

IT'S STRAWBERRY



TIME



Choose Louisiana strawberries for a nutritious and delicious treat. In addition to the fact that Louisiana berries are naturally sweet and tasty, locally grown berries require less shipping time than those grown out of state, helping to insure a fresher, higher quality product.

Any time is Louisiana strawberry time! Although spring marks the height of the Louisiana strawberry season, Louisiana strawberries are now often available for six months each year.

Louisiana strawberries are usually available from November through May. The early harvest season is due to the use of the early maturing variety Festival and plug plants.

Most of the Louisiana strawberries are produced in Tangipahoa and Livingston parishes, although they are grown commercially in several other parishes.

Some strawberry farmers open their fields to “pick-your-own.” This is a great family activity, and you can pick large amounts of berries at a bargain price for freezing and making into preserves, jam and jelly.

Serve luscious Louisiana berries fresh at breakfast, lunch or dinner, and freeze some for later enjoyment.

Vitamin-rich

Strawberries are naturally high in fiber, vitamin C, folate, potassium and antioxidants, low in calories and practically fat- and sodium-free. Ounce for ounce, strawberries have more vitamin C than citrus fruit. One cup of strawberries provides 46 calories, 85 mg vitamin C and 2.9 grams fiber.

Buying Guide

Strawberries don't ripen after picking, so choose firm, ripe strawberries with a solid red color, bright luster and bright green caps attached. There should be no moisture, mold or decayed spots. Mold spreads quickly from one berry to another. If the container has red stains, the berries may be overripe or have been crushed. The flavor depends on variety and ripeness, not on size.



How Much to Buy

- 1 qt. basket = 1 - 1 1/3 lb. berries
- 1 lb. berries yields:
 - 2 2/3 cups whole, stemmed berries
 - 2 to 2 1/3 cups sliced berries
 - 1 2/3 cups crushed berries

One pound fruit will make about 3 to 4 half-pint jars of preserves. Two pounds of fresh berries will make about 6 to 8 half-pint jars of jam.

Proper Care and Preparation

- Make strawberries your last purchase at the store.
- Hurry home with the strawberries.
- Discard immature, unripe berries or spoiled fruit.
- Spread in flat container, cover loosely and refrigerate unwashed until ready to use. Washing strawberries removes their natural protective outer layer, and if done before refrigerating, quality will deteriorate rapidly.
- Thoroughly wash berries under cold running water in a colander with caps on just before using. Do not soak.
- After washing the strawberries, use a paring knife to cut out the hull and stem.
- Remove any damaged areas.
- Rinse again if necessary, to remove any hull or stem.
- Let the berries air dry, or gently pat them dry with a paper towel.
- To crush strawberries, spread the strawberries on a clean baking tray with four edges. Crush the berries. (A potato masher works well).

Freezing

Freezing is the easiest and best way to maintain nutritional quality and to keep the berries tasting like fresh from season to season. To retain the high quality of the berries, use recommended freezing methods and moisture/vapor-proof freezing bags or containers. Berries freeze well with or without sugar, but texture, color and flavor are better when packed in sugar. If you want to make preserves or jam later, or if you're limiting your sugar intake, freeze berries without sugar.



Wash and prepare berries following directions shown above in Proper Care and Preparation.

With Sugar

Sprinkle sugar over berries. Use 1/2 to 3/4 cup sugar to 1 quart (1 1/3 pounds) sliced berries, depending on tartness of berries and your taste preference.

Turn berries gently with a large spoon until all are coated with sugar. Let them set 5-10 minutes to make their own juice. One teaspoon of commercial produce color protector mixture stirred into sugar will help protect bright red color and vitamin C.

Pack berries in moisture/vapor-proof bags or containers. Fill containers leaving 1/2-inch of space at top. If a rigid container is used, place a small piece of crumpled waxed paper or freezer paper on top to hold berries under the juice. Seal airtight and label. Freeze quickly at zero degrees.

Without Sugar

To freeze whole berries without sugar, place in single layer on a tray or baking pan, cover lightly and freeze quickly until firm. Remove from pan, and package airtight in moisture/vapor-proof containers or bags. If they are to be used for preserves or jam, measure and bag before freezing.

