



Plums



Plums



Are they a fruit or a vegetable?

Plums are stone fruits and belong to the Rose family, along with cherries, pears and apples.

How do they grow?

Plums grow on trees.

Where do they grow?

Plum trees are grown throughout the world, and China, Serbia and the US are the biggest producers. Plum trees also grow well throughout the UK – more than 300 types of plums are grown here.

When are they in season?

In the UK, plums are in season from August to early October.

What should you look for?

Plums are ready to eat when they feel slightly soft if you give them a gentle squeeze.

How do you store them?

Store them at room temperature until they are ripe, then keep them in the fridge.

How can you eat them?

You can eat plums raw or you can cook them, either by stewing them slowly with a little sugar, or by grilling them and serving them with yoghurt for a tasty pudding. You can also make plum sauce to go with duck or pork.

Why are they good for you?

Plums are full of goodness. The skin contains lots of vitamins, minerals and fibre. Fibre is very important in our diets because it keeps our digestive system healthy and helps keep us feeling full so we don't eat too much.



Did you know?

- ★ Plums develop their best flavour if left to ripen on the tree.
- ★ Plum trees are grown on every continent except Antarctica.
- ★ There are more than 2,000 varieties of plum. The most popular in the UK is the Victoria plum, named after Queen Victoria.
- ★ Plum stones were found on the wreck of Henry VIII's warship, the Mary Rose. A plum tree has since been grown from one of the stones!



Spiced plums with yoghurt



Serves 6

- ★ 8 ripe plums
- ★ 1 teaspoon mixed spice
- ★ 2 tablespoons runny honey
- ★ 350g natural yoghurt

Use a small sharp knife to carefully cut all the way around one plum, in a circle. Hold the plum in your hands and twist until you can pull the two halves apart, then use a teaspoon to scoop out the stone. Carefully slice the plum into quarters and place in a bowl, then repeat with the rest. Sprinkle the spices over the plums and drizzle over the honey.

Divide the plums between 6 bowls and serve each one with a large spoonful of natural yoghurt on the side.

Equipment

- ★ knife
- ★ teaspoon
- ★ measuring spoons
- ★ mixing bowl
- ★ 6 bowls, for serving

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

This lesson is about getting children to taste and enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables while learning about where they come from and why they are good for you. We want children to understand how important and fun it is to eat well.

Use this recipe to get your class to see, touch, smell and taste some gorgeous, juicy plums. Even if they can't help with the preparation, get them stirring in the honey and mixing in the spices. Get as many children involved as possible and make it fun!



Plums



Notes for teachers

Key facts

- ★ Plums are stone fruits. They are members of the Rose family and closely related to cherries, pears and apples.
- ★ Plums came from western Asia and were probably brought to the UK by the Romans. They became popular in the UK in the late 18th century.
- ★ Plums are now grown all around the world, but most come from California, Mexico, Serbia and China.
- ★ Plums are full of goodness. The skin contains lots of vitamins, minerals and fibre. Fibre is very important in our diets because it keeps our digestive system healthy and helps keep us feeling full, so we don't eat too much. This can help us control our weight, as the digestion process is slowed down.

Curriculum links

Haikus

Haikus are short poems with five syllables in the first line, seven in the second and five in the third. Ask the children to think of words that describe plums and write them on the whiteboard. Get the children to use the words to make plum haikus.

Weighing

Get the children to estimate how many plums there are in a kilogram. Ask each child to weigh their plum individually and then, as a class, work out how many plums make a kilogram. Get them to calculate how many kilograms of plums they would need to make sure everyone in the class gets one plum to taste.

Pointillism

Cut a plum in half, explore the various circular shapes within a plum – you can also bring in other vegetables here as examples. Introduce the idea of pointillism and get the children to paint their favourite fruit or vegetable using this technique.



Lettuce



Lettuce



Is it a fruit or a vegetable?

