

# BerryCare: When Blackberries and Other Berries are in Season

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**G**o outside and play. Eat your fruits and vegetables. These two pieces of advice have a wide range of health benefits. Blackberries in particular have exceptional health benefits and are a rich source of phytonutrients. Phytonutrients are naturally found in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and nuts. They decrease inflammation and protect us from a wide range of health conditions, such as cancer and heart disease. They might even protect us from pollution. Pollution is manmade and naturally formed chemicals that stay in the air, water, and soil, and are bad for human health.

When most of us think of blackberries, our mouths begin to water at the thought of cobbler and pies. But blackberries are great to eat plain by the handful! They also make great additions to savory dishes throughout the day.

All you need is one serving per day for health benefits:

When blackberries are in season, the plants produce so much fruit you might not know what to do with it all. When eating plain berries, storing, or preparing berry-containing recipes use berries that are plump, uniform in color, and look

½ cup blackberries = one serving

A one-half cup serving of raw berries contains 35 calories, has zero fat, and is a good source of potassium, vitamin C, and fiber.



fresh. Berries should be free of stems or leaves. Avoid fruit that is moldy, crushed, bruised, or contains extra moisture. Handle all berries gently. Wash berries by covering them with water and gently lifting the berries out. Remove any stems and drain on a single layer of paper towels. If the berries are not going to be used right ways then store them in the refrigerator unwashed and covered in a breathable container. Use within two days. Use this same procedure for any berries you grow or purchase—whether they are blackberries, blueberries, strawberries, or raspberries.

Eating blackberries (or other berries) raw is always a great option. Experimenting with blackberries throughout the day can add color and

interest to your favorite recipes. Try the examples here and feel inspired to add blackberries to dishes you never thought of before! You can also substitute blueberries, strawberries, or raspberries into any of the suggestions below. You can also freeze or preserve berries when they are in season so you can enjoy them – and their phytonutrient power—year round. Breakfast is a great opportunity to add blackberries to your diet.

- Top off a bowl of oatmeal or cereal.
- Add to an egg and cheese omelet.
- Mash with fresh basil leaves and honey, and add to whole-wheat toast.
- Mix with peanut butter and spread on whole-wheat toast.
- Mix with whole-wheat pancake mix and add other berries.



Breakfast might seem like the easiest time to add blackberries or other berries to a dish, but lunch can take on a new, exciting twist with some berries.

- Mix with favorite spinach salad recipe.
- Blend with oil, vinegar, and herbs for a dressing.
- Mash with fresh basil leaves and add to a grilled cheese sandwich.
- Add to soda water instead of a sugar-sweetened beverage.
- Blend with yogurt and other fruit to make a smoothie.



Blackberries and other berries can even be featured in dinner dishes. Here are new, unique ways to add some phytonutrient power to your dinner by adding blackberries.

- Mash into a sauce to top chicken or fish.
- Bake on a flatbread with cheese, greens, caramelized onions, and pears.
- Add to skewers with beef or chicken, peppers, and onions for grilled or baked shish kabobs.
- Combine with other fresh fruits and vegetables such as tomato, mango, and lime juice to create a salsa and top on tacos.
- Chop and mix with chopped tomatoes, balsamic vinegar, and salt for a fresh bruschetta.

While just a handful of raw berries might be the easiest after-dinner sweet treat, there are countless other options. See below for some of the most popular blackberry dessert ideas. Add a variety of berries to each to increase the phytonutrient content of the dessert – this can also make the dish more eye-appealing.

- Mix with your favorite muffin recipe.
- Blend with yogurt, honey, and banana, then freeze for homemade popsicles.
- Toothpick with cubed watermelon and feta cheese.
- Top on a yogurt and granola parfait.

Blackberries are fresh and in season during the mid-summer months. But this does not mean you cannot eat them year round. In addition to buying frozen berries during the winter months, you can also plan ahead and freeze your berries when they're in season.

Frozen berries are as healthy and easy to use as fresh berries. Frozen berries can be used in all the above ways (thrown into cereal, added to grilled cheese, blended into a sauce, etc.). Canning is another option, but will limit what you can do with your preserved berries.

To freeze fresh blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, or strawberries:

- Rinse, drain, and dry the berries.
- Cover a sheet pan with wax paper.
- Place blackberries in a single layer.
- Freeze for at least 2 hours.
- Store blackberries in a freezer-safe bag or container in the freezer.
- Be sure to label and date the container.

Blackberries can be stored in the freezer for up to 6 months. For more information on freezing berries, check out the Cooperative Extension Publication FCS3-336: Freezing Fresh Fruits.



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