

Cucumis melo var. *cantalupensis*

CANTALOUPE is a vine. It is possibly native to Persia (now Iran) and the Caucasus.

It is also known as *Cantaloup* (French), *Cantaloupe* (Swedish), *Cantaloupe-meloni* (Finnish), *Dilimli kavun* (Turkish), European cantaloupe, *Kabuklu kavun* (Turkish), *Kantalupe* (German), *Kantaloep* (Dutch), *Kantalup kavunu* (Turkish), *Kantalupmelon* (Danish), *Kantalupmelone* (German), *Kanteloep* (Dutch), *Kyantarooopu* (Japanese), *Melon*, *Melon cantaloup* (French), *Kantaruupu* (Japanese), *Melão-cantalupo* (Portuguese), *Melón cantalupo* (Spanish), *Melon charentais* (French), *Melone* (German), *Melone cantalupo* (Italian), *Qâwûn kantâlûbî* (Arabic), True cantaloupe, *Warzenmelone* (German), and *Wratmeloen* (Dutch).

Melo is Latin (apple-shaped melon). *Cantalupensis* is derived from Cantalupo, the place where the Roman Catholic Pope has his Summer residence.

The origins of this melon, from which further varieties have been developed by various countries around the Mediterranean, including Italy, France and Algeria, are the subject of debate. Some authorities support the view that it is native to Persia (now Iran) and the Caucasus, and others say that it was brought to Rome from Armenia in the 16th Century. In any event it seems that many years of patient development by monks in the gardens of the Pope's Summer residence outside Rome, are to be thanked for the beautiful orange colour of the flesh today, as well as its size and sweetness.

Early in the 21st Century cantaloupe became an unwitting symbol of the rise *Salmonella* food poisoning caused by fruit and vegetables in proportions seen in past years in meat. The international demand for fruit and vegetables throughout the year, regardless of season, was thought to have exacerbated the increasing problem. It had been noted that in North America cantaloupe had been the cause of food poisoning in a minimum of 28 outbreaks involving over 1600 people of whom at least two had died. The outbreaks began in 1973 but the majority occurred at the turn of the Century. During that time, where the cantaloupe is concerned, its popularity had increased dramatically and its rough skin enables it to harbour bacteria, especially if it is damaged in any way, and it also makes it difficult to clean. (Authorities were urging consumers to scrub the fruit under cold water before cutting it to avoid transferring any bacteria to the unaffected flesh inside.)