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Handling, processing & freezing of pawpaw fruit

Storing Fresh Fruit. Like bananas, the pawpaw fruit will continue to ripen at room temperature. You can slow the process down by putting them in the refrigerator. The best method seems to be to wrap each fruit in a paper towel and put in a covered container or zip lock bag. Although the skin will eventually turn brown (after about a week), this does not affect the quality of the fruit. You may be able to keep the fruit for several weeks if you don't plan to freeze it.

Preparation. The simplest way to eat fresh fruit is to wash it, then take a sharp knife and cut as deeply as you can all around the fruit lengthwise and twist it apart (like you would an avocado). Then eat flesh with a spoon right from the skin, spitting out the seeds like when eating watermelon. A pulp sac surrounds each seed, which is also edible.

Processing. There isn't a mechanical processor available to the home kitchen yet to remove the seeds so it must be done manually: Cut the fruit same as above for eating, but take sharp edge of knife and scrape the pulp sac partially from the row of seeds so you can easily pick them out. Using a spoon, scoop out the flesh into a container. You do not have to puree the pulp before freezing. In fact, it is difficult to do this because the pulp is very thick and doesn't process quickly. It is easier to puree it with the eggs and liquid when you are ready to bake. Pawpaws will oxidize (turn a little darker) when frozen. This does not affect the taste or quality of the fruit. You can try adding Fruit Fresh (follow package directions) at this point if you want to avoid this.

Freezing. To freeze, spoon pulp into a freezer container the size you will need for your recipe. Use a spoon to press out any air bubbles. Press plastic wrap directly on top of the pulp (to suppress oxidation) before you put the lid on. Pawpaw pulp can be frozen up to 12 months for using raw (in smoothies and in making ice cream), and somewhat longer for using in baked goods.

Baking. You can use fresh or frozen pawpaw pulp in nearly any recipe that calls for pureed applesauce or banana. It can also be substituted for pumpkin in recipes but you would need to reduce the sugar since pawpaw is sweet. It is recommended that you use far less spices or flavorings since pawpaw has a delicate flavor you don't want to overpower. As an added bonus, since pawpaw is a natural fat substitute (has good fat), you can significantly reduce or even eliminate fats/oils in these recipes.

Nutrition. Pawpaw is higher in Niacin and Calcium than apples, oranges, and bananas. Pawpaws have 3 times as much Vitamin C as apples, 2 times as much as bananas and 1/3 as much as oranges, Pawpaws has as much potassium as bananas, and more than apples and oranges. Pawpaw is the ONLY fruit with ALL essential amino acids. In addition, it is loaded with antioxidants.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has not found any health risks associated with the consumption of pawpaw fruit.