

July: National Berries Month

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July is the month known as National Berries Month because so many berry holidays represent the month of July. This includes everything from blackberries to blueberries to raspberries. Berries are bursting with vitamins and minerals, many of which are classified as antioxidants.

Researchers from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) found that blueberries, cranberries, blackberries, raspberries, and strawberries were among the top 11 foods for antioxidant activity. Antioxidants may help increase our immune function and protect against cancer and heart disease. Check out these tips to increase your berry consumption.

Tips on how to include more berries into your diet:

Add berries to foods you already eat.

- Try adding sliced strawberries to a bowl of whole grain cereal, stir raspberries into vanilla yogurt, or sprinkle blueberries on a salad.
- If you like to grill, try making fruit kabobs that incorporate berries with other fruits such as pineapple chunks, bananas and grapes.
- If you like ice cream, try cutting your portion size in half and add different berries to make your cool treat higher in fiber, vitamins, and minerals.

Keep berries on hand in different forms.

- Most berries are naturally sweet and require little effort to prepare.



- They do not always have to be fresh; you can keep a variety on hand in frozen form to throw in yogurt or smoothies! Blend fat-free or low-fat milk or yogurt with fresh or frozen fruit for a smoothie.
- Dried fruit is a great alternative to keep in your desk or bag. Often you can find dried cranberries and blueberries.

What to look for when shopping.

- Avoid buying bruised or oozing berries, and make sure you turn the container over to check berries at the bottom.
- Look for firm, plump, full-colored berries. At home, cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.
- Wash fruits before preparing or eating. Under clean, running water, rub fruits briskly with your hands and dry after.



Make July fun and nutritious by celebrating National Berry Month and adding more berries to your diet. Make it a point to find different ways berries can be used in cooking. Remember to be brave and broaden your food horizons, you never know if you will like something unless you try it!

Sources:

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