Apricot is a drupe, or stone fruit, that belongs to the rosaceae family. There are about a dozen varieties of apricots widely sold throughout the United States. All varieties are similar in taste, but differ somewhat in size and color. Color can range from yellow to deep orange. They are in season from May through July. They are quite delicate and may be harvested before they are ripe to prevent damage during shipping. Ripe apricots are initially sweet with a slightly tart finish and a juicy, tender mouthfeel.

The origins of apricot is highly disputed. They are native to parts of Asia. Trade routes, exploration and time would spread the fruit from Asia into Europe and eventually the New World. Most New World apricots are of European origins. Central Asian apricots are still relatively new to North American growers as they do not have the visual appeal of plumper European varieties yet they are considered the most delicious in fruit flavor and texture. Apricot trees are disease resistant and do not respond well to fertilizers. The trees love full sun, hot dry summers and sheltered cool to cold but frost-free winters. Fruits will crack under humid, wet conditions.
SELECTING AND STORING

To select ripe apricots, look for fruit with a rich, orange color (not pale yellow or green) and are a little soft to the touch.

Refrigerating apricots will dramatically impair their ripening process. Leave them out at room temperature until they are ripe, then refrigerate them.

Some varieties are so delicate that they cannot be shipped. This delicate nature causes most apricots to be processed. Apricots are often cooked, canned, or dried before sold.

CULINARY USES

- Like all stone fruit, they are an excellent filling for pies and tarts.
- Dried apricots make a great snack or garnish for salads.
- Apricots flavor jam, marmalade, syrup, and jelly.
- There is an Egyptian drink known as amar al-din. This drink is made from apricots. First, the apricots are dried. Then, a sweetener is added to the dried fruits and then the drink is made out of it.

INTERESTING FACTS

- California produces about 95% of apricots in the U.S.
- In Latin, the apricot is called praecocquum, which means “early-ripening peach.”
- In the US, National Apricot Day is observed on January 9 every year.
- Astronauts ate apricots on the Apollo Moon mission.