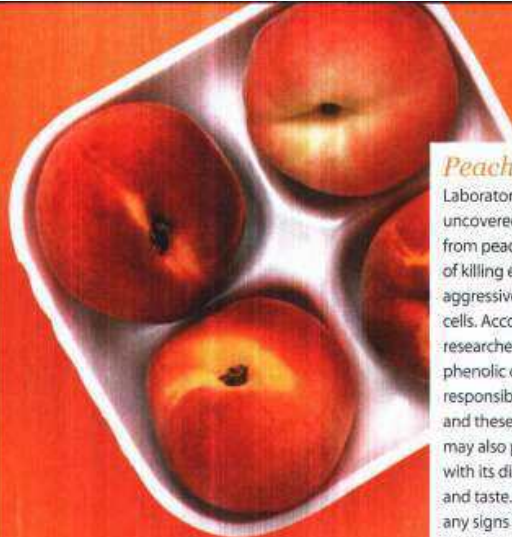




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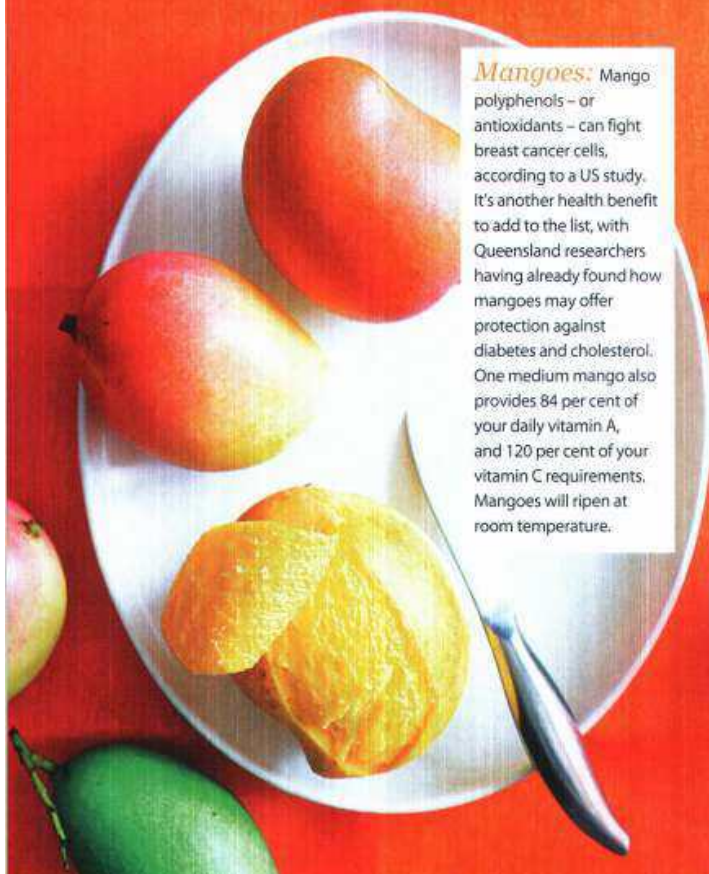
**Prunes:** US research has found that, thanks to their antioxidant content, prunes – which are dried plums – may help to build stronger bones. And if you want to snack on something that will curb your appetite, prunes are considered to be a good choice. They not only provide a 'feeling of fullness', but also have a positive effect on the fat content of the blood as well as helping regulate bowel movements.



**Peaches:** Laboratory tests have uncovered how an extract from peaches is capable of killing even the most aggressive breast cancer cells. According to researchers, two particular phenolic compounds are responsible for the action, and these compounds may also provide the fruit with its distinctive smell and taste. Avoid fruit with any signs of greenness – while under-ripe peaches will soften at room temperature, they never get any sweeter.

# set in stone

Stone fruits spell summer *and* they deliver a host of health benefits. Karen Fittall pits 10 of the best against each other



**Mangoes:** Mango polyphenols – or antioxidants – can fight breast cancer cells, according to a US study. It's another health benefit to add to the list, with Queensland researchers having already found how mangoes may offer protection against diabetes and cholesterol. One medium mango also provides 84 per cent of your daily vitamin A, and 120 per cent of your vitamin C requirements. Mangoes will ripen at room temperature.

**T**hey're typically juice-laden, deliciously sweet and at their best at the height of summer. But the fact that fruits with a stone, or pit, at the centre aren't usually available year-round isn't the only reason to get your fill of fruits like cherries and apricots this season. They're also jam-packed with antioxidants and nutrients that do everything from fight cancer to protect against cholesterol. Here's how to kill two birds – taste and health benefits – with 10 stone fruits.



**Lychees:** These are another fruit which have proven its value in the fight against breast cancer cells. Japanese researchers have discovered that lychee extract may also help to reduce the abdominal, or visceral fat that's linked to an increased risk of everything from heart disease to diabetes. Called Oligonol, there is now talk of turning the extract into a supplement.



**Avocados:** The avocado is one fruit that may help prevent oral cancer. That's according to US research that found extracts taken from Hass avocados are capable of killing some oral cancer cells and preventing pre-cancerous ones from forming. Avocados require harvesting before they start to ripen, but the Hass avocado is the only one that changes colour during the ripening process, turning from green to a purple-black colour when ready to eat.

**Apricots:** French researchers have labelled apricots as being among the group of fruits with the highest polyphenol count. For the greatest concentration of antioxidants, choose apricots that are as ripe as possible. Experts advise selecting apricots based on aroma, rather than appearance. And while ripe apricots can be stored in the fridge, bring them to room temperature before eating.

**Plums:** In 2009, Texas scientists revealed how plums deserve to be considered the new 'super fruit', thanks to their ability to match and, depending on the variety, sometimes exceed the antioxidant content of blueberries. Putting plums to the test, the same researchers discovered that an extract from the plum containing a high level of phytonutrients inhibits the growth of cancer cells.

**Cherries:** A fruit that's synonymous with Christmas, cherries may provide relief for arthritis sufferers. That's according to US researchers who discovered that Bing cherries, a particularly juicy variety that's available in Australia, can help prevent the build-up of uric acid, which is often the cause of arthritis-based pain. How? It's all thanks to the fruit's antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. Choose plump cherries with fresh, green stems.

**Dates:** They look a bit like prunes, but dates are not a dried 'version' of a stone fruit. They're the sweet fruit of the date palm and are usually graded into soft, semi-dry and dry. Studies have shown why many cultures consider them to be the 'ideal food' - they contain at least 15 minerals, 23 types of amino acids, and six different vitamins, and they're also rich in fluorine, which is useful for protecting teeth against decay.

**Nectarines:** Along with peaches, nectarines are one of the fruits that Spanish researchers discovered had up to five times more antioxidants than previously thought, with the extra and previously 'hidden' antioxidants only being unlocked during the digestion process. One medium nectarine provides both 40 per cent of your daily vitamin C and 14 per cent of niacin, or vitamin-B3, needs. Steer clear of those with a green tinge.