

Pear

History

Pears are a member of the rose family and have been enjoyed by people for thousands of years. Pears originated in southeastern Europe and were a favorite food of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The ancient Greek author Homer described them as “gifts from the gods” likely due to their sweet, juicy flavor. The early Romans developed 50 varieties of pear and planted them across Europe. Pears are not native to the United States. The first tree was planted in the US in 1620. By the 1700s many European settlers were growing pears. They were given the nickname “butter fruit” because of their soft, melting texture. Today, pears are found growing all over the world. Most of the pears sold in our grocery stores are grown in the US, but during the winter, you may find pears grown in Chile, New Zealand, Australia, and Argentina.



Varieties

Bartlett Pears are the most common variety of pear. It is eaten fresh and used for canning. The pears are shaped like a bell and turn from green to yellow when ripe. They are very sweet and juicy when ripe. Look for Bartlett pears from July to December.

Anjou Pears are oval-shaped pears with a smooth, thin skin. They do not change color as they ripen, so they remain a light green color. Anjou pears are most commonly available from October through June.

Bosc Pears have a brown-green color skin that does not change color as they ripen. They also have a rougher skin that is unique to this variety. Bosc pears are the best baking pear and can be found from August to May.

Comice Pears are a very round pear and have a short neck and stem. They are green-yellow in color and frequently have a red blush. They will not change color as they ripen. Look for Comice pears in stores from August to April.

Fun Facts

- There are more than 3,000 varieties of pears.
- Pear trees grow best in volcanic soil and need plenty of water.
- Pear trees can live to be 100 years old.
- Pears do not ripen while on the tree.
- Pears ripen from the inside out.
- 95 percent of pears sold in the US are grown in California, Oregon, and Washington.



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