

Appetite for Knowledge



MARKET FRESH: STRAWBERRIES

At last, the strawberry fields are pumping out berries like there's no tomorrow. Today there are over 600 varieties of strawberries.

The heart-shaped silhouette of the strawberry is the first clue that this fruit is good for you. These potent little packages protect your heart, increase HDL (healthy) cholesterol, lower your blood pressure, and guard against cancer.

NUTRITION

How are strawberries, which are second only to apples in fresh-fruit popularity, doing your body good? Let's review some strawberry nutrition facts. One cup of sliced strawberries provides 163 percent of your daily dose of vitamin C (more than a whole orange) and 12 percent Daily Value (DV) of fiber, as well as 9 percent DV of the B vitamin folate, all for a mere 50 calories.

The sweet, slightly tart berries rank among the top 10 fruits and vegetables in antioxidant capacity. Their deep, rich hue supplies their high flavonoid content, a topic of research in many studies supporting the health benefits attained by consuming strawberries regularly.

It is the free-radical fighting compounds called anthocyanins that are the true all-star health components of strawberries. "Anthocyanin pigments are anti-carcinogenic and berries that have a deep red color like strawberries tend to be high in these anthocyanin compounds. The reddest berries have the most anthocyanins."

Strawberries are the third-best food source of polyphenols (an antioxidant phytochemical that tends to prevent or neutralize the damaging effects of free radicals) behind only coffee and olives.



APRIL 26, 2018

Research increasingly points to strawberries as an anti-cancer powerhouse. They have been found to be protective against oral, breast, and cervical cancers.

PICKING

Choosing good strawberries is simple: your nose will know. Sniff around until you find the berries smell so good you cannot resist! You should also check the bottom of the basket to make sure the berries haven't gone over the hill and started leaking. Choose fully ripe berries. Strawberries do not ripen after being picked.

PREPPING

Since they are very perishable, strawberries should not be washed until right before eating or using in a recipe. Do not remove their caps and stems until after you have gently washed the berries under cool running water and patted them dry. This will prevent them from absorbing excess water, which can degrade strawberries' texture and flavor. To remove the stems, caps and white hull, simply pinch these off with your fingers or use a paring knife.

The flavor of strawberries is best if you serve them at room temperature to enhance their natural flavors.

Fresh summer strawberries are one of the most popular, refreshing and healthy treats on earth. Here are some handy tips to incorporate more of this super food into your diet:

- Dice strawberries and add them to your chicken salad.

HONEY LIME RAINBOW FRUIT SALAD

Ingredients

- 1 pound fresh strawberries, chopped
- 1 pound chopped fresh pineapple
- 12 ounces fresh blueberries
- 12 ounces red grapes, sliced into halves
- 4 kiwis, peeled and chopped
- 3 mandarin oranges
- 2 bananas, sliced (optional)
- 1/4 cup honey
- 2 teaspoons lime zest (zest of 2 medium limes)
- 1 1/2 Tablespoons fresh lime juice

Preparation

1. Add all fruit to a large mixing bowl.
2. In a small mixing bowl, whisk together the honey, lime zest and lime juice.
3. Pour over fruit and toss to evenly coat, serve immediately.

Recipe Notes

- 1 (15 oz) can mandarin oranges in juice or light syrup, drained well will work here too (which was what was previously listed, I just now prefer the fresh).
- Fruit can be chopped 1 day in advance (except banana) and dressing can be made 1 day in advance and kept separate and chilled, toss together just before serving.

- Prepare a delicious chilled strawberry soup.
- Make your own fruit cocktail with fresh fruit and include grapes, pineapple, sliced peaches, and strawberries. Drizzle a small amount of honey on top of the fruit mixture for an extra sweet treat.
- Slice strawberries, add them to plain Greek yogurt with a drizzle of agave nectar, and sliced almonds.
- Top whole-grain waffles, pancakes, or oatmeal with fresh strawberries, or fold them into muffins and sweet breads. You can also blend strawberries in a food processor with a little water and used as a fresh syrup to top desserts or breakfast foods.
- Add them to a spinach salad with almonds, pecans, or walnuts and goat cheese.
- Toast a whole-grain bagel and top with light cream cheese and strawberries.
- Fresh sliced strawberries tossed with a splash of balsamic vinegar and a sprinkle of sugar and pepper make a gorgeous salsa for just about any grilled fish.
- Place some unsweetened frozen strawberries in a blender with a banana, milk, and ice for a quick and easy strawberry banana smoothie.
- Cool off with a beverage made by blending water, fresh strawberries, lime juice, and a little sugar.
- Dip strawberries in melted chocolate for an elegant dessert.
- Is there anything easier – or better – than delicious strawberries cut up and delicately sugared and served with lightly sweetened whipped cream? Toss in a shortcake and you have a heavenly treat.

Strawberries are available fresh, frozen, freeze-dried and in jellies, syrups, and jams. Make sure to check the label of frozen and dried strawberries for added sugars. When looking for jellies or jams, go for all fruit spreads without the added sweeteners and fillers.

Strawberries not only add a vibrant pop of color to any dish, but the flavor (and nutrients) never go unnoticed!

Sources

- EatingWell, [eatingwell.com](https://www.eatingwell.com)
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- U.S. Department of Agriculture, [USDA.gov](https://www.usda.gov)



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Issued in furtherance of extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Kelly Crane, director, University of Wyoming Extension, University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming 82071.

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