



BLACKBERRIES

Description

Blackberries are also called bramble berries because they grow on thorny bushes (brambles). blackberries range in size from one-half inch to an inch when mature and are purplish black in color. Blackberries are oblong and are made up of small edible seeds that are encased in juicy globules adjoining a fleshy base.

Uses

Plump, deeply colored blackberries are the most delicious to eat, and immature red berries are tart. Blackberries are best used immediately, because they spoil quickly. They can be lightly covered and refrigerated for 1 or 2 days. Blackberries can be eaten fresh; used as a topping for yogurt, ice cream and pancakes; tossed into a fruit salad; pureed to make a dessert sauce; or made into blackberry pie. About 98 percent of commercially produced berries are processed into jams, fillings, juices, wines, and brandies.

Varieties

The most common varieties of blackberry are the Cherokee (a sweet variety) and the Marion (a tart variety), Boysenberries, loganberries, ollolaberries, sylvanberries and tayberries are hybrids of blackberries and raspberries.

Nutrient Content

Blackberries are high in vitamin C, are a good source of dietary fiber, and contain ellagic acid, a phytochemical that may help prevent cancer.

Recipe

Blackberry Cake

1 teaspoon baking soda
1 cup buttermilk
1 cup shortening or butter
5 eggs, beaten until smooth
2 cups granulated sugar
1 teaspoon salt
2 cups blackberries

3 cups flour
1 teaspoons cinnamon
2 teaspoons nutmeg
2 teaspoons ground allspice
2 teaspoons ground cloves

Add baking soda to buttermilk. Mix flour, spices and salt together. Add all remaining ingredients except blackberries to the buttermilk-soda mixture; mix well. Add the blackberries (drain all juice, if frozen or canned), and beat until well mixed. Batter will be thick. Grease and flour a tube cake pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour. May be served plain or with whipped cream.

Availability

In the United States Blackberries typically peak during June in the South, and in July in the North. Crops are ready at various times of the month depending on which part of the state you are located. In order to produce good local blackberries, producers depend on ideal spring and early summer weather conditions. Unripe berries will not ripen once picked. Don't wash the berries until you are ready to use them. Washing makes them prone to spoiling. Even under ideal conditions blackberries will only keep for a week in a refrigerator.

Origin

Blackberries are found throughout the temperate zones of the world, growing wild in meadows and at the edge of forests. The bushes flower in spring and bear fruit throughout the summer. Borne in loose cluster on stems that grown from the canes, the berries change from green to red and then to purplish black as they ripen. Blackberry bushes are so vigorously invasive that they are considered a weed in some areas.

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