

# YUMMY NORTHWEST

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## Berry good

Packing a whole lot of nutrients into one small, sweet package, strawberries are a snack you don't have to worry about.

In honor of this humble berry, there are days to celebrate all year, summer festivals to attend, and many foods to eat.

Take advantage of summer to search out local berries that fade quickly but taste sublime. You can buy strawberries all year, but you won't taste any as nice as those grown in the Pacific Northwest summer.



## Strawberry joy

Washington and Oregon strawberries are a real treat but getting harder to find each year. Stiff competition from California and Florida, which can produce berries most of the year, has meant declining production in the Pacific Northwest.

Before World War II, strawberry farms dotted the area around Puget Sound. Oregon held onto acreage until 1993 but is fast losing its grip.

Still, Pacific Northwest strawberries, particularly small, red, intensely flavorful Oregon berries, represent a spunky one percent of the U.S. domestic market. Since they do not ship well, most local commercial berries are frozen or processed into puree to be added to other foods.

### What's in 'em

High in fiber (did you notice all those seeds wrapped around the outside?), vitamin C (8 berries contain as much as an orange), and antioxidants, and supplying many B vitamins and healthful amino acids, strawberries are just plain good for you.

### Select 'em

Strawberries are best fresh, but delicious



## Celebrate strawberries

**National Strawberry Ice Cream Day**  
January 15

**National Strawberry Month**  
May

**National Strawberry-Rhubarb Pie Day**  
June 9

**National Strawberry Day**  
June 14

**National Strawberry Sundae Day**  
June 25

**National Strawberry Shortcake Day**  
July 7



alternatives can be frozen, dried, and even covered in chocolate or stirred into ice cream. Check the shelves of your local store.

Fresh ones should be free of mold and smell like real berries. Strawberries will not ripen after they are picked, but they do start to deteriorate almost immediately. Size does not matter. Their taste depends on ripeness and how much sun they got.

Local berries are grown for flavor, whereas those shipped from California or Florida are picked when half ripe and treated with a carbon dioxide solution to prevent spoilage and are tough to endure much handling and many days on the road. You will not find them very flavorful.

### Store 'em

Vine-ripened berries will last a day or two, refrigerated or not, so if you want them fresh, you'll have to eat them right away. Berries shipped from far away will last 4 to 5 days.

Don't wash strawberries until you use them. Wash them whole, then remove the hull. If you can, set them out in the sun until warm to enhance the taste.

### Buy 'em

I used to think I was sensitive to strawberries. I ate them with gusto, but the next day my nose would be stuffed and I'd spend several hours in misery

Then I enjoyed some organic strawberries and was surprised to feel no aftereffects. Apparently, I am sensitive to some pesticide not the berry itself.

Strawberries are one of the 12 most contaminated fruits and vegetables you can eat. With as many as 36 pesticides found on a single berry, you're better off hunting down an organic source.

Visit farmers markets and ask farmers about their berries if a sign isn't already posted. Go to produce stands such as Carpinito Brothers in Kent, or natural foods stores, like Greenfresh in Renton where, if you shop early in the day, you might get them right off the truck from a local farmer.

## “Strawberry” festival

It doesn't seem possible to have a strawberry festival without strawberries, but that's what Burien, Wash., tried to do this year.

At the annual Burien Strawberry and Arts Festival on June 23 and 24 you could find plenty of arts, including jewelry and woodworking for sale at a variety of booths, music and dancing on two stages, and even amazing feats of daring at a skateboard contest.

But you had to look hard for strawberries. Tucked under trees in a quiet corner, a fundraiser for the arts center included one table selling strawberry shortcake.

A lone farmer from Frog's Song Farm near Mount Vernon sold organic berries – at a fast pace once festivalgoers realized this was the only place to get berries.



Tillamook strawberries in pint containers tower over the Shuksan variety in half pints, courtesy of Frog's Song Farm, Mount Vernon, Wash.

And if you were lucky, you met the Strawberry Lady, who wandered the paths on Saturday festively attired with strawberry-themed clothing and jewelry. She has been attending the festival for 35 years and this was the first time she had to ask herself where all the strawberries were.

In years past, Burien had many strawberry farms, and an annual celebration was in keeping with the agricultural spirit that nurtured its inhabitants.

But the strawberry fields are gone now.

## A festival near you

Not all strawberry festivals will be actively celebrating the berry, but don't be afraid to attend any and all you hear about. There is always something to enjoy.

**July 13, 14, and 15**  
Strawberry Festival  
Vashon Island, Wash.

**Past**  
(get ready for next year!)

All of these are in June:

Bellevue, Wash.

Billings, Mont.

Burien, Wash.

Burlington, Wash. (Berry Dairy Days)

Lebanon, Ore. (“home of the world's largest strawberry shortcake”)

Marysville, Wash.

St. Paul, Ore. (French Prairie Farms Strawberry Festival)

Silverton, Ore. (Silverton Hills Strawberry Festival)

To find more strawberry festivals, go to [www.pickyourown.org/strawberryfestivals.php](http://www.pickyourown.org/strawberryfestivals.php).



Coco Counts, known as the Strawberry Lady, models her festive attire.

Sadly, it seems that not even memories remain. Next year, perhaps, there will be only a Burien Arts Festival, and people will dance and sing on the land that once produced luscious berries for the region.



## Strawberry fizz

Mash 4 to 5 fresh, sweet strawberries. Add a bit of sugar as desired. Put in a tall glass and stir in 8 ounces of clear, fizzy drink of choice: ginger ale or champagne would be nice.



## About Yummy Northwest

Each monthly issue highlights an edible delight available in the Pacific Northwest.

## Contact the editor

Comments, corrections, topic ideas, and submissions are all most welcome at [Yummy\\_Northwest@hotmail.com](mailto:Yummy_Northwest@hotmail.com). View archives at [yummynorthwest.com](http://yummynorthwest.com).