



# Live Healthy Georgia

## Seniors Taking Charge

### Watermelon: More Than a Fourth of July Tradition

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*There is nothing better than enjoying the first juicy, sweet watermelon of the season! Many families have a tradition of getting a watermelon for their Fourth of July get-togethers. This sweet treat has many health benefits that make it perfect for the summer heat!*

*Cordele, Georgia, in Crisp County, is considered the "Watermelon Capital of the World." Enjoy the Watermelon Days Festival during the month of June!*

#### Quick Facts about Watermelon

- Member of the Curcubitaceae family, which makes it a cousin of cucumbers, pumpkins, and squash.
- Watermelons are botanically considered fruits, and specifically berries because they contain seeds, the flesh is consumed, and there is no core.
- Largest watermelon recorded in 2010 was grown by Chris Kent in Sevier County, TN, and weighed 291 lbs.
- Watermelons are thought to have originated in the Kalahari Desert in Africa.
- Georgia is the 4<sup>th</sup> highest producer of watermelons in the world.

#### Health Benefits of Watermelon

Watermelons are almost 92% water, which means that they provide excellent hydration during the summer heat. In addition, watermelons have more lycopene – a powerful antioxidant – than tomatoes. These melons also contain several vitamins and minerals, including vitamins A, B6, and C, as well as thiamin, magnesium, and potassium. A half-cup (½ c.) serving of cubed watermelon contains 25 calories and 6 grams of carbohydrates (5 grams of sugars).



#### Selecting and Preparing Watermelon

1. The watermelon should be firm and symmetrical. Avoid melons with obvious bruises, cuts, or dents.
2. The melon should be heavy for its size – it is mostly water!
3. The underside should have a soft, yellow spot where it was on the ground.
4. Be sure to wash the watermelon before cutting into it. Bacteria or other contaminants on the surface may be transferred to the edible portion by your knife.

## Ideas for Eating More Watermelon

- ❖ Top salads with cubed watermelon and drizzle with a balsamic vinaigrette dressing.
- ❖ Add watermelon to a morning smoothie (see recipe below)
- ❖ Grill watermelon to add a smoky flavor to this sweet fruit.
- ❖ Purée watermelon in a blender or food processor, then pour into ice cube trays and freeze. Add the watermelon ice cubes to sparkling water for a refreshing drink.
- ❖ Use watermelon in a fruit and yogurt parfait.

### Strawberry Watermelon Shake (Smoothie)

#### Ingredients

- 1 container (8 ounces) lemon nonfat yogurt
- 2 cups cubed, seeded watermelon
- 1 pint fresh strawberries, cleaned and hulled
- 1 banana medium, peeled and sliced

#### Instructions

In blender or food processor, process yogurt, watermelon, strawberries and banana until smooth and frothy. Serve immediately.



Picture and recipe courtesy of the National Watermelon Promotion Board,  
<http://www.watermelon.org/Recipes/Kid's-Watermelon-Strawberry-Shake-and-Frozen-Smoothie-Pops-193.aspx>

## Watermelons As Good Containers

Using the watermelon shell as a serving dish is also a fun way to encourage kids and other family members to eat what is inside. Here are a few pictures to inspire your artistic melon endeavors:



Carving instructions are available from <http://www.watermelon.org/Carvings/Carving-Entertainment.aspx>

References:

- CDC. Fruit of the Month: Watermelon. <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/month/watermelon.html>
- Gardening Channel. Watermelon: Fruit or Vegetable. <http://www.gardeningchannel.com/watermelon-fruit-or-vegetable/>
- National Watermelon Promotion Board. <http://www.watermelon.org/Default.aspx>
- SouthwestGeorgia.net. <http://www.southwestgeorgia.net/festivals/watermelondays.html>

Pictures:

- <http://www.watermelon.org/images/Media/PhotoGallery/HighRes/4.jpg>
- <http://www.heatheronhertravels.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/home-grown-watermelon-in-greece.jpg>