



# SIMPLY GOOD FOOD

## Cantaloupe (Muskmelons)

There are four types of dessert melons (not watermelons) unless specified. Summer is their peak season.

**Culture:** They are close relatives of New World squashes, but are from the Old World. Marco polo Commented about the great quantity and quality of the melons in Afghanistan on his way to China. Historians list the origin of melons as Persia and believe they are one of the earliest foods grown. Melons were popular in ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. No meal was complete without melons in tenth century France. Unknown in the New World, the English brought them to the East Coast and the Spanish introduced them to the West and Southwest.

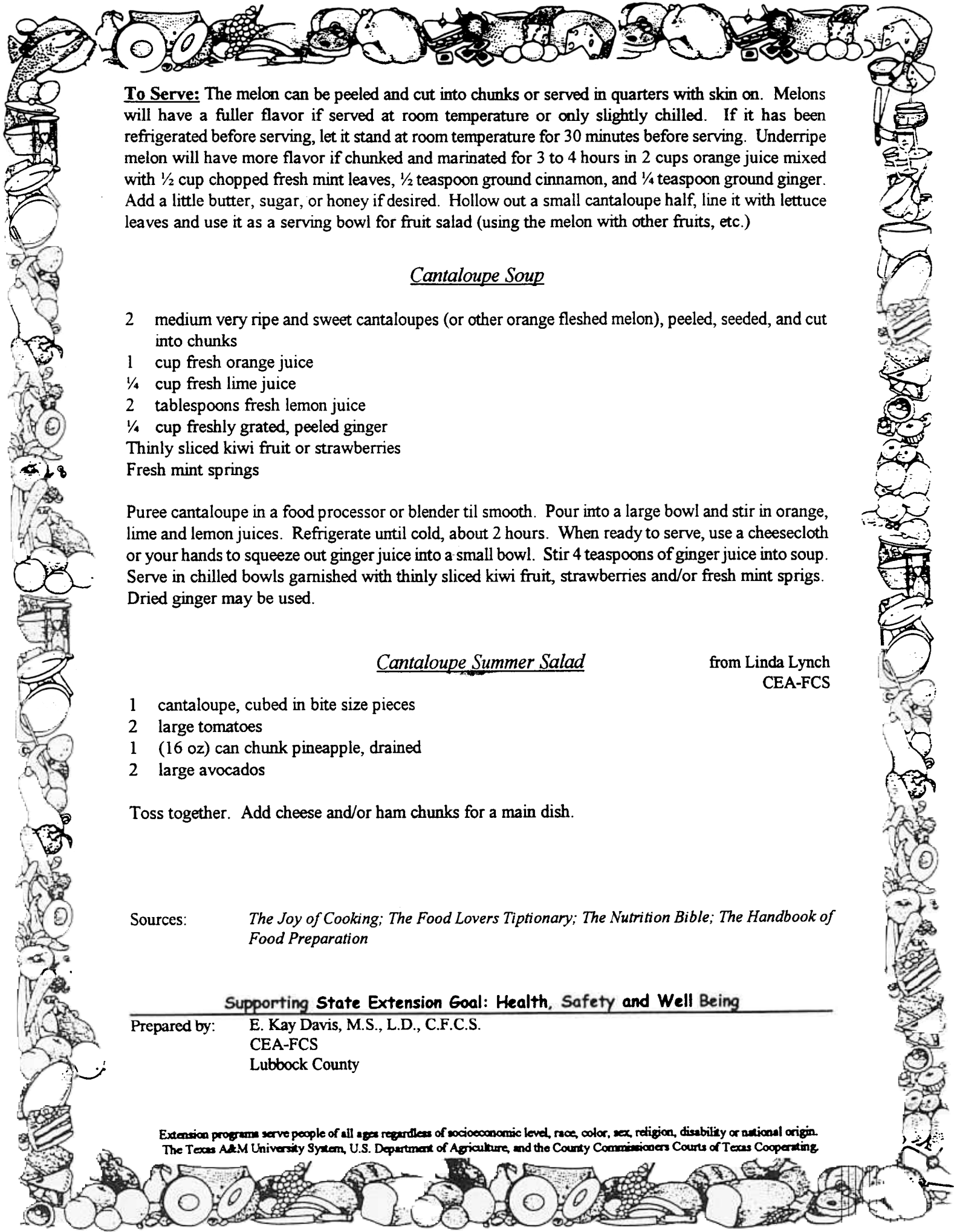
**Choose:** Melons whose stems are gone, leaving a smooth, symmetrical, shallow basin called a "full-slip". If all or part of the stem base is present or if the stem scar is jagged or torn, the melon is probably not fully matured. The netting or veining should be thick, coarse, and corky and should stand out in bold relief over some part of the surface. The skin color (ground color) between the netting should have changed from green to a yellowish buff, yellowish gray, or pale yellow. A cantaloupe can be mature, but not ripe. A ripe cantaloupe will have a yellowish cast to the rind, have a pleasant cantaloupe odor and yield slightly to light thumb pressure on the blossom end.

