

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Strawberry season is definitely here! The Strawberry Festival has come and gone all ready. But there are still plenty of juicy red berries being picked daily. So please, take advantage of our local bounty and enjoy some soon. Unless you are one of the unfortunate ones who are allergic to strawberries, what reason could there be for not adding them to your plate? Strawberries are no longer limited to shortcakes, milkshakes and glazed pies. They have definitely entered today's mixed flavors cooking world.

If you prefer to keep the berries sweet and in the dessert category, there are still lots of unusual options. From strawberry fudge to strawberry cakes, there are flans, cobblers, dumplings, buckles, flans, cookies, muffins and breads in between. But for the really exotic, try strawberry enchiladas, burritos, or roasted berries with chocolate filling. You can dry sliced berries to make strawberry chips to flavor cereal or dip in chocolate sauce.

Even good old strawberry jelly is catching the new flavors trend. Strawberry orange jam is delicious, but it is old all ready. At the Strawberry Festival one entry in the Home Canned Goods section in the Neighborhood Village was a Strawberry Jalapeño Jam! My tastebuds can imagine it on some mild cheese, or as a glaze for grilled chicken or salmon, even if I didn't want it on the breakfast toast.

You can no longer say that you don't like them because they are too sweet.

Strawberries are now showing up in the most unusual places. There are dozens of recipes for Strawberry Salsa! The delicious berry taste is being used to balance onions, jalapeño peppers and cilantro! There are salsa recipes that use mint, rum, black, chili, green or red peppers, orange juice or orange liqueur, lime juice or zest, brandy, cider or balsamic vinegar or a dozen other ingredients. These mixtures are slightly sweet, yes, but also zesty, tart, biting or peppery. They are intended for use along with grilled fish, chicken or pork, even crab cakes or in fish tacos.

Strawberries are finding a place in many more salads than the traditional fruit salad mixtures too. Most of us have probably tasted a spinach, strawberry and pecan salad, they're almost common. And strawberry jello salads come from Grandmother's cookbook. But have you had a turkey, pasta and strawberry salad yet? Or a strawberry and mozzarella salad drizzled with an oil and mint dressing? Strawberry nachos, or strawberries and spaghetti? The dressing can be strawberry too, orange or lavender if you prefer.

Maybe you want strawberry soup to salad? Here again, the adventuresome cooks of the country are leading us down some unusual paths. The more common strawberry soup is based on cream or yogurt, with pureed berries and sugar. But how about trying a strawberry gazpacho? This is very like its more traditional version, but now it includes strawberries along with the tomatoes, garlic, cucumbers and peppers. It's topped with shredded jicama and crumbled goat cheese.

If you want to go searching on the web for recipes, just put Strawberry Recipes in your search box and you'll get thousands of choices, from strawberry growers' associations to recipe collectors.

A 16 oz clamshell package of whole berries will give you about 3 cups of whole, sliced or quartered berries. Six or 7 large berries makes about 1 cup. And one 16 oz clamshell will yield about 1 3/4 cups of pureed or crushed berries for jam.

For a slightly different but not too exotic use of strawberries, here's a strawberry salad dressing. You can use it on spinach or fresh green salad, even fruit salad. Enjoy!

Pink Strawberry Dressing

1 cup (6-7) fresh whole strawberries	2 Tbsp virgin olive oil
1/4 tsp salt	2 Tbsp vinegar, white or balsamic
1 Tbsp chopped fresh basil	1 Tbsp water
pinch ground black pepper	

Rinse berries and remove leafy caps. Combine all ingredients in blender or food processor. Puree until smooth. Will keep refrigerated for 3 days. Makes about 1/2 cup, or enough for salad for 6 people.

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