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nation's second largest producer. As a rule, it isn't necessary to peel plums before cooking. The peels add to the flavor and aren't unattractive.

It's hard to judge maturity of dark-skinned plums by color, but try to choose fruit that's full colored for its variety. Ripeness is slightly soft at the tip end and gives when squeezed gently.

Nectarines

Or you could imagine Joyce Kilmer writing — "I think that I have never seen a poem as lovely as a nectarine."

No less an authority than "The Joy of Cooking" states that nectarines are a cross between a peach and a plum. They aren't. Nectarines were cultivated in China as a distinct variety of fruit at least 2,000 years ago.

The nectarines we buy today are much improved over older varieties. They're larger and redder.

"Michigan-grown nectarines aren't appreciated enough," said

Maloral. "They're juicy and very tasty, but they lack the 'star quality' of the California product. Customers who try them are delighted with their flavor."

Choose nectarines that have an orange-yellow (not green) background color between the red areas. Ripe nectarines give to gentle pressure but are not as soft as a ripe peach. Generally, nectarines can be substituted when recipes call for peaches.

Apricots

"I could not love thee, Dear, so much/Loved I not 'apricots' more," Richard Lovelace.

Apricots are the most fragile of stone fruits, and very difficult to find at their peak. They're usually picked green so they'll survive the trip to the market, and they just never develop the true delicate apricot flavor.

Most of the Michigan crop is processed, and only 6 percent of the California crop is sold fresh. A good fresh apricot is precious, so eat it at once, perhaps with a

dollop of yogurt or creme fraiche. Look for plump fruit with as much golden orange color as possible. Avoid fruit that's pale or greenish yellow, very firm or shriveled.

Cherries

"Oh my love is like a red, red, cherry/That's newly sprung in June," (Robert Burns).

The pits of several species of cherries have been found in the Stone Age deposits of Swiss lake dwellings and in the mounds and cliff-caves of prehistoric America. The early colonists brought cultivated varieties with them.

In Michigan, the first commercial crop was harvested in Traverse City in 1896. The dark, sweet, Bing cherry was developed in the Western hemisphere and named for a Chinese workman.

Sweet cherries increase in size, sweetness and depth of color as they ripen. Look for plump, bright-colored cherries. Avoid overly soft or shriveled cherries. Chunks should have stems attached.

The key to maximum enjoyment of all stone fruits is to remember that they're not carrots. Eat them now! If necessary, ripen stone fruit (except cherries) may be stored, unwashed, in a paper bag in the refrigerator for up to three days. Two days is better.

Cherries are quite perishable. To keep them for up to three days, line a shallow pan with several layers of paper towels. Arrange cherries, unwashed, on towels in a single layer; top with more paper towels and plastic wrap. Better yet, just eat them!

To ripen fruit, place in a paper bag, close bag loosely, and leave at room temperature. Check daily for ripeness by placing fruit in palm and squeezing gently. If it gives to light pressure and has a fragrant aroma, it's ready to eat.

Stone fruits are fairly low in calories (a medium peach has about 60 calories), and are rich in vitamins and minerals. They're low in sodium and fat, and filled with carbohydrates for quick energy.

WEIGHT CONTROL

If you're overweight and recognize that personal problems and life stresses are contributing to the problem, contact Dr. Ralph Keith, an experienced psychotherapist to help you regain control and live life more productively.



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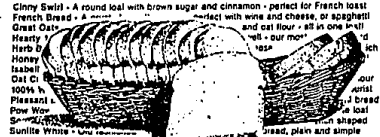
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Polish off dinner with gemstone desserts

See related story — "Stone Fruits gems in the rough," on Taste front.

FRENCH STONE PEACH TART

Buttery Pastry Crust
1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup butter
1 egg yolk, beaten
2 tablespoons milk
Combine flour and salt in a mixing bowl. Cut butter in until mixture is in pea-sized pieces, combine egg yolk and milk. Mix into flour mixture, and stir just to mix. Do not over-stir.

