

This Tropical Fruit Can Be a Healthy Occasional Treat

Known for its juicy pink flesh, this fruit treats your pet's palate to a burst of tropical flavor while offering an array of health-boosting vitamins, minerals and polyphenols. Find out more about its benefits to your pet's health here.

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STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Guava offers a wealth of health-promoting bioactive compounds, vitamins and minerals that both you and your pet can benefit from
- One notable compound that's specifically found in the guava plant and its parts is guajaverin; it also contains quercetin, beta-carotene, lycopene, and ascorbic and citric acid
- Guava is considered a rich source of pectin, a naturally occurring soluble fiber that may help improve pets' gut health in various ways
- You can use guava as an ingredient to your pet's homemade treats or as a meal topper to diversify their species-appropriate, nutritionally balanced diet

Often enjoyed in smoothies, jams, pastries and other confectionery creations, guava (*Psidium guajava*) is a tropical fruit that's known for its sweet, juicy flesh, which smells musky and pungent when ripe. It's also a delectable treat when eaten fresh, and if you're wondering whether you can share it with your pet, the short answer is yes. Continue reading to learn more benefits of guava for your furry friend and how you can make it a healthy addition to their species-appropriate, nutritionally balanced diet.



Guava Fun Fact

Guava is also referred to as the "poor man's apple of the tropics" because it has a similar shape to apples, but is more affordable and widely available in tropical regions.^{1,2}



What Is Guava and How Does It Benefit Pet Health?

A member of the Myrtaceae plant family,³ guava is believed to have originated from Mexico, Central America, South America and the Caribbean, and is now grown in many tropical and subtropical areas around the world.⁴ The fruit comes in different colors and sizes, with pink guava being the most well-known variety. However, there are around 30 different types of red and white guavas that are either round or oval, as well as one variant of yellow-fleshed guava developed in California.⁵

This fruit is sometimes named after its flavor profile. One example is the strawberry guava, which tastes reminiscent of strawberries, and the lemon guava, which is tart and lemony.⁶ Regardless of variety, guava offers a wealth of health-promoting bioactive compounds, vitamins and minerals that both you and your pet can benefit from. It also has a long

history of use in various therapeutic applications. According to an article published in Clinical Phytoscience:⁷

“Many countries have a long history of using guava for medicinal purposes. This plant finds applications for the treatment of diarrhea, dysentery, gastroenteritis, hypertension, diabetes, caries and pain relief and for improvement in locomotor coordination ...

Its fruit is rich in vitamins A, C, iron, phosphorus and calcium and minerals. It contains high content of organic and inorganic compounds like secondary metabolites e.g. antioxidants, polyphenols, antiviral compounds, anti-inflammatory compounds.”



Did You Know?

Guavas offer more vitamin C than oranges. A 100-gram guava fruit has 228 milligrams of vitamin C⁸ — that’s almost four times the amount of vitamin C found in 100 grams of oranges.⁹ Vitamin C is a powerful antioxidant that dogs and cats can produce in their own body via their liver,¹⁰ but obtaining additional amounts of it from fresh foods like guava is also good for their health.



Guava Offers Various Health-Promoting Phytochemicals

Guavas offers a wide array of bioactive compounds. One notable compound that’s specifically found in the guava plant and its fruit is guaijaverin, which research shows may have a high potential as an antiplaque agent, as it helps inhibit the growth of bacteria in the mouth.¹¹

Guava also contains quercetin, which exerts a wide array of biological activities, such as antidiabetic, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, antiallergy, antiarthritic, neuroprotective and wound-healing properties.¹² According to a study published in the journal Veterinary Sciences, quercetin helped stimulate the immune response in dogs.¹³

Guava is high in ascorbic acid and citric acid as well, which are the major compounds that play important role in this fruit’s anti-mutagenic activity.¹⁴ Plus, it’s a good source of beta-carotene (provitamin A) and lycopene,¹⁵ both of which are carotenoids that exert potent antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and chemopreventive properties.¹⁶ They also help support your pet’s eye health by protecting against oxidative stress and age-related eye diseases.¹⁷

Guava Provides Gut-Healthy Pectin

“Guava is considered a rich source of pectin, a naturally occurring soluble fiber that may help improve pets’ gut health in various ways.”

One of pectin’s mechanisms of action is by promoting the production of short-chain fatty acids, which in turn support your pet’s intestinal epithelium and aid in meeting their energy requirements.¹⁸

According to an article published in Frontiers in Microbiology, pectin also helps “induce gut immunity, improve intestinal integrity and mucosal proliferation, and favor adhesion of probiotic Lactobacillus strains to the epithelial cells.”¹⁹ A study published in the Journal of Animal Science showed similar results, demonstrating that higher pectin

intake helped increase the *C. perfringens* and lactobacilli concentration in cats.²⁰

How to Choose and Safely Offer Guava to Your Pet

Fresh guava is available in most supermarkets in Florida and nearby areas, or in special grocery stores around the country. When buying guava, gently squeeze the fruit to gauge if it's ripe; softer guavas are riper and sweeter. The skin should also be lighter in color, sometimes with spots of pink. Dark green peel indicates that they're not as ripe; you can speed up their ripening by putting them in a bowl or a paper bag and leaving them at room temperature in the kitchen.²¹

Ripe guavas are highly perishable, so if you're not going to eat them or feed them to your pet right away, store them in the fridge first to slow down the ripening process. Once you're ready to offer it to your pet, cut the flesh into bite-sized pieces to avoid choking risks, and remove the seeds. You can either remove the peel or leave it on (if organic), as it's edible and contains high amounts of the phytochemicals mentioned above. Always remove the stem prior to feeding.

You can use ripe guava as an ingredient to your pet's homemade treats or as a meal topper to diversify their food bowl. You can also puree it and spread it on your pet's lick mat. As always, remember to limit the serving of healthy "extras," including guava, to less than 10% of your pet's daily caloric intake. Avoid feeding your pet processed guava products like jams and jellies, as they contain excessive amounts of sugar.

Top Producers of Guava in the US and Globally



According to data from the Food and Agriculture Organization, India leads the world's guava production, accounting for 39% of the global output. Second place goes to Pakistan, with 14% of global output, while Brazil ranks third at 7% of global output.²² In the U.S., guava is primarily grown in Florida, California and Hawaii.²³



Is Guava a Sustainable Crop?

According to HeaLabel, guava is a relatively sustainable crop. Guava has a low water footprint, requiring only 1,800 liters of water to produce 1 kilogram of guava fruit.²⁴ Guava trees are drought-tolerant, although they will produce a better yield if they have access to water.²⁵ Guava's carbon footprint is also relatively low, as it only takes about 0.15 kg CO₂e to produce 1 kilogram of fresh guava, which is equivalent to a car driving 0.75 kilometers.²⁶

Guava is also not included in the Environmental Working Group's Dirty Dozen list, so conventionally grown varieties may have minimal to no pesticide residues and may be safe to eat. But to make sure that the guava you're serving to your family, including your pets, is truly safe and sustainable, opt for spray-free, organic varieties at your local farmers market whenever possible.

Sources and References

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