



GARDEN STATE ON YOUR PLATE

BLUEBERRY

RECIPES



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History

Blueberries are native to North America and have been a food source for people for at least 13,000 years. Native Americans foraged for them, eating them fresh in season, then drying and storing the rest for winter. Indigenous Americans also used their roots, stems, leaves, and flowers for medicine. The earliest mention of blueberries by a European comes from Samuel de Champlain, who in 1615 wrote of Algonquin women drying “blues,” which they used with cornmeal in breads.

“Sky-coloured” blueberries make for “a most excellent Summer Dish...They usually eat of them put into a Bason, with Milk, and sweetened a little more with Sugar and Spice...The Indians dry them in the Sun, and sell them to the English by the Bushell, who make use of them instead of Currane [currants], putting of them into Puddens, both boyled and baked, and into Water Gruel.”

~ John Josselyn, “New-Englands Rarities Discovered (1672) and Account of Two Voyages to New-England (1674).

Vaccinium cyanococcus, aka...

Vaccinium refers to a shrub. It comes from a Latin name that may have been derived from an even older Mediterranean language. Cyanococcus means blue round fruit.

Native Americans called blueberries “star berries” because the blossom end of each berry – the calyx – forms a five-pointed star. The Great Spirit was said to have sent star berries to ease children’s hunger.

The Lenape name is wepin. The Ojibwe name is miin. The Dakota name is haza.

Around the World

For many Native North American tribes, blueberries (and their cousin huckleberries) were important culturally and economically. They dried blueberries and added them to soups, stews and meat, and crushed them into a powder to use on meat as a preservative. When Europeans arrived, they gave them blueberries. After the 1916 publication of “Directions for Blueberry Culture,” by Dr. Frederick Coville of the USDA, with work from Elizabeth White of New Jersey, commercial blueberry growing exploded.

The blueberry emoji made its debut in 2020.



Words for Blueberry

In Old English, berry comes from Old English berie. Blue is estimated at c. 1300, bleu or blwe, meaning sky-colored.

Latin: vaccinia

Arabic: قرزاً توت

Cantonese: 藍莓

French: myrtilles

Haitian Creole: bè ble

Hindi: ब्लूबेरी

Italian: mirtilli

German: blaubeeren

Japanese: ブルーベリー

Persian: هتخا لاغز

Spanish: arándanos azules

Swahili: beri za bluu

Ukrainian: чорниця

Art & Literature

“The cultivated blueberry was developed in the Pine Barrens...In 1911, Miss Elizabeth White, one of four daughters of a cranberry grower who lived near Chatsworth, read a publication of the USDA in which a Dr. Frederick Coville described the possibilities of crossing various wild blueberries and producing superior offspring. Miss White invited Dr. Coville to use Whitesbog, her family’s property, for his experiments...They eventually made thirty-five thousand hybrid cuttings. Of the resulting bushes, they threw away all but four, from which modern cultivated blueberries, in their numerous varieties, were developed.”

~ John McPhee, “The Pine Barrens,” 1967



Botany

Blueberries (*Vaccinium cyanococcus*) are deciduous perennial shrubs in the Ericaceae (heath) family. Related: cranberry, native to US; bilberry, native to Europe; lingonberry, native to cool latitudes of North America, Europe, and Asia; and huckleberry, native to the mountainous regions of North America, and to the Andes mountains of South America.

Lowbush blueberries (mostly wild and native to Maine) are around 24 inches tall, with small, intensely flavored berries. Highbush blueberries, the most commonly cultivated, with a sweet-tart flavor, can reach about 13 feet. Rabbiteye blueberries, native to the southeastern US, with a sugary flavor, can reach up to 15 feet tall.

Season's Best

In New Jersey, blueberry harvest is from mid-June through July. In other months, they are shipped to our supermarkets from elsewhere: Late June-September: Oregon. August: Michigan, Washington, and Maine; September: Washington; later in fall and into winter: Peru and Chile (most on refrigerated container ships); March-May: Mexico, Florida, Georgia and North Carolina; April-June: California.

In the Garden

Coville's discovery in 1911: Blueberries require very acidic soil and produce best in full sun. Plants rely on native bees, bumblebees, honeybees, and butterflies for pollination. Fire is vital in some blueberry habitats, as controlled burns encourage new growth.

In the garden, wait until the dew has evaporated before picking. Look for plump, firm berries with no white, green, or red remaining near the stem. The silvery-white powder coating is natural protection for berries and means they are untouched. Gently loosen berries from the branch with a slight roll of the thumb. Unripe berries won't detach. Take care to leave blooms intact.

