

# BRIEF BREADFRUIT BASICS

## PICK IT RIGHT!

Mature fruit has the best flavor and texture for most dishes where a potato-like consistency is desired. It's perfect for eating plain or with a sauce, or for making breadfruit salad, stew, curry, fries and many more kinds of dishes.

Note: A firm, mature breadfruit will ripen and become soft in 1–3 days at room temperature (it can then be used for dessert dishes!). To store a mature fruit and delay ripening, put it in the refrigerator. The skin will turn brown, but the edible flesh will stay firm. Fruit can also be stored a few days fully submerged in cool water (put a weight on top so the fruit is completely underneath the water).

## RIPE BREADFRUIT IS GREAT FOR DESSERTS

A ripe breadfruit is soft to the touch with a sweet, aromatic fragrance. Ripe fruit is perfect for cakes, pies, cookies, energy bars and other sweet treats.

Ripe breadfruit is best used right away, although it can be kept in the refrigerator for a few days before using or stored in the freezer for later use.

## IMMATURE "GREEN" BREADFRUIT SHOULD BE AVOIDED!

Immature breadfruit is bright green and has not reached full size.

Immature fruit is rubbery and watery even when cooked, lacking the rich flavor and texture of mature fruit. An immature breadfruit will not mature or ripen after picking. Most people who eat immature breadfruit end up not liking breadfruit. This is a shame ... choose mature breadfruit!

## DON'T BE SAPPY

Breadfruit contains a small amount of white sap, which can stick to knives, pots and steamers. Cutting off the stem immediately after harvest and letting the fruit sit stem end down drains most of the sap. Sap issues can be reduced or eliminated by choosing mature fruit, proper field handling, washing and refrigeration. In the kitchen, breadfruit should be soaked for 1–2 minutes in cold, clean water and washed to remove any sap or debris on the skin. Dry with a clean towel before cutting or cooking.

If fruit oozes sap upon cutting, a piece of cardboard placed over the cutting board keeps it clean. Utensils resist sticky sap when sprayed with a non-stick oil or rubbed with cooking oil. Sap that sticks to kitchen equipment can be removed with oil and a scrub brush followed by washing with dish soap in hot water.

## COOKING

### STEAMING

The fruit is commonly quartered lengthwise (parallel to the core), after which the core can easily be cut away. The skin, which is edible, can be removed before steaming, left on for consumption, or removed after steaming (which is easiest).

Steam until the flesh is tender and can be easily pierced with a fork. Steaming time varies depending on the size of the steamer and how large the pieces are. Breadfruit can also be boiled. It will absorb more water when boiled than when steamed, which is desirable for certain varieties and recipes, and undesirable for others. Avoid overcooking.



Mature fruit: Look for greenish-yellow skin, a smooth surface, and brownish cracking between the surface segments. The flesh inside is firm and creamy white or pale yellow in color. Some varieties vary in maturity indicators.



Avoid immature green fruit. An immature, full size fruit is bright green and bumpy and the lines between sections are solid green. The flesh is pale green just beneath the skin. When cooked, the texture is rubbery and the flavor is watery.



Steaming is a great way to cook breadfruit to eat alone or in dishes. Do not overcook or breadfruit will become mushy and waterlogged!

## FRYING

Breadfruit can be pan- or deep-fried, much like potato. If peeled fruit is desired, blanching raw fruit before peeling helps loosen the skin from flesh. A variety of oils complement the taste of breadfruit, including coconut and olive oils. For deep-frying, vegetable oil (such as canola) is recommended. Make sure the oil is hot (355°F or 180°C) before dropping in fruit. Sometimes the fruit is partially steamed or boiled before frying.

## BAKING IN OVEN

Oven baking breadfruit results in a tender flesh and a slightly roasted flavor. To bake, rinse the skin, cut in half and place cut side down on an oiled baking sheet or in a shallow baking pan with  $\frac{1}{2}$ – $\frac{3}{4}$  inch (1–2 cm) of water. Fruit can also be cooked whole wrapped in aluminum foil to keep the flesh moist. Bake at 375–400°F (190–205°C) for one hour or until the fruit can be easily pierced with a fork. Cooking time varies depending on the size of the fruit.

## FIRE IT UP!

Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders traditionally cook breadfruit in underground ovens called imu (Hawaiian) or above ground in umu (Polynesia) or umhw (Micronesia). It can also be roasted over an open fire. All of these methods impart a wonderful smoky flavor to the fruit. After peeling off the skin, the fruit can be eaten as it is, or as an ingredient in other traditional dishes.

## FREEZING COOKED BREADFRUIT

Steamed, cooked pieces should be completely cooled to room temperature (important to avoid freezer burn) and then frozen. When using a freezer-grade plastic bag, quality will be retained for up to a year. Thawed breadfruit processed in this way holds its texture and flavor very well. Boiling is not recommended prior to freezing, as it results in too much water absorption and freezer burn. Note that when frozen raw, the fruit has an unpleasant “sappy” flavor when thawed. However, fully ripe raw fruit freezes well.

Frozen breadfruit should be defrosted in the refrigerator. After thawing, lightly steaming it before use will restore the original texture.

## MAKE A DELICIOUS DISH

Breadfruit is delicious all on its own, with just a little butter and salt, or dipped in sauces. Use breadfruit instead of potato in curries, soups, patties, stews, mashed, and salads—it is truly versatile. Find recipes in the *Ho’oulu ka ‘Ulu Cookbook* available for purchase at [www.breadfruit.info](http://www.breadfruit.info) or download free recipes at [www.breadfruit.org](http://www.breadfruit.org).



Breadfruit fries are delicious!



Steamed breadfruit retains its original flavor and texture for up to a year when kept in the freezer.



Left to right: Sam Choy's seafood 'ulu salad, 'ulu chips, Pono Pies' panini and chocolate pies, seafood chowder, and yellow curry.

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