

STRAWBERRY TID BITS



Strawberries are one of the first fruits of the season and have long been associated with rebirth and Spring. Strawberries are one of the earliest farmed foods in North America.

NUTRITION:

- In ancient times strawberries were used not only for food but also for medicinal purposes. Tamra Andrews in 'Nectar and Ambrosia' tells how ancient hunters in Central Europe would eat strawberries "to sharpen their powers of perception. Others used them to cure nervous disorders, control heart palpitations, and purify the blood."
- Although we no longer use strawberries as a cure for our ailments, they are nonetheless rich in Vitamin B and C and contain potassium, iron and fiber.
- By weight, strawberries contain more vitamin C than oranges.

GROWING AND PREPARING STRAWBERRIES:

- Strawberries are the only known fruit to have their seeds on the outside, with an average of 200 seeds per fruit.
- Besides runners (?), the distribution of wild strawberries is aided by being sown by birds. When birds eat the berries, the seeds pass through intact.
- Under the right conditions, strawberry seeds will germinate and grow; they seem to respond more to light conditions than to moisture and need no dirt cover to grow.
- The strawberry, besides being as red as a rose, is actually a member of the rose family.
- Size is not the deciding factor to taste but generally the larger berries are not as flavorful. Even though strawberries are usually picked before they are fully ripe they do not ripen further after picking. They only get softer.
- Strawberries are a delicate fruit and do not store well. If not using immediately store in a single layer on a paper towel-lined tray in the refrigerator up to 2-3 days. Do not wash or remove caps before storing as strawberries absorb moisture. Immediately before using quickly wash berries (do not soak) with caps still intact, so the berries will not fill with water which dilutes the flavor of the strawberry. Remove the leaf-like caps with a sharp knife or strawberry huller.

WHEN MEASURING STRAWBERRIES:

- 1-1/2 pounds = 2 pints or 1 quart
- 1 small basket = 1 pint
- 1 pint = 3 1/2 cups whole berries
- 1 pint = 2 1/2 cups sliced berries
- 1 pint = 1 2/3 cups pureed berries
- 1 cup = about 4 ounces

HISTORY AND SYMBOLISM:

- Many Indian tribes, the best known being the Iroquois, transplanted the little plants from the woods and cultivated them in beds. Making them, along with corn, one of the earliest farmed foods.
- American Indians were already cultivating and eating strawberries when the colonists arrived. The crushed berries were mixed with cornmeal and made into bread. After trying this bread, colonists developed their own version, which we today know as strawberry shortcake.
- British Royalty loved strawberries. Princess Mary, King Henry VIII's daughter, loved them so much that a basketful was always presented to her when she visited.
- The word 'strawberry' did not exist in this spelling until 1538.
- The Strawberry was a symbol for the goddess Venus because of its color and its unique heart shape.
- At one time, the French people considered the strawberry to be an aphrodisiac and traditionally served a strawberry soup to newlyweds.
- Strawberries, because of their red color and heart shape, have always been associated in some way with romance. One legend says that if you break a double strawberry in half and share it with a member of the opposite sex, you will fall in love with each other. Another version of the same legend does not specify 'double', any strawberries will do.
- The Romans thought strawberries medicinal while the Greeks declared them 'taboo.'
- To symbolize perfection and righteousness, medieval stonemasons carved strawberry designs on altars and around pillars in churches and cathedrals. In modern cemeteries, you can see this influence on tombstones.