THE BRIGHT-HUED GEMS DAZZLE IN WARM-WEATHER DISHES
In the realm of summer fruit, berries reign as the crown jewels. Sure, you can probably pick up a pint of blueberries in the dead of winter, but the out-of-season offerings can't compare to the color, flavor, and sweetness of local berries from a farmers' market or pick-your-own farm. To help you make the most of these summer treasures, we've put together a guide to finding and preparing berries that are flawlessly fresh and exquisitely ripe.
Blackberry, Jicama, and Apple Salad

SERVES 4 | 30 MINUTES OR FEWER | GLUTEN FREE

Blackberries are perfect salad berries because they're sturdy enough to stand up to tossing and substantial enough to be speared with a fork. In place of jicama, you can use seeded cucumber.

- 2 Tbs. nonfat yogurt
- 4 tsp. lime juice
- 4 tsp. olive oil
- 2 tsp. raspberry champagne vinegar
- 2 tsp. agave nectar or honey
- ¼ tsp. poppy seeds
- 2 cups arugula
- 1 cup blackberries
- ½ cup jicama, peeled and cut into thin matchsticks (1 cup)
- ½ Granny Smith apple, cut into thin matchsticks (1 cup)

Whisk together yogurt, lime juice, oil, vinegar, agave nectar, and poppy seeds in bowl. Combine arugula, blackberries, jicama, and apple in separate bowl. Toss with yogurt dressing, and serve immediately.

PER CUP SERVING: 104 CAL, 2 G PROT, 5 G TOTAL FAT (<1 G SAT FAT); 15 G CARB, 15 MG CHOL; 10 MG SOD; 4 G FIBER; 9 G SUGARS

Red Currant Tea Cakes

MAKES 12

These little cakes are based on the French financier, a light tea cake made with almond flour and egg whites. Red currants add some tartness to every bite. You can also top the tea cakes with black currants, blueberries, or raspberries.

- 1⅛ cups almond flour
- ¼ cup all-purpose flour
- ⅛ cup confectioners' sugar, plus more for dusting
- 1 tsp. baking powder
- ½ cup applesauce
- 3 Tbs. unsalted butter, melted
- 3 large egg whites
- 12 oz. red currants, fruit pulled from stems

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat 12-cup muffin pan with cooking spray.
2. Whisk together almond flour, all-purpose flour, confectioners' sugar, and baking powder in large bowl. Stir in applesauce and butter. Beat egg whites in separate bowl with electric mixer 4 to 5 minutes, or until soft peaks form. Gently fold one-third of whipped egg whites into flour mixture. Fold in remaining egg whites until completely combined.
3. Fill each muffin cup no more than half full with batter. Top with several red currants.
4. Bake 15 to 20 minutes, or until lightly brown around edges. Cool 10 minutes before unmolding. Dust with confectioners' sugar to serve.

PER TEA CAKE: 174 CAL; 5 G PROT; 10 G TOTAL FAT (2 G SAT FAT); 19 G CARB; 8 MG CHOL; 66 MG SOD; 3 G FIBER; 10 G SUGARS

PICK of the crop

These berry-picking tips come from Katie Creeger, owner of Kestrel Perch Berries CSA in Ithaca, N.Y.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Berry</th>
<th>At the market</th>
<th>Pick-your-own tip</th>
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<tr>
<td>Blueberries</td>
<td>Look for dark, plump berries with a whitish bloom. Avoid blueberries with pinkish rings at the stem, a sign that they aren't quite ripe.</td>
<td>&quot;Blueberries should be picked individually—not all the berries in a cluster will ripen at the same time,&quot; says Creeger.</td>
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<td>Raspberries</td>
<td>Select berries that are uniform in color with no signs of moisture or crushing— raspberries are highly perishable and will mold quickly if damaged.</td>
<td>Pluck raspberries that come off easily from the plant. &quot;Bramble fruits are really easy to pick when they're fully ripe. If you have to exert pressure to get them off the plant, they're not ready,&quot; explains Creeger.</td>
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<td>Blackberries</td>
<td>&quot;It can be very hard to tell whether blackberries are ripe just by looking at them,&quot; says Creeger. &quot;Some varieties change from shiny to dull when ripe, but some don't.&quot; Taste, if you can, or follow the same rules for raspberries.</td>
<td>Because blackberries can still be sour even when they look ripe, gently test each berry to see if it comes away easily—the only sure sign of ripeness.</td>
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<td>Red &amp; black currants</td>
<td>Currants should still be attached to their stems in clusters and have a vibrant-hued glow about them.</td>
<td>Pluck clusters instead of individual fruits. &quot;You'll have to pick the stems off later, but wouldn't you rather do that sitting in the shade than out in a hot field?&quot; jokes Creeger.</td>
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BLACKBERRIES ARE PERFECT SALAD BERRIES—THEY'RE STURDY ENOUGH TO STAND UP TO TOSSING AND SUBSTANTIAL ENOUGH TO BE SPEARED WITH A FORK.
Fresh Berry Tart with Toasted Nut Crust

SERVES 8

A crumbly homemade nut crust sets this tart apart from other berry pies. It can be made up to three days ahead and refrigerated until ready to use.

