Berries have gained the status of superfood because they contain exceptional amounts of healthful nutrients and they never fail to please our palates. Here are 10 ways to benefit from these delightful little fruits.

1. Get Concentrated Antioxidants
Bite for bite, berries offer a higher concentration of antioxidants than most other foods, according to a study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. Researchers tested more than 1,100 foods, measuring antioxidant content in a typical serving of each, and ranked blackberries number one. Strawberries, cranberries, raspberries and blueberries also ranked among the top 10, in that order, making berries the leading antioxidant-rich category of fruit.

2. Protect Against Cancer
Quercetin, a flavonoid found in all berries, appears to help regulate cell growth and protect against estrogen-related cancers such as breast and endometrial cancers. Ellagic acid, another phytochemical in berries, has impeded lung, skin and liver cancers in animals. The top three berry sources of ellagic acid are blackberries, raspberries and strawberries.

3. Keep Your Heart Healthy
Quercetin also helps prevent plaque from sticking to arteries and clots from forming. Berries are also rich in vitamin C, which enhances the action of quercetin. Anthocyanins, another type of antioxidant, help to keep arteries healthy. And antioxidants prevent the oxidation of LDL (“bad”) cholesterol—free radicals have a “rusting” effect on LDL, making it more harmful; antioxidants help to reverse this effect.

4. Maintain a Healthy Brain
Animal research has shown that strawberries and blueberries can prevent declines in memory and motor learning, and blueberries can also improve balance and coordination. In addition, antioxidants in all berries may help to prevent both Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s diseases.

5. Quell Inflammation
Anthocyanins in raspberries, strawberries, blackberries and cranberries inhibit inflammation, an underlying factor in heart disease, cancer, allergies, arthritis and other forms of illness. Berries also contain salicylic acid, an active ingredient in aspirin, and therefore may help alleviate pain.

6. Defy Aging
Oxidation plays a key role in aging by damaging cell membranes and DNA, leading to the ills commonly associated with a longer life. Berries’ antioxidants protect against this deterioration.
7. Take a Berry Extract Blend
Dietary supplements that contain proprietary blends of berry extracts, such as OptiBerry or BerryVin, offer standardized amounts of berry phytochemicals. These types of supplements, like the berries themselves, offer a combination of benefits. (See examples on p. 28.)

8. Get Creative
In addition to eating berries as a snack or dessert, try these tips:
- After tossing a salad sprinkle berries on top; add to smoothies or yogurt; mix with breakfast cereal or oatmeal; and use to decorate cakes and other desserts.

9. Turn Frozen Into Fresh
Although berries are seasonal, frozen ones are available year-round and, when thawed correctly, almost appear fresh. Individually quick frozen (IQF) berries maintain their shape rather than sticking together in a bag. If you spread out IQF berries, so that they aren't touching one another, on a plate lined with two layers of paper towels, they will maintain their shape and texture as they defrost.

10. Add to Recipes
Marionberries, named after Marion County, OR, where they grow, are considered the premium blackberry. Add them to your chicken, tuna and other salads, or try the following recipe.
Marionberry Curry Chicken Salad
Serves 4

1/2 cup reduced-fat mayonnaise
2 Tbs. mango chutney
1 Tbs. dry white wine (or white wine vinegar)
3 Tbs. curry powder
2 Tbs. lemon juice
1 tsp. ground ginger
1 lb. cooked chicken breasts, cut into 1/2 inch cubes
2 cups marionberries, fresh or frozen
1 celery stalk, chopped
1 green onion, chopped
1/2 cup cashews, roasted

Combine mayonnaise, chutney, wine, curry powder, lemon juice, and ginger in a large bowl. Add chicken, berries, celery and onion; toss to coat. Season with salt and pepper. If using frozen berries, allow salad to sit in refrigerator 30 minutes. Add cashews just before serving on a bed of greens or in a whole-grain pita.

PER SERVING: 390 CAL; 39G PROT; 15G TOTAL FAT (3G SAT. FAT); 24G CARB; 96MG CHOL; 401MG SOD; 3G FIBER; 11G SUGAR

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