

‘Quinces’

Some facts & recipes



- Quince belongs to the same family as apples and pears; its shape is similar to a pear, but larger. It has lumpy yellow skin and hard flesh that is quite bitter so shouldn't be eaten raw. When fully ripe, the quince has a wonderful perfume
- Quince can be added to cooked apple and pear dishes or used to make quince sauce. It also makes excellent preserves, especially marmalade.
- It is a worthwhile addition to the fruit garden because it is easy to look after and not prone to many of the more common fruit problems.
- Quinces need a long growing season to ripen well and so are best trained as a fan against a south or west-facing wall in more exposed or northerly gardens. They flower early, so avoid frost pockets. Gardeners in warmer climates or in sheltered, urban or coastal sites can grow their quinces as free-standing trees provided they position them in a sunny location.
- They are happy in most soils, but particularly those that are relatively moist throughout the summer, yet well-drained to avoid waterlogged in winter. Light or shallow chalky soils should have plenty of organic matter added prior to planting and be well mulched afterwards.
- They come in many shapes and sizes, from large spreading trees that would make an attractive specimen to half standards that are suitable for smaller gardens or even in pots. Free-standing trees attain a height and spread of 3.75–5m (12–16ft), depending on the rootstock, position and soil type.
- As alternative to growing in the ground, compact forms of quince are happy in large, containers filled with soil-based compost.
A 45cm (18in) container is the smallest feasible and 60cm (2ft) would be ideal.

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Chicken Stew with Quince

A recipe from Christopher Lloyd's 'Garden Cook'

From Jane Grigson's '*Good Things*', in my battered old copy of which I made the marginal comment 'So good and easy'

- 1 large jointed chicken
- 500g/1 lb Quinces (or more for flavour)
- 125g/4oz butter
- 2 large, finely chopped onions
- A bunch of parsley, chopped
- About half teaspoon ground ginger
- Salt, black cayenne (Blacks ok) and paprika

The meat is not browned before cooking. Put it and 30g/1oz of the butter into a large pan with the onions and parsley. Just cover with cold water and season with ginger, salt and peppers.

Bring to the boil and simmer for about an hour, until cooked. Slice and core the quinces (leave the peel on), brown them very lightly in the remaining butter and add to the stew, half an hour before end of cooking.



An eighteenth - century Quince pudding

A recipe from Christopher Lloyd's 'Garden Cook'

For this I often turn to quince pulp stored in the deep freeze.

The recipe is from Jane Grigson's
'Good Things'

150g/5oz quince puree
300ml/half pint cream
(double, single, or the two mixed)
2 egg yolks
Sugar
Powdered ginger
60 g/2oz butter

Beat the cream with the egg yolks and add the quince puree. Add sugar and ginger to taste. Cut the butter into little pieces and stir into the mixture.

Butter a baking dish, pour in the quince mixture and bake at about 160c/325f/gas mark 3 or less, until set. Eat hot!

As this pudding is a kind of fruit custard, it's important not to cook it so fast that the mixture boils - this will curdle the eggs. The proportion of fruit puree to custard may be varied to taste. Puree should be on the dry side, not in the least sloppy.

Quince Pulp

Any quince that is left over from immediate kitchen uses can be cooked, sieved, sweetened (but not too much) and then stored as pulp in small containers in the deep freeze. It is wonderful to have a supply to draw on at any time of the year.



Cotognata (quince paste)

A recipe from *'The heart of Sicily'*

Recipes and reminiscences of Regaleali

A quince tree stands in the middle of the Garden, Its fragrant yellow fruit makes a stiff richly coloured jelly, Cotognata, which is very sweet and perfumed..

Best served with coffee, along with such other sweetmeats as zuccata and brittle.

- Cook quartered quinces with sliced lemons (about four pounds of Quinces to two Lemons) in a little water until soft.
- Then puree the quinces in a food mill, weigh the puree and add an equal amount of sugar (by weight) and cook the mixture in a non-reactive saucepan until it is very dense and it comes away from the sides of the pan, like a pate a choux.
- Pack the paste into lightly oiled moulds - you could use a cake tin, and put them , covered with cheesecloth, in a cool place for several days, until the paste feels dry. At that point, remove the paste from the moulds to let the top dry.
- When the paste is no longer sticky, wrap it in wax paper and store until ready to serve.