

Cooking Smart with Summer Fruits & Vegetables

Linda J. Minges, MPH, RD, LDN
Family & Consumer Science Agent
Gaston County Center
email: linda_minges@ncsu.edu
website: gaston.ces.ncsu.edu

Cooking Smart Recipe Ideas

- [Fruits & Veggies for Better Health](#)
- Growers Associations
 - **blackberries/raspberries** - [North American Raspberry & Blackberry Association](#)
 - **blueberries** - [US Highbush Blueberry Council](#)
 - **peaches** - [SC Peach Council](#)
- [Med Instead of Meds](#)
- [MyPlate](#)
- [NC 10 Percent](#)
- [Oregon Raspberries & Blackberries](#)

Blackberries & Raspberries



Seasonal Availability



- June to July
- Fresh summer berries can be enjoyed eaten freshly picked or frozen for multiple uses throughout the year

Eating Smart with Berries: Blackberries & Raspberries

- High in vitamin C
- Excellent source of potassium
- Good source of folate
- Low calorie (one cup raw ~ about 60 calories)
- Contains antioxidants - may help to reduce cancer risk, prevent UTIs, boost immunity, and more



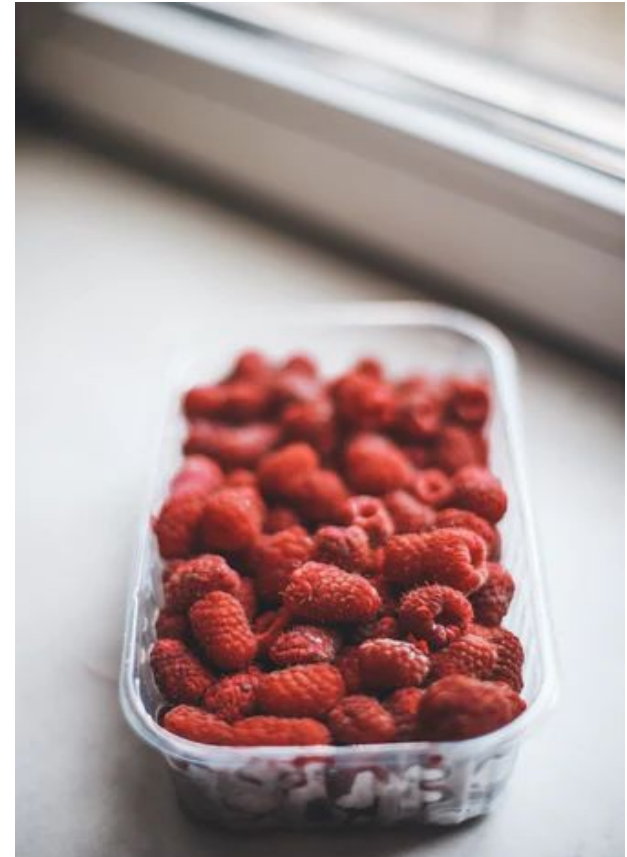
Selection Tips: Raspberries



- Berries do not ripen once picked
- Select plump, tender berries
 - not mushy or immature and without mold
- Protect from direct sunlight once picked

Storage Tips: Raspberries

- Store in refrigerator until ready to use
- Use berries within 1 to 2 days
- Do not wash until ready to use
- Place berries in colander and swirl gently in stream of water



Selection Tips: Blackberries

- Ripe berries are deep black and dull in color
- Small to medium berries have better flavor than larger berries dependent on variety of berry
- Protect from direct sunlight once picked



Storage Tips: Blackberries



- Store in refrigerator until ready to use
- Use berries within 2-3 days
- Do not wash until ready to use
- Place berries in colander and submerge in sink of cold water

Freezing Tips

- Select fully-ripe, firm berries
- Wash, drain and dry
- Remove stems
- Pack using one of following methods:
 - Dry Pack
 - Sugar Pack
 - Syrup Pack

(See [Freezing Guide](#) for details)



Canning Tips



- Use tested recipe
- Blackberries and raspberries can be safely canned in water-bath canner
- Jams & Jellies - determine if using added pectin

For complete details:

[Jams & Jellies Guide](#)

[Canning Fruit](#)

Smart Summer Cooking with Blackberries and Raspberries

- Salads
- Cold soups
- Bake
- Smoothies
- Sauces

Recipe Ideas

- [Blackberry Lemon Scones](#)
- [Berry Overnight Oats](#)
- [Blackberry Winter Salad in a Jar](#)
- [Raspberry Chipotle Roasted Chicken](#)
- Summertime Fruit Salad*

