



The Fruits of Summer

Mother Nature knows that sweet, juicy fruits hit the spot on hot and humid summer days. Of all the sweet things available for meals and snacks, summer fruits make the healthiest snacks or desserts. Berries, melons, cherries, peaches and more come loaded with vitamins, minerals, fiber, and phytonutrients. These brightly colored fruits, especially berries, strengthen your immune system, protect you from cancer, and improve your overall health. Summer fruits also are moist and juicy which helps to keep you well-hydrated.

Strawberries, raspberries, and blueberries are grown throughout Vermont and are highly nutritious. These small fruits contain powerful and important substances necessary for good health.

- Strawberries: extremely high in vitamin C and fiber; also contain flavonoids that protect cells from damage and mutations leading to cancer.
- Raspberries: high in fiber, providing 1/3 of recommended daily amount in 1 cup; also contain vitamins B and C and iron, copper, and manganese as well as phytonutrients.
- Blueberries: high in fiber, low in calories, with an abundance of vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals which protect against inflammation, heart disease, and cancers...one of the most health-promoting fruits!

Fruits are easy to eat for snacks, but can also be ingredients in salads, soups, muffins, and smoothies. Summer pies made from fresh fruits are the ultimate delicious dessert, but a generous piece may also contain 400-500 calories, and even more when topped with whipped cream or ice cream! Satisfy your sweet tooth with three or more servings of fruits each day and enjoy the wide variety of fruits available in the Vermont summer harvest.

Buy brightly colored, plump and blemish-free fruit. Handle fruits carefully and smell them for freshness. Peaches, cherries, nectarines and berries should smell a bit like they taste. Choose melons that are firm and symmetrical with a creamy yellow spot which is a sign that they have sat on the ground and ripened in the sun. Store fruits, especially berries, in the refrigerator for up to five days. Wash just before serving.

Here are a few ideas for making the most of summer fruits:

**Layer sliced fruits with granola and yogurt for breakfast or dessert parfaits.

**Add diced fruits to pancakes or muffins

**Freeze grapes and eat for dessert

** Add fruits to salads---lettuce or coleslaws

**Make fruit kabobs with chunks of fruits for colorful and tasty snacks

**Blenderize yogurt and fruits for smoothies

Enjoy the nutritious fruits of summer!

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