Companion/guild plantings: borage, cranberries, sage, lemon balm, strawberries, onions, basil, thyme, bee balm, chives, rhubarb, spinach, basil, parsley, chives, elderberries, lingonberries, lupine

Math & Money

Blueberries are the state fruit of New Jersey, and are the state's top-grossing and highest-selling crop. The total value of the 2023 blueberry crop in New Jersey was \$92.1 million, with 10,800 acres harvested. Most blueberries in New Jersey are grown on ~254 farms in the southern part of the state, specifically within the Pinelands region and Atlantic County. One town, Hammonton, has been the center of production since the early 1900s.

Worldwide, Latin America accounts for 42% of acreage; China produces about 32% of the berries.

Ingredient Pairings

Blueberries pair well with almonds, apricots, bananas, butter, buttermilk, cornmeal, cream, ginger, honey, mangoes, mascarpone, melon, molasses, oats, orange, peaches, pears, pecans, rhubarb, ricotta, strawberries, sugar, walnuts, and yogurt.

In the Kitchen

Blueberries have a long culinary history in Native American cuisine – most famously, in pemmican, where it is mixed and pounded with meat and fat. A close second is sautauthig, with a corn porridge base. They are traditionally mashed for the long-simmered wojapi, a Dakota fruit sauce. Mix them into whole-grain dishes, or make a blueberry sauce by cooking them over medium heat until they pop, then cool. Taste-test with a drizzle over anything and everything. Blueberries keep for about a week in the refrigerator; rinse and let air-dry on a clean towel before using in recipes.

Fuel for Learning & Powerful Play

Blueberries are an excellent source of Vitamin K and manganese and fiber, and a good source of Vitamin C. Wild blueberries are even richer in antioxidants, calcium, and fiber than the cultivated versions.



Climate Impact

Climate destabilization is affecting yields of lowbush blueberries along coastal Maine; their cultivated kin stand higher from the soil and can be more easily irrigated. Conventional highbush blueberry fields typically are sprayed with pesticides and herbicides to control insects, fungi, and weeds. Even wild varieties aren't necessarily pesticide-free. When possible, buy from smaller farms, choose organic varieties in season – or grow your own.

Resource Intensity

The greatest emissions are caused by the conversion of land, the continued use of that land rather than reforestation, by processes on the farm, by refrigerated transport and by plastic packaging. When possible, choose foods in season, and from smaller farms.

Blueberry Tasting

If possible, pick blueberries from bushes, and buy samples from nearby supermarkets and/or farmers' markets. Rinse thoroughly and allow to dry. Taste raw, noting aroma, color, tenderness of skin, depth of color, and crunch. Sip water and take a bit of plain cracker between tasting each variety.

In small bowls, mash a few of each variety with a fork. Try various flavorings: balsamic vinegar, a few grains of salt, a whisper of lemon zest, a drop of vanilla, a smidgen of vinaigrette, a crumble of goat cheese.

This seasoning mix can be used to bathe produce before roasting, as a seasoning for braising or simmering, and for dressing salads of fresh greens.

Use a $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ ratio, acid to oil.

Vinaigrette

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup lemon juice

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup olive oil

1 garlic clove, crushed

$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dijon mustard

Salt

Pepper

Preparation

Place ingredients in a jar with a tight-fitting lid.

Shake to combine. Store in refrigerator.

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Harvesting Nature

Pemmican

J. Townsend. writes: "Pemmican is probably the first protein bar ever in existence. The root of this super food can be traced to Indigenous Americans who recognized the value of dried meat as a safe storage method and an item that was easily transported. There is only one major drawback to the traditionally prepared pemmican. Like many other traditional dishes; they were created to be functional not flavorful....I wanted something that was light, will not spoil, and is tasty. I put my culinary brain to work and came up with this recipe of hearty healthy pemmicany deliciousness which adds some much needed flavor and additional nutrients to the traditional pemmican recipe."

