

In The Garden

Kumquat

Kumquats are native to China and grow on compact evergreen bushes. The name Kumquat roughly translates from Cantonese words to mean “golden orange.” The kumquat was brought from China to Japan where it remains quite popular. In 1846, Robert Fortune, a Scottish botanist, brought kumquats to London. Kumquats made their way to the southern US around 1850.

Kumquat bushes produce many small fruits every year. Kumquats are a relative of other citrus fruits. They have many similar characteristics to oranges, lemons and limes. The tart oval fruits can be eaten many ways. Often kumquats are enjoyed raw and are unique because they are eaten whole, skin and all. The skin of the kumquat is sweet while the inside flesh is tart. Kumquats can also be cooked in different ways. They can be candied, baked into muffins, cakes, and pies, simmered into marmalade and jams.



Kumquats are an excellent source of fiber and vitamin C. The fruits also contain manganese, vitamin A, and calcium. They contain smaller amounts of iron, zinc, potassium and vitamin E. Herbalists in Asia also use Kumquats as a remedy for symptoms of colds and flu. The fruits are traditionally smashed, mixed with ginger, salt, and honey, and steeped as a soothing tea.

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How To Eat a Kumquat

Choose ripe kumquats. Ripe kumquats range from bright orange to yellow-orange. Stay away from greenish, unripe fruits. The skin should be nice and firm, free of blemishes or shriveled areas.

Wash and dry the fruit. No matter where you got the kumquat, rub the peel under cool, running water. Since the peel is edible, you don't want any traces of dirt on the surface. Pat the fruit dry with a paper towel.

Rub the kumquat (optional). Some say that rubbing or squeezing the fruit between your fingers helps it release the sweet, citrus-like scent of the rind.

Remove the seeds (optional). The seeds are not poisonous, but they have the same bitter taste as orange seeds. To remove seeds cut the kumquat in half and pluck out the seeds. You can easily spit the seeds out as you eat instead, or even chew them up if you don't mind the flavor. Pull off the nubs of green stems if they are present.

Eat the kumquat. Kumquats have a sweet rind and sour inside flesh. The best way to eat a kumquat is to pop the whole fruit in your mouth and chew, chew, chew. Much like a sour candy, kumquats will start out sour and get sweeter as you chew up the rind. Another way to eat a kumquat is to nibble the end of the kumquat to taste the rind first. Once you encounter the mouth-puckering juice, you can either keep nibbling cautiously, or eat the whole thing.

Some kumquat species are less sour than others. Try different types to find one you like, or use the fruits in cooking.

