pomegranates are extremely high in antioxidants (even higher than red wine and green tea), which may help prevent and fight cancer. The antioxidants found in pomegranates may also help fight atherosclerosis, which is caused when fatty deposits collect along the walls of arteries.

**• VITAMINS:** Pomegranates contain B vitamins, such as riboflavin, thiamin and niacin, as well as vitamin K, which helps with blood coagulation. They also are high in vitamin C, which is a good anti-inflammatory agent. Vitamin E is present in pomegranates and helps protect vitamin A and essential fatty acids from oxidation, and prevents the breakdown of body tissues.

**• MINERALS:** Pomegranates contain calcium for bone health as well as phosphorus, which plays a role in DNA and RNA. Being high in potassium, pomegranates can help manage high blood pressure and build strong bones.

**• FIBER:** Fiber is present only in the seeds of pomegranates and aids in digestive regularity. Fiber may lower LDL cholesterol as well as prevent cardiovascular disease.

**Varieties and uses**

An easy way to avoid the inevitable staining caused by the bright red juices of pomegranates is to seed them while submerged in water. First, score the fruit into quarters from crown to stem end, cutting through the skin but not into the interior of the fruit. With the fruit submerged in a bowl of water, pull it apart with your hands and remove the seeds and membrane. The seeds should fall to the bottom of the bowl, and the membrane should float to the surface. Discarding the membrane, pour seeds into a colander. Rinse, and pat dry.

**• Pomegranate seeds** can be used as garnishes on sweet and savory dishes. You can sprinkle them on salads, over hot or cold cereals, or on top of yogurt. They also pair well with seafood.

**• Pomegranate juice** can be reduced with broth and aromatics for rich sauces to accompany a variety of meat and poultry dishes. It can also be reduced into syrups to drizzle over desserts.

**Storage**

Refrigerate whole pomegranates for up to two months, or store in a cool, dark place for up to a month. Seeds can be stored in an airtight container and frozen for up to three months.

**Serving size**

1 medium pomegranate = approximately 100 calories

Contributions to this article were made by Katharine Bradley.
POMEGRANATE TAPIOCA PARFAITS

Yield: 6 servings

Ingredients:

2 T. sugar  
1 T. cornstarch  
1 1/2 cup pomegranate seeds, divided  
2/3 cup pomegranate juice  
1 T. lemon juice  
1/2 cup large tapioca pearls  
2 cups water  
2 1/2 cups low-fat milk  
2 eggs, beaten  
1/2 cup sugar  
1/4 t. salt  
1 vanilla bean, split lengthwise  
6 mint sprigs

1. To prepare compote, mix sugar and cornstarch in a small saucepan. Add 1 cup pomegranate seeds, pomegranate juice and lemon juice; stir to combine. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Cook, stirring until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes. Divide compote mixture among six 6-oz. parfait glasses, ramekins or other dessert cups. Place in refrigerator to chill.

2. To prepare pudding, soak tapioca in water for 3 hours in refrigerator in a 2-quart saucepan.

3. Drain water. Add milk, eggs, sugar and salt. Scrape seeds from vanilla bean into mixture. Mix well. Cook on medium heat, stirring constantly until thickened and pearls are translucent (about 45 minutes). Remove from heat.

4. Spoon pudding mixture over compote. Cover; refrigerate until pudding is well chilled and firm, at least 1 hour.

5. To serve, garnish each parfait with remaining pomegranate seeds and mint sprig, if desired.

Nutrition Information

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<tr>
<th>Calories: 260</th>
<th>Fiber: 1g</th>
<th>Calcium: 15%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fat: 3.5g</td>
<td>Protein: 6g</td>
<td>Iron: 4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat. Fat: 2g</td>
<td>Vitamin A: 8%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbs: 51g</td>
<td>Vitamin C: 10%</td>
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This recipe was tested by Clemson University’s Culinary Nutrition Undergraduate Student Research Group.