

North Carolina Berry Season

Let's get picking because North Carolina strawberries are in season. Blueberries are not far behind. We have lots of dessert recipes for you to enjoy with these delicious fresh fruits. One is even low in calories. But don't worry because the flavor is still delightful. The growing season for strawberries and blueberries can go quick so don't miss out. Stop by a roadside stand, pick your own farm or the farmers market today and enjoy two of our sweetest treats. Get extra to freeze and you can enjoy the goodness that grows in North Carolina all year long.

Strawberries and Cream

1- 8 oz. Sheet frozen puff pastry, thawed
1 large egg, beaten
1 teaspoon granulated sugar
4 oz. Cream cheese, softened
¼ cup heavy cream
½ teaspoon grated lemon zest
3 Tbsp. confectioners' sugar (2 Tbsp. - cream cheese mixture / 1 Tbsp. - dust the top)
2 cups strawberries, sliced

Heat oven to 375 degrees. On a lightly floured surface, unfold the sheet of pastry and roll it into a 10 X 12 inch rectangle. Transfer to a parchment-lined baking sheet.

Using the tip of a knife, score a 1-inch border around the pastry without cutting all the way through. Brush the border with the egg and sprinkle with the granulated sugar. Bake until golden and puffed, 18 to 22 minutes.

Using the tip of a knife, re-score the border of the cooked pastry without cutting all the way through. Gently press down on the center of the pastry sheet to flatten it. Let cool to room temperature, 15 to 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, with an electric mixer, beat the cream cheese until smooth. Add the cream, lemon zest, and 2 tablespoons of the confectioners' sugar and beat until smooth. Spread the cream cheese mixture evenly within the borders of the pastry.

Arrange the strawberries in a single layer over the filling and sprinkle with the remaining tablespoon of confectioners' sugar.

PERSONAL Note: This is a rich and delicious dessert. It is a great way to enjoy fresh North Carolina strawberries. You can also make it with fresh NC blueberries.

Strawberries in the Snow

1-8 oz. pkg. reduced fat (1/3 less fat) cream cheese, softened
12 packs of Splenda
½ c. 1 % milk
1-lg. light cool whip
1-angel food cake, torn into bite size pieces (9 oz.)
1 pound strawberries, sliced

Slice strawberries and combine with 6 packets of Splenda to bring out the juices. Let them sit for 30 minutes. With electric mixer, combine softened cream cheese, remaining Splenda (6 packets) and milk. Fold in cool whip and pieces of angel food cake. Pour into 13 x 9 inch dish. Pour strawberries and juice to cover the top. Refrigerate. Recipe serves 10-15.

PERSONAL Note: The great thing about this dessert is you will not miss any of the calories or the sugar. It is light, sweet and filling.

Lemon Blueberry Cake

1-1/2 c blueberries
2 T flour
1 box lemon cake mix
1 c sour cream
4 eggs

Toss the blueberries with the flour and set aside. In a bowl, combine the cake mix and sour cream. Add the eggs and beat well. Fold in blueberries. Pour into a greased tube or Bundt pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 45-50 minutes. Cool for 15 minutes before removing from the pan.

PERSONAL Note: This quick and easy recipe is courtesy of Lisa Shively's and her cookbook, "Fat Little Blueberry". Thanks for sharing this beautiful cake!

Chocolate-Strawberry Tart

32 chocolate wafer cookies
2 Tablespoons sugar
½ tsp. coarse salt
6 Tablespoons (¾ stick) unsalted butter, melted
12 oz. Semisweet chocolate chips
1 ¼ cups heavy cream
1-pound fresh strawberries, whole or sliced

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a food processor, combine cookies, sugar and ½ teaspoon salt. Process until very fine crumbs form. Add butter and pulse until mixture just comes together. Press crumbs firmly into a 9 inch fluted tart pan with a removable bottom. Place on a baking sheet and bake until crust is dry and set, 20 minutes. Let cool.

In a large bowl, combine chocolate and a pinch of salt. In a small saucepan, bring cream to a bare simmer over medium-high heat. Immediately pour cream over chocolate and let stand 1 minute. Stir gently until chocolate melts and mixture is completely smooth. Pour chocolate into cooled tart shell and refrigerate until set, 30 minutes. To serve, remove tart from pan and scatter strawberries on top.

PERSONAL Note: This decadent dessert is delicious with whipped cream or vanilla ice cream or great all by itself. You can make this tart the night before and top with strawberries before serving.

Berry Trifle

1- 1 ½ -cup fresh blueberries
1- 1 ½ - cup fresh strawberries, sliced
1- 8 oz. Cream cheese, softened
1 ¼ cups cold milk, divided
1 pkg. (3.4 oz.) vanilla flavored instant pudding
1 (12oz.) whipped topping, thawed and divided
1 pkg. prepared pound cake, cubed (12 oz. Small trifle/ 16 oz. Large trifle)

Half strawberries rinse and set aside. Wash blueberries, drain and set aside.

Beat cream cheese in a large bowl until creamy. Gradually beat in ¼ cup milk. Add remaining milk and dry pudding mix; beat 2 minutes. Stir in 8 ounces of whipped topping.

Place half the cake cubes in the bottom of a large serving bowl; cover with half the pudding mixture. Top with strawberries. Layer with remaining cake cubes and pudding mixture. Layer with blueberries. Top with remaining whipped topping.

PERSONAL Note: Another fun way to serve this dessert is by layering the ingredients in individual glasses.