



STRAWBERRY TALKING POINTS

2. A Slice of Strawberry History

- Strawberries have a **history that goes back more than 2,000 years**. They are **indigenous to both the northern and southern hemispheres**. European explorers discovered strawberries in North America in 1588 when they landed on the shores of the state of Virginia. The explorers found tiny, sweet, deep red, wild strawberries. **Early settlers in Massachusetts enjoyed eating strawberries grown by local American Indians** who cultivated them as early as 1643.
- Strawberries grew wild in Italy as early as 234 B.C.E., where the first mention of strawberries occurred in the writings of Cato, a Roman Senator.
- The first “refrigerated” shipping of strawberries across the United States occurred in 1843 when some innovative growers in Cincinnati, Ohio spread ice on top of the strawberry boxes and sent them by train. By the middle of the 1800s many regions of the United States were cultivating strawberries. Strawberries have been grown in California since the early 1900s.



What's in a name?

There are many theories on how the strawberry got its name.

- Some believe that the name came from the practice of placing straw around the growing plants for protection, or from children in the 19th century who threaded the berries with straw and offered them for sale.
- Others believe the name originated more than 1,000 years ago with the stolons, or runners, which are horizontal branches at the base of the plant that produce new plants from buds at its tips. The name may have been derived from the Anglo-Saxon verb to *strew* (spread) and the fruit came to be known as *streibergen*, *straberry*, *streberie*, *straibery*, *straubery*, and finally, *strawberry* to the English.

3. & 4. How Do Strawberries Grow?

- Strawberries grow on small, low growing **perennials** (plants that survive more than one growing season) that prefer well-drained, sandy soil and are native to temperate and mountainous tropical regions. To produce the best crop the plants need **plenty of water, warm days and cool nights**.
- To reproduce, many varieties of strawberry plants **produce stolons** (horizontal above-ground shoots) that spread out from the base and **take root to form new plants**.
- Strawberries are a member of the rose family. The plants produce white or pink flowers. After flowering, **strawberry plants require pollination by bees or other insects in order to produce fruit**.

Strawberry Science Confusion

- Strawberries are not a fruit, but everyone refers to them as such. They are a false fruit because a fruit grows from the ovaries of the plant's flower on the inside of the flower. **A strawberry grows from the bottom of the flower**. Also, the seeds are

on the outside of the strawberry and those seeds are actually the fruit that is imbedded in the fleshy wall of the strawberry.

- Factors such as cool or wet weather, which discourages bee activity, have a damaging effect on fruit production. Growing conditions and weather also affect the time required to produce fruit.
- On average it takes about **30 days for flowers to develop into fruit**. The first crop can be harvested the year following planting.
- Because strawberries are delicate, they are picked by hand when ripe and carefully placed in plastic baskets or containers. Once the berries leave the field, they are taken to cooling facilities to help them last longer.
- While strawberry plants can survive and produce fruit for many years, commercial strawberry plants are replaced every two to four years, depending on the type of strawberry.

5. What season do we pick strawberries?

There are three basic types of strawberry plants:

June-bearing plants produce a single crop each year, usually lasting three to five weeks in July.

Day-neutral plants produce fruit the same year in which they are planted and can produce berries throughout their year-long growing season since they are not dependent on day length to produce flower buds.

Everbearing plants produce fruit twice per year, usually in late June to early July and again in late August. Because they produce few berries, they are rarely used for commercial production.

- **Strawberries may be grown in most parts of South Dakota**, because they are adapted to a wide range of soil and climatic conditions.
- To pick your own strawberries in the summer you can go to Sanderson Gardens (Brookings County, Aurora, SD) and Grandma's Farm & Zoo (Fall River County, Hot Springs, SD).
- Strawberries are usually the first fruit to ripen in the spring.

6. Why should we eat Strawberries?

- Potassium—8 berries have as much as a half banana
- Vitamin C
- Antioxidants like calcium, folic acid and iron
- Fiber—8 berries have almost 3 grams
- Eating strawberries, which are rich in nitrate, can increase the flow of blood & oxygen to the muscles by 7%. Tshi prevents muscle fatigue, making exercise easier.
- Strawberries, as part of a 5 a day fruit & vegetable program, can help reduce the risk of cancer & heart attacks.

7. How do you pick a good Strawberry?

- Strawberries are picked at their peak of freshness. They do not ripen after harvesting. So make sure to pick ones that are bright red, have a natural shine and green caps that look fresh.
- Store unwashed strawberries in the refrigerator to keep them fresh.
- Before serving, use cool water to gently wash strawberries with the green caps still attached.
- For best flavor, allow strawberries to reach room temperature before serving.

Strawberry Fun Facts

- The average strawberry has 200 seeds.
- The ancient Romans believed that strawberries alleviated symptoms of melancholy, fainting, all inflammations, fevers, throat infections, kidney stones, bad breath, attacks of gout, and diseases of the blood, liver and spleen.
- In medieval times, strawberries were served at important functions to bring peace & prosperity.
- To symbolize perfection, medieval stone masons carved strawberry designs on altars and around the tops of pillars in churches and cathedrals.
- In parts of Bavaria, country folk still practice the annual rite each spring of tying small baskets of wild strawberries to the horns of their cattle as an offering to elves. They believe that the elves, are passionately fond of strawberries, will help to produce healthy calves and an abundance of milk in return.
- Madame Tallien, a prominent figure at the court of the Emperor Napoleon, was famous for bathing in the juice of fresh strawberries. She used 22 pounds per basin. Needless to say, she did not bathe daily.
- There is a museum in Belgium just for strawberries.
- Over 53 percent of seven to nine-year-olds picked strawberries as their favorite fruit.