



What's a California Prune?

A California Prune is not just a dried plum. It's a very specific variety of plum that's ideal for drying — and with craftsmanship and techniques that have been perfected in California so the fruit stays “juicier” and more flavorful than prunes from other places around the world.

During the California Gold Rush in the mid-1800s, French families brought their Petit d'Agen variety of plum to the region. Unlike others, this variety fully ripens on the tree, pit and all, without fermenting. Farmers grafted the Petit d'Agen onto wild American plum stock, and this became the unique California prune plum variety.

Today, California grows **approximately 99% of the total United States' production of prunes** and 40% of the world's supply, with about 42,000 acres of orchards concentrated in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys. There are about 600 growers and 27 packers who produce the finest prunes on earth.

These valleys have long growing seasons, with rich soil warmed by a steady sun and cool evening temperatures. Growers hand-tend the trees as they grow, and they adhere to the world's most rigorous agricultural standards.

Harvesting, Drying & Processing

By mid-August, the orchards are ready for harvest — a job that usually takes about 30 days. California Prunes are tree-ripened, so growers determine harvest time by checking fruit firmness and sugar content with a tool called a light refractometer. To deliver consistent top-quality fruit, harvesting today is largely done by machines. A mechanical shaker grabs a tree's main limb or its trunk and, in a matter of seconds, shakes the fruit onto a catching frame underneath.

From there, it's a quick conveyor ride to bins where the fruit is ready for drying. Processors dry the prunes in climate-controlled tunnels and have honed this practice into a precise, California-only art, balancing temperature, humidity, and time. Once processed, California Prunes are packaged and ready to ship.





A NATURAL SWEETENER AND A FLAVOR BOOSTER

California Prunes are exceptionally versatile in the kitchen. With a smooth, silky mouthfeel and a natural sweetness with notes of honey and caramel, and no added sugar, prunes can be used whole, sliced, diced or pureed to enhance the flavor and texture of both sweet and savory dishes.

What's your experience with prunes? Research from the California Prune Board shows that most Americans think of this dried fruit as a snack, but some think of it as an ingredient, often in classic dishes from around the world — like prune cake and other European desserts, Chicken Marbella, meat dishes like braised brisket and tagine, and savory sauces like molé.

It's time to think of prunes as even more — as an essential, naturally sweet ingredient in cooking and baking year-round. Here are some tips for using California Prunes:



Sweeten up your salads and sides. Use a wet knife to slice prunes, so they don't stick, and use them to enhance:

- Simple slaw with endive, cabbage and an apple cider vinegar-maple syrup dressing
- Quinoa or farro salad with sliced fresh fennel, pitted Bing cherries, toasted nuts and an orange-infused vinaigrette
- Roasted carrots, winter squash, green beans or broccolini, with a drizzle of balsamic vinegar and a garnish of fried prosciutto
- Steamed basmati rice or couscous, along with toasted, slivered almonds or pistachios and chopped fresh dill or parsley



Use prune puree to reduce sugar or swap for eggs in baked goods. Prunes are naturally sweet and add moisture and richness to desserts and baked goods. To make prune puree, blend 8 ounces of prunes with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup hot water in a blender until smooth. Store for up to a week in the refrigerator. Some tips and ideas:

- Substitute prune puree for up to half the sugar in dense baked goods like quick breads, muffins, pancakes and brownies.
- Substitute up to three eggs in baked goods by using $\frac{1}{4}$ cup prune puree for one egg.
- Prunes are perfect with baking spices like cinnamon, allspice, nutmeg, cardamom and cloves – as well as other classic dessert ingredients like chocolate, caramel, honey, maple syrup, ice cream, coffee and tea.



Include prunes on your next grazing board. Their deep, sweet flavor and luxurious texture that's "juicier" than most other dried fruit makes prunes a hit on any board. Some favorite pairings:

- Flavorful cheeses, especially goat cheese, aged Gouda, Manchego and blue cheese
- Bright, tangy fruits such as pears, pomegranate seeds, cherries and citrus
- Toasted nuts, especially pecans, walnuts, almonds and pine nuts
- Salty ingredients like olives and capers
- Cured meats and paté, especially paté that's made with brandy



Mix up a prune sauce. The natural sweetness of prunes pairs nicely with spicy, briny and umami ingredients in sauces and relishes.

- Like mustard? Try a sweet, sour and spicy prune mostarda as a sandwich filling.
- Like briny flavors? Add a prune & olive relish to roasted, shredded pork shoulder.
- Like grilled meat? Use prunes to naturally sweeten teriyaki sauce or California-style barbecue sauce.
- Like molé? Add a unique depth of flavor with prunes.



Stew prunes and use them as a versatile topper. Combine 1½ cups hot water and about 20 prunes in a saucepan; bring to a low simmer and cook until soft. Add little lemon juice and a sprinkle of cinnamon, to taste. Try this compote on:

- Vanilla or coconut yogurt and granola
- Oatmeal with nuts and your milk of choice
- A turkey sandwich, especially with spicy arugula
- Toasted bread with Manchego or a smear of soft goat cheese
- Roasted chicken thighs with some caramelized onions
- Vanilla ice cream and hot chocolate sauce



Include prunes in cocktails and after-dinner sips.

