

## Harvesting/Purchasing Pears

*By Janet Hackert, Nutrition Specialist*

When a person is new to harvesting or selecting fresh pears, it can be a little tricky. So here are some tips on harvesting, selecting and ripening pears.

Although related to the apple and apricot, pears are sometimes not picked ripe like the others are. Tree ripened pears can become gritty in the middle. Instead, pears are picked firm, but not too hard. In fact, according to [Michele Warmund, State Horticulture specialist](#) with University of Missouri Extension, pears should be harvested when still firm, “as soon as seeds turn brown. They may be stored in refrigeration or a cold cellar and brought out to ripen as needed in a dark place at about 65 degrees Fahrenheit.”

When selecting pears at a store or farmers market, also select fruit that is firm but not too hard.

Sometimes a pear is mistakenly thought to have a poor quality flavor, but if allowed to ripen fully can taste much better. To ripen, place unripe pears in a paper bag that has some slits cut in it. Adding a banana to the bag speeds up the natural ripening process. Ethylene is the compound that encourages ripening and bananas give off a lot as they ripen so they help the process along. Pears respond well to ethylene for ripening.

Ripe pears can be stored in an air-tight container in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

Fresh pears make a healthy, delicious snack. They are high in fiber and low in calories. When fully ripened, they are sweet and juicy. Pears can be canned, frozen or dried in pieces or as fruit leather. When buying or harvesting in bulk and using for preserving, a good approximation is about 50 pounds per bushel. Then, for example, a 7-quart canner load of pear halves requires about 17.5 pounds of fresh pears. The whole bushel would make 16-25 canned quarts.

Pears can also be made into jam, preserves, relish and pickles. Safe procedures for making these can be found at the National Center for Home Food Preservation web site at [homefoodpreservation.com](http://homefoodpreservation.com) or search the MU Extension web site at [extension.missouri.edu](http://extension.missouri.edu).

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