

APRICOT DRYING TECHNOLOGY AND ITS IMPORTANCE

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Abstract: *this article gives an idea of apricot fruit, its drying technology and the importance of dried apricots. The microbiological significance of dried fruits is also highlighted.*

Keywords: *sweet, dried apricots, technology, benefits, vitamins, health.*

Dried fruit is fruit from which the majority of the original water content has been removed either naturally, through sun drying, or through the use of specializing dryers or dehydrators. Dried fruit has a long tradition of use dating back to the fourth millennium BC in Mesopotamia, and is prized because of its sweet taste, nutritive value¹ and long shelf life [1].

Today, dried fruit consumption is widespread. Nearly half of the dried fruits sold are raisins, followed by dates, prunes, figs, apricots, peaches, apples and pears. These are referred to as "conventional" or "traditional" dried fruits: fruits that have been dried in the sun or in heated wind tunnel dryers. Many fruits such as cranberries, blueberries, cherries, strawberries and mango are infused with a sweetener (e.g. sucrose syrup) prior to drying. Some products sold as dried fruit, like papaya, kiwi fruit and pineapple are most often candied fruit.

Dried fruits retain most of the nutritional value of fresh fruits. The specific nutrient content of the different dried fruits reflects their fresh counterpart and the processing method.

Apricot belongs to family Rosaceae. In angiosperms, Rosaceae is one of the largest families having about 3,400 species including almonds, peaches, apples, plums, cherries and berries, distributed throughout the northern temperate regions of the globe. Apricot has been named by Romans most probably from the mixed accent of two words "praecocia" from Latin meaning "early matured", since apricots were ripen during early summer as compared to ancient Asian peaches or "albarquq" from Arabic, meaning short ripening period [2]. It is a temperate fruit and grown in climates with well-differentiated seasons. It requires a fairly cold winter and moderately high temperatures in the spring and early summer. Botanically, apricots are drupes like peaches, plums, cherries and mangoes in which the outer fleshy part (exocarp and mesocarp) surrounds a hard stone (endocarp) with a seed inside. Fruit color ranges between orange to orange red and some cultivars are cream white to greenish white. Amongst the drupes, apricot and plum belongs to genus *Prunus* which is differentiated from other sub genera *Amygdalus*, *Cerasus* and *Padus* in the shoots having a terminal bud and auxiliary buds being solitary. The flowers are sessile, white, with five regular sepals, petals and stamens that open early before leaves in the spring.

To extend their shelf life, fresh fruits are processed by various techniques to become DFs. Dried fruits are a concentrated form of fresh fruits with lower moisture content. Fruits can be dried whole (e.g., apricots, berries and grapes), in halves, or in slices (e.g., kiwis, mangoes and papayas). In this form, they are easy to store and distribute, they can be available throughout the year, and they are a healthier alternative to salty or sugary snacks. Apples, apricots, currants, dates, figs, peaches, pears, prunes, and raisins are referred to as "conventional" or "traditional" DFs. Meanwhile, such fruits as blueberries, cranberries, cherries, strawberries and mangoes are commonly infused with different types of sugar solution (or fruit juice) concentrate before drying [3] so are not included in the aforementioned category. Moreover, we have also excluded dried tomato because although it is botanically a berry-type fruit, it is culinary considered a vegetable and it shares nutrient composition with this food category.

Dried apricots are obtained from drying the fruit. This includes a drying process that evaporates the water content of the fruits without harming or reducing the nutritive value of the dried apricots. As a result, nutrients are not harmed and you yield even more benefits of dried apricots. These contain Calcium, Potassium, Phosphorus, Vitamin A, Iron, and Vitamin C. One cup serving of dried apricots contains 158 micrograms of Vitamin A. These dried fruits supply many nutrients that are required for a healthy body along with combating many diseases [4].

Dried apricots are not only delicious but are full of valuable nutrients. They are easy to incorporate into your diet, and their sweet flavor makes them an attractive food choice. Investigate the nourishment this tasty fruit offers, and find ways to incorporate it into your diet and lifestyle [5].

Just as dried apricots are dehydrated fresh apricots, prunes are the result of drying fresh plums. These two fruits belong to the rose family and are botanically related to almonds, peaches, nectarines and other stone fruits. Fresh apricots and prunes are excellent sources of several important nutrients, including fiber, potassium and antioxidant carotenoids. Although the drying process degrades a fruit's content of water-soluble and heat-

sensitive vitamins such as vitamin C, other nutrients become more concentrated. Consequently, dried apricots and prunes provide higher levels of most nutrients, ounce for ounce, than their fresh counterparts.

Before the drying process begins, the mango that has been sliced will usually have moisture on the surface. In the drying process, warm air that has little moisture will be used to pick up the moisture on the surface of the sliced mango. As the water on the surface is being evaporated, the water from inside the mango is also being drawn out to the surface to replace the lost moisture. The process of water being drawn out from the center of the material to the surface is called diffusion. Then the moisture will also be taken away by the warm air. As moisture is being drawn out to the surface, moisture on the surface will be less visible until it reached a point where the surface will no longer look wet. The rate of moisture removal will also be slower as time goes on. As moisture is being drained out of the mango, its cellular structure will begin to break down, causing the mango to shrink. At high temperature, moisture can be drawn out too quick that a thick hard layer is formed in the surface of the mango. The thick layer will trap moisture inside the mango making it really difficult to entirely dehydrate the mango. This phenomenon of developing hard skin-like outer layer is called case-hardening.

In conclusion, Apricot is one of the most advantageous fruits, with heaps of advantages. 100gm of crisp apricots can give you 12% of vitamin A, 12% of vitamin C, and 6% of all the potassium required by your body – and this under 50 calories [6].

Apricots, likewise a standout amongst other Dry fruits are made out of dietary fiber and beta-carotene. Furthermore, you get another rich accessibility of magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, alongside sodium. A solid cancer prevention agent Lycopene is additionally gotten from apricots.

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