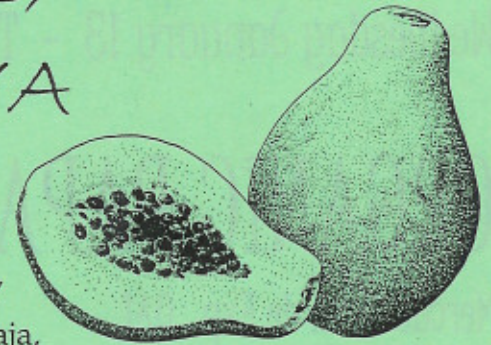


Veritable Vegetable's PRODUCENOTES

For a Taste of the Tropics, Try an Organic PAPAAYA

One of the nicest, and flavorful, surprises this winter has been the organic Sunset papayas from Baja, Mexico. Grown and shipped by Mercado Independiente de Exportation, a growers' collective located in San Jose del Cabo, at the southern tip of Baja, these papaya are similar in appearance and flavor to the conventional Sunrise Solo variety that we offer from Hawaii. The supply is so good right now that we are able to offer them at a price close to conventional.



Native to the lowlands of eastern Central America, papaya (*Carica papaya*) grow as a tall stalk, up to 20 feet high, topped by a crown of large, lobed leaves. The fruit hangs down from the crown in clusters. Because papayas can fruit and flower simultaneously, a near constant supply is possible in good growing conditions. Once planted, a papaya takes 9 months to fruit, and can continue to bear fruit for another 2 years. The fruit we are currently receiving is the first crop from a planting started 9 months ago by collective grower Manuel Salvador Aviles.

Papayas grown in Baja are not a host to the fruit fly pest, so they do not have to go through any post harvest treatments, like irradiation or fumigation, before they can be shipped into the US. The Hawaiian papayas we offer are subject to a hot water vapor treatment before they can be shipped to the mainland. Since the Baja fruit avoids treatment, which can accelerate ripening, the fruit can be picked at a stage closer to tree ripe, resulting in fuller flavor.

This may sound strange, but it is actually desirable to select papayas that are not cosmetically perfect. Papayas freckled with small spots or sunken holes are fine, as are those that don't color up evenly. As contrary as it may seem, experts note that fruit with these characteristics tend to have higher sugar content and taste better! Our experience here supports that claim. We've found that papayas that may not look perfect on the outside, are fully colored on the inside and delicious to eat. Once fully ripe, a papaya can be refrigerated for 1-2 days before it needs to be eaten.

High in vitamins A and C, rich in potassium and a good source of fiber, papayas are also low in calories at a mere 55 per 8 oz serving. Try serving sliced papaya with a wedge of lime, or as part of a salad with greens or fruits, especially strawberries, pineapple, bananas, coconut and/or oranges. Ripe papaya holds up to cooking, and complements the flavor of many meats and seafood. The seeds are edible, too, and have a spicy, peppery flavor. The fruit, leaves and seeds of the papaya plant contain the digestive enzyme papain, well known for its healthful properties.

~~ Liz Bourret