CRUST

- ¾ cup each almonds, pecans, and hazelnuts
- ¾ cup whole-wheat flour
- ¾ cup sugar
- 3 tsp. salt
- 6 Tbs. chilled unsalted butter, diced
- 1 large egg yolk

FILLING

- ½ cup light sour cream
- ½ cup nonfat plain Greek yogurt
- 2 Tbs. light brown sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla extract
- ½ tsp grated orange zest
- 1 cup blueberries
- 1 cup raspberries
- 1 Tbs. orange juice

1. To make Crust: Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat 9-inch tart pan with cooking spray. Spread nuts on baking sheet, and toast in oven 12 to 15 minutes, or until browned.
2. Pulse nuts, flour, sugar, and salt in food processor until nuts are ground to powder. Add butter, and pulse until mixture resembles coarse meal. Add egg yolk, and pulse until no moist clumps form. Press dough into bottom and sides of prepared pan, about ¼-inch thick, and pierce with fork. Freeze 30 minutes.
3. Adjust oven temperature to 400°F. Bake Crust 12 to 14 minutes, or until golden. Cool.
4. To make Filling: whisk together sour cream, yogurt, brown sugar, vanilla, and orange zest in small bowl. Toss berries with orange juice in separate bowl.
5. Spread sour cream mixture in Crust with spatula. Spoon berries over top a little at a time, until sour cream mixture is evenly covered. Refrigerate 30 to 60 minutes before serving.

PER SLICE: 288 CAL; 6 G PROT; 19 G TOTAL FAT (9 G SAT FAT); 26 G CARB; 58 MG CHOL; 87 MG SOD; 4 G FIBER; 13 G SUGARS

Raspberry-Vanilla Freezer Jam

MAKES 4 JARS | VEGAN | GLUTEN FREE

Adding a fresh vanilla bean turns this freezer jam into a special treat that makes a great gift come holiday time. The jam will keep in the freezer for a year and in the fridge up to three weeks. Try the recipe with other berries as well.

1. Bring sugar, pectin, and 1 cup water to a boil in saucepan, reduce heat to medium, and boil 1 minute, or until sugar is dissolved.
2. Add raspberries, and boil 3 minutes, stirring often. Crush berries with back of wooden spoon. Scrape seeds from vanilla bean into berry mixture.
3. Pour jam into jars or freezer containers, and cool. Cover with lids, and let stand at room temperature overnight, or until jam sets. Refrigerate or freeze.

PER 1-TBS. SERVING: 33 CAL; <1 G PROT; <1 G TOTAL FAT (<1 G SAT FAT); 8 G CARB; 0 MG CHOL; <1 MG SOD; <1 G FIBER; 7 G SUGARS

Quick Berry Coulis

MAKES 2 CUPS | VEGAN | 30 MINUTES OR FEWER | GLUTEN FREE

Coulis is a fancy word for a colorful, versatile dessert sauce. Because the berry pulp is not cooked, the flavor of fresh, ripe fruit really shines through. Chef’s secret: place coulis in a small squirt bottle to decorate dessert plates.

1. Combine berries, sugar, and lemon juice in food processor bowl; let stand 5 minutes.
2. Add ¼ cup water and orange liqueur, if using, to berry mixture, and purée until completely smooth.
3. Strain through fine mesh sieve, stirring and pressing with wooden spoon to remove seeds.

PER 3-TBS. SERVING: 21 CAL; <1 G PROT; <1 G TOTAL FAT (<1 G SAT FAT); 5 G CARB; 0 MG CHOL; <1 MG SOD; <1 G FIBER; 4 G SUGARS

Summer Pudding

SERVES 8

Layers of angel food cake soak up the juices of fresh and cooked berries to create a rich, moist, no-bake dessert.

1. cup blueberries, plus more for garnish
1. cup raspberries, plus more for garnish
1. Tbs. sugar
2. cups sliced strawberries, plus more for garnish
1. prepared angel food cake, cut into ¼-inch slices

MY HUCKLEBERRY FRIEND

As sustainable and organic farmers get back to their roots, they’re reintroducing local berry varieties that are worth seeking out in season. Here are a few to look for:

Huckleberries, wild blueberries
Small, blue-black varieties that can be used like blueberries.

Lingonberries
These tiny, tart red berries are members of the cranberry family.

Boysenberries
Sweet, purple-red berries that are hybrids of loganberries, raspberries, and blackberries.
1. Bring blueberries, raspberries, and sugar to a boil in saucepan over medium heat. Simmer 5 minutes, or until berries begin to release their juices. Cool.

2. Pulse strawberries in food processor, until mashed. Stir into blueberry-raspberry mixture.

3. Line 6-cup bowl with several sheets of plastic wrap, leaving 6 inches extra on all sides. Line bowl with angel food cake slices, cutting pieces to completely cover inside of bowl. Pour berry mixture into lined bowl. Top with remaining slices of cake to cover completely.

4. Fold plastic wrap over cake to seal. Place slightly smaller plate on top of bowl and weigh down with two cans. Refrigerate 12 to 24 hours.

5. Remove cans and plate, and unseal plastic wrap. Cover bowl with large plate. Invert pudding onto plate, and remove plastic wrap. Serve garnished with fresh berries.

PER SLICE:

- 229 CAL
- 5 G PROT
- <1 G TOTAL FAT
- (<1 G SAT FAT)
- 53 G CARB
- 0 MG CHOL
- 380 MG SOD
- 2 G FIBER
- 29 G SUGARS

Carrie Purcell is a Los Angeles-based freelance food stylist and writer who loves the way fresh berries make foods "pop" on the pages of magazines.