**Avoid:** Over-ripeness where there is a pronounced yellow rind color, a softening over the entire rind, and soft watery and insipid flesh. Small bruises normally will not hurt the fruit, but large bruised areas should be avoided since they can cause soft, water-soaked areas underneath the rind. Mold growth on the cantaloupe especially in the stem scars with wet tissue under the mold-indicates decay.

**Store:** Slightly under-ripe melons should be stored at room temperature in a paper bag pierced in several places. Cut melon will not ripen. Adding an apple to the bag will speed ripening. Store whole, ripe melons in the refrigerator up to 5 days. Store cut melons in the refrigerator, tightly sealed in plastic wrap or air-tight containers up to 3 days. Cut melons absorb other food odors easily, and their odor can ruin other foods. Desert melons freeze well.

**Preparation:** Wash melon with soapy water and a vegetable brush and rinse well before cutting. Cut in half and then into quarters. Use a large spoon or ice cream scoop to remove seeds. Leaving seeds in a halved melon during storage will help preserve freshness.

**Nutritional Information:** 1 cup of cubed cantaloupe or persimmon melon (about 5 3/4 ounces) has 56 calories, 68 mg. Vitamin C, and 515 RE Vitamin A. It is also a good source of Folate.



**To Serve:** The melon can be peeled and cut into chunks or served in quarters with skin on. Melons will have a fuller flavor if served at room temperature or only slightly chilled. If it has been refrigerated before serving, let it stand at room temperature for 30 minutes before serving. Underripe melon will have more flavor if chunked and marinated for 3 to 4 hours in 2 cups orange juice mixed with ½ cup chopped fresh mint leaves, ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon, and ¼ teaspoon ground ginger. Add a little butter, sugar, or honey if desired. Hollow out a small cantaloupe half, line it with lettuce leaves and use it as a serving bowl for fruit salad (using the melon with other fruits, etc.)

### Cantaloupe Soup

- 2 medium very ripe and sweet cantaloupes (or other orange fleshed melon), peeled, seeded, and cut into chunks
- 1 cup fresh orange juice
- ¼ cup fresh lime juice
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ¼ cup freshly grated, peeled ginger
- Thinly sliced kiwi fruit or strawberries
- Fresh mint springs

Puree cantaloupe in a food processor or blender til smooth. Pour into a large bowl and stir in orange, lime and lemon juices. Refrigerate until cold, about 2 hours. When ready to serve, use a cheesecloth or your hands to squeeze out ginger juice into a small bowl. Stir 4 teaspoons of ginger juice into soup. Serve in chilled bowls garnished with thinly sliced kiwi fruit, strawberries and/or fresh mint sprigs. Dried ginger may be used.

### Cantaloupe Summer Salad

from Linda Lynch  
CEA-FCS

- 1 cantaloupe, cubed in bite size pieces
- 2 large tomatoes
- 1 (16 oz) can chunk pineapple, drained
- 2 large avocados

Toss together. Add cheese and/or ham chunks for a main dish.

Sources: *The Joy of Cooking; The Food Lovers Tiptonary; The Nutrition Bible; The Handbook of Food Preparation*

### Supporting State Extension Goal: Health, Safety and Well Being

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