- Prune puree brings nuanced, caramel-y sweetness to mulled wine, spicy ginger beer and cocktails, especially those made with warm-flavored alcohol like whisky, bourbon, brandy and rum, or botanical spirits like Campari. Consider stirring some into a Manhattan, a Negroni — or play with your own combination of whiskey, bitters and fresh lemon juice, and it's hard to go wrong.
- Cognac, Armagnac, other brandies and port after dinner — they all benefit from an accompaniment of prunes, dark chocolate and nuts.

And, yes, grab prunes as a snack. When a package of California Prunes is in the pantry all year round, it's easy to grab a few as a portable and convenient snack. They're ready to eat and shelf-stable, with no prep or refrigeration required. Enjoy them solo or paired with a protein source like nuts or cheese.



NUTRITION & HEALTH BENEFITS OF CALIFORNIA PRUNES

California Prunes can help life be more flavorful — they can add an unexpected touch to recipes and inspire endless culinary possibilities. They’re also highly nutritious, with more than 70 published studies on a variety of health benefits particularly related to gut health and bone health.

A serving of four to six prunes (38-40 grams) is around 100 calories and is deliciously satisfying, with a sweet flavor, luxurious texture and ...

- **3 grams of fiber**, or 11% Daily Value (DV), which helps regulate the body’s use of sugars, helping to keep hunger and blood sugar in check.
- **24 grams of carbohydrates** (9% DV), which provide energy for bodies to perform at their best.
- **20% DV of vitamin K**, which is important for blood clotting and bone metabolism.
- **6% DV of potassium**, an important mineral that may play a role in maintaining healthy bones and is important for muscle contractions and fluid balance.
- Other important **vitamins and minerals** like magnesium, boron, riboflavin, niacin and vitamin B6.
- **No added sugar, cholesterol, sodium or fat.**

Prunes can add flavor and texture to savory dishes like meat stews and grain salads, and they’re perfect in baked goods and other desserts — adding natural sweetness that doesn’t cause blood sugar spikes because prunes are low on the glycemic index.

Nutrition Facts	
Varied Servings Per Container	
Serving size	4 prunes (38g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	90
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 0mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 24g	9%
Dietary Fiber 3g	11%
Total Sugars 14g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 1g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 20mg	2%
Iron 0.4mg	2%
Potassium 280mg	6%
Vitamin A 10mcg	2%
Vitamin C 0mg	0%
Vitamin K 23mcg	20%
Riboflavin 0.1mg	8%
Niacin 0.9mg	6%
Vitamin B6 0.1mg	6%
Pantothenic Acid 0.2mg	4%
Magnesium 15mg	4%
Copper 0.1mg	10%
Manganese 0.1mg	4%

*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.



Promoting Gut Health

Enjoying California Prunes has long been known for helping with healthy digestion, and research shows eating them daily may help improve overall gut health, too. For example, a 2022 study found that consumption of prunes is linked to an increase in a particular gut bacteria associated with lowering inflammatory markers in the body.¹ The presence of this “good” bacteria has been linked to many other benefits like bone health, heart health, weight management, healthy aging and more, which may help explain why a growing body of research has tied eating prunes to these health benefits that go beyond the gut.



Supporting Healthy Bones

Several published studies among postmenopausal women as well as men have shown that eating California Prunes regularly may help support bone health,^{2,3} – which is important to maintain after bone building is achieved by age 30. Prunes have a combination of minerals, vitamin K, fiber and antioxidants that is unique among fruit and research shows, seems to work together for a positive effect on bones.



¹ Simpson, AMR, De Souza, MJ, Damani, J, Rogers, C, Williams, NI, Weaver, C, Ferruzzi, MG, Chadwick-Corbin, S, Nakatsu, CH. Prune supplementation for 12 months alters the gut microbiome in postmenopausal women. *Food Funct.* 2022 Nov 28;13(23):12316-12329. doi: 10.3390/foods9050584

² Damani JJ, Oh ES, De Souza MJ, Strock NC, Williams NI, Nakatsu CH, Lee H, Weaver C, Rogers CJ. Prune Consumption attenuates proinflammatory cytokine secretion and alters monocyte activation in postmenopausal women: Secondary outcome analysis of a 12-mo randomized controlled trial: The Prune Study. *J Nutr.* 2023 Nov 19;S0022-3166(23)72732-6. doi: 10.1016/j.tjnut.2023.11.014. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 37984741

³ George KS, Munoz J, Ormsbee LT, Akhavan NS, Foley EM, Siebert SC, Kim J-S, Hickner RC, Arjmandi BH. The short-term effect of prunes in improving bone in men. *Nutrients.* 2022; 14(2):276. doi: 10.3390/nu14020276

Visit CaliforniaPrunes.org for a full summary of additional published California Prune research studies.

