



BERRY GOOD

Reap Big Benefits from Summer's Tiny Gems



by Judith Fertig

Fresh berries, nature's little gems, full of flavor and flavonoids, reach their peak during the warmer months. Each berry's burst of juicy deliciousness carries antioxidants, vitamins C and E, riboflavin and fiber that work to fight obesity, protect brain function and promote urinary health. The red, blue and purple pigments in berries, known as anthocyanins, also help our bodies detoxify, repair damaged DNA, fight cancer and help lower LDL, or "bad" cholesterol, levels.

The Department of Food Science and Technology at Oregon State University cites scores of studies that point to the many health benefits from consuming a variety of fresh berries. Each berry offers not only a unique flavor and color, but also a particular health protection.

BLACK RASPBERRIES: The dark purple member of the raspberry family grows on low shrubs and ripens in summer. This member of the berry corps helps fight oral, esophageal and colon cancers.

BLACKBERRIES AND MARION-BERRIES: Members of the rose family, these berries grow on shrubs and ripen in mid-to-late summer. Both help digestion and prevent salmonella growth.

BLUEBERRIES: Powerhouse blueberries also grow on low shrubs and generally ripen in early summer. This renowned berry offers whole-body protection against many diseases and aging.

CHERRIES: Sour cherries ripen in early summer, while sweet cherries reach

their peak later in summer. Both types help reduce inflammation, especially in occurrences associated with gout.

GRAPES: Dark purple Concord grapes, often found in home gardens or at farmers' markets, ripen in the fall. Their resveratrol content is a key help in combating the effects of aging.

STRAWBERRIES: These delicious favorites ripen throughout the year in various parts of the country. Strawberries help fight breast and cervical cancers.

Home gardeners that grow berries know exactly what fertilizers and natural pesticides have been placed in or on them. Buying organic berries at the local farmers' market or the grocery store ensures that the health benefits of fresh berries are not undercut by infiltrated pesticides or anti-fungal chemicals used by agribusiness, both here and abroad.

Right before serving, berries may be gently rinsed, and then patted completely dry; they will keep well in the refrigerator as long as they are not crowded together.

Summer berries can star in cool treats throughout the day. At breakfast, they're a welcome wake-up flavor for cereal or yogurt. As a snack, they're perfect whether eaten by the handful or turned into frozen yogurt pops. Seasonal berries can be combined with quinoa or couscous for easy summer salads. They also add a special note when friends and family toast the end of the day with an iced tea, enhanced with fresh blackberries and mint.

Pairing berries with low-fat ingredients, whole grains, fresh produce and natural sweeteners makes for fast, fresh and fabulous summer dishes that keep us cool all summer long.

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BERRY ICY TREATS



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MORE GOOD NEWS

Berries May Lower the Risk of Parkinson's

A recent study by researchers at the Harvard School of Public Health, in Boston, that followed 125,000 subjects for 20 to 22 years, confirms that eating berries can lower the risk of Parkinson's disease. The participants who consumed the most flavonoids, especially the anthocyanins found mostly in berries, had a much lower risk of developing the disease than those whose diet contained less or different classes of flavonoids.

Berries Help Fight Pain and Heart Disease

A natural form of aspirin—salicylic acid—has been found in berries that grow on canes, such as blackberries, blueberries and raspberries. The Oregon State University's Department of Food Science and Technology reports that the salicylic acid found in these caneberries could prove to have effects similar to aspirin in protecting against heart disease. A 100-gram serving (about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup) of red raspberries, for example, contains about 5 milligrams of salicylic acid.



Blackberry Mint Iced Tea

Served over ice, this flavorful beverage is a great way to quench thirst on the hottest days of summer.

Serves 8 (about 2 quarts)

5 organic black tea bags
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup mint leaves, crushed; reserve one leaf per serving for garnish
4 cups boiling water
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup natural sugar (or use honey to taste)
6 (6-oz) packages blackberries, reserve two to three per serving for garnish

Place tea bags and mint in a heatproof pitcher. Add boiling water and steep at least 10 minutes. Strain into another pitcher and discard mint and tea bags. Stir in sugar. Purée blackberries in a blender or food processor, then strain through a fine sieve. Discard pulp and seeds. Stir blackberry purée into tea. Taste and adjust sugar as desired. Chill. Serve over ice garnished with mint leaf and two or three blackberries.

Source: Recipes.Driscolls.com recipe library



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Blueberry Couscous Salad with Mango, Onion, and Lemon Dressing

This cool summer salad, with its fresh flavors, is easy to make and a pleasure to eat.

Serves 4

½ cup orange juice
⅓ cup water
½ tsp natural salt, divided
¾ cup whole wheat couscous
1 package blueberries
1 cup fresh mango cubes
⅓ cup chopped red onion
2 Tbsp chopped fresh mint
2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil
⅛ tsp black pepper

Combine orange juice, water and ¼ tsp of the salt in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil. Stir in couscous; cover, remove from heat and let stand 5 minutes. Transfer couscous to a bowl and fluff with a fork; cool 10 minutes. Stir in remaining ¼ tsp salt, blueberries, mango, onion, mint, lemon juice, olive oil and pepper; mix well. Serve immediately or refrigerate until serving.

Source: *Recipes.Driscoll's.com* recipe library.

Strawberry Frozen Yogurt

This blend, made even more delicious with a natural sweetener, is a summertime variation of homemade yogurt with fruit. If desired, freeze the mixture in a frozen pop mold to make individual frozen treats.

Serves 6

3 cups strawberries, hulled
1¾ cups plain yogurt
2 Tbsp liquid honey
or 4 tsp agave syrup
Additional strawberries
Untreated rose petals

In a blender, purée strawberries until smooth. Add yogurt and a natural sweetener of choice; pulse until evenly blended. Pour into a shallow, freezer-safe container and freeze, uncovered, for 40 minutes. Using a fork, break up ice crystals and return to the freezer for 1 hour or until firm. (Alternatively, freeze in an ice cream maker, according to the manufacturer's instructions.)

Transfer to the refrigerator 15 minutes before serving. Serve in glass sundae dishes, garnished with strawberries and rose petals.

Source: *175 Natural Sugar Desserts*, by Angela and Ari Dayan, ©2007 Robert Rose Inc.; reprinted with permission.