Makes 7 square bars

Ingredients

For the meat and berries

- 1 pound ground venison, heated to internal temperature of 160°F
- 12 fresh sage leaves, julienned very thin
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 2 teaspoons Cajun seasoning
- 2 tablespoons Liquid Smoke
- 2 8-ounce containers blueberries

For the kale

- 1 bunch kale, washed, dried, and ends clipped
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon Cajun seasoning

For the tallow

- ½ cup coconut oil
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 teaspoon mustard seeds
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground coriander
- ¼ teaspoon whole fennel seeds

For the bar assembly

- ½ cup cornmeal
- 2 cups rolled oats

Preparation

Meat and berries

1. Set the berries aside.
2. Mix all the ingredients in a bowl
3. Form the meat into golf ball size rounds. Flatten into ¼" – ½ " patties.
4. Place the patties on sheets in a food dehydrator.
5. Add the blueberries to the dehydrator.
6. Leave in the patties and berries in the dehydrator for 4-8 hours or until thoroughly dried and are no longer spongy.
7. Break the patties into 1-inch chunks and add one by one to a food processor.
8. Process to powder.
9. Do the same with the dried berries.
10. Set both items aside.



Kale

11. Heat oven to 350 degrees.
12. Toss the kale in the olive oil.
13. Season with the Cajun Seasonings.
14. Place the kale on a baking sheet; roast for 15-20 minutes or until the leaves are crisp. Don't worry if they turn a little brown.
15. Place kale in a food processor and process to flaky consistency. Leave in processor.

Tallow

16. Heat a small pan over high heat and add the mustard seeds and fennel seeds.
17. Toast the seeds in the pan for about 2 minutes, or until fragrant, while stirring constantly.
18. Place the toasted seeds in a mortar; grind with pestle to a fine consistency.
19. Bring a saute pan to medium heat.
20. Add the coconut oil and all of the spices.
21. Cook for about 1 minute so that the spices can infuse in the oil.
22. Remove from heat and sit the pan aside.

Assemble the bars

23. Toast oats in dry skillet over medium heat for 5-7 minutes, stirring constantly, until they reach a light golden brown and develop a nutty aroma. Remove from heat and scatter on a baking sheet to cool. Wipe skillet with paper towel, then place cornmeal into hot skillet and return to stove. Let heat for 30 seconds, then stir constantly until the cornmeal deepens in color and begins smelling toasted. Remove promptly from heat; scatter on another baking sheet to cool.
24. Add the venison/blue berry powder mixture to the flaked kale in the food processor.
25. Process ingredients until thoroughly mixed.
26. Keep the processor running and slowly add the spiced coconut oil to the processor, then add the toasted, cooled cornmeal. Process until homogenous.
27. Remove the mixture from the processor and place on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper
28. Lay another piece of parchment paper atop the mixture. Flatten with a rolling pin to about ½ inch.
29. Cut into 2" x 3" bars or shape into round patties
30. Roll the patties in toasted oats.

<https://harvestingnature.com/2014/10/22/wild-venison-kale-and-blue-berry-pemmican-bars/>



North American Blueberry Council

Sautauthig (Cornmeal Blueberry Mush)

"Pronounced sawí-taw-teeg), a simple pudding made with dried, crushed blueberries, dried, cracked corn, and water. Later, the settlers added milk, butter and sugar when they were available."

Serves 6

Ingredients

1½ cups water

1½ cups milk

¾ cup cornmeal or quick cooking grits

½ teaspoon salt

3 tablespoons maple syrup or honey

2 cups fresh, frozen or canned blueberries or ½ cup dried blueberries

Preparation

1. In a blender, puree the chopped blueberries with the bread, garlic, sherry vinegar and ½ cup of water at high In a 2-quart saucepan heat water and milk until bubbles form around edge of pan.
2. Stirring constantly, slowly add cornmeal or grits and salt until well combined.
3. Reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer, until thickened, about 10 minutes, stirring occasionally.
4. Stir in maple syrup or honey until well combined.
5. Gently stir in blueberries.

<https://northcarolinablueberries.com/385/a-blueberry-favorite-at-the-first-thanksgiving/>



The New York Times

Jordan Marsh's Blueberry Muffins

This is an adaptation from Esther Howland's 1847 cookbook, "The New England Economical Housekeeper, and Family Receipt Book."

Serves 12

Ingredients

½ cup softened butter
1¼ cups sugar
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups flour
½ teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons baking powder
½ cup milk
2 cups blueberries, washed, drained and picked over
3 teaspoons sugar

Preparation

1. Preheat the oven to 375.
2. Cream the butter and sugar until light.
3. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition. Add vanilla.
4. Sift together the flour, salt and baking powder, and add to the creamed mixture alternately with the milk.
5. Crush ½ cup blueberries with a fork, and mix into the batter. Fold in the remaining whole berries.
6. Line a 12 cup standard muffin tin with cupcake liners, and fill with batter. Sprinkle the 3 teaspoons sugar over the tops of the muffins, and bake for about 30-35 minutes.
7. Remove muffins from tin and cool at least 30 minutes. Store, uncovered, or the muffins will be too moist the second day.

