

The fresh apricot harvest begins in mid-May and only lasts for about 8 weeks. When selecting fresh apricots look for well formed fairly firm fruit. These will be great for eating if you wash them first and leave them on your counter. Once they are ripe put them in your refrigerator to hold them for a longer period of time. My favorite place to buy apricots at the Market is from Louis Farms in Brentwood, Calif. Doug sells two varieties that are considered heirlooms, the Tiltans and the Blenheims. I like the smaller ones for cooking and canning or making jam. Here is one of my favorite recipes using apricots.

Fresh Apricot Spice Crumble Cake

Apricots baked to perfection. This easy cake disappears fast.

CRUMBLE TOPPING:

1 cup flour
1 cup brown sugar, packed
½ cup butter, softened

CAKE:

1 ½ cups flour
1 cup sugar
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon baking powder
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon nutmeg
1 ½ cups chopped fresh ripe apricots
2 eggs beaten
¾ cup vegetable oil
1 teaspoon vanilla

For topping, combine 1 cup flour with brown sugar, cut in butter with pastry blender or fingertips until mixture is moist and crumbly. For cake, combine 1½ cups flour with sugar, cinnamon, ginger, baking soda, baking powder, salt and nutmeg in large bowl. Add apricots, eggs, oil and vanilla. Mix together to form a batter. Pour into greased and floured 9x13 inch baking pan. Sprinkle top evenly with topping. Bake in 350 degree oven for 45 to 50 minutes or until pick inserted in center comes out dry. Serve warm, topped with ice cream if desired. Makes 12 servings.

Recipe courtesy of the California Apricot Advisory Board. Now I bake the cake in a 9X9 inch pan because I like the thickness. My friend Shirlee Veverka really likes this cake and made it with baby food and said it was just fine, but I think it is really best with the fresh apricots. At the height of apricot season you may find yourself with an abundance of fresh apricots. One solution is to make them into apricot puree. This is a fast way to utilize and store them for future use. Later on

you can make this puree into Apricot Butter. Apricot Puree. Wash and pit ripe fruit, fill your blender with the apricots and add two tablespoons lemon juice and 1 tablespoon fruit fresh for every quart.

Put this into freezer containers, leaving an inch or more space from the top. I also put a piece of wax paper over the top to help keep it from turning brown. Later on I will share the recipe for Apricot Butter and some cookies to make using the jam.