



It's berry season!! Did you know that berries are bursting with health benefits? Berries taste **delicious** and are also good for you! Berries have very high levels of antioxidants that fight disease and aging!

Let's look at some of the different berries and what they have to offer:

Blueberries - Researchers at the USDA Human Nutrition Center (HNRCA) have ranked blueberries #1 in antioxidant activity when compared to 40 other fresh fruits and vegetables. They contain powerful phytochemicals, such as anthocyanin, which is the pigment that gives blueberries their color. Blueberries are associated with numerous health benefits including protection against urinary-tract infections, cancer, age-related health conditions and brain damage from strokes. They may also reduce the build-up of so-called "bad" cholesterol, which contributes to heart disease and stroke. Also, blueberries contain vitamins A and C, zinc, potassium, iron, calcium and magnesium, and are high in fiber and low in calories.

Cranberries - Along with their well-known usefulness in treating urinary-tract infections, cranberries also protect against cancer, stroke and heart disease. Cranberries are rich in polyphenols, a potent antioxidant, and researchers have found that they may inhibit the growth of human breast cancer cells and reduce the risk of gum disease and stomach ulcers. They have also been found to decrease levels of total cholesterol and "bad" cholesterol in animals. The juice is high in sugar so you may want to dilute it with seltzer water or mix it with another less concentrated juice (such as orange or apple). Remember, the whole fruit offers your body beneficial fiber which is not true of the juice.

Strawberries - Strawberries came in second to blueberries in the USDA's analysis of antioxidant capacity of 40 fruits and vegetables. They are also rich in dietary fiber and manganese, and contain more vitamin C than any other berry (more than any other berry). Antioxidants in strawberries include anthocyanins and ellagic acid, a phytochemical that has been shown to fight carcinogens. Antioxidant compounds found in strawberries may also prevent the oxidation of LDL ("bad") cholesterol, and thereby help fight the development of heart disease. Strawberries are also high in folic acid, dietary fiber and potassium.

Raspberries - Raspberries are rich in anthocyanins and cancer-fighting phytochemicals such as ellagic, coumaric and ferulic acid. They also contain calcium, vitamins such as A, C, E, fiber and folic acid. Some of the fiber in raspberries is soluble fiber in the form of pectin, which lowers

cholesterol. Raspberries have also been found to protect against esophageal cancer and other cancers.

There are various other types of berries including blackberries, gooseberries, caneberries, huckleberries and more. Not all of them have been well studied, but chances are good they have health benefits as well.

Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity (ORAC Value) of foods is a measurement of antioxidant levels. The higher the ORAC Value, the more antioxidants a food has. It's believed that foods high in these vitamins give the body its greatest protection. **Scientists believe that increasing intake of foods may be needed to increase serum and tissue antioxidant activity sufficiently to improve health outcomes.**

Here are the top ORAC Antioxidant containing foods:

- Small red beans (dried)
- Wild blueberries
- Red Kidney beans
- Pinto beans
- Blueberries (cultivated)
- Cranberries
- Artichokes (cooked)
- Blackberries
- Prunes
- Raspberries
- Strawberries
- Red Delicious apples
- Granny Smith apples
- Pecans
- Sweet cherries
- Black plums
- Russet potatoes (cooked)
- Black beans (dried)
- Plums
- Gala apples

Take note that berries are in 6 of the top 11 spots-WOW!

Read more about the health benefits of berries here:

<http://www.driscolls.com/health/DriscollsBerryNutritionForConsumers.pdf>

So, why not just take a nutritional supplement containing the phytochemicals found in berries? Research shows that it is a combination of phytochemicals working together with fiber, vitamins, and minerals which make it so effective. Taking a supplement does not give you fiber, energy or the synergy of the different components working together. You need to find that in whole foods! Although berries can be expensive, consider them a healthy treat and an investment in your health! Here's some ideas on working more of them into your diet:

1. Add fresh, frozen, or dried berries to hot or cold cereals.
2. Use in or on top of waffles and pancakes to add color, flavor, and nutrition.
3. Add to green salads for color and sweetness. Berries work well with a vinaigrette dressing.

4. Toss them into a fruit salad. The red and blue colors make a splash in the sea of yellow, white, and green.
5. Mix into yogurt, or add as topping to light vanilla ice cream.
6. Whip them into a smoothie. Berries complement traditional smoothie ingredients such as bananas, nonfat frozen yogurt, and fruit juice.
7. Stir them into your favorite muffin batter. Oatmeal muffins become Blueberry Oatmeal Muffins. Corn muffins become Raspberry Corn Muffins. Lemon Muffins become Lemon Strawberry Muffins. You get the picture.
8. Feature them in a coffee cake, or serve your coffee cake with a fresh berry topping.
9. Use them to make sauces that dress up desserts like angel food cake or chocolate truffle cake, or complement grilled meat, fish, or poultry.
10. Use them as a colorful garnish for your plate at breakfast, lunch, or dinner.
11. Celebrate summer with a traditional berry dessert like strawberry shortcake, or berry cobbler, grunt, or crisp.

Check out the attached recipe for making “Berry Easy Topping” which can be used in multiple ways to add berries to your eating!

Have a healthy and active weekend! Buy some berries for your health!! If you are interested in picking your own, see <http://www.berrypatchfarm.com/> (or stop by 13th and Grand intersection in Ames Monday through Saturday 7-11 AM or 4-7 PM for fresh Berry patch berries)

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