

## Bountiful Berries

The days lengthen as the sunshine lingers, kids count down their last days of school, and the temperature climbs. Summer is definitely here. The summer season will bring an assortment of in season fruits and vegetables at our supermarkets, and who can resist the tempting sweet taste, bright colors, and the refreshing bite of berries.

Summer is the prime time to take advantage of these nutritionally packed fruits. You can find plentiful varieties at a fraction of their usual cost. Strawberries, blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, red and black currants, cranberries and gooseberries are all great choices to add to your shopping list. Berries offer one of the richest sources of antioxidants in comparison to other foods including other fruits and vegetables. One of the primary antioxidants found in berries is none other than Vitamin C.

Antioxidants defend the body against free radicals. Free radicals are unstable molecules that can cause damage to the cells in the body. Research suggests these free radicals may be the source of the aging process, and development of cancer, arthritis, and heart disease. Antioxidants help protect the body from disease by neutralizing free radicals.

You will find berries packed with fiber, amounting to 20-30% of the entire fruit. Fiber is essential to promote regularity and can assist in preventing heart disease by lowering cholesterol levels.

Check out the nutritious perks of these berries:

- One cup of blackberries provides 8 grams of fiber and 47% of your daily value of manganese.
- Strawberries provide 150% of Vitamin C needs and 10% of daily value of folic acid
- One cup of raspberries provides 50% of your daily value of vitamin C.

Berry picking at a local farm is also a fun family outing that can continue right on into the kitchen as you find creative ways to dish them up. Try them as toppings to cereal, waffles, yogurt, and salads. Serve up an after dinner treat by adding a dollop of whipped cream or bake berries into a cobbler or pie. This is only a smidgen of the endless ways to enjoy summer berries, so be sure to add these sweet treats to your shopping list.