

STOP! Don't Throw Away Those MOLDY GOURDS!

For all "newcomers" to the World of Gourds, one of the most common "bad habits", is to throw away those moldy, nasty looking gourds. Very commonly, when one first becomes acquainted with fresh gourds, and they begin to get moldy, this is what happens. However, not all gourds go through a molding stage, depending on their environment.

If the gourd is still firm to shape during this molding stage, it is going through its' natural "drying out" process. The moisture from within the gourd is escaping. The gourd is typically said to be 95%-99% water. Whatever the percentage is, it is quite high.

Common to a lot of folks, the skin is removed for preservation of the gourd. Although, it is not necessary to remove the skin for all its' intended uses (ex. birdhouses). Once a gourd is dry, the seeds will normally be able to be shaken loose, and will be able to hear rattle. It will keep indefinitely under the right environment, depending also, on its intent of use.

Usually, during the molding stage, the skin that is molding the most, can be removed very easily when submerged and scrubbed in a tub of warm water. Whereas the skin that is not molding can be very stubborn to remove and a scraping tool may be necessary to use. OR again, depending on its' intended use, this portion of the skin may be left intact indefinitely, or it may become moldy again later, and the skin removed at that time. Usually though, any gourd used for craftwork (ex. painting, etc.), it is recommended that all skin be removed.

As long as the gourd retains its' mature shape, and remains firm and solid to the touch, it will probably dry out for you. Some gourds have even been known to wrinkle somewhat and still continue to dry out. Pieces of these are capable of being used for various unique functions (ex. masks, headwear, jewelry, etc.). If gourds wrinkle and shrivel up, becoming mushy, and losing their shape, chances are, they weren't "mature" gourds when they were picked or when the plant died off. Sometimes when purchasing gourds at Festivals and such, it can be very hard to determine which gourds are mature and which ones aren't. Most of the time a mushy or soft gourd was harvested pre-maturely. When selecting "fresh picked" gourds, if you want "keepers", try to select good solid firm gourds for your best choice. However, some of these gourds may still be very solid, and haven't started to show their "immaturity" yet. It can be very frustrating, while at the same time, very fun making a decision. If you have the opportunity, ask the Grower. The increasing interest in gourds is seemingly growing by leaps-and-bounds. It seems as though someone is always looking for certain gourds.

The main thing to remember when working with gourd, is the many variables you have to deal with. The same attempt will not necessarily yield the same results every time. The overall environment plays the major factor (ex. moisture, sunlight, heat, humidity, wind, soil, etc.). There are so many different growing and crafting techniques that you can experience. I truly believe, this is why so many people have become intrigued with gourds.

So., when those gourds begin to mold on you this Fall and Winter, "Don't throw them out!" (Unless you just want to, or need to--- "which I hope not!") Clean-em up, and enter them in the Gourd Show(s), and/or share them with others ...and Gourd Luck!

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