

## Melon Basics

### BUYING MELONS

- When selecting melons of any variety, look for quality and freshness.
- The melon rind should have good color and should not be misshapen or bruised.
- The rind should give slightly at the stem end when ripe.
- For maximum enjoyment, let melons develop flavor and juiciness by storing at room temperature.

### MELON TIDBITS

- To remove soil and bacteria, rinse melons in running water before slicing or peeling. Always store fresh, peeled melons in the refrigerator.
- Cut a small melon in half and remove the seeds, then top with a scoop of cottage cheese, ice cream or sherbet, chicken salad, fresh fruit salad, or enjoy the melon by itself.
- Cut a whole watermelon in half lengthwise; scoop out one half, leaving an inch of flesh intact. Scallop the edges for decoration. Fill the hollowed half with party punch or fresh fruit salad made with the reserved watermelon chunks.
- Cut a honeydew melon in wedges, then remove the rind. Alternate wedges with avocado slices, arranged on crisp green lettuce, for a real green salad!
- Mix cubed cantaloupe with vanilla yogurt and walnuts. Chill and serve as a light dessert.
- Purée watermelon chunks, then freeze this juice into colorful and tasty “pops.”

### WATERMELON RIND PICKLES

(About 4 or 5 pints)

Pare rind and all pink edges from the watermelon (need 3 quarts or about 6 pounds). Cut into 1-inch squares or fancy shapes as desired. Cover with brine made by

mixing  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup salt with 3 quarts cold water. Add 2 quarts (2 trays) of ice cubes. Let stand 3 to 4 hours. Drain; rinse in cold water. Cover with cold water and cook until fork tender for about 10 minutes (do not overcook). Drain. Combine 9 cups sugar, 3 cups white vinegar, 3 cups water, 1 tablespoon whole cloves and 6 cinnamon sticks. (Spices should be tied in a clean, thin, white cloth.) Boil 5 minutes and pour over the watermelon; add 1 thinly sliced lemon. Let stand overnight in the refrigerator.

Heat watermelon in syrup to boiling and cook slowly 1 hour. Pack hot pickles loosely into clean, hot pint jars. To each jar, add a 1-inch piece of stick cinnamon from spice bag; cover with boiling syrup to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch from top. Remove air bubbles. Wipe jar rims. Adjust lids. Process 10 minutes in a boiling water bath at altitudes up to 1,000 feet. At altitudes between 1,001 and 6,000 feet, process for 15 minutes.

For more information on melons, contact your local Extension office or the Home and Garden Information Center at 1-888-656-9988.

#### Sources:

1. Reynolds, Susan and Paulette Williams. *So Easy to Preserve*, Bulletin 989. Cooperative Extension Service, The University of Georgia. Fourth edition revised by Elizabeth Andress and Judy Harrison, 1999.
2. United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association. *The Fresh Approach to Melons*.

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This information has been reviewed and adapted for use in South Carolina by P.H. Schmutz, HGIC Information Specialist, J.E. Campbell, graduate student; and E.H. Hoyle, Extension Food Safety Specialist, Clemson University.

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