

Strawberries

Strawberries are delicious and nutritious! Every spring and summer many people look forward to strawberry season, but did you know they are grown year round in California! So, they are 'in season' all the time. Many times when we think of them our thoughts turn to fresh strawberries and ice cream, strawberry shortcake, strawberry pie and chocolate dipped strawberries. These choices are great for the occasional treat but strawberries are very nutritious and good for you to eat without adding extra sugar. Studies from around the world continue to show positive health effects that come from eating strawberries. These effects include: disease prevention, anti-aging, improved brain function, and overall good health.

A one cup serving of strawberries (about 8 medium berries) contains only 8 grams of sugar and 50 calories. This size serving has more vitamin C than an orange and also has potassium, folate and fiber. Potassium helps control blood pressure and fights strokes. Fiber helps control weight and relieves constipation. Vitamin C helps repair damage in the body and helps promote a healthy immune system. Folate helps fight birth defects and helps control the inflammatory process associated with heart disease.

The American Diabetes Association has identified berries as one of the top 10 superfoods for a diabetes meal plan because they have so many vitamins, antioxidants and dietary fiber. Antioxidants, fiber and phytochemicals have been shown to reduce total cholesterol levels. According to a study reported in the July 2012 issue of the Annals of Neurology eating strawberries more than twice a week appeared to delay cognitive aging.

Strawberries are grown year round in California making them available all year either fresh or frozen. Other facts include: a strawberry has about 200 seeds and are part of the rose family, California provides about 85% of the strawberries in the United States and they are handpicked so only the highest quality berries are harvested.

They are picked when they are fully ripe and will not continue to ripen after harvest. Choose berries that are bright red, have a natural shine and a fresh looking green top. Keep them refrigerated and dry until just before using them. Wash them with a gentle cool spray of water, blot them dry and remove the green leafy cap. To freeze berries, just put the cut side down on a waxed paper lined cookie sheet and place in the freezer uncovered for about 24 hours, then transfer them to a freezer bag or storage container, they can be stored frozen several months.

The fact that strawberries are delicious make it easy to take advantage of all the great nutrition that is packed into one serving. Think about different ways to include them in your diet including adding them to salads, smoothies, and sandwiches instead of just to desserts or just eat them plain for a quick and easy snack. Change up your strawberry sundae by putting a little ice cream on your bowlful of strawberries rather than a few strawberries on your bowlful of ice cream.

Nancy Frecks
Extension Educator
Food, Nutrition, and Health
PO Box 248
Trenton, Nebraska 69044
308 334 5666
308 340 9313
Nfrecks1@unl.edu