STRAWBERRIES

Ingredient of the Month

Presented by ACFEF Chef & Child Foundation and Clemson University
Plump, red and juicy, the strawberry is a notable member of the rose family and has grown wild for centuries in the Americas and Europe. First cultivated in the 13th century, strawberries have been traded and shipped across the world and are now cultivated in many places. Strawberries have a sweet, slightly tart flavor and a soft crunch to them. They can be made into many different items, including jams, glazes and creams. Some of their most popular flavor pairings are ice cream, curd cheese, cucumber, oranges, rhubarb, almonds, vanilla, rosewater, chocolate and black pepper.

Fresh strawberries are available year-round in many regions of the country, with peak season around May, depending on local harvests. In North America, strawberries are usually available from April to June, but in more southern places (i.e. better climates), strawberries can be grown year-round. Not only is the strawberry a favorite fruit for many Americans, but it also carries nutritional significance because it is low-calorie and low-fat, but high in vitamin C, potassium and nitrate, which increases blood and oxygen flow to muscles. The strawberry is the only fruit with its seeds on the outside. Each strawberry has more than 200 seeds.

Healthy ingredient contribution

**VITAMIN C:** Strawberries contain a lot of vitamin C, which is an important vitamin and antioxidant that decreases oxidative stress. In addition, vitamin C is a cofactor that plays a role in the biosynthesis of key biochemicals.

**MANGANESE:** Strawberries contain manganese, which acts in enzymatic reactions that are involved in the synthesis of fatty acids and cholesterol. It is also important in helping the body fight viruses.

**FOLATE:** Strawberries contain folate, which is important in red blood cells and DNA synthesis.

**POTASSIUM:** Strawberries also contain potassium that aids in muscle contraction (muscle spasms are caused by a lack of potassium).

**VITAMIN K:** Vitamin K is found in strawberries and plays an important role in helping the body with blood clotting.

**VITAMIN B6:** Strawberries contain vitamin B6, which is not only important in the synthesis of amino acids, but it also helps with the formation of antibodies, and fat and carbohydrate metabolism.

**AMINO ACIDS:** Strawberries contain many different amino acids. While they contain the most of glutamic acid and aspartic acid, strawberries also contain other amino acids. Each amino acid functions a little differently in their healthy components; however, all amino acids are needed in the body, whether they are found in the body (non-essential) or consumed in the diet (essential).

Varieties and uses

There are many varieties of strawberries throughout the world that mainly differ in location grown, size, taste, shape, time of ripening and color. Strawberries can be used in many desserts and salads. Two other common uses for them are in jams and smoothies. Since sugar is added to many uses of strawberries, the healthiest way to eat a strawberry is by itself. Strawberries can also be frozen, made into preserves or dried.

- **Albion** is a modern California variety with a long growing season. This extra-large, dark red berry with a sweet flavor is a popular variety to use in desserts and cakes.
- **Chandler** is a large, firm variety that has a flat, wedge shape. It is a good all-purpose strawberry, with a glossy color and excellent berry flavor.
- **Elsanta** is one of the most popular commercial varieties in the UK, with a glossy appearance and mild flavor. This variety is often used in cold desserts, such as puddings and mousses.
- **Mieze Schindler** is a classic German variety with a delicious, full flavor and a plump, heart shape. They are mostly used to make jams or puddings.
- **Wild Strawberry**, also known as **fraises des bois**, are found in the wild and cultivated as Alpine strawberries. With an extremely fragrant taste, these tiny, fragile berries are often used in tarts or other specialty desserts.
Storage
Strawberries should not be washed until ready to use, and should be stored (preferably in a single layer on a paper towel) in a moisture-proof container in the refrigerator for two to three days.

Serving size
The recommended serving size is 147 grams, which is about 1 cup of whole strawberries. In one serving, there is about 24 mg calcium, 225 mg potassium, 35 mg phosphorus, 86.4 mg vitamin C, and various amounts (all under 1g) of many amino acids.

STRAWBERRY GAZPACHO

Yield: 8 servings (serving size: ¾ cup gazpacho, 2 tablespoons almonds)

Ingredients:
1 lb. fresh strawberries, hulled
1 lb. frozen whole strawberries
1 red bell pepper, chopped
1 jalapeño chili, chopped finely
1 medium cucumber, peeled, seeded and chopped
1 garlic clove, crushed
½ sweet onion, chopped
2 T. chopped fresh tarragon leaves
2 T. white balsamic vinegar
2 T. extra-virgin oil
1 T. chopped mint leaves
1 T. fresh lime juice
¼ t. salt
¼ t. freshly ground black pepper
½ cup slivered almonds, toasted

Method:
Place fresh and frozen strawberries, red bell pepper, jalapeño chili, cucumber, garlic, onion, tarragon, vinegar, oil, mint leaves and lime juice in jar of blender; blend until smooth. If mixture seems too thick, add a little water. Season with salt and pepper. Chill in refrigerator until ready to serve. Garnish with toasted almonds.

Nutrition Information
- Calories: 130
- Fat: 7g
- Sat. Fat: 1g
- Carbs: 16g
- Fiber: 4g
- Protein: 3g
- Vitamin A: 15%
- Vitamin C: 140%
- Calcium: 6%
- Iron: 6%

This recipe was tested by Clemson University’s Culinary Nutrition Undergraduate Student Research Group.