

Quince

Peak Season: September to December

The quince has been a popular ingredient since medieval times. Related to the apple and pear, it looks similar to a stubby-necked pear. However, the fruit is tart and chalky when raw, and requires cooking to bring out its sweet flavor and seductive aroma. Quinces have a bright-yellow and fuzzy skin when ripe and firm white flesh that turns soft and rosy pink when cooked.



Grown throughout regions of the Mediterranean and Asia for more than 4,000 years, it was first used as a flavoring in meat stews and then later in jams and preserves throughout Europe. It is still widely unknown in the United States where only about 200 acres of quince trees are grown commercially. The majority of these come from California's San Joaquin Valley.

Storage

Keep quinces in a bowl at room temperature for up to a week, or refrigerate in an airtight bag for as long as two months.

Preparation

Because the fruit is irregularly shaped, squaring it will make peeling and cutting easier. With a sharp knife, cut off the top and the bottom of the quince, close to the stem. Remove peel using a small paring knife. Unlike apples, quince cores tend to be irregularly shaped and off center, so you will generally need to bypass the apple corer and cut your quince by hand.

Cooking

Remember, quince should not be served raw. Cook the fruit to remove the astringency of the flesh.



Ancient Roman suitors used to give quinces to their lovers as a sign of commitment. The Greeks associated quinces with romance, too. Mythology holds that the quince was a gift from Aphrodite, the goddess of love, and it was a custom in ancient Greece to toss whole quinces into bridal chariots.

Quince and Currant Chutney

Courtesy of Bon Appetit November 2005

Ingredients

- 1 pound quinces (about 3 medium), peeled, quartered, cored, cut into 1/3-inch cubes (about scant 4 cups)
- 1 1/2 cups apple cider
- 1 1/2 cups chopped red onion
- 1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
- 1/2 cup (packed) golden brown sugar
- 1/2 cup dried currants
- 1/4 cup minced peeled fresh ginger
- 2 teaspoons grated orange peel
- 1 whole star anise*
- 1 teaspoon black mustard seeds
- 1/2 teaspoon dried crushed red pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cardamom
- 1/8 teaspoon salt



Preparation

Mix all ingredients in heavy large saucepan; bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until almost all liquid is absorbed, stirring often, about 45 minutes. Discard star anise. (Can be made 4 days ahead. Cover; chill.)

*A brown star-shaped seedpod; available in the spice section of some supermarkets and at specialty foods stores and Asian markets

yield: Makes 2 1/2 cups



Apple-Quince Crisp

Courtesy of *Cooking Light* November 1997

Ingredients

- 7 cups sliced peeled Granny Smith apple (about 2 pounds)
- 6 cups sliced peeled quince (about 6 quinces)
- 3/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/4 cup water
- 2 teaspoons grated lemon rind
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- Cooking spray
- 2/3 cup regular oats
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup packed brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons chilled stick margarine, cut into small pieces



Preparation

1. Preheat oven to 400°.
2. Combine first 9 ingredients in a large bowl; toss well to coat. Spoon apple mixture into a 13 x 9-inch baking dish coated with cooking spray.
3. Place oats in a food processor, and pulse until coarsely ground. Add flour, 1/4 cup sugar, and margarine; pulse 10 times or until mixture resembles coarse meal. Sprinkle over apple mixture.
4. Cover mixture, and bake at 400° for 30 minutes. Uncover, and bake 20 minutes or until the fruit is tender and the topping is crisp. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Yield: 12 servings (serving size: 1 cup)

Amount per serving

- Calories: 162
- Calories from fat: 14%
- Fat: 2.5g
- Saturated fat: 0.5g
- Monounsaturated fat: 1g
- Polyunsaturated fat: 0.8g
- Protein: 1.1g
- Carbohydrate: 36g
- Fiber: 2.6g
- Cholesterol: 0.0mg
- Iron: 0.9mg
- Sodium: 31mg
- Calcium: 27mg