<https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/2868-jordan-marshs-blueberry-muffins>



Ham El-Waylly

Roasted Chicken Thighs With Blueberries

This easy roasted chicken dinner packs a bright, puckery blueberry punch. The whole-grain mustard gives the sauce spice and a satisfying pop that plays off the jammy blueberries. Patting the thighs dry and starting them in a cold pan allows the skin plenty of time to render brown and crisp. The most important thing is to ensure the skins are getting full contact with the skillet's surface. (If thighs are large and crowd a medium pan, use a large skillet instead, so they brown rather than steam.) Save any leftover sauce as a mustardy sandwich condiment.

Serves 4

Ingredients

4 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs (about 1½ pounds total)
Kosher salt and freshly cracked black pepper
6 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
1 tablespoon ground coriander
1 teaspoon hot paprika
3 cups fresh blueberries (about 18 ounces)
3 tablespoons whole-grain mustard, plus more to taste
1 tablespoon honey
Extra-virgin olive oil, for drizzling
½ cup picked tarragon leaves, roughly chopped
Crusty bread, for serving

Preparation

1. Heat oven to 400 degrees. Use a paper towel to pat the chicken thighs dry; generously season them all over with salt.
2. Place the thighs skin side down in a medium or large oven-safe skillet, making sure the pan is large enough to avoid crowding. Turn the heat to medium and cook, undisturbed, until the fat on the chicken skin has rendered, the thighs release easily from the pan and the skin is a golden brown with splotches of dark brown, about 15 minutes. Flip the thighs over and cook until the other side is golden brown, about 5 minutes.
3. Transfer the chicken to a plate, setting it skin side up. Return the skillet to medium heat, add the garlic and ½ cup of water, and scrape up any browned bits with a stiff spatula or wooden spoon. Simmer until water has mostly evaporated, about 2 minutes. Add the coriander and paprika and cook until fragrant, about 1 minute. Add the blueberries, mustard, honey and a large pinch of salt. Stir to combine, then bring to a simmer. Place the thighs on top, skin side up, pressing gently to nestle them into the sauce.
4. Transfer the skillet to the oven and cook until the blueberries have burst and the thighs are cooked through, 15 to 20 minutes. Finish with freshly cracked black pepper and a drizzle of olive oil. Taste the sauce and season with salt, pepper and mustard.
5. Garnish with tarragon and serve alongside thick slices of crusty bread.

<https://cooking.nytimes.com/recipes/1024046-roasted-chicken-thighs-with-blueberries>



Aube Giroux, Kitchen Vignettes

Creamy Wild Blueberry Frozen Yogurt

4 servings

Ingredients

2 cups creamy full-fat Greek yogurt

1 cup fresh wild blueberries, washed and dried on a towel, (or 2 cups frozen)

1 teaspoon vanilla

Dash salt

¼ cup cane sugar or maple syrup

¼ cup heavy cream

Preparation

1. If using frozen blueberries: cook the thawed blueberries and sugar in a small saucepan, simmer-ing for about 10 minutes or until much of the water has evaporated and the sugar has created a light syrup. You should end up with 1 cup of blueberries and syrup (half of what you started with). Allow this mixture to cool before adding to the yogurt and vanilla and blending in a food processor until smooth.
2. Place all the ingredients except the cream in a food processor. Blend until smooth. Taste and if needed, add a bit more sugar or maple syrup to suit your taste. Blend a bit more to dissolve the sugar.
3. Strain the now-smooth mixture using a fine mesh strainer and a wooden spoon to obtain a less pulpy consistency (optional).
4. If you have an ice cream maker, cool the mixture to 45F and churn according to the manufacturer's instructions.
5. If you don't have an ice cream maker, pour the mixture into ice cube trays or a large metal cake pan. (Spreading the mixture out thinly on a wide surface area or using ice cube trays helps it freeze more quickly which prevents ice crystal formations). Freeze for at least 4 hours and up to 24 hours, until solid.
6. Remove from freezer, and let the mixture warm slowly by leaving it on the counter for about 10 to 15 minutes. (If necessary, you can dip the bottom of ice cube tray or pan quickly in warm water to loosen). If you used a baking pan, break up the mixture into smaller chunks, using a bread knife or a wooden spatula. Place the "ice cubes" or chunks into the bowl of a food processor and blend until the chunks break up into small sandy bits.
7. While keeping the food processor running, slowly pour in the heavy cream in a steady stream. Gradually the mixture will form a creamy ball with the perfect consistency. Immediately stop blending and serve. If you've taken it too far and the frozen yogurt has become too soft, simply refreeze it for another 20 minutes before serving. If you freeze it again for a long period of time, it will harden and you will need to either let it soften on the counter again or repeat the food processor and cream process.

