

Bite into Summer

Peaches are a seasonal pantry essential.

/ by Kim Buffington / photography by Eli Warren



Simple pleasures sure are enjoying their moment in the sun. Flowers from the garden. Walks in the neighborhood. Fresh fruits and vegetables from nearby farms. Lucky for us here in South Carolina, that also means peaches.

Since South Carolina is the second largest state for domestic peach production, we have a lot to celebrate when it comes to the juicy fruit. A good place to start is with a visit to some of the state's quintessential "peach stands" in the Old 96 District. A drive to this five-county district just south of Greenville makes for a memorable daytrip. Step back in time to visit these historic markets that offer locally grown fruits and vegetables, boiled peanuts, jams and jellies and of course plenty of peaches.

Peach season is upon us and will run through about Labor Day. Clingstone peaches are the first of the season and by the end of June freestone peaches are ready. Consider their names to delineate the differences; a freestone peach has a seed inside that separates nicely from the flesh of the peach – the riper the fruit is, the more easily it will come off the seed. A clingstone peach is not going to part easily from its pit.

There are many peach varieties to consider. Titan Farms, the largest producer in the Old 96 as well as the southeast, grows 60 peach varieties on their farm. The Scarlet Prince is a flavorful freestone that is 80% red blush in color and is considered the southern standard for peaches. The O'Henry variety is touted as one of the best-tasting in America; they are 90% red and very firm. Big Red peaches make a statement with their size, these juicy freestones are the largest of the bunch by far.

You can also find white peaches in SC. The white flesh varieties come to market a bit later than the rest and the roadside stands are a great place to find them. While the color of the flesh is the most obvious difference between white and red peaches, white peaches are better eaten as a whole peach and need to be handled gently as they are quite tender.

Sure, one of the best ways to enjoy a peach is straight out of the basket but cooking with them is a delight too. Classics like summer galettes,

pies and, of course, cobbler are expected, but savory dishes can be a bit more unique. Add grilled peaches to meats, salads, bowls and salsa. Don't forget the summer drinks too. Sangria and peach bellinis are porch-time favorites.

Store peaches at room temperature until desired ripeness. You can accelerate ripening by placing them in a brown paper bag. Only put peaches into the refrigerator once they have reached desired ripeness.

Lori Anne of Titan Farm's Fresh Peach Ice Cream

Makes 2 Quarts

2 cups milk
2 cups heavy cream
¾ cup sugar
2 teaspoons vanilla
2 cups fresh peaches, peeled and chopped
Pinch of salt

Note: 2-3 large fresh peaches will yield this amount

Method:
In a bowl, stir together milk, cream, sugar, vanilla, peaches and salt until sugar is dissolved. Pour mixture into prepared cylinder. Follow the manufacturer's directions to process the ice cream. Serve immediately.

Iconic Peach Stands

The historic peach stands that pepper the Old 96 District are a slice of Americana. Head south on US25 and make your way through Greenwood to visit three of our favorites in the Trenton area. It's a scenic drive and the bounty of this daytrip can be labeled nothing shy of delicious.

Sara's Fresh Market at Titan Farms | 5150 Edgefield Rd

The peach ice cream here is the thing. Also 50 different varieties of peaches, plus locally grown bell peppers, tomatoes, watermelon, corn, onions.

Jackie's Market | 2669 Edgefield Rd

Peaches, butter beans, peas, squash and other fresh produce. Hanging baskets and perennials are interesting add-ons for flower lovers.

Cook's Farm & Stand | Hwy 25/1236 Augusta Road

A popular family-owned and operated stand. Favorites here are peaches and boiled peanuts.

Visit Old96SC.com /feelin-peachy for more information about historic peach stands.