Form into a ball, adding more milk if necessary.

Roll dough to fit 11-inch tart pan (with removable bottom). Fit pastry dough into pan and trim excess. Place waxed paper over dough and fill with dried beans. Bake crust at 425 degrees for 10 minutes. Remove paper and beans, and bake 3 more minutes.

GLAZE
1/2 cup apricot preserves

2 tablespoons water
1/2 teaspoon almond extract
Filling
3 cups peeled, sliced, ripe, Michigan peaches — (to peel peaches, pour boiling water over peaches, let set for a couple of minutes, no longer. Skins will slip off easily.)
1 tablespoon glaze
1 8-ounce package cream cheese, softened

Heat preserves, water and almond extract until smooth. Stir 1 tablespoon glaze into softened cream cheese, and spread mixture into buttery pastry shell. Arrange peaches artistically over filling and brush with remaining glaze. (Glaze may also be spooned over peaches). Refrigerate 1 hour and serve. (This tart must be served the day it is made.)

PLUM CRISP
1 cup all-purpose flour
1/2 cup oatmeal
1/2 cup margarine or butter, soft-

tened
1/2 cup brown sugar, firmly packed
4 cups (about two pounds) sliced Michigan plums
1/2 cup sugar
1/4 teaspoon cinnamon
1 tablespoon quick tapioca
Thoroughly combine first 4 ingredients to make topping. Set aside. Mix plums, sugar, cinnamon and tapioca together until plums are evenly coated. Place in shallow 2-quart baking dish or 9-inch baking pan. Sprinkle topping evenly over plums.

Bake in 350 degree F. oven about 40 minutes, or until plums bubble around edges and topping is golden brown. Serve warm with ice cream.

Serves eight.
Recipe, courtesy Michigan Plum Advisory Board

NECTARINE THAI SALAD
Dressing
1/2 cup each corn oil and lime juice
2 tablespoons each chopped

fresh mint leaves, cilantro, seeded
1/2 teaspoon sugar
Salad
12 ounces coll vegetable, cooked, drained, cooled
1/2 cup chopped red onion
1 medium cucumber, sliced
1/4 pound medium-sized shrimp, ready-to-eat
3 fresh ripe nectarines, sliced
lettuce leaves
diced, crushed red chili pepper flakes

To make dressing — combine pasta, onion and half the dressing in a medium bowl. Toss until well-mixed. To serve, place pasta on lettuce-lined platter, arrange shrimp, nectarine, and cucumber slices on top of pasta. Drizzle with remaining dressing and garnish by sprinkling with dried crushed red chili pepper flakes.

Cherry dip, sauce, muffins extraordinary

See Larry Jones' Taste Buds column on Taste front. For more cherry recipes, write to: The Cherry Marketing Institute, 2220 University Park Drive, Okemos, MI 48864.

CHERRY VEGGIE DIP

1 cup dried cherries, chopped
1/2 cup crumbled blue cheese (about 2 ounces)
1/2 cup chopped walnuts
1 cup sour cream
1/4 cup mayonnaise
vegetables, for dippers
In a medium bowl, combine cher-

ries, blue cheese and walnuts. Stir in sour cream and mayonnaise; mix well. Serve with vegetable dippers such as celery, carrots, cauliflower, broccoli.

CHERRY BARBECUE SAUCE

1 can (21 ounces) cherry pie filling
2 tablespoons soy or teriyaki sauce
2 tablespoons sherry (optional)
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
Combine all ingredients and mix well. Place in a blender or processor

and puree until smooth. Brush mixture over chicken or turkey during the last 10 minutes of grilling. Makes 2 1/2 cups.

