

Watermelon: An Athlete's Top Choice

Watermelon is in season now and a great fruit option for athletes for 5 reasons:

1. **Rehydrating.** Ninety-two percent of what you eat is water and contains 170 mg of potassium, a mineral that is lost in sweat and helps prevent muscle cramping and fatigue.
2. **Lycopenes.** It contains the phytonutrient lycopene which helps reduce inflammation in our body. As you well know the training effects of exercise leave muscles sore and fatigued. A diet rich in lycopenes may help reduce inflammation and improve recovery time naturally. Tip: Allow your watermelon to ripen fully as the lycopene content increases when the melon becomes pinker and riper.
3. **Cost Effective.** One cup of chopped watermelon averages less than \$0.30 per serving.
4. **Nutrient Rich.** It's packed with nutrition yet one of the lowest calorie fruit options. At 47 calories per cup, it contains 17 percent of our daily value (DV) for Vitamin C, 20% DV Vitamin A and 5% DV for potassium. Vitamins A and C are rich in antioxidants which help prevent and repair cell damage caused during exercise.
5. **Variety.** There's more than one way to slice a watermelon. Check out these recipes below, courtesy of Mercy Health, Chef Bryan Nader

Watermelon Salsa

Yield 6 cups

Ingredients:

3 cups diced watermelon
1 cup diced pineapple
½ cup diced mango
¼ cup diced red onion
½ cup chopped green pepper
1 jalapeno, seeded and minced
¼ cup chopped mint
Juice of 2 limes
1/8 tsp. kosher salt

Preparation:

1. Combine all ingredients in a large bowl.
2. Cover and refrigerate for at least 2 hours before serving

Watermelon and Feta Salad

Ingredients:

6 cups diced watermelon
½ cup chopped red onion
1 English style cucumber, diced

1 Tbsp. basil, chopped
1 Tbsp. mint, chopped
½ cup feta
1 Tbsp. extra virgin olive oil
2 Tbsp. reduced balsamic vinegar

Preparation:

1. In a large bowl, add the watermelon, red onion, cucumber. Stir to combine
2. Sprinkle the basil and mint over the top, crumble over feta, and finish with the olive oil and reduced balsamic vinegar.

Watermelon Strawberry Skewer

Ingredients:

Watermelon, cubed into 1 ½ " pieces
Strawberries, hulled and quartered
Basil leaves
Goat cheese
Honey

Preparation:

1. Start the layer with the watermelon, followed by the basil leaf, ¼ tsp. goat cheese, strawberry and finish off with a drizzle of honey.

Watermelon Sorbet

Yield 10 cups

Ingredients:

1 cup sugar
1 cup water
8 cups seedless watermelon, pureed
2 Tbsp. lemon juice

Preparation:

1. In a small saucepan, add the sugar and water, bring mixture to a boil over medium/high heat, cooking until the sugar is dissolved about 2-5 minutes. Set mixture aside to cool.
2. In a large bowl, add in the pureed watermelon, lemon juice, and cooled sugar mixture. Carefully pour the watermelon mixture into a 9"x13" pan. Place the pan into the freezer, and freeze until firm.
3. Remove mixture from the freezer and puree before serving.

Watermelon Popsicle

Cut your watermelon into pie shaped wedges. Place a popsicle stick through the core and freeze wrapped in parchment paper. Enjoy after a short or long run!

How to Choose a Watermelon

Choose a watermelon that feels heavy based on size. It should be uniform in shape and not dull or shiny. The patch where it rested on the ground should be deeper in color. Yellow is better than white and white is better than no patch at all. Knock on the melon. If your knuckles meet with a dull thud it means the melon is under ripe.

Check out more recipes on our Mercy Health Pinterest Page @MercyHealthWM under the board called Healthy Summer Parties.