



SOUTH CAROLINA FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LEADERS

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Leader Training Guide

Peaches: South Carolina History, Nutrition, & Recipes

Objective:

Participants will learn about the history and economic importance of peaches in South Carolina, identify their nutritional benefits, and explore simple ways to incorporate peaches into healthy meals and snacks.

Lesson Overview/Introduction:

Peaches are among South Carolina's most recognized agricultural products, but surprisingly, they are not native to South Carolina or even to North America. Peaches originated in China thousands of years ago and spread across Asia, Persia, Europe, and eventually to the Americas through Spanish explorers. Today, South Carolina is known as "The Tastier Peach State" and is the leading peach-producing state east of the Mississippi River. Peaches contribute millions of dollars annually to South Carolina's economy while providing families with nutritious and delicious fruit to enjoy each summer. This lesson explores the rich history of peach production in South Carolina, the health benefits of eating peaches, and simple recipes families can prepare using fresh South Carolina peaches.

Lesson:

1. SOUTH CAROLINA PEACH HISTORY

The Journey of the Peach to South Carolina

Although peaches are often associated with the American South, they originated in China more than 8,000 years ago. Ancient Chinese farmers carefully selected and cultivated peaches for desirable traits long before recorded history. Because peaches were cultivated for so many generations, truly wild peaches no longer exist in China.

From China, peaches spread to Japan, Persia, and the Mediterranean region through trade routes. The scientific name *Prunus persica* means "Persian apple," which led many people to mistakenly believe peaches originated in Persia. Archaeological evidence has since confirmed their Chinese origins. Spanish explorers introduced peaches to North America during the 1500s. By 1571, Spanish missionaries were growing peaches on St. Simons Island, Georgia. Native American tribes quickly adopted the fruit, selectively breeding and sharing peach trees throughout the Southeast. Within a century, peach trees were growing throughout much of the southern colonies.

South Carolina's Peach Industry

Commercial peach production became important in South Carolina during the mid-1800s. Henry William Ravenel of Aiken is credited as one of the first South Carolinians to commercially ship peaches outside the state. Railroads helped expand the industry by allowing peaches to be transported quickly to distant markets. Packing houses were built near railroad lines so peaches could be loaded directly onto rail cars packed with ice.

Two important leaders in developing South Carolina's peach industry were Henry William Ravenel of Aiken and Colonel R.B. Watson of Edgefield. During the 1920s, Colonel Watson encouraged farmers along South Carolina's "Peach Ridge" to plant peach orchards. Their efforts helped establish the state as a major peach producer.

South Carolina Peaches Today

Today, South Carolina is consistently among the leading peach-producing states in the nation and remains the largest peach-producing state east of the Mississippi River. In 2018, South Carolina produced more than twice as many peaches as Georgia, earning the state the nickname "The Tastier Peach State."

Many South Carolina peach farms have remained family-owned for generations, with third-, fourth-, and even fifth-generation growers continuing the tradition. This long history contributes to the exceptional quality of South Carolina peaches.

Peach production is also a significant contributor to South Carolina's economy. The peach industry generates approximately \$80 million annually and employs more than 1,000 people. Additional economic benefits come from supporting industries such as transportation, equipment maintenance, packaging, chemicals, and marketing, adding an estimated \$30 million in economic value.

Peach farms also strengthen rural communities by creating jobs, supporting local businesses, and helping improve the quality of life for residents across the state.

2. PEACH FACTS

Nutrition

Peaches are naturally sweet, low in calories, and packed with important vitamins and minerals.

One medium raw peach (147 grams) contains:

- 50 calories
- 0.5 grams fat
- 0 grams cholesterol
- 0 grams sodium
- 15 grams carbohydrates
- 13 grams natural sugars
- 2 grams fiber
- 1 gram protein

Health Benefits of Peaches:

Vitamin C

A half-cup serving of fresh peaches provides approximately 10% of the daily recommended amount of vitamin C, which supports a healthy immune system and helps the body heal wounds.

Vitamin A

One medium peach provides approximately 6% of daily vitamin A needs. Vitamin A supports healthy skin, vision, and immune function.

Potassium

Peaches are a good source of potassium, which helps regulate heart rate and blood pressure.

