

Seasonal Eating
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Strawberries Herald in Summer
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You know summer is close when the strawberries make their bright, shiny appearance. Yes, its strawberry season! These red jewels of the garden are full of vitamin C for maintaining a healthy immune system and reducing inflammation. The bonus is that they are sweet and flavorful and can be used in so many ways.

Usually when I get farm grown strawberries or pick my own, I eat them just out of the bucket on the way home. You will want to give them a rinse just before using but eating them plain for a snack or sliced over yogurt or cereal is a great way to enjoy their sweet, juicy flavor.

Then there are the salads. Fruit salad with a creamy yogurt or pudding dressing is always good and throw in some pineapple, oranges or grapes as well. Strawberries also pair well with spinach for a green salad topped with blue or feta cheese, toasted nuts and a poppyseed or red wine vinaigrette.

We don't often think of cooking strawberries, but roasted strawberries from the oven concentrates their flavor. You can serve these over ice cream or frozen yogurt, but you can also use them in a sauce over pork chops or grilled chicken breast. Toss 1 pound of cleaned and hulled strawberries with 2 tablespoons sugar and 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar. Bake on a rimmed sheet pan at 250 degrees for about an hour, stirring about every 15 minutes, until dark red. For sauces with meat, you can add a little chopped fresh rosemary and sauteed shallots or green onion with a splash of lemon juice or balsamic vinegar to brighten it up. You can thin it out with a little chicken broth, if too thick.

And then there's the desserts and baked goods, including strawberry pies, cakes, cobblers, crisps, muffins and breads. Sweet and delicious, these are a special treat for the short strawberry season. Four layer dessert and strawberry pretzel gelatin are two of my favorites. Crisp crusts with creamy layers of cream cheese, whipped topping and pudding or gelatin – what could be better. So for an annual, decadent splurge, the Strawberries and Cream Layered Dessert below is your perfect go-to for the season.

So enjoy strawberry season over the next few weeks. For more information and recipes check out the Seasonal Eating page at bedford.tennessee.edu.

Strawberries and Cream Layered Dessert

- 18 full sheets graham crackers
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup sliced almonds, toasted
- 2 pinches salt
- 8 tablespoons butter, melted
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened



1 cup powdered sugar
16 ounces frozen whipped topping, thawed, divided
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
1/4 teaspoon almond extract
1 cup sugar
1/4 cup cornstarch
1 pinch salt
1 1/2 cups lemon-lime soda
1/2 cup water
1 (3-ounce) package strawberry gelatin
1 1/2 - 2 quarts fresh strawberries, hulled and chopped

Pulse graham crackers in a food processor to fine crumbs. Place in a large bowl. Pulse the almonds until roughly chopped. Add to cracker crumbs. Add 1/3 cup sugar and salt and stir to mix. Add the melted butter and stir to combine into a wet sand texture. Press into the bottom of a 9"x13" baking dish sprayed with vegetable spray. Bake at 375 degrees for 10 minutes. Let cool.

Meanwhile, combine 1 cup sugar, cornstarch, salt, lemon lime soda and water. Bring to a boil and cook until thickened. Add gelatin and whisk until dissolved. Set aside to cool to room temperature.

With electric mixer, beat cream cheese and powdered sugar together until smooth. Add extracts and 1/2 the whipped topping. Mix well. Spread over the cooled crust and put in refrigerator.

When the gelatin mixture is cooled, add the strawberries and stir to combine. Pour over the cream cheese layer in the baking dish. Cover and chill for an hour. Spread the remaining whipped topping over the strawberries. Cover and store in refrigerator until ready to serve, at least 2 hours until strawberry layer is set.