When Are Peaches Ready to Pick?

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Quick Answer

Peaches are ready to pick when they are mature in color, softened slightly, and have developed their characteristic flavor and aroma. In Utah, peach harvest can begin as early as mid-July for early cultivars and continue into September, depending on the variety and location. For the best flavor, allow peaches to ripen on the tree when possible, but peaches picked before they are fully ripe can continue to soften after harvest.

How Do I Know When a Peach Is Ripe?

One of the first signs of ripeness is a change in the peach's background or ground color. The green background color changes to yellow, cream, or another mature color depending on the variety. The red blush on the outside of a peach is not a reliable indicator of ripeness because its color varies among varieties.

Ripe peaches become softer as they mature. Press the fruit gently rather than squeezing it, since peaches bruise easily. A ripe peach should yield slightly to gentle pressure and have a fresh peach aroma.

Peaches on the same tree do not necessarily ripen at the same time. Check the fruit regularly and harvest ripe peaches over a period of one to two weeks rather than picking the entire tree at once. Some peach stems detach at harvest, when peaches are fully ripe, and can serve as an indicator of ripeness.

The exact harvest date depends on the peach variety and growing location. In Utah, early varieties may be ready as early as July, while later varieties can continue into September and, in regions with longer growing seasons, even into October.

Should I Let Peaches Ripen on the Tree?

Yes. Allowing peaches to ripen on the tree produces the best flavor. Tree-ripened peaches develop better sweetness and flavor than fruit harvested too early.

However, fully tree-ripened peaches are softer and do not keep as long or transport well. If peaches will be stored, frozen, or canned, they can be harvested at the firm-ripe stage rather than when they are completely tree-ripe.

Handle ripe peaches carefully during harvest because they bruise easily. After harvest, ripe peaches can be kept in a cool place for a short time or refrigerated.

Can Peaches Ripen After They Are Picked?

Peaches can continue to ripen somewhat after picking, but fruit picked too early will not develop the same flavor as peaches that ripen on the tree. Peaches that are picked while still green may become juicier, but they will not become sweeter and may become tough or shriveled instead. Ripening after harvest varies by peach variety.

If peaches are firm but have already developed their mature background color, you can let them finish ripening at room temperature. Place firm peaches in a loosely closed paper bag at room temperature and check them daily until they reach the desired ripeness. Once peaches are fully ripe, use them promptly or refrigerate them to slow further softening.

References

- USU Extension — How to Grow Peaches in Your Garden
- USU Extension — FAQs | Fruit | Small Acreage | Production Horticulture
- USU Extension — How to Preserve Peaches
- USU Extension — Harvest and Storage of Vegetables and Fruits
- USU Extension — Fruit and Vegetable Guide Series: Peaches

Adapted from USU Extension yard and garden resources.

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