



University of California
Cooperative Extension
Tulare County

Agriculture and Natural Resources



Prepared by:

GETTING THE BEST FROM STRAWBERRIES

Are the folks at your house bored with breakfast? If so, why not surprise them with something new—like fresh strawberries?

Our local strawberries are in abundant supply and at reasonable prices. We can expect them to be available for several more weeks.

Strawberries are a welcome addition to any meal. We suggest serving them for breakfast because they are a rich source of vitamin C and a good substitute for the traditional breakfast orange juice.

A half-cup serving of strawberries gives you your day's supply of vitamin C at a cost of only 25 calories. When we talk about 25 calories in a half-cup serving, we're talking about plain strawberries. Sugar adds 15 calories per teaspoon—but who needs it? Half and half adds 20 calories per tablespoon and sour cream 30 calories per tablespoon.

In place of high-fat, creamy products, why not use nonfat sour cream, cottage cheese or plain yogurt, all of which give you more protein and other nutrients for your calories. A breakfast of cottage cheese with strawberries plus a piece of toast and a glass of nonfat or lowfat milk is a well-balanced meal that is low in fat and high in nutrients.

Or why not combine the fresh strawberries with your bowl of cereal for a change of pace? Pancakes or waffles with strawberries make a delightful breakfast shortcake. Another goodie your children will love is yogurt with strawberries or a strawberry "smoothie". Just blend milk, strawberries and ice cubes in the blender. Add sweetener to taste.

If time is at a premium in the morning, get your breakfast strawberries ready the night before: washed and sliced, if desired, but not sugared. Sugar draws out the juice and leaves the strawberries

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limp and squishy.

Strawberries are very delicate and don't keep very well. You should plan to use them within a day or two after you buy them. They should be refrigerated without washing to preserve their texture. Damp berries become soft and may get moldy if kept too long. If you find their strong aroma objectionable in the refrigerator, tuck the basket of strawberries in a plastic bag.

If you have purchased underripe berries and hope to ripen them by holding them at room temperature, as you do for other fruit, forget it. Strawberries, once they're picked, will not ripen very much—they just get soft.

Unrefrigerated fresh strawberries are more flavorful than cold berries. So if you're going to eat berries the same day you buy them, you might prefer not to refrigerate them. Or if they're refrigerated, let them warm up to room temperature before eating them.

When you choose fresh berries, look for those that are fully ripe, but not overripe. A good strong strawberry odor is a sign of flavorful berries. But if the berries are cold, this odor may not be very pronounced.

Size is something to consider also. Often the large berries are higher priced because they are so showy. But often the smaller berries have a better flavor and texture. In addition, you get a lot more berries in the box when you buy small ones compared to large ones.

If you have any freezer space, you might want to take advantage of special prices on strawberries and freeze some now for later use. Strawberries can be frozen whole, without added sugar, for short-term storage. However, they will have a better texture and flavor if you mix dry sugar with them before freezing them.

Another idea for extending the time for enjoying fresh strawberries is to make freezer jam. This jam is uncooked and retains the beautiful color and fresh flavor of the fresh berries. Since you don't cook the jam and thereby reduce the amount of liquid, you add more sugar than you do for cooked jam. You also need to use commercial pectin—powder or liquid. You will find a recipe for uncooked freezer strawberry jam packaged with the pectin.

Source: Home News & Views by Dorothy Wenck!

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