How Produced – Cling peach trees are grown by nurseries and sold to growers for planting during dormancy in the winter months. To encourage early fruit production, trees are planted with a minimum density of 121 trees per acre. The first peaches are seen when the trees are one year old, in "second leaf." At five years, they are in full production, yielding an average of 18 tons of fruit per acre. The orchards require the constant attention and care of the growers. Pruning is generally done during the winter months. Thinning is done in the spring to achieve optimum sized fruit at harvest.

Harvest begins at the end of June in the southern San Joaquin Valley, and concludes soon after Labor Day in the northern Sacramento Valley. Cling peaches are picked when fully ripe. An average picker harvests three tons of peaches each day. Quality peaches at optimum maturity are placed in bins that hold 1,000 pounds of fruit. The fruit is then delivered to canneries that operate seven days a week during peak season.

At the processing plant, peaches are unloaded on a conveyer belt where they are sized and sent into the appropriate pitting machine. Following pitting, cling peaches are peeled and sliced. All peaches are packed in natural syrup to preserve quality and taste. Finally, the cans are sealed, cooked, and cooled. The fresh fruit is generally processed into one of its many products within 24 hours. Quick processing allows the fruit to maintain its nutritional value and quality.

History – Chinese writings more than 3,000 years old give reference to peaches. In California, Spanish padres found that cling peaches thrived along the mission trail. In the late 1700s, President George Washington enjoyed the peaches he grew in his garden at Mount Vernon. The fruit became well established during California's gold rush when settlers began growing and preserving them for commercial sale to miners. During World War I peach pits were gathered, ground, and used as filters in gas masks.

Varieties – The 16 most common California peach varieties, which account for 92 percent of all acreage, are separated into four main groups identified by harvest time—from extra early (late June) to extra late (September). The term "cling peaches" was given to these varieties because the flesh of the fruit "clings" to the pit. Today, by-products from peach processing are used in animal feed and compost.

Commodity Value – Cling peaches have a value of $120 million at harvest and increase to more than $450 million after processing. Cling peaches are primarily processed into two major products: canned cling peaches which are diced, sliced or halved, or diced as an ingredient in fruit cocktail. Other products include frozen cling peaches, baby food, and peach concentrates.
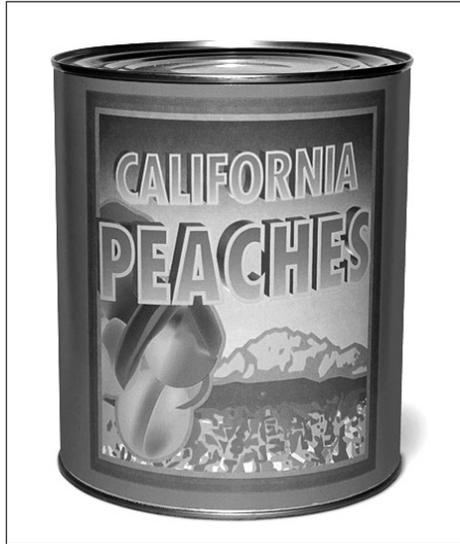
Top Producing Counties – Cling peaches are grown on approximately 20,000 acres in the San Joaquin and Sacramento Valleys by more than 450 growers. Five companies are responsible for processing the harvest, around 325,000 tons per year.

Although peaches are grown in 41 states, California accounts for nearly 100 percent of the commercial production of cling peaches in the United States. Butte, Fresno, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, Sutter, Tulare, and Yuba counties produce most of the state's cling peaches. These areas are ideal because the dormant season provides sufficient "chilling hours" to set the following year's crop. Later in the season, warm summer days combined with rich soil, and adequate water provide strong fruit growth.

Nutritional Value – California cling peaches are picked at the optimum nutrient level and the canning process locks in nutrients until you open the can and take a bite. Cling peaches are naturally fat-free and contain high levels of vitamin A and vitamin C. They also contain carotene and lycopene, antioxidants that improve skin condition and strengthen eyesight. In 2008, scientists discovered that carotene and lycopene increase during the canning process, supporting the claim that cling peaches are a great source of these nutrients.

