

Berries- Summer's Special Treat.

As strawberries and blueberries, blackberries and other regional berries come into season across much of the United States in May, June, and July, we have an opportunity to delight in this abundance. You don't want to waste a single bite of these sweet, juicy berries, so I've gathered some tips for selecting and storing your berries. And we know that berries are super healthy.

Make desserts with fiber. Berries, oats, seeds, nuts.

Think fresh, creamy, crunchy.

- Ideally, buy local. Berries that have been bred are quite different from the small, more fragile, and super sweet berries.
- Look for berries with a bright color.
- Don't worry about shape.
- Don't worry about size.
- Buy organic whenever possible. Strawberries are high on EWG's Dirty Dozen list.
- As soon as you get the berries home, check for any that may be soft or moldy and discard. One bad berry will ruin the whole bunch!
- Wash berries just before using them, lest they become mushy or moldy.
- Leaving the stems on strawberries until you're ready to use them use the stems to make strawberry-scented water.

As for where to store berries, it all depends on when you plan to use them:

- If you plan to eat them the day you buy them, wash, dry and store them on the countertop.
- Refrigerated berries should be used in 3-4 days: I put the picked over berries, unwashed in a tea towel lined container, loosely covered.
- For longer storage, wash and pat dry, and store in covered glass jars (such as mason jars) in the fridge. I have had berries last several weeks using this method.
- For even longer storage. freeze in a single layer on a flat pan until solid. Then, store in an airtight container in the freezer for up to several months.

Making fruit desserts

- The amount of added sweetener needed when making fruit desserts depends on the relative sweetness of the fruit. Less is more, let the fruit be the main event. Citrus, zest, and juice, brighten fruit desserts.
- Balsamic reduction, touch of liquid sweetener and strawberries- thyme, rosemary, basil
- Make a filling and top with a premade crumble, cornbread, cake or cookie crumbs, nuts, and seeds.
- Use a combination of fresh, frozen, or dried fruit.
- Add vegetables: zucchini and yellow squash, tomatoes, eggplant, and don't forget herbs. Thyme, rosemary, basil, chervil in addition to mint.

Lots of interesting folklore surrounds the names of early baked or cooked fruit dishes. The names are sometimes interchangeable, or the item is interpreted differently depending on the region, but the basic components remain constant: fruit filling and a quickly mixed topping. In past centuries, these items were prepared on the hearth. Today, these treats are baked in the oven or cooked on the stovetop until the fruit juices are bubbling and the toppings are set. The preparation does not require the same precision required when making cakes and pies. Mixing and matching combinations of fruit and toppings is encouraged.

- Boy Bait: A buttery version of the buckle
- Brown Betty: Fruit layered with buttered crumbs or diced bread. For a vegan version eliminate the butter, use cookie or cake crumbs, along with applesauce or other fruit sauce.
- Buckle: A sweet, light-textured, yellow cake with fruit baked into the batter. It also has a streusel topping. As it bakes, the cake bubbles with the fruit juices and the crumbly topping is said to look “buckled,” which is how it gets its name.
- Cobbler: Fruit fillings baked in the oven under sugar-dusted, biscuit-style dough. The fruit can also be topped with cake batter instead of the biscuit dough. Use fruit that is on the edge of becoming over-ripe and bake in a deep dish to contain the juices. Another common variation of the cobbler is one with a bottom and top of pie pastry.
- Crisp: Fruit fillings topped with a crunchy mix of flour, sugar, spices, fat and usually rolled oats and baked in the oven. Graham crackers and nuts can also be used in the topping.
- Crumble: Essentially a crisp, minus the oats, i.e. with a streusel topping. Sometimes you will find that the names crumble and crisp are used interchangeably. Bake a fruit filling topped with granola for a contemporary twist.
- Dowdy: A fruit filling with a top crust that is baked, much like a cobbler, but the crust is “dowdied,” or broken up and mixed into the fruit and cooked a little longer to insure that the crust pieces are fully cooked.
- Duff: A topping of egg white-leavened batter is spooned over cooked stone fruit, then baked.
- Pandowdy: A deep-dish fruit filling sweetened with molasses or brown sugar.
- Slump and Grunt: Different names for the same desserts, these are fruit fillings cooked in a tightly covered skillet on the stovetop under a layer of soft biscuit or dumpling batter. As the fruit bubbles in the skillet, the steaming dough or batter “slumps” down, thus giving the dessert its name. Some say the fruit makes a grunting noise as it stews, hence the other name. For this to happen, the fruit filling contains more liquid than the other desserts. A slump or grunt was popular in the summertime because the oven wasn’t necessary. In only 15 minutes of cooking time, you could have a delicious dessert.
- Sonker: A baked, deep-dish dessert with a pastry or batter topping from areas of North Carolina. The filling can be any available fruit as well as rhubarb or sweet potato.

Nondairy Cashew Cream, Fruit paste sweetened

I've added Strawberries to Date Sweetened Cashew Cream. The number of (pitted) dates and berries varies depending on the relative sweetness of these fruits and your palate.

This Live Event features a Mango-Lime Cashew Cream, made using hydrated dried mangos and lime.

Cashew Cream Recipe | a Template

Use dates or another dried fruit to make a no-sugar added cream.

Raw Cashews	1 cup	142g	soaked, drained
Dried Mango	2oz	60g	enough water to cover, hydrate until soft/ save the soaking water
Plant milk	2oz	60ml	Oat, almond, soy
Fresh lime juice		2-3T,	more to taste

Method

- Put mango into a small bowl. Add enough water to cover the mango but an inch.
- Hydrate until very soft.
- Drain, reserving the soaking liquid.
- Put drained cashews and drained mango to high-speed blender.
- Add ¼ cup /2 oz of the mango soaking water and the plant milk to the blender.
- Blend starting on low, the increase to high. Use the pusher as needed. Add a small amount more liquid only if needed.
- Taste and adjust flavor, adding more fruit or lime.
- Use as any sauce or in a fruit parfait.
- Freeze the cream for a sorbet like dessert.

I'm using this cream to layer with fresh mango cubes and a variety of berries plus nuts for texture. x