

BRITAIN'S FAVOURITE BERRY OFFERS AN INDULGENT YET HEALTHY TREAT AS FAREEDA KANGA DISCOVERS ON A RECENT TRIP

A berry good idea

I'm standing at the hallowed grounds of Wimbledon, where the world's greatest tennis players battle it out for the most coveted championship of the year. Yet from what I can see, the longest lines are not at the ticket stalls but at the food court to sample the famous 'strawberries and cream' — the quintessential 'taste of Wimbledon.'

Besides being the favourite fruit at Wimbledon and a staple on the British culinary landscape, strawberries are a pastry chef's delight due to their versatility and natural sweetness that enables a recipe to cut the sugar content considerably.

Afternoon tea has been an English tradition since 1830 in a country obsessed by 'High Tea and Scones' strawberry has an important role.

Even the Flag Carrier, British Airways, does a magnificent rendition of this English classic on some routes with strawberry éclairs and a sumptuous jam that dots its scones and cream.

ALL ABOUT THE STRAWBERRY

The strawberry season is truncated and runs from the end of May to July. To achieve maximum yields, farmers need to protect emerging berries from the muddy soil. They do this by spreading a layer of straw around each new plant —



HEALTH BENEFITS OF STRAWBERRIES

The first clue that strawberries are good for your heart comes from their heart-shaped silhouette itself. These pint-sized packages protect your heart, increase HDL (good) cholesterol, lower blood pressure, and guard against cancer.

Loaded with fiber, vitamins and amazingly high levels of antioxidants known as polyphenols, strawberries are dieters' dream as they are sodium-free, fat-free, cholesterol-free and low-cal.

They are among the top 20 fruits in antioxidant capacity and are a good source of manganese and potassium. Just one serving — about eight strawberries — provides more vita-

mould-free.

Opt for shiny, deep red colours with bright green caps. Once picked, strawberries do not ripen further so avoid dull berries with green or yellow patches. "They can be frozen so they can be stored for a longer period of time. Adding sugar or lemon juice to strawberries will help preserve their bright colour if you are freezing them," says Chef Aashay Chirmuley, Pastry Chef, Four Seasons Hotel Mumbai.

Cooked strawberries and strawberry preserves can be used as a filling for popular



STRAWBERRIES AT WIMBLEDON

Strawberries arrive at the All England Lawn Tennis Club at 5.30 am. Wimbledon is the oldest tennis event in the world but the tradition of serving strawberries with cream started in 1953. In 1970, cream and a dusting of sugar was added. The fruit is served in punnets of 10 prize-winning berries. This year spectators will consume almost 30,000 kg —

STRAWBERRY JAM

INGREDIENTS

- 1kg / 2lb 3oz strawberries
- 1kg/2lb 3oz granulated sugar or caster sugar
- ½ lemon
- Small knob of butter

1 Place the strawberries into a large bowl with 500g/18oz of the sugar. Turn carefully to mix and coat well, then cover with cling film and place into the fridge overnight.

2 The next day, place a saucer into the freezer to chill.

3 Sterilise the jam jars — first wash the jars and rinse.

4 Pour the strawberries, their juice into a large pan, remembering that the mixture will rise as it boils, and add the remaining sugar and the lemon juice.

5 Stir over a gentle heat until the sugar has completely dissolved.

6 Bring the strawberries up to the boil. Check the setting point every ten minutes, although it may take up to half an hour.

7 To test the setting point, remove the pan from the heat. Take your saucer from the freezer and place a drop of jam onto the cold plate. After a few seconds push the jam with your finger.

8 If the jam surface wrinkles then it has reached setting point and is ready. If it slides about as a liquid, then it hasn't reached setting point and should be returned to the heat and boiled for a few more minutes.

9 When setting point has been reached, turn off the heat. Stir in the butter and remove off any scum on the surface of the jam.

10 Let the jam cool and thicken in the pan for ten minutes, so that the strawberries don't sink.

11 Carefully remove the sterilized jars from the oven with oven gloves — try to avoid touching the insides of the jars with the oven gloves.

12 Stir the jam, and then ladle it into the sterilised jars.

13 Cover the top surface of the jam in each jar with a complete seal.

14 Cover with a lid while still hot, label and store in a cool place.

RECIPES COURTESY:

STRAWBERRY MOUSSE

INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 teaspoon unflavored gelatin
- 1 tablespoon whipping cream
- 1 cup sliced fresh strawberries
- 1/2 cup powdered sugar
- 1/2 cup whipping cream
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 24 miniature dessert or cordial chocolate cups

In small bowl, sprinkle gelatin over 1 tablespoon whipping cream; set aside to soften gelatin. In food processor, place strawberries and powdered sugar. Cover; process until smooth. Pour mixture into 1-quart saucepan; add softened gelatin. Cook over medium heat, beating with whisk occasionally, until mixture comes to a simmer and gelatin is dissolved. Remove and cool for 30 minutes.

In small bowl, beat whipping cream with electric mixer on high speed until stiff peaks form. On low speed, beat strawberry mixture into whipped cream until blended.

Place mousse in decorating bag fitted with small star tip. Pipe mousse into chocolate cups. Refrigerate until set, about 30 minutes, or up to 2 hours before serving. Garnish with fresh sliced strawberries, if desired.



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