

CODEX STANDARD FOR PRICKLY PEAR

CODEX STAN 186-1993

1. DEFINITION OF PRODUCE

This standard applies to the fruit of commercial varieties of prickly pears grown from *Opuntia ficus indica*, *O. streptachanthae*, and *O. lindheimeri* of the *Cactaceae* family, to be supplied fresh to the consumer, after preparation and packaging. Prickly pears for industrial processing are excluded.¹

2. PROVISIONS CONCERNING QUALITY

In all classes, subject to the special provisions for each class and the tolerances allowed, the prickly pears must be:

- whole;
- firm;
- fresh in appearance;
- sound, produce affected by rotting or deterioration such as to make it unfit for consumption is excluded;
- free of prickles;
- clean, practically free of any visible foreign matter;
- practically free of damage caused by pests;
- free of pronounced blemishes;
- free of damage caused by low temperature;
- free of abnormal external moisture, excluding condensation following removal from cold storage;
- free of any foreign smell and/or taste;
- sufficiently developed and display satisfactory ripeness, depending on the nature of the produce.

Depending on the prickly pear variety, the receptacle of the fruit will be flat or slightly hollow. The prickly pears must have a shape, colour, taste and smell characteristic of the species.

2.1.1 The development and condition of the prickly pears must be such as to enable them:

- to withstand transport and handling, and
- to arrive in satisfactory condition at the place of destination.

¹ Governments, when indicating the acceptance of the Codex Standard for Prickly Pear, should notify the Commission which provisions of the Standard would be accepted for application at the point of import, and which provisions would be accepted for application at the point of export.

2.2 CLASSIFICATION

Prickly pears are classified in three classes defined below:

2.2.1 “Extra” Class

Prickly pears in this class must be of superior quality. They must be characteristic of the variety and/or commercial type. They must be free of defects, with the exception of very slight superficial defects, provided these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package.

2.2.2 Class I

Prickly pears in this class must be of good quality. They must be characteristic of the variety and/or commercial type. The following slight defects, however, may be allowed, provided these do not affect the general appearance of the produce, the quality, the keeping quality and presentation in the package:

- slight defects in shape and colour;
- slight skin defects such as bruising, sunspots, crusting, blemishes or other superficial defects. The total area affected shall not exceed 4 per cent.

The defects must not, in any case, affect the pulp of the fruit.

2.2.3 Class II

This class includes prickly pears which do not qualify for inclusion in the higher classes, but satisfy the minimum requirements specified in Section 2.1 above. They must be characteristic of the variety and/or commercial type. The following defects may be allowed, provided the prickly pears retain their essential characteristics as regards the quality, the keeping quality and presentation:

- defects in shape and colour, as long as the produce has the characteristics common to prickly pears;
- skin defects due to bruising, scarring, crusting sunspots or other defects. The total area affected shall not exceed 8 per cent.

The defects must not, in any case, affect the pulp of the fruit.

3. PROVISIONS CONCERNING SIZING

Size is determined by the weight of the prickly pear, in accordance with the following table:

Size Code	Weight (in grams)
A	90 – 105
B	105 - 140
C	140 - 190
D	190 - 270
E	> 270

4. PROVISIONS CONCERNING TOLERANCES

Tolerances in respect of quality and size shall be allowed in each package for produce not satisfying the requirements of the class indicated.

4.1 QUALITY TOLERANCES

4.1.1 “Extra” Class

Five per cent by number or weight of prickly pears not satisfying the requirements of the class, but meeting those of Class I or, exceptionally, coming within the tolerances of that class.

4.1.2 Class I

Ten per cent by number or weight of prickly pears not satisfying the requirements of the class, but meeting those of Class II or, exceptionally, coming within the tolerances of that class.

4.1.3 Class II

Ten per cent by number or weight of prickly pears satisfying neither the requirements of the class nor the minimum requirements, with the exception of produce affected by rotting, pronounced irregularities or any other deterioration rendering it unfit for consumption.

4.2 SIZE TOLERANCES

For “Extra” Class, 5 per cent; and for Class I or Class II, 10 per cent; by number or weight of prickly pears not satisfying the requirements as regards sizing, but falling within the class immediately above and/or below or those indicated in Section 3.

5. PROVISIONS CONCERNING PRESENTATION

5.1 UNIFORMITY

The contents of each package (or lot for produce presented in bulk) must be uniform and contain only prickly pear of the same origin, variety, quality and size. For “Extra” Class, colour and ripeness should be uniform. The visible part of the contents of the package (or lot for produce presented in bulk) must be representative of the entire contents.

5.2 PACKAGING

Prickly pears must be packed in such a way as to protect the produce properly. The materials used inside the package must be new,² clean, and of a quality such as to avoid causing any external or internal damage to the produce. The use of materials, particularly of paper or stamps bearing trade specifications is allowed, provided the printing or labelling has been done with non-toxic ink or glue.

Prickly pears shall be packed in each container in compliance with the Recommended International Code of Practice for Packaging and Transport of Tropical Fresh Fruit and Vegetables (CAC/RCP 44-1995).

5.2.1 Description of Containers

The containers shall meet the quality, hygiene, ventilation and resistance characteristics to ensure suitable handling, shipping and preserving of the prickly pears. Packages (or lot for produce presented in bulk) must be free of all foreign matter and smell.

6. MARKING OR LABELLING

6.1 CONSUMERS PACKAGES

In addition to the requirements of the Codex General Standard for the Labelling of Pre-packaged Foods (CODEX STAN 1-1985, Rev. 2-1999), the following specific provisions apply:

6.1.1 Nature of Produce

If the produce is not visible from the outside, each package shall be labelled as to the name of the produce and may be labelled as to the name of the variety.

² For the purposes of this Standard, this includes recycled material of food-grade quality.

6.2 NON-RETAIL CONTAINERS

Each package must bear the following particulars, in letters grouped on the same side, legibly and indelibly marked, and visible from the outside, or in the documents accompanying the shipment.³ For produce transported in bulk these particulars must appear on a document accompanying the goods.

6.2.1 Identification

Name and address of exporter, packer and/or dispatcher. Identification code (optional).⁴

6.2.2 Nature of Produce

Name of produce if the contents are not visible from the outside. Name of variety and/or commercial type (optional).

6.2.3 Origin of Produce

Country of origin and, optionally, district where grown or national, regional or local place name.

6.2.4 Commercial Identification

- Class;
- Size (size code or weight range in grams);
- Number of units (optional);
- Net weight (optional).

6.2.5 Official Inspection Mark (optional)

³ Governments, when indicating their acceptance of this Standard, should notify the Commission as to which provisions of this Section apply.

⁴ The national legislation of a number of countries requires the explicit declaration of the name and address. However, in the case where a code mark is used, the reference “packer and/or dispatcher (or equivalent abbreviations)” has to be indicated in close connection with the code mark.

7. CONTAMINANTS

7.1 HEAVY METALS

Prickly pears shall comply with those maximum levels for heavy metals established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission for this commodity.

7.2 PESTICIDE RESIDUES

Prickly pears shall comply with those maximum residue limits established by the Codex Alimentarius Commission for this commodity.

8. HYGIENE

8.1 It is recommended that the produce covered by the provisions of this Standard be prepared and handled in accordance with the appropriate sections of the Recommended International Code of Practice - General Principles of Food Hygiene (CAC/RCP 1-1969, Rev. 3-1997), and other relevant Codex texts such as Codes of Hygienic Practice and Codes of Practice.

8.2 The produce should comply with any microbiological criteria established in accordance with the Principles for the Establishment and Application of Microbiological Criteria for Foods (CAC/GL 21-1997).