

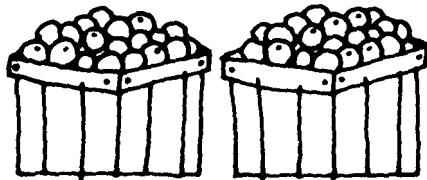


Kentucky Blueberries

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Long before the Europeans arrived in the New World, the native tribes of North America gathered a variety of wild sapphire-colored berries as a food staple. The Indians called these fruits “star berries” because of the star-shaped calyx on the top of each berry. Today, we know them as “blueberries.”



The Indians ate the berries fresh, stewed, dried and mixed with meat and other foods. When European colonists arrived, they took to the new fruit immediately, creating pies, cobblers, preserves, syrups and wonderfully unique desserts such as blueberry “slump” or “grunt,” a kind of boiled cobbler.

Fresh is Best

Blueberries have more to offer than good looks and taste. They’re nutritious, too. Like all fruits, they contain no cholesterol. Blueberries are also an important source of potassium and dietary fiber. At 80 calories a cup, you can afford to eat blueberries out of hand.

Selecting and Storing

Fresh blueberries should be plump, firm and relatively free from leaves and stems. They should be stored covered in the refrigerator and should be used within 10-14 days after harvesting. Berries should be washed just before using.

Baking Basics

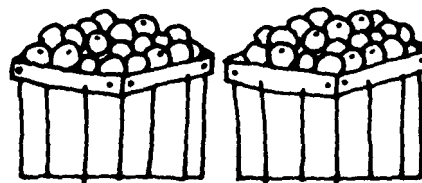
Blueberries sometimes change color when cooked. Berries often turn red when they come in contact with acids, such as lemon juice, vinegar or yogurt. In a basic environment, such as batters containing large amounts of baking soda, blueberries may turn a greenish-blue. Color changes do not affect flavor.

Freezing Blueberries

Whole berries may be frozen with no sugar or covered with syrup. The syrup pack is preferred for berries to be served uncooked. Berries frozen unsweetened are satisfactory for cooking.

Select full-flavored, ripe berries all about the same size, preferably with tender skins. Sort, wash and drain. If desired, steam for 1 minute and cool

immediately. Preheating in steam tenderizes skin and makes a better flavored product.



Syrup Pack. Pack berries into containers and cover with a cold 40-percent syrup, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Seal and freeze. To make a 40-percent syrup, combine 3 cups sugar and 4 cups of luke-warm water. Stir until dissolved and cool. For a lighter syrup, use 2 cups sugar and 4 cups water.

Unsweetened Pack. Pack berries into containers, leaving 1/2-inch head space. Seal and freeze.

Blueberry-Spice Jam

- 2 1/2 pints ripe blueberries
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon ground nutmeg or cinnamon
- 3/4 cup water
- 1 (1 3/4-ounce) box powdered pectin
- 5 1/2 cups sugar

Wash and thoroughly crush blueberries, one layer at a time, in a saucepan. Add lemon juice, spice and water. Stir in pectin and bring to a full rolling boil over high heat, stirring frequently. Add the sugar and return to a full rolling boil. Boil hard for one minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat, quickly skim off foam and fill jars, leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Adjust lids and process.

Process half-pints or pints in a boiling water canner for 10 minutes.

Yield: About five half-pints.

Nutrition facts per tablespoon: 28 calories, 0 g fat, 7 g sugar.

Blueberry Sauce

- 2 cups fresh or frozen blueberries, thawed if necessary
- 1/4 cup each orange juice and water
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1/4 teaspoon grated orange peel
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- Dash salt

Combine all ingredients in saucepan. Cook and stir over medium heat 4 to 5 minutes or until thickened.

Yield: About 2 cups.

Nutrition facts per tablespoon: 10 calories, 0 g fat, 2 g sugar.

Serve on pancakes, waffles, blintzes, ice cream, puddings or cake.

Blueberry Muffins

- 2 cups sifted all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 egg
- 3/4 cup low-fat milk
- 2 tablespoons salad oil
- 1 cup blueberries

Preheat oven to 400°F. Grease twelve 2 1/2-inch muffin-pan cups. Sift together flour, sugar, baking powder and salt into large bowl. In small bowl, beat egg, milk and oil. Add egg mixture and blueberries to flour mixture. Stir just until flour is moistened. Batter will be lumpy.

Spoon batter into muffin-pan cups. Bake 20 to 25 minutes until golden.

Yield: 12 muffins.

Nutrition facts per muffin: 143 calories, 3 g fat, 19 mg cholesterol, 1 g dietary fiber, 11 g sugar.

Lattice-Topped Blueberry Pie

- 3/4 cup sugar
- 3/4 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon each ground cinnamon and grated orange peel
- 4 cups fresh or frozen blueberries, thawed if necessary
- Pastry for 2-crust (9-inch) pie
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 1 tablespoon butter or margarine

Combine sugar, flour, cinnamon and orange peel; lightly toss with blueberries. Place in pastry-lined piepan. Sprinkle with orange juice; dot top with butter. Roll out remaining pastry; cut into 1/2-inch strips. Arrange in lattice pattern on top of pie. Moisten edge of lower crust; fold over lattice ends, seal and flute. Bake at 425°F for 10 minutes; lower heat to 350°F and bake 35 to 40 minutes or until crust is golden brown and filling begins to bubble.

Yield: 8 servings.

Nutrition facts per serving: 409 calories, 17 g fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 3 g dietary fiber, 28 g sugar.