Figs Assorted

Ficus roxburghii, Ficus carica, Ficus racemosa, Ficus sycomorus

(a) *Ficus roxburghii*

Common names	Higo, figue, feige, fico, common fig, cluster fig, Sycomore fig
Origin	The origin of common figs is in Middle East and Western Asia, while cluster figs are native to Australia, Malaysia, South East Asia, South Africa and the Indian subcontinent. Figs belong to Moraceae family, the same family as mulberry.
Description	A fig is a special type of multi-fruit called a syconium. The fully ripe fig has bell or pear shape with succulent flesh.
Growth Habitat	The common fig needs a Mediterranean climate, lots of sun and dry weather. Cluster figs do well in subtropical and tropical climates.
Foliage	Green, palm-shaped leaves with three to seven lobes and are 25 to 30cm long. The leaves have a rough texture on top and are hairy on the underside.

Flowers	A common feature of all figs is that the flowers are borne inside the fruit and therefore are not visible. Pollen-bearing male flowers and seed-bearing female flowers are hidden inside a tear-drop or round, flatted-shaped green to purple fruit which is fertilized by a small wasp.
Fruits	In contrast with common figs that grow on leaf branches, cluster figs grow in large, branched bunches on the main trunk and older branches of cluster fig trees. During each season, the tree bears several hundred pear shaped fruits twice a year, varying in size and color depending on the variety. Interiorly, the fig fruit features numerous club shaped ovaries protruding towards central hollow cavity. In their natural habitat, "caprifigs" are pollinated by a tiny gall wasp (Blastophaga grossorum) that enters the flower cluster through a small opening in the apex.
Soil	The fig can be grown on a wide range of soils; light sand, rich loam, heavy clay or limestone, providing there is sufficient depth and good drainage. Highly acid soils are unsuitable. Ideal pH is 6.0 to 6.5. Moderate salinity can be tolerated.
Pruning	Prune figs trees annually during the first three years in order to establish desired shape. In subsequent years prune only to stimulate new growth or to control size. Figs can bear fruit on the previous year's growth, so heavy pruning will result in lighter crops the following season. Remove all weak, diseased or dead limbs after harvesting.
Fertilization	Usually, only a regular application of nitrogen is needed (2.2-2.5% of the dry leaf weight); 9-18kg/acre of nitrogen is the average application rate. Other nutritional deficiencies are rare. Figs are more likely to suffer toxicities from sodium, boron, or chloride.
Propagation	Figs trees are propagated by air-layering, rooted cuttings, suckers or sprouted seeds. Having the right moisture, heat

	and humidity are crucial for cuttings.
Harvest	Edible fig cultivation may produce 1 to 2 crops per year. A small amount of handpicked figs are marketed fresh but they can perish rather quickly. Most figs are harvested as a dried crop. These are allowed to dry on the tree and fall to the ground. Dried figs are mechanically swept into windrows and collected, fumigated, and sun dried or dehydrated to 17% moisture or less.
Nutritional Properties	Fresh figs are rich in calcium, iron and Vitamin A and C. They are low in acid and high in natural sugars. Fresh figs contain some 80 percent water and 12 percent sugars, but when they are dried the sugar rises to 50 percent.
Health Benefits	Figs are among the richest plant sources of calcium and fiber. According to USDA data for the Mission variety, dried figs are richest in fiber, copper, manganese, magnesium, potassium, calcium, and vitamin K, relative to human needs. They have smaller amounts of many other nutrients. Figs have a laxative effect and contain many antioxidants. They are a good source of flavonoids and polyphenols including gallic acid, chlorogenic acid, syringic acid, catechin, epicatechin andrutin. In one study, a 40-gram portion of dried figs (two medium size figs) produced a significant increase in plasma antioxidant capacity.
Commercial Uses	Figs can be eaten fresh peeled or unpeeled. They are cooked in pies, puddings, cakes or breads or added to ice-creams, preserved in syrup or made into jam or a paste for fig rolls. They can be candied whole or dried. Fig seeds can be made into seed oil, leaves for fodder. Medicinally, latex is used on warts, skin ulcers and sores. Figs have long been used as a natural laxative.

Food Suggestion	**Roast figs with cinnamon, thyme and honey** Prep time:20 min Cook time:20 min, plus standing Serves:6 <u>Ingredients</u> • 3 tbsp clear honey • walnut-sized knob of butter • 1 tbsp orange liqueur • 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon • 12 figs • 1 tsp thyme <u>Method</u> 1. Preheat the oven to 190°C/gas 5. 2. Put the honey, butter, liqueur and cinnamon in a small saucepan. Heat gently, stirring, until liquid. 3. Using a small, sharp knife, make a cut like a cross in the top of each fig, cutting almost down to the base. 4. Place them upright in a roasting pan, splaying them out shamelessly as you go. Pour the liquid over each one. Roast for 15 minutes. 5. Sprinkle a bit of thyme over each fig. Return to the oven, switch it off, leaving the door ajar. Leave the figs in the oven for 5-10 minutes before serving.