Selecting, Storing, and Serving Ohio Blueberries, Blackberries, and Raspberries

One of the highlights of summer is enjoying the bounty of luscious Ohio berries. July is the peak month for blackberries and raspberries. Blueberries are in season from mid-July through mid-September.

Selection

All Berries
- A dull appearance or soft, juicy berries means the fruit is old. The berries should be sweet and full-flavored. Sweetness varies by variety.
- Look for stains on containers, which indicate crushed or bruised fruit. The berries should be free of dirt, mold, or decay.

Blueberries
- Blueberries should be plump and firm with a dark blue color and waxy, silvery “bloom.”

Raspberries
- Raspberries may be red, black, yellow, or purple. The red raspberry is the first to ripen, followed by black and then purple and yellow. Some varieties produce two crops a year and are called everbearing or fallbearing.
- Ripe raspberries should be large, bright, shiny, uniform in color and ripeness, attractive, firm, and of good quality. Taste varies from tart to sweet depending on the variety and maturity.

Blackberries
- Upon ripening, blackberries become dull-black in color and are just beginning to soften and get sweet.

Fruit is medium to large sized. The small depression in each drupelet should be well filled. They should be solid and have plump, juicy fruitlets.

Storage
- Handle fruit gently to avoid bruising. Bruising shortens the life of fruit and contributes to low quality.
- Sort carefully and place berries loosely in a shallow container to allow air circulation and to prevent the berries on top from crushing those underneath.
- Berries are highly perishable. Store immediately in the refrigerator.
- Do not wash berries before refrigerating.
- Store covered containers of berries in a cool, moist area of the refrigerator, such as in the hydrator (vegetable keeper), to help extend the usable life of the fruit. Blackberries and raspberries can be stored one to two days in the refrigerator; blueberries can be stored three to five days in the refrigerator.
- To prepare, rinse berries gently in cold water. Lift out of water and drain.
- Never soak berries in water.
- Remove berries that are too soft or decayed.
- Serve fresh or in your favorite berry recipe.

Nutrition
All three types of berries are good sources of vitamin C and also contain fiber, folate, and vitamin K.

One of the most important health benefits of berries stems from their high level of phytochemicals, which
are non-nutrient components that scientists believe may help reduce the risk of chronic disease. Berries are rich in phenolic compounds and flavonoids, which have antioxidant properties and help fight cancer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Per 1 cup of unsweetened berries</th>
<th>Raspberries</th>
<th>Blackberries</th>
<th>Blueberries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
<td>32 mg (54% daily need)</td>
<td>30 mg (50% daily need)</td>
<td>14 mg (24% daily need)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fiber</td>
<td>8 grams</td>
<td>8 grams</td>
<td>4 grams</td>
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**Blueberry Oat Scones**

1½ cups oat bran  
1½ cups flour  
¼ cup light brown sugar  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
¼ cup trans-fat free margarine or butter  
2 eggs or 2 egg whites  
¼ cup honey  
½ cup buttermilk  
½ teaspoon imitation rum extract  
½ teaspoon pure vanilla extract  
1 pint fresh blueberries

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Lightly grease one baking sheet. Mix oat bran, flour, brown sugar, and baking soda. Cut in margarine or butter. Beat eggs and beat in honey in a separate bowl. Add buttermilk and extracts to egg mixture. Pour into oat bran mixture and stir only until moistened. Stir in blueberries. Drop by tablespoon onto baking sheet. Bake in 400 degrees F oven 25 to 30 minutes. Serve hot.

Makes 16 scones.

**Yield**

- One pint of berries will provide four to five servings of fresh uncooked fruit.

**Serving Ideas**

- Puree raspberries, sieve out seeds, and use as a melba sauce over peaches, ice cream, or frozen yogurt.
- Add fresh berries and a few nuts to hot or cold cereals.
- Top fresh berries with plain nonfat yogurt and granola for a delicious breakfast, snack, or dessert.
- Bake berries into muffins or cobblers.
- To reduce fat in the diet, choose one-crust berry pie recipes over those with two crusts.
- Combine raspberries into a fresh lettuce salad. Top with a vinaigrette dressing.
- A few berries go a long way when combined with other fruits in a salad or compote.

For more information on preserving berries, contact your local OSU Extension office for the following fact sheets:

- Drying Fruits and Vegetables, HYG-5347-09
- Preserving Pie Fillings, HYG-5355-08
- Basics for Canning Fruit, HYG-5343-08
- Freezing Fruits, HYG-5349-09
- Jams, Jellies, and Other Fruit Spreads, HYG-5350-09
- Safe Handling of Fruits and Vegetables, HYG-5353-09
- Growing Blueberries in the Home Garden, HYG-1422-98
- Raspberries for the Backyard Fruit Planting, HYG-1421-98

Contact your local OSU Extension office for recommendations on varieties.

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