Lettuce is a leafy vegetable. There are lots of varieties, including cos, little gem, watercress, rocket and radicchio. They all look and taste different.

How does it grow?

Lettuce is easy to grow. All the seeds need to grow in a bed of soil, natural sunlight and regular watering.

Where does it grow?

The cool climate in the UK is perfect for growing lettuces. Most lettuce is grown outside to get the best of the sun. There are more than 50 varieties of salad leaves and about 14,000 acres of farmland in the UK is used for growing them.

When is it in season?

In the UK, lettuce is in season from May to October.

What should you look for?

Choose lettuce heads that are neither wrinkly, nor have wilted leaves. Choose those with outer leaves that look healthy and are vividly coloured. They should also be compact, firm and symmetrical in shape.

How do you store it?

Lettuce is best stored in the vegetable box of the fridge. Typically, iceberg lettuce will last up to two weeks, romaine for about ten days, and leaf lettuce for about a week.

How can you eat it?

Lettuce is usually eaten as part of a salad. You can use different varieties to create all sorts of lovely salads – think about texture, taste and colour.

Why is it good for you?

The nutritional value of lettuce varies greatly from leaf to leaf. Leaves that are darker in colour usually have a higher nutritional value. However, all types of lettuce contain lots of water, which is vital for everything our body does.



Did you know?

- ★ Lettuce was originally grown for medicinal purposes. The first Roman Emperor, Augustus, who ruled from 27 BC to 14 AD, was said to have been cured of a serious illness by eating lettuce.
- ★ Lettuce is meant to contain a natural chemical that helps you sleep. Romans ate lettuce at the end of a dinner to help calm their stomach and make them sleepy.
- ★ Iceberg lettuce was developed in the US and got its name from the way it was packed with ice to survive transportation in warm temperatures.



Everyday chopped green salad



Serves 6

- ★ 4 spring onions
- ★ ½ a cucumber
- ★ a few sprigs of fresh basil
- ★ 2 small ripe avocados
- ★ 1 round lettuce
- ★ 1 punnet of cress
- ★ 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ★ 1 lemon
- ★ sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

It's best to start chopping the harder, crunchier veg first – trim the ends off the spring onions and cucumber then carefully chop up. Pick and chop the basil leaves and bring to the centre of the board along with the spring onions and cucumber, continue chopping and mixing everything together as you go.

Use a knife to carefully cut around the length of the avocado, slicing as deep as the stone. Hold the avocado in your hands and twist until you can pull the two halves apart, then use a spoon to scoop out the stone. Do the same with the other avocado, then squeeze the avocado flesh out of the skins onto the board and throw away the skin.

Separate and wash the lettuce leaves, spin then dry them in a salad spinner then add to the board. Snip over the cress, then continue chopping everything together.

When everything is chopped up, you'll have a big mound of salad on the board. Make a well in the middle and add the oil. Cut the lemon in half and squeeze over the juice, holding your hand underneath to catch any pips, then add a tiny pinch of salt and pepper. Toss together so everything is nicely coated and serve on the board or in a bowl.

Equipment

- ★ chopping board
- ★ large knife
- ★ salad spinner
- ★ scissors
- ★ measuring spoons
- ★ serving bowl or board

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

This lesson is about getting children to taste and enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables while learning about where they come from and why they are good for you. We want children to understand how important and fun it is to eat well.

Use this recipe to get your class to see, touch, smell and taste some crunchy lettuce. Get them involved with picking and washing the leaves, adding the seasoning and mixing everything together. Get as many children involved as possible and make it fun!

We're using green veg here but there are all sorts of different ingredients you can add to a chopped salad. You could mix things up by trying things like peppers, tomatoes, herb sprigs and even different cheeses.



