

Berry Good Summer-Blueberries!

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Blueberries are a sweet summer treat that are low in calories, but pack a powerful punch in the fight against chronic disease. Their arsenal of nutrients includes a variety of antioxidants that protect cells and fight free radicals. Blueberries are believed to contain the highest concentration of antioxidants in all commonly-consumed fruits and vegetables.

Health benefits

Studies have shown that small amounts of daily berries can aid in boosting the immune system, lowering cholesterol and blood pressure and fighting urinary tract infections. Blueberries have also been shown to improve artery function. Despite their sugar content, studies show that blueberries improve insulin action and reduce resistance, lowering blood sugar levels. This makes blueberries a perfect summer fruit for diabetics and those diagnosed with pre-diabetes.

Shopping for blueberries

Select blueberries that are firm, plump and completely blue, with a silvery sheen and no tinge of red. Bring them home and store, unwashed, in the refrigerator or freezer until ready to use. Refrigerated berries can last up to 10 days. If purchasing frozen berries, be certain the berries are loose in the bag and not solid, which may indicate thawing and refreezing. Once frozen berries are thawed, they last 3 to 4 days in the refrigerator.

How to prepare blueberries

There are so many ways to enjoy blueberries. Sprinkle fresh berries into salads, cereal, pancake batter, or on ice cream. Use frozen berries in smoothies and shakes, muffins or scones. Puree and freeze into popsicles or ice cream. Blueberries make great syrup, jam or preserves. For delicious and nutritious blueberry recipes, visit AdvancedHealth.com/Healthy-Bytes-Initiative.

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Rhubarb Blueberry Crisp

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 1/2 cup flour
- 1/2 cup old fashioned rolled oats
- 1/4 cup melted margarine

FRUIT FILLING

- 3 cups chopped rhubarb
- 3 cups blueberries
- 2 Tablespoons cornstarch
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 cup cranberry juice
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Directions:

1. Mix the brown sugar, flour and oats in a bowl. Stir in the margarine. Set aside.
2. Spread the rhubarb and blueberries in an 8-inch baking dish.
3. In a 2-3 quart saucepan, mix cornstarch and sugar and stir in the juice. Cook over medium heat until thickened, stirring constantly.
4. Add the vanilla and pour mixture over the rhubarb and blueberries.
5. Crumble the oat mixture on top of the fruit.
6. Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.
7. Serve warm or cold.

Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

Recipe provided by Food Hero, an Oregon State University Extension Service initiative.