

## Did You Know?

California growers produce most of our Nation's apricot supply—thanks in part to ARS' **apricot breeding program** at the **San Joaquin Valley Agricultural Sciences Center** in Parlier, CA. Approximately 12-15 major producers grow approximately 13,000 acres of U.S. apricots. ARS researchers not only develop new apricot varieties, but also maintain the Nation's official collection of apricot trees from around the world. ARS' apricot varieties developed for the apricot industry account for 18% of all apricots sold in the United States.

Apricot breeding is a long, arduous process that takes many years from selection to commercial availability. Only today are consumers able to enjoy new apricot varieties whose development began more than 15 years ago. ARS' extensive breeding program has resulted in new varieties that make it to market quicker and have higher sugar content, meeting consumer demands for sweeter tasting apricot varieties. Some of these sweeter apricots are processed into marmalades, jams and jellies for high-end gourmet markets.

ARS releases most of its varieties through the agency's public release program. However, some varieties are patented and licensed to U.S. apricot growers to help them compete in a global marketplace.

Whether fresh, canned, juiced, frozen or dried, this delicious fruit—loaded with essential nutrients like vitamins A and C—is a tasty addition to American's fruit offerings.



Apricots.

## California Apricot Oatmeal Squares

2 sticks butter  
 3/4 cup brown sugar  
 3/4 cup sugar  
 2 eggs  
 2 teaspoons vanilla  
 1 1/2 cups flour  
 1 teaspoon salt  
 1 teaspoon baking soda  
 3 cups quick-cooking oats  
 1 (15 1/4 oz.) can California apricot halves, drained and diced into small pieces (approx. 1 cup)  
 1 12 oz. bag semi-sweet chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Servings: About 20

Grease a 13" x 9" pan and set aside. Melt butter, add sugars and blend well. Add eggs and vanilla and blend. In a separate bowl, combine flour, salt, baking soda and mix together. Add mixture to the butter and sugars. Add oats and blend until combined. Add apricot halves and chocolate chips. Spoon mixture evenly into pan and bake 20-25 minutes until toothpick pulls out clean; do not over bake.

Variations: Omit chocolate chips; add 2 teaspoons of cinnamon and an additional can of apricot halves (drained and diced). Other possibilities include adding 1/2 cup of walnuts, almonds or coconut.

---

Reprinted with permission from the Apricot Producers of California.

*Please submit story ideas and national award items to Tara T. Weaver-Missick, tara.weavermissick@ars.usda.gov or call 301-504-1663.*