

Blueberries

What are blueberries? Blueberries are the second most popular berry in the US. They are also one of the healthiest foods. They have one of the highest **antioxidant** capacities among all foods. As one of the few fruits native to North America, they have been consumed here for centuries. And they are the one true (in color at least) blue food.



Selection: To find the best blueberries, choose ones that are **firm** and have a uniform **hue** colored with a whitish bloom. If purchasing berries in a container, shake it and note if the berries have the tendency to move freely. If they do not, this may mean they are soft, damaged or moldy. Avoid berries that are dull in color or soft and watery in texture. They should be **free from moisture**. Water will cause the berries to decay. When purchasing frozen berries, shake the bag gently to ensure that the berries move freely and are not clumped together. This may suggest that they have been thawed and refrozen. Blueberries that are cultivated in the United States are

available from **May through October**. Imported berries may be found at other times of the year.

Storage: Remove any crushed or moldy berries before storing to prevent the rest from spoiling. **Wash** berries just before eating as washing will remove the bloom that protects the berries' skins. Store ripe blueberries in a **covered** container in the refrigerator where they will keep for up to **3 days**. If kept out at room temperature for more than a day, the berries may spoil. Ripe berries can also be frozen, although this will slightly change their texture and flavor. Before freezing, wash, drain and remove any damaged berries. To preserve texture upon thawing, spread the berries out on a cookie sheet or baking pan, place in the freezer until frozen, then put the berries in a plastic bag for storage in the freezer.

Nutrients/nutrition: One cup of blueberries has 80 **calories**, 20% of your daily **vitamin C**, 25% of your daily **manganese**, and 30% of your daily **vitamin K**. They are also low in fat and high in **fiber**. Their health benefits include assistance with collagen formation, **iron absorption**, and immune function. Evidence-based research shows that blueberries contain **anthocyanins**. Anthocyanins are **antioxidants** (cancer fighting chemicals) that give blueberries their deep color and anti-inflammatory properties.

Preparation: Wash carefully and gently pat dry, remembering to wash berries just prior to use. When using frozen berries in recipes that do not require cooking, thaw well and drain prior to using. Blueberries retain their maximum amount of nutrients and their maximum taste when they are **enjoyed fresh** and not prepared in a cooked recipe. Their nutrients are damaged when exposed to baking temperatures (350°F/175°C and higher).

Eat well to be well!