About – Thanks to globalization of the produce industry, the variety of melons available today is virtually endless. Cantaloupe, Athena cantaloupe and watermelon are by far the most common melon found in today’s supermarket; however, there are also several varieties of melons that we find during the summer that are becoming increasingly popular. Most of these melons are grown in California and Arizona.

Here is a brief description of a few of the more popular melons:

**Casaba:** A round melon with rich yellow skin and white flesh. Because of their thick rind they have very little aroma. Avoid fruit that is excessively green. They are available June through October.

**Crenshaw:** These rich yellow melons are slightly elongated and can get very large - up to ten pounds. With a sweet and uniquely spicy flavor, Crenshaw melons are a cross between a Persian and Casaba melon. They are available June through October.

**Juan Canary:** As the name implies these melons are canary yellow in color. The skin of a ripe Juan Canary will have a waxy feel to it and show no trace of green. They are available late June through October.

**Honeydew:** Honeydews are arguably the sweetest of all melons when they are fully ripe. Melons with a creamy yellow color and slightly waxy feel will be the ripest. The stem end should have some give to it and often the seeds will rattle if the melon is shaken. Honeydew melons are available year around, but summer is the peak time for domestic production with Mexico supplying us fruit in the winter.

**Orange Flesh Honeydew:** These melons have the same characteristics as honeydew. The only difference is a slight orange tinge to the fruit.

**Persian:** These are similar in appearance to a cantaloupe, but with finely textured netting. Their season runs from June to September peaking in July.

**Santa Claus:** Elongated like a football with pronounced mottled yellow and green skin and creamy white flesh, this is the most distinctive of the variety melons. Normally available from late June through October, their thick rind allows them to be stored for several months, hence the name Santa Claus or Christmas melon.

Selection – When you are selecting fruit, look for melons that are heavy for their size as they will be the ripest. Pick-up two melons of similar size and compare them - then choose the heaviest. Melons should be neither too firm nor too soft and there should be no major blemishes or cuts on the skin.

Storage – Whole melons can be kept for a day or two at room temperature to ripen. Once ripe, they can be kept in the refrigerator for up to five days. Cut melons can be stored in an airtight container for up to three days in the refrigerator.

Preparation and Uses – As with any melon, the surface should be thoroughly washed with soapy water prior to cutting. After cutting the melon in half and removing the seeds, all of these flavorful melons can be used in a variety of ways. They can be sliced, cubed, quartered or scooped out with a melon baller. They make a great addition to a fruit salad; they can be pureed in a cold melon soup, made into a melon boat or simply cut into slices and eaten out of hand. For a zesty treat, season your favorite melon with cayenne pepper.

Nutrition – While relatively low in calories and carbohydrates, because of the differing sugar content, the actual values vary greatly from variety to variety. However, one thing they all have in common is that they all are excellent sources for vitamin C and potassium. They also contain no fat or cholesterol.

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