

Getting to know fruit and vegetables

Fruit and vegetables are the natural and healthy foods par excellence. With olive oil, they are the hallmarks of the traditional orchards and vegetables gardens of Mediterranean countries and give shape to many of their landscapes. This Guide is intended to help you get to know where they come from, the special features conferred by their places of origin, and their identifying labels and trademarks in green-grocer's, supermarkets and restaurants.

Today, a huge variety of fruit and vegetables reach the shops: some are the traditional staples, others are new, bringing new shapes, colours, textures and flavours. In Spain, fruit and vegetables growing is a key activity all over the country, and there are wide differences in terms of output, specialisation and cultivation techniques. Some are traditional and others more modern, but all play a role in producing and preparing the products that reach our shops and restaurants.

As with cheeses and wines, the modernisation of post-harvest processes and of the food industry creates value so that consumers can more thoroughly enjoy and become aware of the differences between various trademarks, the distinct characteristics of each variety, which can differ widely from others of the same species, and their specific nutritional and health properties.

The GUIDE contains a wide range of contributions from companies and organizations that stand out for their innovative products and highly regarded brand names. This information lets readers get to know more about fruit and vegetables and about Spain, one of the largest – perhaps the largest – European suppliers. Some of the newest innovations are unprecedented delicacies. The tour of the rural settings suggested by the maps of the Spanish regions provided in this GUIDE runs through a landscape that changes with the seasons and with the various climates – Mediterranean, continental and Atlantic – and with the different cultivation techniques. Spanish agriculture features landscapes full of charm and character: the fruit orchards of Extremadura, the vines and vast expanses of market garden of the Region of Murcia, the richness and diversity of orchards and vegetable gardens in Andalusia, the tropical fruit plantations of Granada and Malaga, the fields of delicious spring strawberries in Huelva, and the sublime landscape of green-houses in Almería, which produce fruit and vegetables in a closely monitored way and to an outstanding standard of quality.

Fruit and vegetable consumption in Europe is around 250 g per person per day. The World Health Organization recommends an intake of 425 g per person per day, i.e., “5 portions” of fruit and vegetables for



a healthy diet. According to these statistics, only Greece achieves these consumption levels. The publishers of this GUIDE are committed to raising awareness of fruit and vegetables. To eat fruit and vegetables is to be “with it”, and is a key factor in a healthy lifestyle. Knowing more about these foods enables us to enjoy them all the more and use them to create modern recipes. And knowing what to say about each kind of fruit and vegetable - including the aspects that are not outwardly visible - is a valuable addition to our promotional skills.

Given the importance of the fruit and vegetable sector and the associated health benefits for consumers, the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food has supported the dissemination of the GUIDE to the Best Fruit and Vegetables by co-producing the German-language edition in 2007 and this English-language edition in 2008, so that operators and consumers in other countries can gain an improved familiarity with the brands, specialities and growing regions of Spanish fruit and vegetables.

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