

# Dates



## Historical facts

Dates are the fruits of the date palm tree; one of the highest nutritional foods known to man. Saudi Arabia is the home land of the Date Palm Tree. More than 10,000 years of age, it is one of the oldest trees in the world. Many nations transferred the palm trees from Saudi Arabia to other places in the world after they became amused by its charming beauty and its endless generosity. For example, the great Alexander was the first to introduce palm trees to Pakistan. And with the entrance of the Kalifa Abdulrahman Aldakhel to Spain (Andalucia) the first palm tree entered Spain. This led to its availability in America; it was first introduced to Mexico by the Portuguese and from there it reached the United States during the 18th century.

In Islam, dates have received more attention than any other fruit. Prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) encouraged Muslims to break their fast at sunset during the month of Ramadan by dates and water because of its nutritional value.

Today, Saudi Arabia is the second largest producer of dates in the world. It produces more than 300 types of dates, each having its own different taste and texture.



## Nutritional Value

A 100 gram portion of fresh dates is a premium source of vitamin C. Since dates contain relatively little water, they do not become much more concentrated upon drying, although the vitamin C disappears in the process. Each date provides about 20 calories, and is a good source of carbohydrates, fiber, and potassium, also providing some calcium and iron along with other vitamins and minerals in smaller amounts. Dates do not have significant amounts of fat, cholesterol, protein, or sodium.

Dates contain calcium, sulphur, iron, potassium, phosphorus, manganese, copper, magnesium, volatile oils, Vitamin-B6, folic acid, proteins, sugars, and are rich in natural fibers which contribute to a healthy body and mind.

Dates provides natural sugar in the form of glucose and fructose which is ready for immediate absorption and, is infinitely far superior to cane-sugar.

Other Health Values:

1. Dieticians consider dates the best food for breast-feeding mothers.
2. Dates are rich in calcium which contributes to strong bones.
3. Eating dates improves eye sight.
4. Dates help clean the liver from toxins.

## Date Types:

Dates can be classified as soft, semi-soft or dry dates. Chewy dry dates keep longer and can be used for 'survival food' on long trips or when hiking. Dates freeze extremely well, and can be enjoyed year round.

Three main groups of dates exist:

1. Soft e.g. Khalas Qassim and Khalas Kharj
2. Semi-Dry e.g. Ajwa), Anbara, Mabroom , Medjool, and Barni
3. Dry e.g. Ruthana, Nabtat Ali and Segae and Sukkari

Dates ripen in four stages, kimri (unripe), khalal (full-size, crunchy), rutab (ripe, soft), and tamr (ripe, sun-dried).

## Use of dates and other palm tree products:

Date palm leaves are used for making huts, mats, screens, baskets, brooms, large hats, and fans.

Dates can also be used for cooking. They can be chopped and used in a range of sweets such as cakes and other dessert dishes and other savory dishes (see examples of our recipes).

Dates are also processed into paste and date syrup called 'dibs' and are used in many recipes.