the entertaining issue

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summer made simple

Easy Parties

A Perfect Summer

HELP YOURSELF:

Watermelon

See that succulent slice? That's what *we* call a love triangle. Get the most from your melon—and have your healthiest summer yet—with our juicy tips.

BY CRISTINA TUDINO | PHOTO ANDY LYONS

Don't get stuck with a dud!

When shopping for a whole watermelon, look for these clues to quality:

- **A creamy yellow spot** It means the fruit was allowed to rest on the ground and fully ripen before being harvested. No spot in sight? The melon probably was picked prematurely.
- **High density** The heavier the fruit, the juicier the slices. Compare a few watermelons of similar size and pick the one that works your muscles.
- **Uniform shape** Don't worry about a watermelon's size or roundness. But do choose a fruit that's symmetrical. An irregular shape hints at poor growing conditions, which sap flavor.

Sure, at just 46 calories per cup, watermelon won't pack on pounds. That doesn't mean it's light on health perks: Each serving delivers 20 percent of your daily vitamin C and 17 percent of your vitamin A, two nutrients needed for strong immunity. Watermelon also provides potassium, a mineral that helps steady blood pressure. And pink-flesh varieties are loaded with lycopene, a plant pigment linked to lower rates of heart disease and certain cancers.

Trying to use up a monster melon? Go savory. Brush a few thick slices with olive oil, sear on a hot grill for five minutes, then sprinkle with salt and freshly cracked pepper. Another idea: Toss together diced watermelon, diced cucumber, chopped cilantro, minced jalapeño pepper, and a squirt of lime juice for a delicious spin on salsa. Or use watermelon in place of tomatoes in a salad. It makes an especially tasty trio with feta cheese and peppery arugula. ■

Cancel the spitting contest. Watermelon seeds are edible! Toast them with a sprinkle of your favorite spices and nibble away for a healthy hit of fiber, protein, and magnesium.

Storing an uncut watermelon at room temperature raises its levels of lycopene by up to 20 percent. Wash and slice the fruit within a few days of purchase and stick leftovers in the fridge.

SOURCES: **Dawn Jackson Blatner, RD,** author of *The Flexitarian Diet* (McGraw-Hill)
Keri Gans, RD, author of *The Small Change Diet* (Pocket Books)
Jackie Newgent, RD, author of *Big Green Cookbook* (Wiley)
Stephanie Simek, spokesperson, National Watermelon Promotion Board