Fiber

The fiber found in peaches supports digestive health and can help people feel full longer. Most of the fiber and many antioxidants are found in the peach skin, so eating peaches with the skin on provides the greatest nutritional benefit.

Iron

Peaches contain iron, which is necessary for the formation of healthy red blood cells.

Fluoride

Naturally occurring fluoride in peaches contributes to strong bones and healthy teeth.

Antioxidants

Peaches contain powerful antioxidants, including lutein, zeaxanthin, and beta-cryptoxanthin. These compounds help protect cells from damage and may promote healthy aging.

Additional Nutrients

Peaches provide small amounts of vitamins E and K, niacin, folate, choline, magnesium, phosphorus, manganese, zinc, and copper.

Another benefit is that peaches contain no saturated fat and naturally contain no cholesterol.

Fun Peach Facts

- Peaches are South Carolina's official state fruit.
- The Peachoid water tower in Gaffney, designed to resemble a giant peach, is one of South Carolina's most recognizable landmarks.
- Basketball was originally played using peach baskets as goals.
- In Chinese culture, peaches have long symbolized health, longevity, prosperity, and good fortune.
- South Carolina grows more peaches than Georgia and is the largest peach-producing state east of the Mississippi River.

3. EASY PEACH RECIPES

Fresh Peach Yogurt Parfait

Ingredients:

- 1 fresh peach, diced
- 1 cup low-fat vanilla yogurt
- ¼ cup granola

Directions:

1. Layer half of the yogurt into a glass.
2. Add half of the diced peaches.
3. Sprinkle with granola.
4. Repeat layers and serve immediately.

Makes 1 serving.

Peach Smoothie

Ingredients:

- 1 fresh peach, sliced
- 1 banana
- 1 cup low-fat milk
- ½ cup ice

Directions:

1. Place all ingredients in a blender.
2. Blend until smooth.
3. Serve immediately.

Makes 2 servings.

Fresh Peach Salsa

Ingredients:

- 2 peaches, diced
- 1 tomato, diced
- 2 tablespoons red onion, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 1 tablespoon chopped cilantro

Directions:

1. Combine all ingredients in a bowl.
2. Mix gently.
3. Serve with baked tortilla chips or as a topping for grilled chicken.

Makes approximately 4 servings.

Food Safety Tips:

- Wash fresh peaches under running water before eating or preparing.
- Refrigerate cut peaches within two hours.
- Store ripe peaches in the refrigerator and use them within a few days for best quality.

Lesson Summary:

South Carolina peaches are an important part of the state's agricultural heritage and economy. For more than 150 years, peach growers have contributed to South Carolina communities and helped make the state one of the nation's leading peach producers.

Peaches are also a nutritious fruit that provides vitamins, minerals, fiber, antioxidants, and natural sweetness. They are low in calories, contain no saturated fat, and can easily be incorporated into healthy meals and snacks. Whether eaten fresh, blended into smoothies, layered in parfaits, or mixed into salsa, peaches are a delicious way to support a healthy lifestyle.

Suggested Activities:

Peach Timeline Activity

- Create a timeline tracing peaches from ancient China to South Carolina.
- Include major events such as:
 - 8,000 years ago: Peach cultivation begins in China.
 - 1571: Spanish missionaries introduce peaches to the Southeast.
 - Mid-1800s: Commercial peach production begins in South Carolina.
 - 1984: Peach named South Carolina's state fruit.

Map the Peach Journey

- Have participants trace the route peaches traveled from China to South Carolina on a world map.

South Carolina Peach Trivia

- Divide participants into teams and ask questions about peach nutrition, history, and agriculture.

Taste Test

- Compare fresh peaches, frozen peaches, and canned peaches packed in juice. Discuss differences in flavor, texture, added sugar, and nutritional value.

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Sources/References:

- [Peaches: The Story of South Carolina's Non-native State Fruit | Home & Garden Information Center](#)
- [Peaches | South Carolina Encyclopedia](#)
- [Fresh SC Peaches – Our South Carolina State Fruit](#)
- [Clemson Cooperative Extension Peach FAQ](#)
- [Home | SC Peach Council](#)