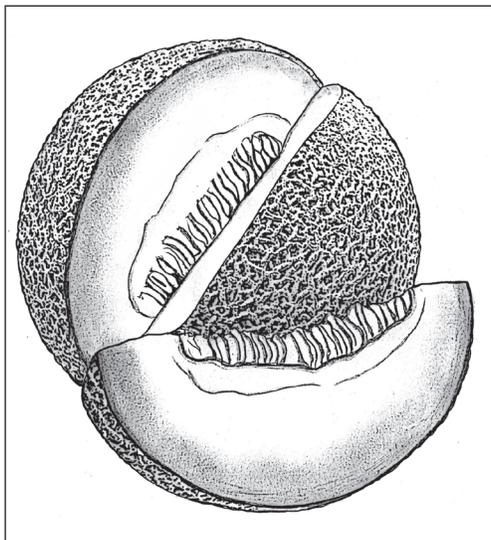


## Commodity Fact Sheet

# Cantaloupe

Information compiled by the California Cantaloupe Advisory Board

**How Produced** – California cantaloupes are grown in two main regions—the Southern Desert Area, and on a 200-mile long stretch on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley from Bakersfield to Tracy. The latter area is where 70% of California’s crop is harvested each year between June and October. Because of climatic conditions, planting times vary depending on the region in which they are produced. In the San Joaquin Valley, “Westside” cantaloupes are planted in early to mid-April and through mid-summer. These cantaloupes prefer loam or clay-loam soils and are planted on beds that are raised so when irrigation water is applied, only the plant roots get the water and the surface of the bed remains dry. This keeps the cantaloupes from contact with moist soil, which can result in cosmetic blemishes. It also protects against molds and other microorganisms.



Cantaloupes can be identified by the characteristic system of ridges that encompass the outside of the rind and look almost as if the fruit is covered in a net. Look for cantaloupes with prominent, cream-colored ridges. It is perfectly normal for one side, where the cantaloupe has touched the ground as it grows in the field, to be lighter in color or to have smoother ridges.

Cantaloupes are generally harvested, packed, inspected, and graded in the field and then transported to a cold storage facility, where they are cooled to 36°F to 40°F prior to shipment. Some melons are harvested into field bins and brought directly to packing houses where they are placed into shipping boxes.

All cantaloupes packed in California are subject to continuous government inspection, and only cantaloupes that meet the inspection criteria may be shipped. Like all fresh fruits and vegetables, melons should be washed under running tap water before cutting. Store sliced melon with seeds still intact in the refrigerator until it is ready to be eaten.

**History** – Egyptians wrote about cantaloupes as far back as 2400 B.C. In later times, the Romans described the cultivation of cantaloupes. Gradually their popularity moved west, reaching France in the 1490s, and continued to spread into central and northern Europe. Columbus brought seeds to the New World on his second voyage and reported their cultivation there upon his return. Since the eastern soils and climate of North America weren’t well suited for cantaloupes,

commercial production eventually moved into the western states. Today, most of the cantaloupes produced in the U.S. are grown in Arizona and California.

**Varieties** – There are many types of cantaloupes grown in California. Traditionally the melon grown in California was called the Western Shipper, but in recent years varieties have been developed that are able to stay fresh longer. Varieties with a moderately longer shelf life (10 to 15 days depending on storage temperature) are called extended shelf life, or ESL types, while those with the longest shelf life (average of 20 days) are called long shelf life or LSL types. Those melons that slip from the vine (Western and ESL types) will have a smooth round crater where the cantaloupe had been attached to the vine, while the ESL types are cut from

the vine and will have a small portion of the stem still attached to the cantaloupe.

**Commodity Value** – California typically produces about 75% of the nation’s domestic supply of cantaloupes. Cantaloupes are generally packed in 40-pound cartons. Production varies greatly, ranging from 500 to 900 cartons per acre. This is equivalent to 20,000 to 36,000 pounds per acre. Over the past five years, the average cantaloupe crop was valued at \$194 million annually.

**Top Producing Counties** – Fresno County grows more cantaloupes than any other California county, but cantaloupes are a major crop in several other San Joaquin Valley counties including Merced, Kern, Stanislaus, and Kings. In addition, cantaloupes are grown in Riverside, Imperial, Yuba, and Sutter counties.

