



BLACKBERRY HEAVEN

Walt Whitman once said that blackberries "adorned heaven," and who can deny the pleasure of fresh, ripe blackberries? One taste can bring to mind a summer's afternoon in a wild berry patch, somewhere on the edge of the woods. They can be a little seedy but that is how they are supposed to be; blackberries aren't a fancy, seedless fruit with their wildness bred out. Yet, when we buy blackberries at the market, we aren't getting a wild picked berry. Close to their wildness as they may be, blackberries have been bred for larger size, flavor, and, in some cases, shelf life. Blackberries thrive in many areas around the world. In the US, we have several native varieties that have been the basis for many of the varieties that we see on the market. Some of the more popular cultivated varieties are the:

Boysenberry: Large, round, purple berry with rich, tangy flavor. Bred by Rudolph Boysen at Luther Burbank's farm in Santa Rosa.

Marionberry: Long, dark purple berry with intense blackberry flavor. Named after an American Revolution hero, General Francis Marion.

Ollalieberry: Reddish in color, large and round. One of the parents of the Marionberry.

Loganberry: Large blackberry with traditional blackberry flavor. Bred by a Dr. Logan in Santa Cruz, CA. Some dispute as to whether it's actually different than a wild blackberry.

Nutritional Values: Rich in Vitamins A & C, potassium, fiber, and low in calories; blackberries are also a good source of iron and calcium. Blackberries are gaining recognition for their powerful antioxidant and free radical fighting properties. One cup raw blackberries contains: 75 calories, 18 g carbohydrate, 7.2 g fiber.

Serving Suggestion: Delicious on their own or in fruit salads, blackberries are brilliant performers when cooked. They hold up well in sauces, cobblers, fruit tarts, pies, and jams. Blackberries taste best when eaten at room temperature.

Storage: Store fresh, unwashed berries, uncovered in the refrigerator as soon as possible after purchase. If you won't be able to use your berries within a few days, freeze the extra berries while they are still fresh by arranging them on a cookie sheet, freezing them, and then emptying into an air tight plastic bag.

Liz Bourret