

Real Foods That Heal



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Blueberries

In the east central Georgia, western South Carolina area where I live, blueberries will be ready for picking very soon now. We have 4 bushes just a few steps from the front door of our house, and I'm watching them carefully, as the birds love the berries as much as we do. Dark ripe blueberries fresh off the bush are a special treat that we look forward to every spring.

And we have good reasons to love blueberries in addition to their taste. They are one of nature's most powerful sources of natural antioxidants. Dark blue fruits (blueberries and blackberries for example) are rich sources of a class of antioxidants called anthocyanins. A research article in 2004 in the journal *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers and Prevention* showed that women whose diets were higher in fresh vegetables and fruits had lower risk of breast cancer. Their discussion of mechanisms of this association included the well-supported theory that it is the antioxidant effect of these foods that at least in part accounts for their cancer preventive effect. Another 2004 article (*Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry*) showed that laboratory breast cancer cell lines were significantly inhibited by extracts from blueberries having high concentrations of anthocyanins. Of all the dark fruits available for consumption, only elderberries and chokeberries (a little hard to find) exceed blueberries in anthocyanin content. This is one of the significant reasons that blueberries (no matter how you eat them) consistently rank among the highest antioxidant capacity of all fruits measured.

The general principle here is that a diet high in a wide variety of vegetables and fruits is a very effective strategy for cancer prevention. And since blueberries are one of the "high achievers" in antioxidant capacity, it makes good sense to include them in your family's diet on a regular basis. Even more so when you can get them fresh and local. So when blueberries come in season in your part of the country, take the time to find a local farmer and bring home enough to enjoy fresh and then freeze for the rest of the year. Your body will thank you!

Blueberry, mango, ginger salad

Because most of the recipes you will find using blueberries are baked goods with lots of flour and sugar (yes, sorry to say that's a health problem for many of us), I

have chosen to adapt a recipe from 2003 Gourmet magazine, modifying it so that the glycemic index will be much lower, but still very tasty.

Take 3 cups of fresh blueberries, and 2 large mangoes cut into bite sized slices, and ¼ cup of finely chopped crystallized ginger (the ginger adds some unique health benefits, we'll cover those in a future bulletin). Mix all the fruit and ginger together in a large bowl, then sweeten the mixture with 1 tablespoon of agave nectar (a low glycemic index natural sweetener available at health food stores). Makes six side dish servings, good with any spring or summer meal.

To your health,

Robert Pendergrast, M.D.

www.realfoodsthatheal.com

P.S. remember to forward this bulletin to a good friend who deserves to know how to reduce disease risk with good food!

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