**The Perfect Pear**

1. **What is a pear?**
2. A yellowish or brownish-green edible fruit that is typically narrow at the stalk and wider toward the base, with a sweet, slightly gritty flesh.
3. There are about 3,000 known varieties of pears throughout the world but only 3 species account for the vast majority of edible fruit production.
4. Pears grow on a medium-sized tree reaching 33-56 ft tall, often with a tall, narrow crown, and often contain flowers.
5. Most pear trees are cold-hardy and can withstand temperatures down to -40°F in winter.
6. Pears contain a core, much like an apple. Some pears even look much like some apples but the major difference is that the flesh of a pear contains stone cells, or the “grit” of a pear’s flesh.
7. There are two types of pears: the European or French pears such as Bartlett, Bosc, and D’Anjou, and Asian pears such as Hosui and Nijisseiki.
8. China is the largest producer of pears, followed by the U.S.
9. There are 6 main states in the U.S. that produce pears: California, Michigan, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Washington. Of these states, California, Oregon, and Washington make up the majority of production.
10. Pear trees can grow in Wisconsin.
11. Pears are a member of the rose family of plants, which includes apples, apricots, cherries, peaches, plums, and strawberries.
12. **History of Pears**
13. European pears and Asian pears evolved separately but during the same approximate time in history about 1,000 B.C. Certain species of pear are also native to parts of Africa.
14. Beginning in the 1500’s, European colonists began to bring pears to North America, where they were apparently not native or enjoyed before that time.
15. It is believed that the pear was known by prehistoric man, but there is no agreement on whether the apple came first or the pear.
16. English records show that in 1629 “stones of pears were sent by the Massachusetts Company to New England” colonists to plant and grow into trees at Plymouth, MA.
17. Prince nursery was established as the first American nursery for the collecting, growing, and selling of the plants and trees at Flushing, New York in 1737. Prince nursery advertised “42 pear trees for sale in 1771.”
18. **Health Benefits**
19. One medium pear provides about 100 calories and about 15% of your daily copper – a trace mineral that’s essential for a healthy central nervous system and also affects our ability to learn and remember by affecting the components responsible for communication between nerves in our brains.
20. Pears are high in fiber; one pear contains about 5g of fiber which is about 20% of your daily need of fiber. Pears are also high in vitamin C and vitamin A.
21. The skin of the pear contains almost half of the fiber, along with many of the phytonutrients.
22. Like all fruits and vegetables, they are very high in antioxidants and flavonoids and also provide anti-inflammatory support.
23. **Selection, Storage, and Preparation**

**Selection**

1. Pick pears when the fruit has a faint yellow blush but is still green.
2. Ripen the pears at room temperature for best quality.
3. Pears are ripe when the flesh around the stem gives to gentle pressure - this “check the neck” is the best way to check for ripeness.

**Storage**

1. Once they are ripened, pears will generally keep in the refrigerator for 3 to 5 days. Unripe fruit can generally be kept for a week or more, however, pears will not ripen properly in the fridge.
2. You can also keep them in a cool (about 40°F), dark place.
3. You can also can the pears for longer storage.

**Preparation**

1. Pears are consumed fresh, canned, as juice, and dried. Many people eat them fresh, like an apple.
2. Since their skin provides about half the pear’s total dietary fiber as well as its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory phytonutrients, it is best not to peel the fruit but to eat the entire pear.
3. To cut the pear into pieces, you can use an apple corer, cutting from the fruit’s base to remove the core, and then cutting it into the desired sizes and shapes.
4. In addition to being served raw in almost anything, pears also bake, poach, sauté, roast, and grill very nicely. They can also be made into preserves, jams, jellies, and chutneys – anything that can be done with an apple can be done with a pear! You can even add pears to your grilled cheese!
5. **Fun Facts**
6. In order to produce fruit, pear trees need to be cross-pollinated with at least two varieties. So don’t plant just one tree!
7. Drop peeled pears in cold, lightly salted water, and they won’t turn brown.
8. Pears will ripen faster if placed next to bananas in a fruit bowl.
9. Pear wood is the favored wood sought after for many things such as furniture, musical instruments, and rulers because it does not warp.
10. Pears are commonly described as a “hypoallergenic” (low allergy) food and are easily digestible by most.
11. December is National Pear Month.
12. Before tobacco was introduced in Europe, pear leaves were smoked.
13. Pears were used as a natural remedy against nausea in ancient Greece.
14. The Bartlett pear is the most popular variety of pear in the United States.
15. Towns with an abundance of pear trees often included the word Perry in the name of the town.
16. The Chinese considered the pear to be a symbol of immortality. The destruction of a pear tree symbolized tragic or untimely death.
17. Pears ripen from the inside out so if you wait until the pear is soft around the middle, then it will be overripe. So “check the neck!”

We hope you enjoyed learning more about pears! Since it is National Pear Month, it is the perfect time to add fresh, nutritious pears to your diet.