Blueberries



Seasonal Availability



- June to July
- Fresh summer berries can be enjoyed eaten freshly picked or frozen for multiple uses throughout the year

Eating Smart with Blueberries

- Great source of vitamin C, vitamin K and manganese
- High in fiber - 5 grams per cup
- Low calorie (one cup raw - about 80 calories)
- Ranked high in antioxidants



Selection

- Plump, firm, dry and free of leaves and stems
- Color indicates a berry's ripeness, not size
- Skin should be smooth and deep purple-blue with a silvery-white bloom



Storage

- Store fresh blueberries covered in refrigerator and use within 10 days
- Wash blueberries just before serving



Freezing Tips

- Select fully-ripe, firm berries
- Wash, drain and dry
- Remove stems
- Dry pack most common

(See [Freezing Guide](#) for details)



Canning Tips



- Use tested recipe
- Blueberries can be safely canned in water-bath canner
- Jams & Jellies - determine if using added pectin

For complete details:

[Jams & Jellies Guide](#)

[Canning Fruit](#)

Smart Summer Cooking with Blueberries

- Salads
- Cold soups
- Bake
- Smoothies
- Sauces

Recipe Ideas

- [Blueberry Cucumber Salad](#)
- [Banana Granita with Blueberries](#)
- [Thai Chicken Salad Wrap with Blueberries](#)
- Lemon Blueberry Chicken Salad*

Corn



Seasonal Availability



- June to August
- Enjoy fresh, frozen, and canned

Eating Smart with Corn

- One medium ear - about 90 calories
- Good source vitamin C
- No “protective” effect like many other vegetables



Selection

- Choose ears with green husks, fresh silks
- Tight rows of kernels



Storage



- Store fresh corn with husks on in refrigerator
- Use fresh corn in 1 to 2 days

Freezing Tips

- Select tender, freshly-gathered corn
- Husk and trim the ears, remove silks and wash
- Freezing options:
 - on the cob
 - whole kernel
 - cream style

(See [Freezing Guide](#) for details)



Canning Tips



- Select tender, freshly-gathered corn
- Must be canned in pressure canner to ensure safety
- Cream style or whole kernel

(See [Canning Vegetables](#) for complete instructions.)

Smart Summer Cooking Tips with Corn

- Grill
- Microwave
- Roast
- Saute
- Soup/Stew
- Steam
- Stir-fry

Recipe Ideas

- [Summer Green Bean Salad](#)
- [Avocado Salad](#)
- [Black Bean Salsa](#)
- Corn and Okra Creole*

Eggplant



Seasonal Availability

Available year round
Peak: July to October



Eating Smart with Eggplant



- Fiber
- Potassium
- Copper
- Thiamin
- Folate
- Magnesium
- Niacin
- High in oxalates
- One-half cup raw ~ about 11 calories

Selection

Selection Tips:

- Heavy, firm with unblemished skin
- Smaller eggplants tend to be sweeter
- Press your finger lightly against the skin
 - if it leaves a light imprint, it is ripe

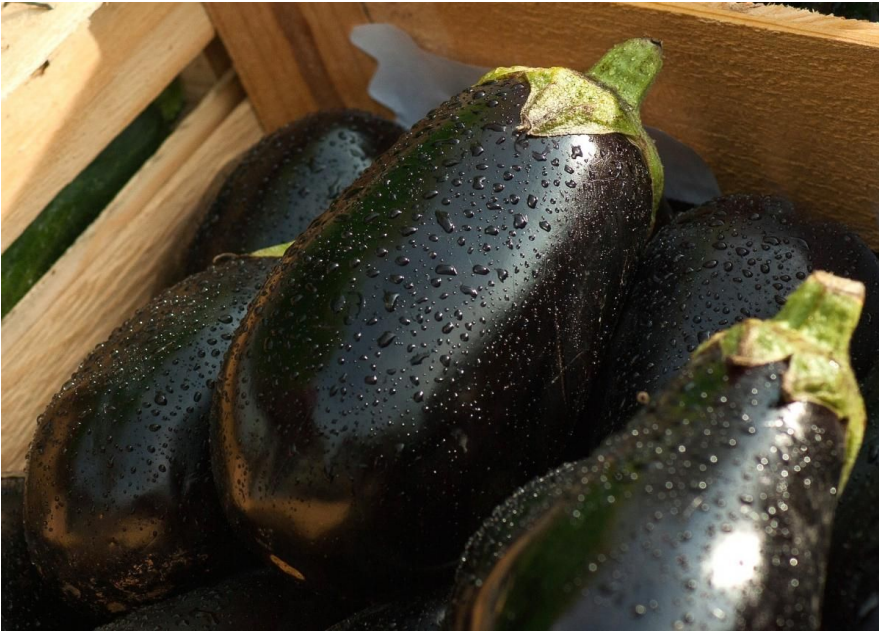


Storage

Storage Tips:

