Strawberry

In 2009, Yuma area producers grew less than 50 acres of strawberries but, the farmgate value of this crop was estimated at slightly less than $0.5 million.

The strawberry belongs to the genus Fragaria in the rose family, along with apples and plums. The name of the scientific classification was derived from the Old Latin word for fragrant. The modern Italian word for strawberry is still "Fragola".

The strawberry is not classified by botanists as a true berry. True berries, such as blueberries and cranberries have seeds inside. The strawberry, however has its dry, yellow "seeds" on the outside (each of which is actually considered a separate fruit).

Native American Indians called strawberries "heart-seed berries" and pounded them into their traditional corn-mead meal bread. Discovering the great taste of the Native Americans bread, colonists decided to create their own version, which became an American favorite that we all know and love, Strawberry Shortcake.

Strawberries have long been associated with love. At wedding breakfasts in provincial France, newlyweds traditionally were served a soup of thinned sour cream, strawberries, borage and powdered sugar.

On the average, there are 200 tiny seeds in every strawberry. If all the strawberries produced this year were laid berry to berry, they'd wrap around the world 17 times. That's enough strawberries to provide every U.S. household with 12 pint baskets.

Respondents to a recent national survey labeled strawberry lovers as "health conscious, fun loving, intelligent and happy." Non-strawberry lovers, on the other hand, were described as "weird, boring, stuffy--picky, fussy eaters who avoid healthy foods."

Eight medium-sized strawberries contain 140% of the U.S. RDA for Vitamin C. In addition, strawberries are good sources of folic acid, potassium and fiber. Strawberries are also fat-free and low in calories.

Fresh juice from sieved strawberry pulp has a cooling effect on feverish patients. For a cooling and purifying drink, either pour water on crushed berries or chop the berries roughly and whirl in a blender with a little water.

As part of the 5-A-Day program suggested by the American Cancer Institute, strawberries can also play a part in helping you to reduce the risk of cancer or heart disease.

If you're expecting a baby, you'll be very interested in some of the new discoveries about folic acid. In fact, 8 strawberries have 20% of the folic acid you need every day.

Strawberry juice combined with honey will reduce inflammation or sunburn. Rub the mixture thoroughly into the skin before rinsing off with warm water and lemon juice.

Every strawberry plant is hand-picked approximately every three days. This is the time in which it takes for strawberries to complete their cycle of turning from green to white to red. There is not a long shelf life for fresh strawberries. After picking, they are rushed to coolers where
huge fans extract the field heat. Then they are delivered to supermarkets across the country via refrigerated trucks.

We know that the word “strawberry” was first recorded in the Old English period as *streaw-berige* — straw (straw) + berige (berry). What’s unclear is why the word straw is the first part of this compound. Some suggest it’s because the plant’s runners resemble straw, while others say it comes from the practice of protecting early-growing plants with a layer of straw.

Strawberries have been growing wild for over 2,200 years, with history recording them in Italy as long ago as 234 BC. But, it wasn’t until the late 13th century that strawberries were first cultivated. Here in the United States, early settlers found Native Americans growing strawberries as early as 1643.

In the United States, California produces over 80 percent of the commercially grown strawberries, with an annual production of about one billion pounds.

Don’t just race into your market, grab any old basket of berries and be on your way. Look for brightly colored, plump strawberries with caps that are a fresh, even green. The berries should have a potent strawberry fragrance. A weak aroma signals fruit that isn’t fully ripe, and berries won’t ripen after they’re picked. Before choosing, check the bottom of the berry container. If it’s a see-through basket, look for unripe, bruised, shriveled or moldy berries. If it’s a cardboard basket, be sure it’s not stained with berry juice, an indicator that some berries are at least crushed, if not rotten.

Don’t wash strawberries until just before using—they can easily become waterlogged so wash them quickly, but gently. Refrigerated berries aren’t as likely to bruise while washing as room-temperature berries. You can also store washed, completely dry strawberries (stems intact) by putting them in a large, screw-top jar. Place a paper towel on top of the berries (to absorb excess natural moisture), seal the jar tightly and refrigerate. Unwashed berries can also be stored in this manner but if you wash them first, the berries will be ready and waiting when you want them.

To sweeten berries, combine them with a tablespoon of granulated (or vanilla) sugar per cup of chopped or sliced berries; let stand at room temperature for 30 to 60 minutes, stirring once or twice. Sugar softens cut strawberries so don’t add it too far in advance of serving.

Remove berry stains from your hands by rubbing them well with lemon wedges.

Strawberry fruit grow on small, low growing perennials (plants that survive more than one growing season) that prefer well-drained, sandy soil.

To produce the best fruit, the plants need plenty of water, warm days and cool nights. Many varieties of strawberry plants produce horizontal runners, called stolons that spread out from the base and take root to form new plants.

Strawberry plants produce white or pink flowers. After flowering strawberry plants require pollination by bees or other insects in order to produce fruit. Factors such as cool or wet weather, which discourages bee activity, have a detrimental affect on fruit production. Growing conditions and weather also affect the time required to produce fruit.

Most plants will produce fruit about a month after blossoms form. While strawberry plants can survive and produce fruit for many years, commercial strawberry plants are replaced every two to four years, depending on the type of strawberry.
Strawberries are the only fruits with its seeds on the outside.

In the US, all 50 states produce strawberries.

There are 7 – 8 strawberries in one serving and contain the most Vitamin C among all berries.

Strawberries were once avoided by pregnant women because it was believed that their children would be born with strawberry birth marks.

The U.S. is the leading producer of strawberries, and supplies about 20% of the world's strawberries. California grows about 75% of U.S. strawberries.

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