**Nutritional Value** – Cantaloupes are an excellent source of both vitamin A and vitamin C. A six-ounce serving, or roughly a quarter of a melon, provides 100% of the U.S. recommended daily allowance of each vitamin. Cantaloupes are also high in dietary fiber as well as folacin, a nutrient needed for growth and the development of hemoglobin. All of the nutrition in cantaloupes comes with minimal calories. There are 50 calories in a six-ounce serving of cantaloupe. Cantaloupes contain no fat or cholesterol.

**For Additional Information:**  
California Cantaloupe Advisory Board  
(559) 591-5715

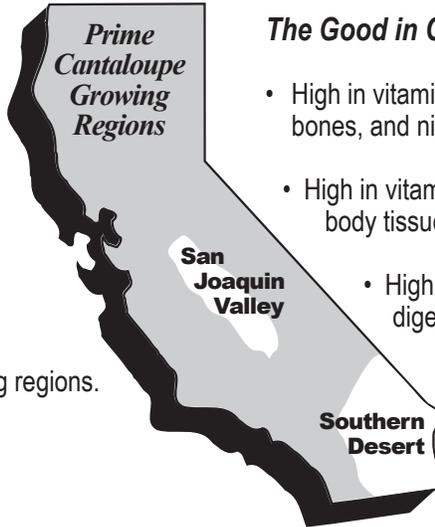


# Cantaloupe Activity Sheet

## Cantaloupes for Californians and the World

### What it Takes to Grow a Cantaloupe

- Loam or clay-loam soils.
- Raised beds so roots get the water but the melons do not.
- Plentiful water.
- Sunny, hot days.
- Seed variety selection for specific growing regions.
- Minimal rain and low humidity.
- Control of white flies and other pests.



### The Good in Cantaloupe

- High in vitamin A essential for healthy body tissue, growing bones, and night vision.
- High in vitamin C essential for strong gums and healthy body tissues.
- High in dietary fiber essential for maintaining a healthy digestive tract.
- High in folacin essential for cell growth and reproduction.
- Low in calories.

### Lesson Ideas

- Cantaloupes were named after the Roman town of Cantalupo where they were grown in abundance. Research the history and culture of Cantalupo, Italy.
- Create a poster illustrating the nutritional benefits of cantaloupe. Ask the produce manager at a grocery store to display the informative posters.
- Cantaloupes are members of the gourd family. Find criteria that define the gourd family and make a list of other commodities classified as gourds.
- Create a limerick about cantaloupes. Include facts found on this fact sheet.
- Collect a variety of soil samples. Have students determine which sample would be best for growing cantaloupes and why.
- Estimate the circumference, surface area, and volume of various melons. Verify your results.

### Fantastic Facts

- California leads the nation in cantaloupe production.
- Fresno County is the greatest cantaloupe producing county in the nation.
- 10-15 bee visits are necessary, on average, for proper pollination and large melons.
- Another name for cantaloupe is muskmelon.
- The fleshy portion of a cantaloupe is usually orange.
- Cantaloupes grow on a vine.
- There is evidence that ancient Egyptians and Romans grew cantaloupes.

## Lesson Plan: Melodious Melon Poetry

**Introduction:** Poetry is often used to express feelings and experiences. A didactic cinquain is a five line verse that uses structure and different parts of speech about a subject.

**Objective:** Students will experience the sights and tastes of cantaloupes and will then write about them poetically.

**California Standards:** CC ELA: L.6-12.2; L.3-12.3; L.4-5.5

**Materials:** One cantaloupe for every six people, knife, paper towels, writing paper, pencils.

#### Procedure:

1. Give each group of students a cantaloupe. Have them write down single words that describe its external appearance.
2. Next, cut the cantaloupe in half. Have students brainstorm a list of adjectives that describe its internal structure.
3. Continue cutting the melons, providing each student with a slice. Have them smell, touch, and taste the melon and then

write down words that describe their experience.

4. Have your students write a cinquain describing their melon-tasting experience.

A one word title, a noun that tells what your poem is about

Two adjectives that describe the title

Three action verbs that describe the title

Four-word phrase that tells more about the title

A synonym for the title