With Artificial Sweetener

Berries can be frozen successfully with artificial sweetener. Follow package instructions for the equivalent amount of sugar. Mix 1/2 teaspoon of a commercial produce color protector with the sweetener and 2 teaspoons water and stir into each quart of berries. Package in moisture/vapor-proof containers or bags with headspace, label and freeze.

Thawing Strawberries

Thaw berries in the refrigerator (six to eight hours for 1-pound package) or in a pan of cool water (turned several times – one-half to 1 hour for a 1-pound package). Strawberries are best served with a few ice crystals remaining. If thawed completely they will become mushy. Strawberries can be stored in the freezer at zero degrees for 8 to 12 months.

Fresh Berry Preserves

Fresh strawberries make clear, bright, tender preserves that retain their whole-berry shape.

Ingredients:

6 cups prepared strawberries or about two 1-quart boxes strawberries

4 cups sugar (3 cups sugar works well for a less sweet product)

Yield: About 4 half-pint jars

Directions:

Wash berries in cold water. Remove caps and place in colander. Pour 1/2 gallon of boiling water over berries. Immediately put drained berries in a deep heavy pot, add 2 cups sugar, stir gently and bring slowly to a full rolling boil. Boil 4 minutes. Take off heat, add remaining sugar, shake pot or stir gently to dissolve sugar.

Bring again to full rolling boil and boil 3 minutes. Skim with a metal spoon and pour boiling preserves into hot sterilized jars and seal. Process in boiling water bath for 5 minutes.

Note: To plump berries before jarring – after boiling berries and skimming cooked berries with a metal spoon, cover berries and leave at room temperature for 12-24 hours to plump. Shake pan gently several times as preserves cool.

Carefully pack plumped whole berry preserves and syrup in clean jars, packing tightly. Leave 1/2-inch headspace. Wipe sealing edge with a damp cloth. Cover jars with new lids prepared according to manufacturer's instructions, and screw on bands. **Process in boiling water bath at simmering temperature for 20 minutes. (This step is necessary for the jars to seal because the plumped preserves are cold.)**



Remove immediately from water. Cool on folded towel. Follow timing directions carefully. Don't overcook! Don't double-batch because cooking times won't be the same. Store in a cool, dark place to protect color from fading.

Frozen Berry Preserves

If you're pressed for time, you can freeze whole, unsweetened berries and use them later for making high quality preserves. The color of preserves from frozen berries may be a little darker, and they may not hold their shape as well, but the taste will be just as good. Put about 2 pints of frozen berries in a big kettle, add 2 cups sugar and heat gradually over low heat until berries thaw and sugar dissolves. Gently separate berries; do not stir. Heat to boiling; boil hard 4 minutes. Remove from heat, add remaining sugar and shake pot or stir gently to dissolve. Bring again to full rolling boil, and boil 3 minutes. Remove from heat, and skim off foam with metal spoon. Pour boiling preserves into hot, sterilized jars and seal. Process in boiling water bath for 5 minutes.

No-Cook Freezer Strawberry Jam*

Ingredients:

2 cups mashed, fully ripe strawberries (about 1 quart)
4 cups sugar

1 tablespoon lemon juice (optional)
1 package powdered fruit pectin
3/4 cup water
Yield: About 5 1/2 cups

*For cooked jam, follow instructions given with commercial powdered pectin.

Directions:

Wash and drain fully ripe berries. Remove caps and crush thoroughly. (A potato masher works well.) Measure 2 cups into a large bowl. If necessary, add a little water for exact amount. Mix sugar into fruit; add lemon juice if used. Let stand 10 minutes.

Mix powdered pectin and water in small saucepan. Bring to a boil and boil 1 minute, stirring constantly. Stir all at once into fruit-sugar mixture. Continue stirring for 3 minutes. Ladle or pour quickly into clean, scalded freezer containers (rigid plastic or glass) with tight-fitting lids. Let stand at room temperature 24 hours to set. Store in refrigerator for up to three weeks, or freeze for long-term storage. Makes a bright red, fresh-tasting jam – an excellent topping for ice cream, too.

