



## Pairing Up With your Perfect Date MP3

**Rod Bain** [00:00:02] It's time for The Dating Game. (audience applause). That's D-A-T-E-I-N-G game. The show that sees how much the contestants know about their dates, those exotic fruits from all over the world. Now, hold on. Dates have a multitude of uses, are well-known around the globe, and can spice up any food occasion. We'll let today's contest to talk about all that. I'm Rod Bain, and coming up, today's episode of The Date-ing game, in this edition of Agriculture USA. So, let's begin the program by having today's contested introduce themselves. Someone who knows a thing or two about dates, a USDA VegU-cator.

**Chantel Oyi** [00:00:43] Hi, my name is Chantel Oyi. Chantel, C-H-A-N-T-E-L Oyi, O-Y-I.

**Rod Bain** [00:00:50] Glad you could join us, Chantel. Now the rules are simple. I ask a question, you give your best response. With that, let's play The Date-ing Game. First question Chantel, where is the best place to find a date in either our country or around the world?

**Chantel Oyi** [00:01:07] So if I was looking for a date in the U.S., I would definitely look in California. And if I was looking for a date outside the U.S., the Middle East or North Africa.

**Rod Bain** [00:01:17] So dates are worldly sorts then?

**Chantel Oyi** [00:01:20] They originated in Spain, traveled to North Africa, and then from there traveled through Spanish and North African colonization to Cuba were then brought to California.

**Rod Bain** [00:01:30] Are you telling me these dates get around?

**Chantel Oyi** [00:01:32] There is about 8.5 million tons of dates produced annually, but the production is highest in the Middle East and North Africa. That also coincides with the consumption. Their also very high in Middle East and North Africa. When we talked about consumption here, the U.S. is actually not the highest, but around the mid-range of consumption and they're continually increasing. So, from the past five years, date consumption has increased from about a tenth of a kilogram to about a kilogram per person.

**Rod Bain** [00:02:03] I understand that a date's original home, the date tree, has quite a presence.

**Chantel Oyi** [00:02:08] If you know anything about date trees, you know, they are some of the tallest trees. They grow to be about 69 to 75 feet. So, it's just interesting to think, you know, someone is actually climbing up the tree and harvesting clusters of dates by hand.

**Rod Bain** [00:02:19] That sounds like an adventurous date to me. Now let's find out what are the best qualities that a date should have. Chantel?

**Chantel Oyi** [00:02:27] You want to look for one that is ripe. They're usually harvested ripe. You also want them to be pitied. They usually have a large stone size fruit or seed in the middle. You also want to look for a date that is not coated in sugar.

**Rod Bain** [00:02:39] So then, Chantel, what is the most exotic way to enjoy a date?

**Chantel Oyi** [00:02:45] So, dates are arranged in several different recipes. One may be a sparkling date juice. I don't think I've ever tried a sparkling date juice, but it's a non-alcoholic version of champagne and it's actually used for special occasions and religious time such as Ramadan. Another exotic use of dates could be the vinegar. There is a vinegar that is made from dates, traditionally a product of the Middle East.

**Rod Bain** [00:03:12] OK, Chantel. How do you think a date should present itself in the best way possible to its suitor?

**Chantel Oyi** [00:03:18] There are a variety of ways. Dates are often purchased or consumed dry. They're stuffed with things like walnuts, pecans, lemon peels, tahini, marzipan or cream cheese. They're also chopped and then tacked on other types of snack foods such as yogurt. Dates can be paired with savory dishes such as pork leaves, different types of protein. And then also they're added to puddings and other desserts, especially around the holidays. So, for example, date nut bread.

**Rod Bain** [00:03:46] Now, I'm sure you'll agree, Chantel, that a date needs to be supportive to keep you happy and healthy?

**Chantel Oyi** [00:03:53] I think it's because of its nutritional benefits. Dates provide a range of essential nutrients, such as dietary fiber, potassium, trace elements such as cobalt, copper, manganese, selenium and zinc. And they also have a very low glycemic index. They also consist of 80 percent sugar. Even though they consist of 80 percent sugar, that sugar is still categorized as having a low glycemic index.

**Rod Bain** [00:04:17] And it's time now for today's Final Question. Chantel, what is your best pick up line for a date?

**Chantel Oyi** [00:04:24] So I had um, It's a date.

**Rod Bain** [00:04:26] That's it.

**Chantel Oyi** [00:04:27] I didn't have any good date jokes. It was kind of like, it's a date!

**Rod Bain** [00:04:31] All right. Well, with that, that is all the time we have for this episode of The Date-ing Game. Hopefully you've learned more about dates, perhaps even yours. Chantel blow a kiss goodbye to the audience.

**Chantel Oyi** [00:04:46] Goodbye (blows kiss).

**Rod Bain** [00:04:46] Thanks Chantel and thank you for joining us. This has been Agriculture USA. I'm Rod Bain reporting for the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C.