- Can be stored in perforated plastic bags in refrigerator for several days
- Can be frozen
- No guidelines for canning

(See [Freezing Guide](#) for details)



Preparation

- Wash just before using
 - cut off cap and stem
- Eggplant should not eaten raw
- May be cooked with or without its skin
- Undercooked eggplant can have a chewy texture; overcooked eggplant is very soft



Smart Summer Cooking with Eggplant

- Bake
- Broil
- Grill
- Stew
- Microwave
- Soups/salads

*Eggplant is most often paired with tomatoes or onions

Recipe Ideas

- [Easy Eggplant Stir-fry](#)
- [Roasted Squash and Eggplant Casserole with Chicken](#)
- [Grilled Eggplant and Blackbean Dip](#)
- Oven Fried Eggplant*



Peaches

Seasonal Availability



Available May to
September in the
Carolinas

Eating Smart with Peaches

- Good source of vitamin C and potassium
- Source of vitamin A
- One raw medium peach has ~ 50 calories



Selection/Storage Tips



- Choose peaches with firm, fuzzy skins that yield to gentle pressure when ripe
- Avoid blemishes
- Store unripe peaches in paper bag
- When ripe, store at room temperature for use within 1-2 days

Freezing Tips

- Select well-ripened fruit
 - Handle carefully to avoid bruising
 - Sort, wash and peel
 - Ascorbic acid (or commercial brand product) used to prevent browning
- (See [Freezing Guide](#) for details)



Canning Tips

- Yellow peaches - suitable for canning
- White peaches - freezing is recommended instead of canning



(See [Canning Peaches](#) for details)

Smart Summer Cooking with Peaches

- Bake
- Cold soups
- Grill
- Microwave
- Salads
- Smoothies
- Sauces

Recipe Ideas

- [Browned Butter Grilled Peaches with Cinnamon](#)
- [Tuna Fish Tacos](#)
- [Peach Raspberry Smoothie Bowl](#)
- [Honey Dijon Chicken with Peach Salsa](#)



Summer Squash & Zucchini

Eating Smart with Summer Squash

- High in vitamin C
- One-half cup of raw zucchini contains ~ 9 calories



Selection/Storage Tips



- Firm with shiny, tender rinds
- Avoid squash that has injury, pitting or dull rinds
- Smaller zucchini have a firmer texture because they have a lower water content
- Plan to use in 3 to 4 days

Freezing Tips

Choose fresh, young squash with tender skin.

(See [Freezing Summer Squash](#) for details)



Smart Summer Cooking with Summer Squash

- Bake
- Microwave
- Stew
- Substitute for pasta
- Grill
- Roast
- Saute

Recipe Ideas

- [Oven-Roasted Vegetables](#)
- [Sauteed Squash & Onions](#)
- [Simple Stir Fry](#)
- [Squash Nut Sweetbread](#)

Okra



Seasonal Availability

Available May
to September



Eating Smart with Okra



- Excellent source of vitamin C
- Good source of folate, magnesium, and fiber
- Low in calories - one cup ~ about 33 calories
- Fat-free

Selection

- Select dry, firm, okra
- Medium to dark green in color
- Blemish-free



Storage



- Should be used same day of purchase or store in paper bag in "warmest" part of refrigerator for 2 to 3 days
- Severe cold temperature will speed up decay
- Do not wash until ready to use - it will become slimy

Freezing

- Select young tender pods and separate into small and large pods.
- Wash and remove stems at the end - be careful not to exposed the seed cell.



(See [Freezing Okra](#) for details)

Canning Tips



- Select young tender pods
- Pickled okra - safe for water bath canner
- Canned okra - must be canned in pressure canner

(See [Canning Vegetables](#) and [Pickled Dill Okra](#) for complete instructions.)

Smart Summer Cooking with Okra

- Steam
- Saute
- Boil
- Pickle
- Stir-fry
- Roast
- Bake
- Stew/soup

*Okra is a sensitive vegetable and should not be cooked in pans made of iron, copper or brass since the chemical properties turns okra black.

Recipe Ideas

- Okra and Green Beans*
- Okra with Rice and Beans*
- [Okra with Tomatoes](#)
- [Okra and Greens](#)