News Release

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Pick and Enjoy Strawberries for Your Health Now – Preserve for Later

Fresh strawberries are an excellent source of vitamin C, and are also low in calories--one cup of fresh berries contains only about 45 calories. Strawberries also provide plenty of fiber, and minerals. They are full of phytonutrients that help fight cancer, heart disease and macular degeneration.

High quality strawberries are plump and well rounded with a natural shine and rich red color free from white, green or hard tips. Their caps (hulls) should be bright green and fresh looking. Strawberries without caps should not be purchased, as they may be overripe and not good quality. Avoid boxes of strawberries that are stained, leaking or showing signs of mold. Be sure to check that unripe berries are not buried beneath a top ripe layer because strawberries do not ripen after being picked.

Fresh strawberries are highly perishable and delicate. Use strawberries within one or two days after picking or purchasing to ensure the best flavor and appearance as well as the highest nutritional value. If not used immediately, remove berries from their containers, arrange in a single layer in a shallow container; loosely cover and refrigerate. Strawberries can also be stored in a re-sealable plastic bag in a crisper drawer. Berries should not be left at room temperature more than a few hours as the warm temperatures cause a browning effect in the berries.

Wash fresh strawberries just before you are ready to use. Washing strawberries removes their natural protective outer layer, and if done before refrigerating, quality will deteriorate rapidly.
Leave caps on during washing to prevent water from soaking into the strawberry, diluting the flavor and changing the texture. Using a colander wash the berries gently in cool running. Several washes in clean water may be necessary. Let the berries air dry, or gently pat them dry with a paper towel. Remove caps by giving them a gentle twist, or use the point of a sharp paring knife.

To preserve strawberries for use throughout the year freezing is the best method. Canning causes strawberries to fade, float and become mushy.

Wash and stem berries; slice, crush or leave whole, depending on their intended use. Place berries in a single layer on a baking sheet with a lip or shallow baking pan. Berries will freeze quickly, and should then be transferred to food storage containers designed for freezing. Be sure to label and date the containers.

Add sugar or not? The freezing process makes fruit cells expand, and adding a little sugar can actually help protect the fruits. Adding sugar may not be necessary if the frozen berries will be used in recipes that also contain sugar, such as muffins or a fruit cobbler.

Complete directions for freezing strawberries can be found on the National Center for Food Preservation website: http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/.

To find fresh, local strawberries visit http://washco-agmarket.net/agricultural-marketing and click on “links” for a listing of local farmers’ markets roadside stands and pick-your-own sites.

The best strawberries are those that are fresh and in season -- enjoy them while you can!

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