



Taken from: www.nutrition-and-you.com/apricot.html

Full of fragrance and sweet, golden-orange apricots are another summer season delicacies of Asian origin. These much-prized fruits were first brought to the Europe by Greeks, who named them as “golden eggs of the sun.” Botanically, the fruit is closely related to peaches and nectarine; sharing with them in the broader *Rosaceae* family of fruit-trees in the genus; *Prunus*. Scientific name: *Prunus Armenia*. Today, some of the chief producing regions of this fruit are Turkey, Iran, Italy, France, Spain, Syria, Greece, and China.

Apricot is a medium sized deciduous tree that grows best in well-drained mountainous slope soils. During the spring, it bears plenty of beautiful pinkish-white flowers that attract bees. The fruits have almost uniform size, 4-5 cm in diameter, and weigh about 35 g. In structure; the fruit is a drupe, consisting of a centrally located single pit surrounded by crunchy, aromatic edible flesh. The seed is enclosed in a hard stony shell, often called as "stone."

Fresh, ripe apricots have a sweet flavor similar to plums. Sun dried organic apricots fruits are nutritiously denser than fresh ones, although they have less in vitamin-C content. Its seed-kernel is also edible and taste like that of almonds. Oil extracted from these kernels has been used in cooking.

Health Benefits

- Fresh fruits are low in calories, composing just 50 calories per 100 g weight. Nonetheless, they are rich source of dietary fiber, antioxidants, vitamins, and minerals. The fruits are enriched with numerous health promoting phyto-chemicals; that helps prevent heart disease, reduce LDL, ("bad cholesterol") levels and offer protection against cancers.



Healthy Foods

Health Benefits: Apricots

- Apricots are excellent sources of vitamin-A, and carotenes. 100 g fresh fruits carry 1926 IU or 64% of daily-required levels of vitamin A. Both of these compounds are known to have antioxidant properties and are essential for vision. Vitamin-A is also required for maintaining healthy mucosa and skin. Consumption of natural fruits rich in carotenes helps protect the body from lung and oral cavity cancers.
- Fresh fruits contain vitamin-C, another natural anti-oxidant. Vitamin-C helps the body develop resistance against infectious agents and scavenge harmful oxygen-free radicals.
- They are an also good source of minerals such as potassium, iron, zinc, calcium and manganese. Potassium is a heart-healthy mineral; an important component of cell and body fluids that help regulate heart rate and blood pressure.
- The total anti-oxidant or ORAC value of raw apricots is 1115 umol TE/100 g. Much of this in these fruits comes from some important health promoting flavonoid poly phenolic anti-oxidants such as *lutein*, *zea xanthin* and *beta cryptoxanthin*. Altogether, these compounds act as protective scavengers against oxygen-derived free radicals and reactive oxygen species (ROS) that play a role in aging, cancers and various disease process.
- Further, *zea-xanthin*, a carotenoid selectively absorbed into the retinal "macula lutea" in the eyes where it is thought to provide anti-oxidant and protective light-filtering functions. Thus, consumption of fruits like apricots rich in *zea-xanthin* helps eyes protect from age-related macular disease (AMRD), especially in the elderly people.