Spinach, Strawberry, Pecan Salad

Ingredients:

Two 10-ounce packages of fresh spinach
1 1/2 cups strawberry halves
3/4 cups toasted pecan halves
Dressing (follows)
Yield: 15 servings

Dressing Ingredients:

1/3 cup raspberry vinegar
1 teaspoon dry mustard
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup sugar
2/3 cup vegetable or olive oil
1 1/2 tablespoon poppy seeds (optional)

Directions:

Combine dressing ingredients except the poppy seeds in a blender. Add the poppy seeds by hand. Toss dressing with spinach, strawberries and pecans.

Approximate values per serving: 163 calories, 14.62g fat, 1.84g saturated fat, 0 cholesterol, 87mg sodium, 1.76g fiber, 3,549 IU vitamin A, 19.62mg vitamin C.

Louisiana Strawberry Salad

(or Dessert)

Ingredients:

Three 3-ounce packages strawberry gelatin (may use sugar-free gelatin)
2 cups boiling water
1/8 teaspoon salt
16-ounce package sweetened, sliced frozen strawberries or 3 cups sliced fresh berries with 1/4 cup sugar
20-ounce can crushed pineapple in own juice (about 2 cups)
2 or 3 bananas
1/2 cup chopped pecans (optional)
Cream cheese dressing (see below)
Yield: About 20 servings

Directions:

Dissolve gelatin in boiling water. Stir in frozen strawberries, pineapple and juice. If using fresh berries, slice, add 1/4 cup sugar and let sit for 10 minutes to make juice before adding to gelatin. Place in refrigerator to thicken slightly. Fold in sliced bananas and nuts. Pour into lightly oiled or sprayed mold or pan. Chill until set. Spread cream cheese dressing on top or serve separately. Pretty if cut in squares and served on lettuce leaf.

Each serving (with pecans) provides 125 calories, 25.8g carbohydrate, 2g fat, 20g sugar, 2.4g dietary fiber and 15.7mg vitamin C.

Cream Cheese Dressing

(to lower fat, use ingredients in parentheses)

Ingredients:

8-ounce package cream cheese (fat-free cream cheese), softened at room temperature
1 cup sour cream (3/4 cup nonfat plain yogurt or 1 cup nonfat sour cream)
1/4 cup sugar (use equivalent amount of artificial sweetener or to taste)
1/2 teaspoon vanilla

Directions:

Whip cream cheese until fluffy. Add remaining ingredients and mix well.

Approximate values per full-fat serving: 74 calories, 6g total fat (3.9g saturated fat) and 20.5mg cholesterol.

Approximate values per nonfat serving: 33 calories, .32g fat (.2g saturated fat) and 2.1mg cholesterol.

Creamy Strawberry Ice Cream

Ingredients:

2 quarts mashed fresh strawberries*
2 1/2 to 2 3/4 cups sugar
2 tablespoons lemon juice
2 tablespoons cornstarch
1/4 teaspoon salt
1 quart milk, scalded**
4 eggs, beaten
1 can sweetened condensed milk**
1 large can (12- 13-ounce) evaporated milk**
2 teaspoons vanilla
More milk if needed
Yield: 1 gallon or 16 8-ounce servings

*Two 16-ounce cartons of frozen, sliced berries may be substituted for fresh berries.

**Try the skim, nonfat condensed milk and evaporated skim milk in place of regular products.

Directions:

Mash and measure strawberries. Add 1/2 cup sugar and lemon juice. Let stand a few minutes. Mix in blender if one available.



Mix remaining sugar, cornstarch and salt in top of double boiler. Slowly stir in scalded milk; mix until smooth. Place over boiling water and cook about 5 minutes, stirring often. Stir a small amount of hot liquid into beaten eggs; mix well and add slowly back to hot mixture, stirring constantly. Cook 2 or 3 minutes to make a thin custard, stirring often. Pour custard through a sieve into a large container. Mix in canned milks, strawberries and vanilla. Add more milk if needed to fill freezer bucket to fill line. Freeze.

Approximate values per full-fat serving: 351 calories, 7.8g protein, 61.4g carbohydrate, 7.8g total fat (4.7g saturated fat), 90mg cholesterol, .8g dietary fiber, 38.2mg vitamin C and 231mg calcium.

