

Kumquat

C. japonica

Rutaceae

Citrus



Kumquats, or cumquats in Australian English, are a group of small fruit-bearing trees in the flowering plant family Rutaceae. They were previously classified

as forming the now-historical genus *Fortunella* or placed within *Citrus*, sensu lato.

A kumquat isn't much bigger than a grape, yet this bite-sized fruit fills your mouth with a big burst of sweet-tart citrus flavor.

In Chinese, kumquat means “golden orange.”

They were originally grown in China. Now they're also grown in several other countries, including warmer areas of the United States, such as Florida and California.

In contrast with other citrus fruits, the peel of the kumquat is sweet and edible, while the juicy flesh is tart.

This article covers the nutrition and health benefits of kumquats, as well as tips for eating them.

A Big Nutritional Punch in a Small Fruit

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Kumquats are especially notable for their rich supply of vitamin C and fiber. In fact, you get more fiber in a serving of them than most other fresh fruits. A 100-gram serving (about 5 whole kumquats) contains :

- **Calories:** 71
- **Carbs:** 16 grams
- **Protein:** 2 grams
- **Fat:** 1 gram
- **Fiber:** 6.5 grams
- **Vitamin A:** 6% of the RDI
- **Vitamin C:** 73% of the RDI
- **Calcium:** 6% of the RDI
- **Manganese:** 7% of the RDI

Kumquats also supply smaller amounts of several B vitamins, vitamin E, iron, magnesium, potassium, copper and zinc.

The edible seeds and the peel of kumquats provide a small amount of omega-3 fats .



As with other fresh fruits, kumquats are very hydrating. About 80% of their weight is from water .

The high water and fiber content of kumquats makes them a filling food, yet

they're relatively low in calories. This makes them a great snack when you're watching your weight.

High in Antioxidants and Other Plant Compounds

Kumquats are rich in plant compounds, including flavonoids, phytosterols and essential oils.

There are higher amounts of flavonoids in the kumquat's edible peel than in the pulp. Some of the fruit's flavonoids have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. These may help protect against heart disease and cancer .

The phytosterols in kumquats have a chemical structure similar to cholesterol, meaning that they can help block the absorption of cholesterol in your body. This may help lower your blood cholesterol .

The essential oils in kumquats leave a scent on your hands and in the air. The most prominent one is limonene, which has antioxidant actions in your body .

When consumed in a whole food, such as kumquats, the different flavonoids, phytosterols and essential oils are thought to interact and have synergistic beneficial effects.



Supports Healthy Immune Function

In folk medicine in some Asian countries, the kumquat has been used to treat colds, coughs and other inflammation of the respiratory tract .

Modern science shows that there are certain compounds in kumquats that support your immune system.

Kumquats are a super source of immune-supportive vitamin C. Additionally, some of the plant compounds in kumquats may also help bolster your immune system .

Animal and test-tube studies suggest that kumquat plant compounds may help activate immune cells called natural killer cells .

Natural killer cells help defend you from infections. They have also been shown to destroy tumor cells.

One compound in kumquats that helps stimulate natural killer cells is a carotenoid called beta-cryptoxanthin .

A pooled analysis of seven large observational studies found that people with the highest intake of beta-cryptoxanthin had a 24% lower risk of lung cancer. However, the research was not able to prove cause and effect .



May Help Combat Obesity and Related Disorders

The plant compounds in kumquats may help fight obesity and associated diseases, including heart disease and type 2 diabetes.

Scientists are testing this in mice using extract from kumquat peels. This extract is especially rich in the flavonoids neocriocitin and poncirin .

In a preliminary study, normal-weight mice fed a high-fat diet for eight weeks gained significantly more weight than mice given a high-fat diet plus kumquat extract or a low-fat control diet. All groups consumed about the same amount of calories .

Further analysis showed that the kumquat extract helped minimize growth in fat cell size. Previous research suggests that the

flavonoid poncirin may play a role in this fat cell regulation .

In part two of the same study, obese mice fed a high-fat diet for two weeks had a 12% increase in body weight. But, obese mice fed a high-fat diet plus kumquat extract maintained their weight. Both groups consumed about the same amount of calories.

In both parts of the study, kumquat extract also helped lower fasting blood sugar, total cholesterol, LDL (bad) cholesterol and triglycerides.

More research is needed, including research in people. Regardless, since kumquats can be eaten peel and all, you can easily tap into whatever benefits they may carry.

How to Eat Kumquats

Kumquats are best eaten whole — unpeeled. Their sweet flavor actually comes from the peel, while their juice is tart.

The only caveat is that if you're allergic to the peel of common citrus fruits, you may need to pass up kumquats.

If the tart juice turns you off, you can squeeze it out before eating the fruit. Just cut or bite off one end of the fruit and squeeze.

However, many people suggest popping the whole fruit into your mouth and biting in, which mixes the sweet and tart flavors.

It also may help to gently roll the fruit between your fingers before eating. This helps release the essential oils in the peel and mixes the flavors of the sweet peel and tart flesh.

In addition, chew kumquats well. The longer you chew them, the sweeter the flavor.

If you want to soften the peel before eating the fruits, you can plunge them into boiling water for about 20 seconds and then rinse them under cold water. This isn't necessary though.

As for the kumquat seeds, you can either eat them (although bitter), spit them out or pick them out if you cut the fruit.

