**Blackberry Bliss**

*August 2018*

1. **What is a Blackberry**
2. The Blackberry’s botanical name is *Rubus fruticosus.* It is a sweet and succulent fruit that belongs to the same family as a raspberry and dewberry. They were always considered wild
3. They are available all year round but thrive during the spring and early summer months.
4. They grow on thorny bushes called “brambles” and are native to Europe, but are now popular in the U.S. and grown commercially here. They grow well in a wide range of soils, but need good drainage and direct sunlight.

***\*\*\*How many of you grow blackberries or have seen wild blackberry bushes?***

1. Technically, the blackberry is just not one fruit. If you look at one berry, you will see that each has about 80-100 small druplets that are arranged in a circular fashion…kind of like a small bunch of grapes. However, each berry has a juicy pulp, a tiny single seed, and measures 3 to 4 cm long.
2. Their sweet, tart flavor, makes them the perfect addition to salads or smoothies…or just eaten by themselves! We usually see this fruit used in a wide variety of desserts such as crisps, cobblers, jellys, ice cream, and more. However, they can be used in savory dishes paired with a meat protein to.

\*\*\*\****Has anyone ever tried incorporating blackberries into their main entrée?***

1. **History of the Blackberry**
2. Called “bramble” in old English and “brombeere” in German, the ancient Anglo-Saxons baked brambleberries into primitive pies to celebrate the first fruit feast at the beginning of August.
3. They are native to Asia, Europe, North America, Australia, Africa, and South American and have the most widespread geographic origin of any fruit crop.
4. In 1696, the London Pharmacopoeia documented information about blackberries being used to make wine and cordials. Blackberry Pie, or crumble, and jam are sweet favorites that date back to the Pioneer days.
5. Blackberries have a long history of medicinal use as well:
	1. They have been used in Europe for over 2,000 years and are consumed as food, used for medicinal purposes, and planted as hedgerows to keep out intruders. ***(Most likely because of the thorns! – ouch!)***
	2. One way it was used as a medicine was in a syrup form – two parts blackberry juice to one part honey.
	3. Ancient Greek relied on the blackberry to treat gout 🡪 soon become popular in Europe that it was also known as the Goutberry. **(probably for all the antioxidants it contains!)**
	4. They also have been used to treat bowel problems and fevers for more than 2,000 years. The root, bark, and leaf were used for this. They were boiled in water and given as medicine for whopping cough.
	5. Other illnesses thought to be cured by the blackberry were bites from venomous creatures, boils, and sore throats. In 1771, it was documented that the blackberry would cure ulcers.
6. **Nutrition & Health Benefits of Blackberries**
7. Blackberries are considered a superfood. They are jam-packed (no pun intended) with antioxidants and vitamins that help your body fight disease. One of these vitamins is Vitamin C. A 100 g (3.5 oz) serving has 23 mg of Vitamin C which is over 1/3 of the daily recommendations. Vitamin C acts as an antioxidant in the body fighting off free radicals and protecting us again cancer and infection. Vitamin C also helps to make collagen – important in our skin and muscle health and function.
8. Blackberries are also rich in Vitamins A, B, E, and K. They have high content of the antioxidants, lutein and zeaxanthin – known to possibly fight against macular degeneration.
9. They are high in fiber like other berries. A 100 g serving contain 5.3 g of fiber – almost ¼ of the fiber that is recommended. Older adults over 50 should be consuming at least 21 g per day of fiber for a healthy heart and digestive system. More fiber also helps you feel full and eat less!
10. Blackberries are still a fruit and contain sugar, so eating them in moderation is still best, however, a better option compared to a candy bar ☺
11. The blackberry is considered an “An-tho-cy-an-nin.” These are very powerful compounds that fight against cancer, boost cognitive function, and protect against cardiovascular disease. You know you’re consuming anothcyanins when the foods you eat are a deep blue, purple and dark red. Examples of other anthocyanins: black currants, elderberries, blueberries, strawberries, red/purple grapes, red wine, sweet cherries, eggplant, black plums, blood oranges, and red cabbage.

***\*\*\*How many of these foods do you eat each week?***

1. **Storing and Preserving Blackberries**
2. How to store a blackberry
3. If you purchase blackberries from the grocery store, it’s best to store them in the container you bought them in and don’t wash them until you use them. This will help them stay fresh longer. They should be kept in the refrigerator – you low humidity crisper drawer if you have one. Following the tips below will help keep the berries fresh for 3-6 days.
	1. If you wash them all and then dry them off, moisture still got into the berry so the more likely you’ll start to see mold sooner!
	2. Keeping them in a vented contained is best – especially if you purchased them in one. This is because blackberries produce ethylene, a plant hormone that tells fruits and vegetable to ripen. If blackberries are kept in a super tight container the ethylene given off will make them get overripe and go bad faster. The vented containers will also help the moisture escape.
4. How to freeze blackberries
	1. First, make sure all the stems and leaves are off and clean them with cool running water. It’s best to start with fresh, ripe blackberries. This will give you the best quality when you use them and keep the nutrients that the berries contain.
	2. The best method to freezing blackberries is the flash freezing method. Flash freezing freezes the berries individually, instead of one large clump.
		* 1. Line a large baking pan with parchment paper and spread the clean blackberries in a single layer throughout the pan. Cover loosely with plastic and wrap and place in your freeze overnight.
			2. Once frozen they should easily lift off the parchment paper and then should be transferred to a Ziplock Freezer bag. Stash them away for a rainy day!
			3. If frozen properly and keeping as much air our as possible, they should last for up to one year in the freezer.
5. **Blackberry Fun Facts**
6. Old folklore states that blackberries were thought to protect against spells and curses if gathered during a certain phase of the moon. Children with hernias were known to pass through an arched area in the bramble to cure them. Boils were supposed to be cured when the sufferer crawled through the brambles. ***(More likely the thorns simply punctured the boils!)***
7. Native Americans used blackberry canes and vines to make twine and the berries to make indigo or purple dye.
8. Superstition in the UK holds that blackberries should not be picked after September 29th as the devil has claimed them, having left a mark on the leaves variously attributed to striking them, trampling them, spitting on them, or urinating on them….among other versions. ***Basically leaving them toxic!!***
9. If you grow your own blackberries and the bush has turned orange, destroy it. This is a serious fungal disease that cannot be cured.
10. Some researchers claim that the juice extracts of the fruit can be used as an herbal medicine to protect skin from infections and reduce premature skin from infections and reduce premature aging of the skin.