

CITRUS SINENSIS

CARA CARA

Cara Cara Oranges



Description/Taste

Cara Cara oranges are medium to large in size, averaging 7-10 centimeters in diameter, and are round to slightly oblong in shape. The bright orange rind is medium-thick, glossy, and covered in prominent oil glands creating a pebbled texture. Underneath the surface of the rind, the white pith clings to the flesh and has a light, spongy texture. The flesh is soft, seedless, divided into 10-11 segments by thin membranes, and has a unique blend of orange, pink, and red hues. Cara Cara oranges are aromatic, juicy, and have a complex, sweet-tart flavor with notes of cranberry, blackberry, rose, and raspberry.

Seasons/Availability

Cara Cara oranges are available in the late summer, fall and winter through early spring.

Current Facts

Cara Cara oranges, botanically classified as *Citrus sinensis*, are a natural hybrid that belongs to the Rutaceae or citrus family. Also known as the Pink navel and Red navel, Cara Cara oranges are believed to be a cross between the Brazilian Bahia and the Washington navel orange and were discovered as a mutation on a Washington navel orange tree in Venezuela. Favored for their berry-like flavor and low acidity, Cara Cara oranges have recently increased in popularity as specialty fruits are being highlighted on social media, bringing awareness to the unusual varieties.



Nutritional Value

Cara Cara oranges are a good source of vitamin A, vitamin C, fiber, folate, potassium, and the carotenoid lycopene, which is an antioxidant that gives the fruit its pink flesh.

Applications

Cara Cara oranges are best suited for raw applications as their sweet-tart flavor is showcased when consumed fresh out-of-hand or juiced. The flesh can be segmented and tossed into grain bowls, green salads, and fruit bowls, blended into smoothies or shakes, or chopped and mixed into salsa. The segments can also be dipped in chocolate and served as a sweet dessert. In addition to the flesh, Cara Cara oranges can be juiced and made into jam, vinaigrettes, sauces, and used to flavor baked goods such as cookies, cakes, tarts, and muffins. The juice and zest are also commonly mixed into cocktails. Cara Cara oranges pair well with meats such as poultry, roast beef, and fish, seafood, arugula, parsley, mint, lavender, red onion, shallot, garlic, radish, jicama, cranberry, pear, avocado, pomegranate, walnut, and quinoa. The fruit will keep 3-4 days when stored at room temperature and up to two weeks when stored in the refrigerator. The juice can be frozen in an airtight container for up to six months.

Ethnic/Cultural Info

Cara Cara oranges have been available in the United States for many years, but they have only recently become popular due to exposure via social media platforms such as Instagram. On the outside, the Cara Cara orange closely resembles other oranges and are unable to be distinguished by appearance alone in the market. On Instagram, the fruit is most popularly photographed sliced in half to showcase its unusual flesh tones, and this publicity has allowed the demand for the orange to increase. With the farm-to-table movement, the United States' consumers are focusing on the quality of the food and are looking to bloggers, chefs, and health professionals to highlight unusual fruits with unique flavors. By showcasing the fruit in stunning visual images on social media, Cara Cara oranges are becoming a highly desired citrus for their pink-red coloring and high nutritional properties.

Geography/History

The first Cara Cara orange was found naturally growing on a Washington navel orange tree in 1976 at Hacienda Cara Cara in Venezuela. The fruit was then introduced to the United States in the early 1980s and now grows in California, Florida, and Texas. Today Cara Cara oranges can be found at farmers markets, specialty grocers, and select supermarkets in the United States, South America, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa.

