

Valencia Orange



Valencia oranges are available February through October, with peak supplies in May, June and July. This late season citrus variety is known for its amazingly sweet and colorful juice.

A class of compounds found in citrus fruit peels called polymethoxylated flavones (PMFs) have the potential to lower cholesterol more effectively than some prescription drugs, and without side effects, according to a study by U.S. and Canadian researchers that was published in the May 2004 issue of the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*.

In 2006, Yuma County citrus growers harvested about 250 acres of Valencia oranges.

Valencia oranges turn golden as they become fully ripe, but as they remain on the tree during warmer weather the orange skin will produce chlorophyll and, in some cases, it turns green again which usually begins at the stem end. However, the fruit is actually fully ripe, sweet, juicy and bright orange inside.

Not necessarily considered a peeling orange, the Valencia is succulent when sliced and added to Ruby Red Grapefruit for a healthy fruit salad.

Cultivation of the Valencia began in Orange County, California but ceased by the mid-1990s due to rising property costs, which drove what remained of the Southern California orange industry into Florida, Arizona and Texas.

Valencia, first named Excelsior, is considered the world's most important orange. Believed to be of Spanish origin, the variety actually became of interest in the Azores and is almost certainly of old Portuguese origin. The rind is thin and leathery, the interior bright orange, with a high juice content and sweet flavor. Valencias typically have 2-4 seeds per fruit.

The Valencia fruit is technically a type of berry. It consists of several easily separated carpel's, or sections, each containing several seeds and many juice cells, covered by a leathery exocarp, or skin, containing numerous oil glands.

Orange trees are evergreens, seldom exceeding 30 feet in height. The leaves are oval and glossy and the flowers are white and fragrant. Three essential oils are obtained from oranges: oil of orange, obtained from the rind of the fruit and used principally as a flavoring agent; oil of petigrain, obtained from the leaves and twigs and used in perfumes; and oil of neroli, obtained from the blossoms and used in flavorings and also used in perfumes.

About 20 per cent of the total crop of Valencia oranges is sold as whole fruit; the remainder is used in preparing orange juice, extracts, and preserves.

Valencia oranges belong to the genus Citrus, of the family Rutaceae. The sweet orange is classified as Citrus sinensis; the sour, or Seville, orange as Citrus aurantium; the bergamot orange as Citrus bergamia; and the mandarin orange, or tangerine, as Citrus reticulata.

Good-quality Valencia oranges should be firm and heavy for their size. Select thin-skinned oranges with smooth, finely-textured skin. Valencia oranges-often called summer oranges-are actually available from February through October, with peak supplies in May, June and July. Valencia oranges are small to medium sized, and they may have a few seeds. They are usually thin-skinned.

Fresh Valencia juice may be squeezed and refrigerated overnight. If tightly covered and immediately chilled, no loss of flavor or Vitamin C will occur.

Say "Valencia!" Valencias are especially good to eat when cut into "smiles." Cut fruit in half crosswise; then cut 3 or 4 wedges from each half. Peeling Valencias is easy: trim a thin slice from each end of the fruit, then set orange on one end. Cut away strips of peel from top to bottom, until all peel is removed.

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