Approximate values per nonfat serving: 306 calories, 9.1g protein, 63.9g carbohydrate, 1.5g total fat (.5g saturated fat), 70mg cholesterol, .8g dietary fiber, 38.5mg vitamin C and 242mg calcium.

Strawberry Party Punch

Ingredients:

16-ounce package sweetened, sliced, frozen strawberries
Two 6-ounce cans frozen pink lemonade concentrate, undiluted
8-ounce can crushed pineapple*
2 quarts ginger ale, chilled
Yield: 40 servings

*When making large quantities, use a 20-ounce can crushed pineapple for each two recipes.

Directions:

Mix strawberries, frozen lemonade and pineapple in blender. Store in refrigerator. When ready to serve, pour into punch bowl, add ginger ale and mix well. Punch concentrate also may be frozen before adding ginger ale.

Approximate values per serving: 52 calories, 13.5g carbohydrate, 10.9g sugar, 8.4mg vitamin C.

Strawberry Cream Cheese Pie

(Reduced Fat)

Ingredients:

1 graham cracker crust ready-made or homemade (recipe below)
8-ounce package fat free cream cheese
14-ounce can fat-free sweetened condensed milk
1/3 cup fresh or bottled lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
Garnish with fresh strawberries or strawberry glaze
Yield: 8 small servings



Directions:

Let cream cheese soften; whip until fluffy. Gradually add condensed milk, beating until well-blended. Stir in lemon juice and vanilla. Pour into a prepared graham cracker crust. Chill before serving.

Graham Cracker Crust Ingredients:

1 cup graham cracker crumbs
1 tablespoon sugar
2 tablespoons low-fat margarine, melted.

Directions:

Combine ingredients. Press into lightly greased 9-inch pie pan. Bake 5 minutes at 375 degrees. Cool.

Approximate values per serving: 244 calories; 4.3g fat, 34g carbohydrates, 8.7g protein, 8.6mg cholesterol, 307mg sodium.

Strawberry Mint Lemonade

Ingredients:

4 cups water
1 cup sugar substitute
4 cups fresh mint leaves, lightly packed
1 quart strawberries hulled, halved
1 cup lemon juice, freshly squeezed
Yield: Four 16-ounce servings

Directions:

Place 2 cups water, sugar substitute and mint in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil and simmer for 10 minutes. Strain into a blender, discard mint. Thinly slice 1 cup of strawberries and set aside. Add half of the remaining strawberries to a blender and blend until smooth; pour into 2-quart pitcher. Stir in sliced strawberries and remaining water. Add sugar to taste if needed, stirring until dissolved. Cover and chill until served.

Approximate values per serving: 130 calories, fat 1g, saturated fat 0g, cholesterol 0mg, sodium 35mg, carbohydrate 30g, dietary fiber 9g, protein 4g, vitamin C 120mg.

Strawberry Yogurt Shake

Ingredients:

1/2 cup unsweetened pineapple juice
3/4 cup plain low-fat yogurt
1-1/2 cups frozen, unsweetened strawberries
1 teaspoon granulated sugar
Yield: 2 servings

Directions:

Add ingredients, in order listed, to blender. Puree at medium speed, until thick and smooth.

Approximate values per serving: 140 calories, 2g fat, 1g saturated fat, 5mg cholesterol, 65mg sodium, 27g carbohydrate, 2g dietary fiber, 6g protein, 54mg vitamin C, 200mg calcium.



Strawberry Pizza

Ingredients:

1 stick melted margarine
¼ cup powdered sugar
1 cup flour
½ can fat-free sweetened condensed milk
6 ounces low-fat cream cheese
2 tablespoon lemon juice
½ teaspoon vanilla
4 cups sliced fresh Louisiana strawberries
Yield: 12 one-slice servings.

Directions:

Crust. Combine margarine, sugar and flour. Spread in 12-inch pizza pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 12-15 minutes or until lightly brown. Cool.

Filling. Combine sweetened condensed milk, softened cream cheese, lemon juice and vanilla. Spread over cooled crust.

Topping. Place sliced strawberries over filling. Cool. Cut with a pizza cutter.

Approximate values per serving: 162 calories, 10g fat, 4.2g protein, 12.5g carbohydrates, 10mg cholesterol, 131mg sodium, 45mg vitamin C.

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