

THE VERY BEST OF BERRIES

THE LIGHTER SIDE

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Berries, small and soft-fleshed fruit, are nutritional power houses, whether eaten fresh or frozen. They are rich in vitamins, fibre, minerals and phytochemicals. The peel or the skin of these fruits have a higher concentration of phytochemicals. The brighter their colour, the richer their nutrients. The term 'berry' does not always just refer to fruit with names that end with berry. Bananas, kiwi and tomatoes are considered berries, too! But in this article, we will cover just some of the more well-known berries.

Blueberries – Called the brain berries, it is one of the naturally blue-hued foods packed with antioxidants that boost brain function. This tiny fruit is loaded with vitamins C, E, K, soluble fibre, manganese, iron, copper, zinc and beta carotene. The soluble fibre in blueberries absorbs water, creates slow moving gel, that slows down the absorption of sugar. A powerful package indeed!

Strawberries – A sweet flavoured fruit, strawberries contain more vitamin C, a powerful antioxidant that protects cells from free radicals, than an orange and are also high in folic acid. They are also a good source of potassium.

Cranberries – These combat urinary tract infections. They are a good source of tannin, a potential antibacterial agent. Tannins is also found in teas. Pro-anthocyanidins, an antioxidant compound, in cranberries prevent cardiovascular disease by counteracting cholesterol plaque formation.

Raspberries – A helmet-shaped cluster with a red ruby hue, they are an excellent source of Vitamin C and their tiny seeds are a good source of fibre, folate, vitamin E and have a little less natural sugar when compared to other fruits.

Lower the risk for cancer?

People who eat fruit and vegetables have lower cancer rates. The higher concentration of antioxidants in berries helps to ward off a host of chronic diseases. A large body of research suggests that berries may be among the most potent cancer-fighting fruits. Phytochemicals: anthocyanins, ellagic acids, resveratrol play a major role in fighting different types of cancer.

The flavonoid, anthocyanin in berries cause blood vessels to relax, and helps in maintaining normal blood pressure. Beta carotene in berries protects our eyes from age-related conditions that lead to blurred vision and blindness. Beta carotene is most effective when it is combined with vitamin C, zinc, and vitamin E.

Berries can be easily incorporated in our diet:

- Can be eaten fresh. Mix fresh raspberries into your cup of yoghurt.
- Embellish breakfast cereals with blueberries and cranberries.
- Garnish salads with blueberries.
- Combine mixed berries with banana or papaya and milk (low-fat) for a wonderful smoothie.

Most berries are naturally sweet so we do not have to add sugar or glaze it with syrup.

About the author: Kohila Govindaraju is an accredited nutritionist and director of THE BERRIES Nutrition Consulting, an avid blogger (kohilag.wordpress.com) and prolific author of magazine articles on food and nutrition, including a book titled How to Lose Weight Without Hunger published by PatientsEngage.

