

Whip Up a Yogurt Dip for Fresh Strawberries

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Sylvia V. Davis, Extension Agent, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension--Baker/Mitchell Counties Extension Service—Family & Consumer Sciences

Strawberries are a sure sign of spring. They are known for their vitamin C. One cup of raw, uncapped strawberries contains about 82 mg of vitamin C. This is more than the recommended daily allowance for vitamin C. This same cup of strawberries contains only about 55 calories.

Studies have shown that strawberries may protect against heart disease and cancer. They are also used by some to treat anemia, joint disease, and to strengthen the circulatory system and help balance hormones. Strawberries are also a great source of pectin. Pectin is a soluble fiber that may lower [cholesterol](#).

When shopping for strawberries, choose berries that are fully ripe. They don't ripen after picked, so white or pale pink color indicates the strawberries won't be ripe. In addition to a nice red color, choose berries that are plump and well rounded with bright fresh green looking caps. Strawberries that are missing their caps or are bruised have probably been mishandled.

To store strawberries for a short time at home, remove the berries from their containers and discard any spoiled berries. Then arrange them in a single layer on a cookie sheet or other shallow container, cover with wax paper and place in the refrigerator.

Never wash strawberries or remove their caps until just before use. The caps protect the strawberries and help preserve flavor, texture and nutrients.

Just before use, wash the berries by placing them in a colander or large strainer and rinsing gently with a spray of cool water. Then remove the caps. The caps are removed last to preserve nutrients and prevent water from soaking into berries.

Here are some more interesting facts about strawberries:

- Over 53 percent of seven to nine year olds picked strawberries as their favorite fruit.
- Strawberries are the first fruit to ripen in the spring.
- There is a museum in Belgium just for strawberries.
- Strawberries are a member of the rose family.
- On average, there are 200 seeds in a strawberry.
- The strawberry is the only fruit with the seeds on the outside of the fruit.
- Ninety-four per cent of United States households consume strawberries.
- According to the United States Department of Agriculture, the annual per capita consumption of fresh and frozen strawberries is 4.85 pounds.
- Strawberries are grown in every state in the United States and every province of Canada.
- Lebanon, Oregon's annual strawberry festival is home to the world's largest strawberry shortcake.

Americans eat 3.4 pounds of fresh strawberries each year plus another 1.8 pounds frozen per capita. Although strawberries are available in many forms—frozen, jam and jelly, and ice cream — nothing compares to the taste of a fresh vine ripened strawberry.

There are more than 600 varieties of strawberries. Each variety of strawberry differs in flavor, size and texture.

Fresh Fruit Dip

1-8 ounce carton plain yogurt
1/4 cup unsweetened applesauce
1 tablespoon powdered sugar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon
Assorted fresh fruit (pineapple chunks, apples, peaches, and strawberries)

In a small bowl stir together all ingredients. To serve, spear fruit with toothpicks, and then dip into yogurt mixture.

Yield: 6 servings

If you have a question, write to Sylvia V. Davis, Family and Consumer Science Extension Agent, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension- Baker County, P.O. Box 220, Newton, GA 39870 or call the Extension office (229)734-3015, weekdays between 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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