

SPOTLIGHT: A VERY BERRY SUMMER



Spring is here and that means so is berry season! In Indiana, several types of berries are harvested from late spring into the fall including strawberries, blackberries, blueberries and raspberries. You can find local berries at farmer's markets, grocery stores, or visit a local berry farm to pick our own. Berry picking is a fun activity to do with children to teach them about how food grows and where our food comes from. Or, try growing your own!

Young kids (ages 2-3 years) need about 1- 1 ½ cups of fruit per day. Older children and teens need about 2- 2 ½ cups of fruit per day. Fruit is packed with antioxidants, vitamins and minerals, and fiber. Berries are particularly high in fiber, which many kids don't eat enough of. Fruit, including berries, is also a great source of electrolytes that can help replenish the small amount of electrolytes that may be lost during exercise, sports, or during hot weather. So, you can skip the "electrolyte" drinks and opt for fruit and water!

If you have a picky eater who doesn't eat a lot of vegetables, fruit can be a great way to help them eat the fiber and vitamins and minerals they need. It's important to continue to offer vegetables, but rest assured that they can get lots of similar benefits from eating fruit.

IN THE KITCHEN BANANA BERRY SNACK STACKS



Ingredients
1 banana
2-3 tbsp nut butter
1/4 cup Greek yogurt
Mixed berries (match the number to the number of banana slices)

Directions
Cut banana into slices about 1 cm thick.
Spread some peanut butter (or any nut butter will do) onto the banana pieces.
Add a small dollop of Greek yogurt to each one.
Top each one with a berry.

TABLE TALK



Shopping, Storing, and Preserving Your Berries

Shopping
Don't let your summer berry bounty spoil! When shopping for berries, look for containers that are dry and unstained. Berries should be firm, plump, and dry.

Storing
When you get your berries home, check them thoroughly and throw away any berries that are mushy, moldy, bruised, or rotten before they soil the rest. Store them in a shallow container lined with paper towel to absorb any moisture that might build up. Resist the urge to wash them right away as this will introduce moisture which can lead to spoilage, instead wash them just before eating.

Preserving
When stored in the refrigerator, berries can keep for 1-2 weeks. Keep a close eye on them and if you can't eat all your berries before they go bad, you can freeze them. To freeze: wash them and let them dry on paper towel for a few hours. Spread them out on a baking sheet and freeze them. Once frozen, transfer to a freezer-safe storage container.