<https://www.pbs.org/food/recipes/creamy-wild-blueberry-frozen-yogurt>



Saveur magazine

Willie's Crisp

Make this crisp with a mix of fresh berries—whatever's in season. Blueberries, huckleberries, raspberries—red, black, or golden. Currants—black or red. Boysenberries, blackberries – or any good berries that might grow wild down the road.

Serves 4-6

Ingredients

For the crust

- 1 cup flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 egg, beaten

For the filling

- 5-6 cups berries, cleaned and stemmed
- ½-¾ cups sugar to sweeten fruit to taste
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 stick (¼ pound) butter, melted

Preparation

1. Preheat the oven to 375°. Generously butter an oval or square baking dish, about 8" × 8" × 2".
2. For the crust: Combine flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt in a large mixing bowl. Stir to mix the dry ingredients thoroughly. Make a well in the center of the dry ingredients and add the beaten egg. Stir mixture with a fork until it gets crumbly, the consistency of cornmeal. If mixture is too dry, add a little more of another beaten egg.
3. For the filling: Place the berries into another large mixing bowl. Stir the sugar and flour together, then sprinkle over the fruit and carefully toss until it coats the fruit thoroughly.
4. Pour the berries into the buttered baking dish and spread evenly, and pat them gently with your hands.
5. Sprinkle the crumbly flour mixture evenly over the top of the fruit. Drizzle the melted butter evenly over it. Place in the oven and bake about 40 minutes, or until the topping is golden.
6. Serve warm with whipped cream or ice cream. Or serve at room temperature, and the crust will have absorbed even more of the berries' juices.

<https://www.saveur.com/article/Recipes/Willies-Crisp/>



Manjula Bharath, Desi Fiesta

Rasam with Blueberries

Nikhita Venugopal, of Taste Cooking, writes in "India's Peppery Comfort:" "An early description of rasam, according to the late Indian food historian K.T. Achaya, came from Niccolao Manucci, an Italian who came to India in 1654 and spent the next six decades there. "[T]hey sup a concoction which is some water boiled with pepper."... Some varieties are thickened with coconut, others forgo tamarind for a different souring agent, and it's sometimes sweetened with a type of cane sugar called jaggery." In this case, Manjula Bharath incorporates blueberries and uses cooked pigeon peas (toor dal) to thicken the mix. To prepare pigeon peas, sort, clean and rinse them, then soak overnight in cold water. Simmer in water, salted to taste, for about 30-45 minutes. Or scoop out a couple of tablespoons from last night's dinner if you thought ahead and made Toor Dal: <https://www.seriousseats.com/toor-dal-recipe-8737547>

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon ghee
- ½ teaspoon mustard seeds
- ½ teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 sprig curry leaves
- 1 whole red chili
- 2 cloves minced garlic
- 1½ cups blueberries
- 2 tablespoons toor dal (cooked)
- 1 tablespoon tamarind paste
- ½ teaspoon chili powder
- 2 tablespoons ground rasam
- ¼ teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon jaggery or brown sugar
- Salt to taste
- 2 tablespoons chopped cilantro

Preparation

1. Soak pigeon peas, then simmer in water until velvety.
2. Dissolve tamarind paste in ¼ cup water, stirring to homogenize.
3. In a pan, heat oil. Add mustard seeds and cumin seeds.
4. Let them splutter then add curry leaves, whole red chilli, and minced garlic.
5. Saute until aromatic, then add the washed blueberries and cook until skins burst and juices are released.
6. Add 2-3 cups of water, the cooked mashed toor dal, the tamarind mixture, the chili powder, rasam, turmeric, cumin, and salt. Taste and adjust seasonings. Stir in jaggery.
7. Allow to return to simmer, then remove from heat. Serve as a soup or over hot rice.

<https://www.desifiesta.com/2016/08/blueberry-rasam-south-indian-rasam-wi.html>; <https://tastecooking.com/rasam-southern-indias-peppery-comfort/>

