

# Health Benefits of Cantaloupe



Cantaloupe is a type of melon with a rough net-like skin, and a sweet, orange flesh inside. Also known as muskmelon or rock melon, cantaloupes are in the same family as honeydew melon, watermelon and cucumbers. They are rich in nutrients and fiber even though they are 90% water. This makes them a refreshing, low-calorie addition to your summer meal plans.

## WHAT MAKES CANTALOUPE GREAT?

### **Nutrition**

1 cup of fresh cantaloupe provides 60 calories, 2 gm protein, 2 gm fiber, no fat and no cholesterol.

### **Vitamins**

Cantaloupe is an excellent source of beta-carotene, which is converted to vitamin A, and antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthin. These work to maintain eye health and prevent cataracts and age-related macular degeneration. Cantaloupe contains vitamin C for immunity and wound-healing, and B6 for protein metabolism, hemoglobin formation and brain health. This melon also contains small amounts of folate and vitamin K.

The antioxidants in cantaloupe have been shown to be anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial and may reduce risk of diabetes, cancer, liver and thyroid disease.

### **Minerals**

Cantaloupe is low in sodium and high in potassium, which helps regulate body fluids, blood pressure and hydration. Magnesium is important for nerve function, bone development and muscle contraction, including maintaining a normal heart rhythm. Cantaloupe also contains small amounts of calcium and iron.

### **Fiber**

Cantaloupe contains both soluble and insoluble fiber. Soluble fiber helps keep blood sugar levels low. It also lowers cholesterol and feeds our healthy microbiome. There is 3 times more insoluble fiber in cantaloupe, which helps move food through the digestive tract. This fiber reduces risk of constipation, diverticulosis and hemorrhoids.

## BUYING & USING CANTALOUPE

When choosing a cantaloupe, the skin under the net-like mesh should be light orange or cream color. Green indicates unripe fruit although these melons will continue to ripen at room temperature after harvest. Choose heavy melons to indicate ripeness.

The stem should be smooth. At the opposite end is the blossom. If you press on it gently, it should be fragrant and give slightly.

**CAUTION:** Cantaloupe grows close to the ground and the nubby skin can contain bacteria from soil or water. It is important to wash the cantaloupe skin before cutting into it. Then wash the knife well before continuing to cut the cantaloupe into wedges or cubes.

Once cut, use immediately, or store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for no more than 5 days. The riper the melon, the shorter the storage time. Do not leave cut melon at room temperature since this may invite growth of harmful bacteria.

Cantaloupe can make a sweet addition to green salads, vegetable or bean salads. Toss on breakfast cereal, in yogurt or smoothies. Pureed cantaloupe can make a cold soup or be dehydrated to make fruit leather. Or just enjoy wedges of cantaloupe on a summer's day.

Cantaloupe is also a great addition to summer drinks or cocktails. Freeze in cubes and use instead of ice cubes in glasses, blend into margaritas, or puree and mix with iced tea or lemonade.



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Cantaloupe seeds are edible and nutritious. Add them to soups, salads or smoothies, or roast them for a quick snack. To roast, rinse seeds from one cantaloupe and put in small bowl. Add 1 teaspoon olive oil and 1/4 teaspoon salt and mix. Spread on baking sheet lined with parchment paper and lay another piece of parchment over the top. Roast at 425°F for 10 minutes.

## Cantaloupe & Cucumber Salad

Simple-veganista.com

### Ingredients:

- |                                  |                              |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 cantaloupe, cubed              | 3-4 Tbsp apple cider vinegar |
| 1 large cucumber, peeled, sliced | 1 Tbsp olive oil             |
| 1 large red bell pepper, sliced  | Salt and pepper to taste     |
| ½ red onion, thinly sliced       | Fresh mint garnish (opt)     |

### Instructions:

1. Place vegetables and cantaloupe in a large bowl. Add vinegar, olive oil and salt and pepper and mix well.
2. Cover and set in refrigerator for an hour to chill. Stir occasionally.
3. Serve chilled with garnish of fresh mint or basil as desired.

## Cantaloupe Sorbet

(no ice cream maker needed)

Whatgreatgrandmaate.com

### Ingredients:

- 1 whole fresh cantaloupe (8 cups)
- 4 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1-2 Tbsp maple syrup or honey as desired

### Instructions:

1. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Remove skin and seeds of fresh cantaloupe and cut into cubes.
3. Place on baking sheet in a single layer and freeze 2 hours.
4. Place frozen cantaloupe in food processor or blender and process until crumbly.
5. Add lemon juice and maple syrup and pulse until smooth.
6. If the texture is still crumbly and difficult to scoop, add 1 Tbsp water at a time until desired consistency is reached.
7. Enjoy immediately.
8. Store leftovers in an airtight container in freezer. Thaw 15 minutes before scooping.

## Cantaloupe & Sweet Potato Ceviche

Kitchenstories.com

### Ingredients:

- 1 large fresh cantaloupe, cubed
- 14 oz raw sweet potatoes, cubed
- 1 red onion, thinly sliced
- 1 green chili pepper, diced
- 3 limes, zested
- 1/3 cup vegan mayonnaise
- 1 cup corn nuts
- 4 sprigs fresh mint
- 1-2 Tbsp olive oil
- Salt to taste

### Instructions:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F and line baking dish with parchment paper.
2. Place sweet potato in baking dish. Sprinkle with olive oil and salt and toss. Spread in single layer and bake 20 min.
3. Place cantaloupe, onion, and chili pepper into large bowl and set aside. Mix zest with mayonnaise and set aside.
4. When cooked and cooled, add sweet potato to cantaloupe and onion salad.
5. Pour lime juice over salad and allow to marinate 1 hour in refrigerator.
6. Toss and serve with corn nuts, lime mayonnaise and fresh mint.

## REFERENCES

USDA National Nutrient Database

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<https://fcs-hes.ca.uky.edu/commodity/cantaloupe>