For additional information:
California Cling Peach Board

(559) 595-1425
Fax: (559) 591-5744
Website: www.calclingpeach.com

Cling Peach Activity Sheet

◄ #1 Small bareroot peach trees are planted in the winter. Growers extend the harvest season by planting varieties that mature at various times.

8 feet

◄ #2 Winter and spring pruning is done by hand.

◄ #3 Pickers use both hands to pick several peaches at a time. Their day begins at dawn.
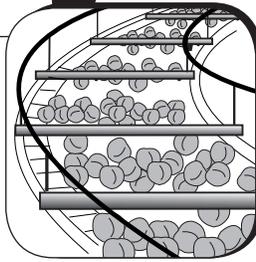
#4 ► Peaches are sorted at the orchards and then placed into big bins.
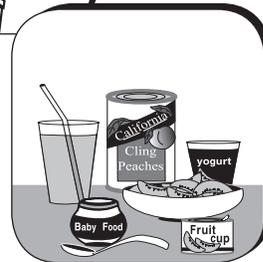
#5 ► At the cannery, peaches are sorted on conveyor belts, cut into different sizes, and processed.

#6 ► Cling peach products including canned peaches, fruit cups, juice, and babyfood are available to consumers worldwide!

California Cling Peaches · yogurt · Baby Food · Fruit cup

Lesson Ideas

- Research the characteristics of cling and freestone peaches. Hypothesize the benefits of each and why both are important to the agriculture industry.
- Analyze the nutritional labels on various canned cling peach products. Which cling peach product would you choose for its nutritional benefits? Defend your choice.
- Research how cling peach growers/farmers increase their production and lower labor costs.
- Using the figures on the fact sheet, calculate the average number of cling peach trees in California.
- On a map of California, identify the major counties where cling peaches are grown. What geographic characteristics do these counties have in common and how do these help with cling peach production?
- Create a recipe that includes cling peaches. Have the students practice their arithmetic by halving, doubling, and tripling their recipes.
- Develop a flow chart showing the innovative and technical processes used to get peaches to homes throughout the county.

Fantastic Facts

1. It takes five years for a cling peach tree to be in full production.
2. The gold miners were the first people to commercially farm cling peaches in California.
3. The average cling peach picker picks four tons, or 8,000 pounds, of peaches daily.
4. Most cling peaches are sold canned.
5. Cling peach trees are pruned twice each year.
6. Cling peaches contain vitamin A and C.
7. California produces nearly 100 percent of the United States' total cling peach production.
8. During World War I, peach pits were gathered, ground, and used as filters in gas masks.

Lesson Plan: Cling Peaches – A Convenient Fruit

Introduction: Cling peaches are processed in a variety of ways to provide nutritious, convenient fruit to people throughout the world.

Objective: Students will examine a variety of cling peach products and compute the price per ounce. They will consider the benefits and costs of value added foods.

Materials: A variety of cling peach products including canned peaches in different mediums and cuts, baby food products, flip-top individual servings, juice concentrates, and frozen cling peaches with the cost of each item, paper, markers and pencils.

California Standards: CC ELA: W.3-12.4; CC Math: 7-RP.2, HS.S-ID.1

Procedure:

1. Ask the students why people may eat processed fruit products such as cling peaches rather than fresh fruit. Write the variety of answers on the board. Answers may include taste, convenience, food safety, and year-round availability
2. Have the students create a table of processed cling peach products and record the price and weight of each item.
3. Divide the students into small groups. In additional columns, have students determine the price per ounce of the food products and then rank the food items from most to least expensive.
4. Have students discuss and then write opinions why some of these products were more expensive than others. Possible answers may include processing requirements, packaging costs, and the popularity of the product. As a class, discuss each group's comments and the term "value added."
5. Have the students taste the cling peach products. Create a line plot that depicts the levels of their popularity.