

# Eat Gooseberries!

The British climate is particularly well-disposed to producing perfect gooseberries - juicy, tart and full-flavoured - and over the years they have captured the hearts of Britons more than any other nationality. More recently, however, the popularity of gooseberries has waned somewhat and their unique qualities don't seem to be valued as much as they merit. We think they're due for a revival.

The gooseberry season starts with the familiar green gooseberries. These are the best ones for cooking. Use them to make a delicious gooseberry fool (recipe below) or poach them with a little sugar and water to make a traditional accompaniment to mackerel. Later in the season come the dessert gooseberries that are sweet enough to be eaten raw - try them in fruit salads.

**HISTORY** - Indigenous to cooler areas of Europe and western Asia, gooseberries were first cultivated in Britain in the sixteenth century when they were used medicinally and recommended to plague victims in London. They reached a peak of popularity in nineteenth century Britain when gooseberry wines, pies and puddings were commonplace. Amateur gooseberry clubs, mostly in the Midlands and North of England, held fiercely-fought competitions to find the biggest and tastiest fruit, and many new varieties were developed during this period.

In 1905 the whole European crop of gooseberries was wiped out by a mildew disease accidentally introduced from America. The plant was reintroduced by crossing with mildew-resistant American gooseberries. Today gooseberries are grown and eaten in cooler climates across the globe, from northern America and northern Europe to the Himalayas.

**BIOLOGY** - Belonging to the genus *Ribes*, gooseberries are related to blackcurrants and redcurrants. The main cultivated species is the European gooseberry, *R. grossularia*.

**BUYING** - The small green cooking gooseberries are available early in the season; look for firm undamaged berries.

Later season dessert gooseberries (often red, yellow or golden coloured) are sweeter and can be eaten raw. Select those with a plump, grape-like texture.

**COOKING** - Scan the code below to view the recipe for '*Elderflower fool with poached gooseberries*' on the seasonal recipes blog.



or visit: [qmulsustainability.wordpress.com/recipes](https://qmulsustainability.wordpress.com/recipes)