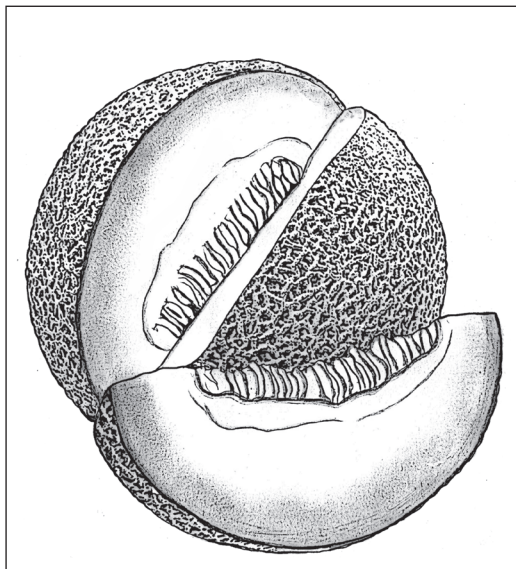


# Cantaloupe

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 percent 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 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 central California are subject to continuous government inspection, and only cantaloupes that meet the inspection criteria receive a stamped certification and 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. The type generally grown in California is called the “western shipping type,” of which there are many varieties. Seed companies

supply the variety best suited to a region’s particular soil type and weather conditions. The average consumer cannot tell the difference between the varieties since they are all nearly round, have a prominent “netting” on their skin and differ only slightly from each other in general appearance.

**Commodity Value** – California typically produces about 75 percent 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.

The cantaloupe retail price, which is the cost at the grocery store, ranges from 69¢ to 99¢ per pound in California. The cost of getting the melons

from the field to the retailer is approximately 15¢ to 20¢ per pound. This includes the cost of growing, picking, packing, cooling and transporting the cantaloupes. From that amount, the grower receives 2¢-4¢ per pound.

**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 and Imperial 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 percent 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:**  
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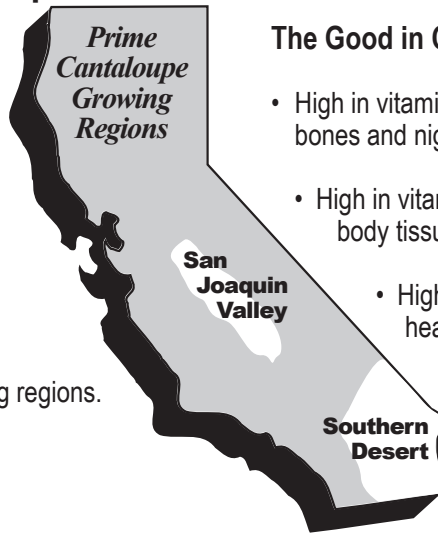


# Cantaloupe Activity Sheet

## 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 and share five interesting facts with the class.
- 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 and then enjoy a melon fruit salad.

### Fantastic Facts

1. What state leads the nation in cantaloupe production?
  2. What California county leads the nation in cantaloupe production?
  3. How many bee visits are needed, on average, for proper pollination and large melons?
  4. What is another name for cantaloupe?
  5. What is the most common color of the fleshy portion of a cantaloupe?
  6. What do cantaloupes grow on?
  7. True or false? There is evidence that the ancient Egyptians and Romans grew cantaloupes.
- 1) California 2) Fresno 3) 10-15 4) Muskmelon 5) Orange 6) A vine 7) True

## Lesson Plan: Melodious Melon Poetry

**Introduction:** Poetry is often used to express feelings and experiences. In this activity, students will experience the sights and tastes of cantaloupes and will then write about them poetically.

**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. A cinquain is a five line verse with a particular structure. 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

