

All I can say is “Wow, what a treat!” I recently stopped by our local grocery store to purchase some fresh fruit, and stumbled across a fruit I had never eaten. Having discovered this unique and delightful fruit I felt compelled to share with you my encounter.

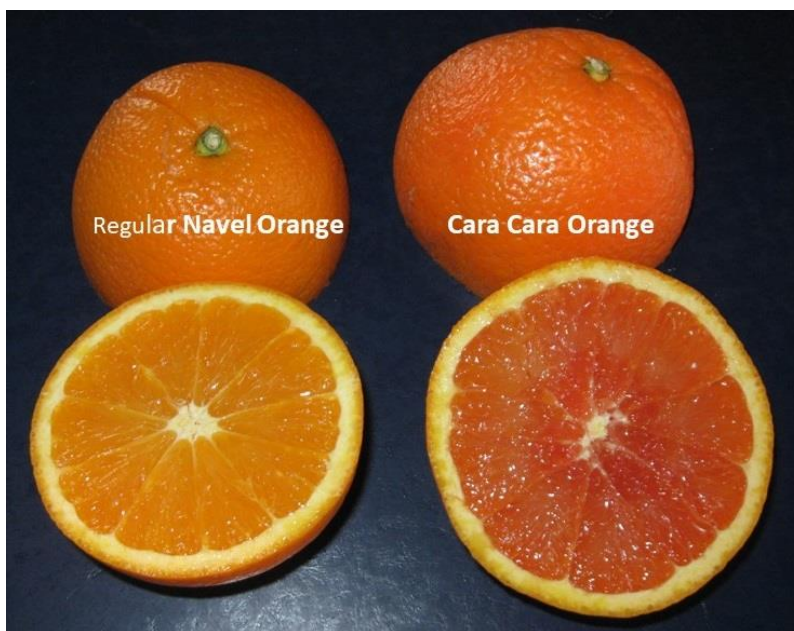
I was amazed that I had never before experienced this fruit. As the saying goes, sometimes I think I live under a rock. Having now enjoyed this tasty fruit, I did my research and discovered it has actually been available for well over thirty years. Chances are many of you are already familiar with this delight. My biggest disappointment about this fruit is I cannot grow it here in Nebraska. Furthermore, this particular fruit is seasonal, and grocery stores generally have it available from December to April. Knowing this, time is running out for this season. It is my hope that after you read this article, your curiosity will be tweaked enough for you also to try this delicious fruit and to do so before the season vanishes for another year.

“So what is this fruit hoopla all about?” you might ask. I am referring to *Citrus x sinensis*, sometimes called a blood orange. Okay, I agree, that particular common name does not sound very appetizing, but this intriguing fruit has another name with which you might be familiar. This interesting fruit is also called a Cara Cara orange.

From the outside, this variety of orange looks like any other orange, but when cut open— wow, what a surprise! Cara Cara oranges have a beautiful, pinkish-red flesh. Perhaps that might be why they are sometimes called a blood orange. Although their distinctive color makes them stand out— more notably, they have a remarkable taste!

My research revealed that Cara Cara oranges are a type of navel orange.

Derived from a cross between the Washington and Brazilian Bahia navel oranges, they were first discovered in the mid-70s at Hacienda Cara Cara in Venezuela (hence, the name). California, Texas and Florida are the three main states in the U.S. that grow Cara Cara oranges. As mentioned earlier, this variety of orange reaches its peak season between December and April.



Cara Caras are generally medium-sized fruits with the same round shape and bright orange rind as traditional navels. What really sets these oranges apart from other navel oranges is what is on the inside. Cara Caras are sweeter, slightly tangy, and less acidic. They are also seedless.

Not only do Cara Caras taste wonderful, I also discovered they possess important nutritional qualities. One medium Cara Cara orange has eighty calories, nineteen grams of carbs and three grams of fiber. These oranges are an excellent source of antioxidants, vitamin A and C and a worthy source of anthocyanin—a protective antioxidant not often found in other citrus fruits. Like tomatoes, Cara Cara oranges also contain the powerful antioxidant lycopene which helps give these oranges their beautiful reddish hue. Since lycopene is linked to lowering the risk of heart disease, prostate cancer, and macular degeneration, I know, from now on when available, Cara Cara oranges will become a part of my regular diet.

As with other citrus fruits, store Cara Cara oranges in a cool spot. Stored in the refrigerator, they should remain fresh up to two weeks. I can assure you, the five pounds of Cara Cara oranges I recently purchased will be gone in less than a week.

As I began, “Wow, what a treat!” This unique variety of orange is gaining in popularity. It is definitely an exciting alternative to the everyday navel orange. I urge you to try Cara Cara oranges. It is best you get to the market now; they remain in season only for a short time.