

Fresh Story: Mandarin Oranges

Get to Know Your Fruits and Vegetables

A holiday treasure from Asia...

December is here! Time for catching snowflakes, making snowmen and singing Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer. It's also time for sweet oranges wrapped up in festive green paper.

Did you know that unwrapping Mandarin oranges is a well-loved Canadian holiday tradition we've been enjoying for over 120 years?

Oranges travelled by ship and were packed in nine-pound wooden crates, hand tied in pairs to form a bundle. The crates were quickly unloaded and shipped across the country by "**Orange Trains**". The brightly painted orange boxcars let everyone along the way know that the Mandarins had arrived and with them the start of the holiday season. These sturdy wooden crates were a favourite gift to give and receive, and once the oranges were eaten, they became instant sleds, tool boxes, and dollhouses.

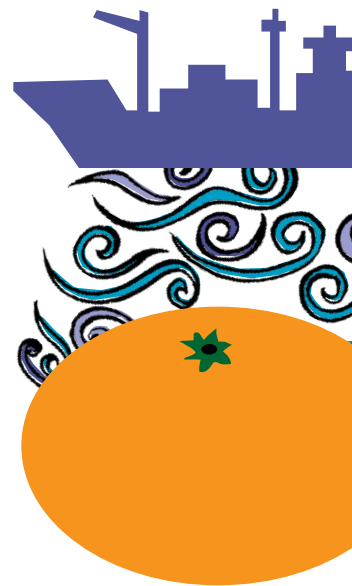
Such a Long Journey...

Mandarin oranges have been cultivated in China and Japan for two thousands years. **Mandarin** is the family name for several types of small oranges with loose, easy-to-peel skin.

Mandarin oranges gained their name from the bright orange robes worn by the **mandarins**, public officials of the ancient Chinese court. When exporting began, Mandarin oranges were named after their port of origin. Tangerines were the first to be exported to North America and were named after the city of **Tangiers** in Morocco.

The Mandarin orange tree is a small deciduous tree with slender twigs. It is delicate and easily damaged by cold and like us, will sunburn in severe heat. Mandarin oranges are cultivated in orchards in Japan, southern China, India, and the East Indies and are shipped around the world.

Mandarin oranges from China to Vancouver = 9,500 kilometres by sea.



How many segments did you get in your Mandarin orange today?





Buying local = fresh food = great taste =
happy farmer = healthy plan

Closer to Home...

A sun-drenched Mandarin orange is a special winter treat. Our climate in BC isn't suited to growing oranges so we need to import them from warmer growing regions. In our global market place we are able buy foods from all over the world so that we can enjoy a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables in the winter.

What is local food? Simply, local foods are produced as close to home as possible. Buying local food helps to support the local food system.

For a good part of the year many crops thrive in BC, making it possible to buy closer to home. At other times, or for foods like oranges, we need to reach farther away. It doesn't mean we never eat bananas or pineapples, it just means that in summer and fall a better choice might be a peach, an apple, or a pear. Eating local produce when it's in season is a better choice than purchasing the same type of food from thousands of miles away.

Why does it matter how far my food has travelled? The total distances food has travelled from grower to your plate is called **food miles**. Both the distance and the method of travel are important. More **food miles** mean more carbon dioxide in the air as a result of transportation. Choosing to buy locally grown food can reduce global warming, pollution and improve air quality.

How do local farmers help? Small, local farms are run by farmers who live on their land and work hard to preserve it. They protect open spaces by keeping land in agricultural use and preserving natural habitats. By being good stewards of the land, seeking out local markets, minimizing packaging, and harvesting food when it's ripe, farmers can greatly reduce their environmental impact.

Mandarin oranges come from Japan and China, are they a local or imported food?

How can we reduce our food miles?



1. Eat fresh food that's in season; it hasn't travelled as far as out-of-season, imported fruits and vegetables.
2. Can and freeze local produce to enjoy throughout the winter.
3. Visit local farmers' markets; they're a great source of local produce – and fun too!
4. Grow our own vegetables – that's as local as it gets.
5. Shop at your neighbourhood grocer or produce store and ask them to stock locally grown products.
6. Walk, bike, or take the bus to go shopping.