

Reserve the Rind

Watermelon rinds make for more than just attractive containers for serving cold dishes and beverages. The rind can also be used in creative, edible ways and is good for your heart.

Watermelon, both the flesh and the rind, is a good source of a compound called citrulline, an amino acid that raises levels of arginine in the blood, which in turn helps maintain blood flow, healthy blood vessels and heart health.

Whether you're eating for good health or good taste (or both), you can use the rind to make pickles and relishes, grate into salads and slaws, toss into stir-fry and add to smoothies and juice. The key to chowing down on watermelon rind is knowing how to prepare it. These three preparation methods can help you put that rind to good use:

PICKLED: Watermelon rind is similar to a cucumber, which is why it's no surprise that pickled watermelon rind is a popular option.

JUICED: Most people know you can enjoy juice from red flesh of the melon, but you can juice the rind, too. Just like the watermelon flesh, the rind is loaded with water and nutrients.

STIR-FRIED: When it's cut up, watermelon rind is just like a vegetable, which means it can be tossed in a pan and stir-fried right alongside broccoli and carrots.

Look for more creative ways to use your watermelon rind at watermelon.org.



WATERMELON RIND PICKLES

4 cups water
1 tablespoon coarse salt
2 cups peeled watermelon rind, cut into 1-½-by-2-inch pieces (leave thin layer of pink)
¾ cup granulated sugar
1 allspice berry
½ cup cider vinegar
4 peppercorns
4 whole cloves
½ teaspoon pickling spice
1 long slice of fresh gingerroot
¼ teaspoon celery seeds

In large pot over medium-high heat, bring water and salt to boil. Add rind pieces and boil until tender, about 5 minutes. Strain. Transfer rinds to large metal bowl.

In saucepan, combine watermelon rind, sugar, berries, vinegar, peppercorns, cloves, pickling spice, gingerroot and celery seeds. Bring to boil over medium-high heat, stirring until sugar dissolves. Simmer 15 minutes until slightly reduced. Pour over watermelon rinds in bowl. Place plate over top to keep rinds submerged in liquid.

Cover and refrigerate 1 day. Transfer to glass jar and keep sealed in refrigerator up to 2 weeks.

WATERMELON RIND STIR-FRY

2 teaspoons sesame oil
2 cups watermelon rind, julienned (white part only, from about ½ of seedless watermelon)
1 cup julienned carrots
½ cup chives, cut into 3-inch pieces
1 tablespoon honey
1 tablespoon soy sauce
1 tablespoon fish sauce
1 clove garlic, minced
1 piece (about 1 inch) ginger, minced
½ cup fresh basil leaves, torn
¼ cup cilantro leaves
¼ cup mint leaves
crushed red pepper flakes (optional)

In wok over high heat, heat sesame oil. Add watermelon rind and carrots and fry, stirring constantly, 1-2 minutes. Let sit over high heat 1 additional minute without stirring. Add chives and stir to combine.

In small bowl, whisk together honey, soy sauce, fish sauce, garlic and ginger. Pour sauce over watermelon rind and cook, stirring, 30 seconds-1 minute, until fragrant.

Transfer to serving dish. Add basil, cilantro and mint, tossing to combine. Sprinkle with red pepper flakes, if desired, and serve.