CHERRY OATMEAL MUFFINS

1 cup old-fashioned oats, uncooked
1 cup all purpose flour
1/2 cup firmly packed brown sugar
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/4 cup buttermilk
1 egg, slightly beaten
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1 teaspoon almond extract
1 cup frozen tart cherries, chopped
In a large mixing bowl, combine the oats with the flour, brown sugar, baking powder and nutmeg. Set aside. In a small bowl, combine buttermilk, egg, oil and extract and mix well. Pour into dried mixture and stir to incorporate. Stir in cherries, mix well and fill muffin pans two thirds full. Bake in a preheated 400 degree oven for 16-20 minutes. Makes 12 muffins.
Recipes compliments of the Cherry Marketing Institute.

Chapoutier from page 1B

which are new each vintage. "I don't believe that the oak itself brings any complexity to the wine," Chapoutier said. "It should offer the wine a slow oxidation potential. The problem with chestnut is that it allowed too much oxidation."

"To have flavorful wines, you need flavorful fruit. You get this when the vineyard has low yields and the grapes are picked at peak ripeness. If grapes are picked too early, they have higher acidity which I consider cheap wine insurance. Winemakers who don't know their fruit look for high acid profiles in their fruit as a safeguard. I don't worry about acidity, I look for fruit flavors to make the best wines. It's a myth that wines with higher acidity will have a longer life. A wine should be balanced with generous fruit."

LOOKING AHEAD

■ Outdoor cooking — For advice on cooking over an open fire we consulted the experts — boy scouts and girl scouts. They shared tips for planning outdoor meals and delicious recipes. We've even got a recipe for Campfire Pizza.

■ Recipe Makeover — Laura Letourbier tells you how to reduce the fat in a no-bake cheeseecake.

In the past, a limited number Chapoutier wines have been available in this market. The good news is that many more are being made available. The following tasting notes are only a sampling. Chapoutier wines span the price spectrum from just over \$10 for a 1990 Cotes du Ventoux to \$51 for the best wine 1990 Hermitage "La Sizeranne."

The 1990 Chapoutier Tavel "La Marcelle" (\$21.50) is a rose wine produced from 100 percent grenache. "With this wine, I do what we did in the Rhone 100 to 150 years ago when rose wines from the Rhone were held in high esteem," said Chapoutier.

If you think that a rose is a whippy wine, then try this one with spicy food and watch it work its magic. 1990 Hermitage Blanc "Chante Alouette" (\$39) is 100 percent marsanne. The taster is immediately charmed by the orange zest notes. "To discover the difference soil makes, try this wine side-by-side with the Chapoutier St. Joseph Blanc (\$24) which is also 100 percent marsanne. The Her-

Wine selections of the week

■ 1992 Dry Creek Vineyard Chenin Blanc (\$7) boasts a fresh guava-grapefruit aroma and intense summertime attractiveness.
■ 1992 Clos du Bois Barrel Formented Sauvignon Blanc (\$8) is a Sauvignon with melon and oak in an integrated rendition at a great price.
■ 1991 Zaca, Mega Syrah (\$12) is a supple summertime wine to enjoy now with picnic, pizza and barbecue ribs.

■ 1992 Joseph Phelps Vin du Mistral Viognier (\$25) is an excellent example of the viognier grape, indigenous to France's Rhone Valley. Pear and pineapple flavors are highlighted by six months of aging in French oak barrels.
■ 1992 Jollesse Sauvignon Blanc (\$5.50) is a true best-buy. This treasure is an all-fruit wine that shows citrus and melon with floral notes.

mitage is full and rich with exceptional body as is the St. Joseph, but it tastes completely different due to the soil elements. 1991 Chateau-neuf-du-Pape "La Borendine" (\$27) is highly perfumed with phenomenal length. The aromas of roses, red plums, herbes de Provence, red currant jam and wild cherry are irresistible. This wine is also 100 percent grenache.

"With this wine, we have returned to the tradition of the region," Chapoutier said. "Historically, Chateau-neuf-du-Pape was not a blend of grape varieties, it was 100 percent grenache."

To leave a message on the Health's voice mail — dial 953-2047, mailbox 1864.

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