Lettuce



Notes for teachers

Key facts

- ★ Lettuce is a leafy vegetable and there are lots of different varieties.
- ★ Christopher Columbus took lettuce seeds to the US on his second voyage in 1493.
- ★ It's thought that lettuce was first cultivated by the Egyptians, but was brought to the UK by the Greeks and the Romans. By the 16th century many types of lettuce were being grown here.
- ★ Lettuce grows all over the world, including Asia, US, Europe and Africa. Currently, the top three producers of lettuce are China, the US and India.
- ★ The nutritional value of lettuce varies greatly from leaf to leaf. Leaves that are darker in colour usually have a higher nutritional value. However, all types of lettuce contain lots of water, which is vital for everything our body does. If you don't consume enough water, you will become dehydrated.

Curriculum links

Hydration

All types of lettuce contain lots of water, which is vital to help keep our bodies healthy and working properly. If you don't have enough water in your diet you will become dehydrated. Discuss the importance of hydration and how this can affect your ability to learn.

History

The cultivation of lettuce goes a long way back. Explore this by telling the children about Christopher Columbus, the Egyptians, the Greeks or the Romans. Get the children to research one or all of these, depending on your current topic.

Storyboard writing

Lettuce seeds are planted in greenhouses and then planted out in fields. Once they have been harvested, they're often packed immediately, then cooled to stop them from wilting. Discuss the features of a storyboard and write about the journey of a lettuce seed, from planting right through to eating the leaves.



Beetroot



Beetroot



Is it a fruit or a vegetable?

Beetroot is a vegetable and is related to other root vegetables like turnips and swedes.

How does it grow?

Beetroot grows from seeds. In the UK, the seeds are sown in the soil in May and harvested from early July until October. Baby beetroots are picked early.

Where does it grow?

Beetroot came from the Mediterranean coasts of Europe, but is now grown all over the world, including the UK.

When is it in season?

In the UK, beetroot is in season from May to October.

What should you look for?

There are lots of different kinds of beetroot. The most common are the deep-purple ones. Look for firm beetroots with a deep colour and healthy, green leaves.

How do you store it?

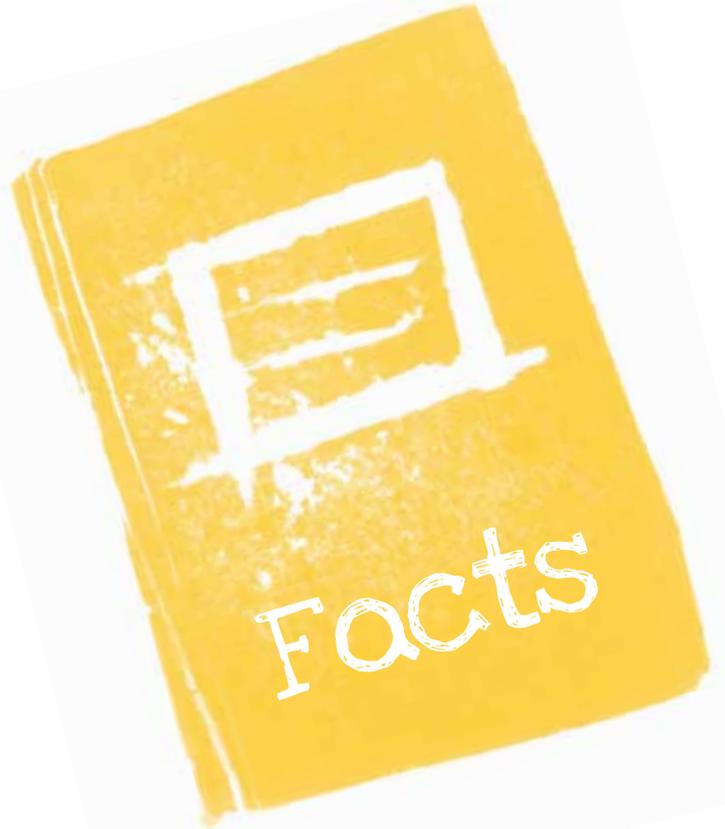
Store beetroot in the fridge.

