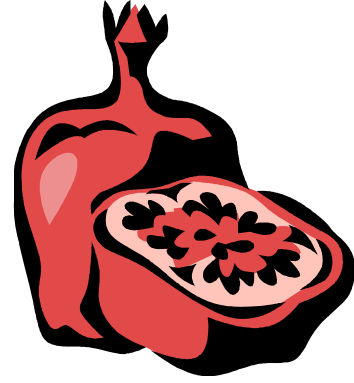




Pomegranate-A Dixie Tradition
Utah State University Extension Educator



The pomegranate is a native fruit of Persia. Its name in Latin means “apple with many seeds,” but it looks somewhat like a petrified tomato. The fruit, which is about the size of an apple, has a thin rind lined with a layer of white membrane which divides the fruit into several cells. Each cell contains numerous seeds encased in a juicy pulp. The outer rind color is pink to deep red when the fruit is mature.

The pomegranate plant may be used for its aesthetic beauty in hedges, as a shrub, a tree or for its fruit. The pomegranate plant is well adapted to the hot, dry climate of the Southwest and grows in a wide range of soils.

Fruit Use:

The edible portions of the fruit include the seed and the juicy translucent flesh enclosing the seed. The tart flavor of the pulp and juice of the ripe pomegranate can add interest and variety to foods. The flesh covered seeds can be used as a garnish in fruit cups, compotes, salads, desserts, and as a snack. The juice is used in making jellies, puddings, desserts, and fruit drinks. Grenadine, made from pomegranate juice, is a flavoring in some beverages. Grenadine also makes a delicious topping for ice cream and chilled fruits such as peaches, pears and bananas.

The pomegranate’s main food value is carbohydrate. One medium pomegranate is 82% water and about 100 calories. It is an excellent source of potassium and is very low in sodium.

Removing the Seeds:

It’s a good idea to wear plastic gloves and an apron when handling pomegranates with deep red juice. They tend to spurt and the stain is just about impossible to remove. Because pomegranate juice can darken if it comes in contact with metal, it is best to use plastic or glass utensils when working with pomegranates.

Seeds can be removed by cutting off the crown, then breaking the fruit open. The seeds can be removed with your fingers. Each section is surrounded by a thin, bitter membrane. Peel the membranes back as the seeds are removed and discard the membranes and the rind.

When you need a large number of seeds, cut off the crown and score the pomegranate lengthwise in three or four places. Submerge pomegranates in a bowl of cold water and let soak for at least five minutes. While holding the fruit under water, split the sections and separate the seeds from the section walls. The seeds will sink to the bottom and the peel and membranes will float. Skim off membranes and drain seeds in a plastic colander.

Seeds can also be removed by cutting the pomegranate in half, placing the cut face down and rapping the shell firmly with a blunt instrument such as a hammer handle. The

section walls will break off and the juice sacs will come loose. Pick out the sections of membrane and discard.

Extracting the Juice:

One large pomegranate yields between one-third to one-half cup of juice. After you have removed the seeds, you need to crush or press them. To remove the juice, strain crushed pulp through a double thickness of cheesecloth or nylon netting. Juice can also be made by whirling seeds, 1 1/2 cups at a time, in a blender or food processor until liquified, then strain.

Another method of obtaining juice is to cut the fruit in half and use a juice press or juicer. Press, do not twist the fruit. The rind contains tannin which gives the juice a bitter taste. Place the juicer in sink to avoid splattering. Strain juice through a plastic colander first, then through cheesecloth.

Storage and Preservation:

Pomegranates should be stored in a cool, dry well-ventilated place. The fruit should be spread on shelves or tables or hung by tying strings to the fruit stems. Fruit can also be stored in the refrigerator. Fresh seeds or juice can be kept in the refrigerator for up to five days.

Juice can be frozen or canned. Freezing is recommended because juice will hold its flavor and color better. To freeze, fill freezer containers allowing 1/2 inch headspace for expansion. Store in an upright position until frozen, label with date of freezing and try to use within one year.

Canned juice may turn brown and lose its flavor. Adding two tablespoons of lemon juice to each quart of juice helps retain color and flavor. Bring juice quickly to a boil, pour into sterilized jars, adjust lids and process in hot water bath for 15 minutes.

Freeze the seeds for use in salads and appetizers by spreading in a thin layer on a cookie sheet. Quick freeze, then store in moisture, vapor-proof freezer bags or containers. For other uses, pack seeds in containers and cover with cold 30 percent syrup. Make the syrup by heating 2 cups of sugar in 4 cups of water until sugar is dissolved. Cool syrup, then pour over fruit. Leave 1/2 inch headspace, seal and freeze.

Make pomegranate raisins by drying seeds in a fruit dryer. Pomegranate raisins can then be used as a snack, or in breads, cakes, etc., as a replacement for grape raisins.

SOME RECIPES TO TRY

Grenadine Syrup:

4 cups pomegranate juice

2 cups sugar

Combine juice with sugar and stir. Heat just to simmering and simmer three to five minutes. Cool.

Store the syrup in the refrigerator for one to two weeks, or in the freezer. Use as topping for ice cream or chilled fruits, or in beverages.

Pomegranate Jelly:

- 3 1/2 cups pomegranate juice, fresh, frozen and thawed, or bottled
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1 package (2 ounces) powdered pectin
- 4 1/2 cups sugar

Combine pomegranate juice, lemon juice, and pectin in a 4 or 5-quart pot. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat, stirring constantly. Stir in sugar until well blended; return to a boil and continue boiling, uncovered, and stirring occasionally, for 2 minutes. Remove jelly from heat immediately.

Let stand a minute to allow foam to form; then carefully skim off the foam. Pour hot jelly quickly into hot jars, filling jars to within about 1/2 inch of tops. Carefully wipe off rim of jar. Put lid on each jar as it is filled, screwing ring band on hand tight. Process in hot water bath 10 minutes.

Cool jars away from drafts on a towel. If jars do not seal, refrigerate. Label sealed jars and store in a cool, dark area. Makes 6 half pints.

Dixie Salad:

There are several versions of Dixie Salad. Here's one to try:

- 2 large pomegranates
- 3 apples
- Whipped cream with vanilla and sugar added
- 3/4 cup raisins
- 3/4 cup chopped almonds

The above amount may vary according to your taste and the amount of people you serve. You can add bananas and pecans or walnuts, and some like pineapple chunks.

Dixie Pomegranate Salsa

- 1 pomegranates, seeded
- 2 oranges, peeled and cut into small pieces
- 1 bunch cilantro
- 1 Chile jalapeño, chopped
- 1 tomato, diced
- 1/2 tsp ground cumin
- 1-2 Tbsp lime juice
- Mix and chill for 2 hours.

