

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Blue is for Health

Put a Rainbow on your plate! That's one of the easy ways to remember what to eat to keep you healthy. The reds and yellows are easy to get. So are the greens. There aren't quite as many blues to choose from. But hopefully the first blue that comes to mind is BLUEBERRIES.

Blueberries are packed with nutrients, ones you can see and ones you can't. Since when can you see a nutrient? When it's bright blue! The pigment that gives blueberries their color and their name is responsible for a lot of their health value. That pigment has the chemical name of anthocyanin. Besides being a color, it's an antioxidant. It traps free oxygen floating around in our cells doing damage. In that way blueberries help protect us from cancers, probably from hardening of the arteries and other inflammation-related diseases.

Another good thing that keeps showing up over and over in research is that blueberries are also good at protecting our brains and our memories. Medical folks are not sure exactly how it works, but probably it's the antioxidants again. By protecting our nerve cells, they limit damage in our brains. Lab rats that are given blueberry extract can better remember where their food is in a maze. They keep exploring new areas longer than those that didn't get the blueberries. Those are signs the brain is in better shape. The blueberry extract was also found to protect rat brains against certain proteins that are part of causing Alzheimer's disease in people. In humans, people who eat about a cup of blueberries a day have better motor skills than those who don't. That means they can keep writing, tying their own shoes and other basic movements longer.

Blueberries in the diet also lead, at least in studies, to lower cholesterol and blood sugar. How they're connected isn't clear yet, but they're just another reason to eat more berries.

If all that isn't enough reason to eat blueberries, there's more. They're low in calories (just 80 a cup), with fiber and water to help fill you up. They have no sodium, but do have potassium. Potassium is one of the 3 minerals that help keep our blood pressure under control, counterbalancing the effects of too much sodium. And they have folate, a vitamin that also helps protect our

brains and nervous systems.

And of course they have a delicious sweet taste hiding under that bright blue skin. Put one in your mouth, press down and feel the sweetness pop. Add some to your pancakes for breakfast, your muffin for lunch, and on top of your vanilla yogurt for dessert tonight for dinner.

There's no big difference between wild blueberries and cultivated ones, so use whichever is easiest to find. Canned berries are fine too. But do stick to real berries. Many of the blue drinks, blueberry flavored beverages, cookies and other items are more flavoring and coloring than they are berries. Spend your money on the real thing. A powdery look to them is perfectly safe. That's the natural wax that keeps their juices in. But a button of white fluff on one end means mold. Pitch it!

If you take advantage of a u-pick farm, or just find a great deal on blueberries somewhere, get extras. They freeze just fine. There's just one trick to freezing blueberries. Just do not wash them before they go in the freezer! Washing them before freezing will have them coming out of the freezer tough and chewy. Freeze them dry, then wash them before you use them.

This recipe is called a pancake, but it doesn't look like a regular pancake at all. You can serve it for dessert or breakfast. It's filled with blueberries and bananas, but you could use other fruits if you wish. Blueberries and peaches would be delicious.

Dutch Pancake with Blueberries and Bananas

1 Tbsp margarine	½ cup skim or 1% milk
3 eggs or equivalent liquid egg	1/3 cup all purpose flour
3 Tbsp sugar	1 ½ cup fresh or frozen blueberries
¼ tsp ground cinnamon	1 small sliced banana

Preheat oven to 450° F. Melt margarine in 9-inch baking dish and swirl to coat bottom evenly. Whisk milk and eggs together to blend. Whisk in flour and 1 Tbsp sugar until smooth. Pour into hot baking dish, bake 8 minutes. Wash fresh berries or drain frozen thawed berries. Reduce heat to 375° F and bake 8-10 minutes longer, until sides are puffy and top is golden. Sprinkle remaining sugar and cinnamon over berries, mix gently. Scatter banana over pancake, then top with berries. Cut in wedges and serve hot. Garnish with a dab of fat free vanilla yogurt if desired. Serves 4.

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