How can you eat it?

Beetroot can be eaten raw in salad when finely sliced or grated. They can also be boiled, steamed or stir-fried, and are particularly tasty when roasted with a little balsamic vinegar and fresh herbs.

Why is it good for you?

Beetroot is a good source of folic acid. We all need folic acid to help keep our blood healthy and build red blood cells. Without enough folic acid we can feel tired and depressed.



Did you know?

- ★ You can get beets in a whole variety of colours, from white and yellow to a vivid candy-striped variety.
- ★ Beetroot is often used as a natural red dye. That means you can get quite messy when preparing beetroot, so feel free to wear rubber gloves if you like. It's also a good idea to cook beets separately from other veg, or add them last to salads to stop them staining the other ingredients.
- ★ Beetroot leaves are edible too – they're delicious picked into a green salad.



Raw beetroot salad



Serves 6

- ★ 4 good-sized raw beetroots, different colours if possible
- ★ sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
- ★ 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ★ 1 lemon
- ★ a few sprigs of fresh flat-leaf parsley
- ★ optional: 75g feta cheese

Pick the leaves off the beetroots then wash the beets thoroughly.

Using the coarse side of a box grater, grate the beetroot then add to a bowl and season with a tiny pinch of salt and pepper. Drizzle over the oil, then cut the lemon in half and squeeze over the juice, holding your hand underneath it to catch any pips.

Pick and chop the parsley leaves then scatter over the salad. Toss so everything is nicely coated and serve with crumbled feta over the top, if you like.

Equipment

- ★ box grater
- ★ bowl
- ★ measuring spoons
- ★ knife
- ★ chopping board

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

This lesson is about getting children to taste and enjoy fresh fruits and vegetables while learning about where they come from and why they are good for you. We want children to understand how important and fun it is to eat well.

Use this recipe to get your class to see, touch, smell and try some tasty beetroots. Even if they can't help with the preparation, get them picking and smelling the parsley leaves, adding the seasoning and dressing and mixing everything together. Get as many children involved as possible and make it fun!

In this recipe, you don't use the beetroot leaves, although it's worth remembering that they are edible and taste great in green salads. Beetroots can be a bit messy to prepare, so wear some rubber gloves if you want to.



Beetroot



Notes for teachers

Key facts

- ★ You can get beets in a whole variety of colours, from white and yellow to a vivid candy-striped variety.
- ★ Beetroot is a vegetable and is related to other root vegetables like turnips and swedes.
- ★ Beetroot came from the Mediterranean coasts of Europe but now it's grown all over the world. The vegetable grows best in the cooler temperatures of northern Europe.
- ★ Beetroot leaves are edible too – they're delicious picked into a green salad.
- ★ Beetroot is a good source of folic acid, which is a B vitamin. Folic acid is needed to keep our blood healthy and helps to build red blood cells. Without enough folic acid we can feel tired and depressed.

Curriculum links

Newspaper report

The world's heaviest beetroot weighed 23.4kg. Write a newspaper report as though your school has just grown the world's largest beetroot. You might like to take inspiration from traditional tales such as The Enormous Turnip.

Magic writing

Dissolve some bicarbonate of soda in water. Get the children to write their names or secret messages using this solution. When the writing has dried, get the children to paint over it with beetroot juice, experimenting with different concentrations/shades. The writing will "magically" reveal itself. Explain that this happened because beetroot contains a substance called flavin, which changes colour depending on whether it is added to an acid or alkali.

Kandinsky

Cut open and take a look at the inside of a variety of beetroots, paying particular attention to the concentric circle pattern inside (use different colours, if possible – you could also use red and white onions to do this too). Examine "Colour Circle and Square" by Kandinsky and talk about the similarities. Children can recreate this piece of artwork, using different combinations of colours, and using the patterns found inside the raw beetroot as inspiration.