

Pomegranate



Is this an apple? It resembles one at first glance. Round and shiny, it's similar in size and its color ranges from yellow to dark red. But because of what we find inside it, the pomegranate is actually a berry!

The pomegranate's name is related to two different things: the 'grenade', which is an explosive-filled weapon shaped like a fruit, and the 'garnet', which is a deep-red gemstone. The word 'granum' comes from Latin and actually means 'grain' or 'core'. In fact, this fruit, which grows on small trees and shrubs, is full of kernels coated with red pulp. You can uncover up to 1,000 such kernels from under the pomegranate's leathery skin. The best way to do this is under water – either with scuba gear or, if you wanted to be more practical, in a large bowl. Otherwise, everything gets completely covered in red spots that are very difficult to get out!

The tannic acids of pomegranate plants are traditionally used for dyeing carpets. Glorious colors ranging from yellow and black to deep ink-blue can be made from them. In Switzerland, pomegranates are often an ingredient in cosmetics. They are said to make the skin look particularly young.

One famous myth from ancient Greece may revolve around a pomegranate. Eris, the goddess of strife and discord, was not invited to a celebration of the gods. Out of sheer anger, she inscribed an 'apple of discord' with the words: 'for the most beautiful amongst all the guests'. At the celebration, three goddesses, Hera, Athena and Aphrodite, got into an argument and asked Zeus, the father of the gods, to decide who was worthy of the fruit. He cleverly passed the problem on to Paris, a young prince from the city of Troy. The three vain ladies tried to influence Paris' decision by offering him gifts. Hera offered power, Athena offered wisdom, and Aphrodite offered the love of Helen of Sparta, the most beautiful woman in the world. Paris chose the last gift and gave the 'apple' to Aphrodite. However, before he could claim beautiful Helen's love, he first had to kidnap her from Sparta. As a result, the Trojan War broke out, triggered by an 'apple' that some historians believe was actually a pomegranate!

Origin:

Asia, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean and South America

Other name:

Fruit of paradise





Grape



A fox was sniffing at some juicy grapes on a vine. As high as he could jump, he simply could not reach them. He then murmured: “The grapes probably taste so sour that I won’t want to eat them”. This fable from the ancient Greek poet Aesop is as short as it is famous. That’s because there’s a lot of truth in it! Many people talk badly about something they cannot get, which makes them feel better about not having it. This negative attitude is often referred to as ‘sour grapes’.

But maybe it was a good thing that the grape plant, with its long shoots, had grown too high and kept the fox from eating the delicious fruit. Grapes, when dried to become raisins, are extremely poisonous for some dogs. Other dogs, however, can eat bunches of grapes without getting sick. The reason for this phenomenon has never really been explained.

Grapes are actually berries that hang on panicles, or multiple-branched flower clusters. They come in colors that range from yellow to green and purple to dark blue. It’s important to make a clear distinction between table grapes, which we usually eat raw, and the grapes we process into wine or juice. People have been processing grapes for over 8,000 years. This fact makes grapevines, of which there are thousands of different types, among the world’s oldest cultivated plants.

Given such a wide selection of grape varieties, it’s not only wine lovers that get enthusiastic over this popular fruit. Moths, and especially the beautifully named vine-hawk moth, also desire grape plants. Fortunately, their caterpillars prefer to eat the leaves and not the tasty fruit!

Origin:

Grapes are grown all over the world!

Other names:

Wine grapes. In dried form they are called raisins, sultanas and currants.



Mandarin, Orange, Lemon and Grapefruit

There are plenty of citrus fruits. What they have in common is that they grow on evergreen trees, which can blossom and bear ripe fruit simultaneously. Under a more or less thick peel, citrus fruits conceal around ten juicy segments, with a smaller or larger number of seeds and packed with vitamin C. But that's where the similarities end!

The mandarin is probably the oldest of the sour citrus fruits. It was so prized in ancient China that it was named after the bright yellow-orange coat of the mandarin, a high-ranking Chinese official. To store mandarins in a can, you simply put the entire unpeeled fruit inside with diluted hydrochloric acid, which then dissolves the peel.

The citron has been around for a long time, too. It has an extra thick skin that is prized for baking and other functions. Flawless citrons have long been used as part of a Jewish ceremony called the Feast of the Tabernacles. The Buddha's Hand citron, which actually looks like a hand with fingers, is given away in China as a lucky charm during New Year's festivities.

Oranges were grown from mandarins and citrons. The earliest cultivated varieties, which have a very strong, bitter taste, are also known as Seville oranges. Over time, sweeter variants were developed. The best cleaning agents can be made from orange oil. They can help you peel away the stickiest of stickers! Bitter oranges and citrons are also the forerunners of the lemons we know today.

And then there is the pomelo, the biggest and most bitter of the original citrus fruits. These tank-like berries have a leathery rind and, like many of their relatives, go straight to the fruit shelves of supermarkets.

The modern grapefruit was developed from pomelos and oranges. Grapefruit got its name because the trees from which they grow form vine-like branches.

Origin:

From Asia to South America, right through to the regions around the Mediterranean, especially Spain, Sicily and southern Italy

Other names:

Blood orange, tangelo and pompia





Apple, Pear and Quince

Apples are the fruit that many people first think of when they hear the term 'fruit'. This is perhaps because Eve, according to tradition, plucked a forbidden apple from the tree of knowledge and then gave it to Adam. The word apple, however, is never mentioned in the Biblical story of Adam and Eve.

Like its siblings, pears and quince, the apple belongs to a group of fruits called pomes. All pomes are both simple fruits and 'accessory' fruits. An apple's 'real' fruit are the little brown kernel seeds stuck in its core, which develop from an ovary. The fleshy part of the apple – the part we eat – does not develop from an ovary and is called 'accessory tissue'. If you cut an apple in half, you will see five chambers, which mostly contain two kernels each. The tasty flesh around the core serves to entice animals to distribute the seeds as widely as possible.

Fortunately, fruit growers do not have to rely on this natural method of reproduction. They've been cultivating and refining apple varieties for more than 6,000 years. The earliest types of apple trees still grow in Kazakhstan, a country where the largest city is called Alma-Ata, meaning 'grandfather of the apple'. Biologists rave about Kazakh apple trees. That's because they can use the trees' genetic material to reduce fungal and other plant diseases in apple trees around the world. When disease is reduced in this way, apple farmers don't need to spray as many chemicals on their crops – a fact that should cheer up all apple eaters!

According to a saying, you should never compare an apple to a pear. This simply means that certain things cannot be judged against each other. Apples and pears are both pome fruits, but they differ in shape and taste, and no apple can be judged 'better' than any pear.

Never say to a farmer how good his pears taste with cheese. Otherwise, he'll keep them all for himself! This is an old Italian piece of wisdom. The mild sweetness of pears goes very well with certain tasty cheese. Most types of quince, however, need to be cooked before you can truly enjoy them. In Portuguese, the name for quince is 'marmelo', which is probably where we get the word 'marmalade'.

Origin:

Europe, Asia, North America

Names for apple varieties:

Honeydew, Fuji and Gala



