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Blueberries



With this summer's blueberry harvest shaping up to be one of the largest ever, it seems like everyone's got the blues these days. *Bon Appétit* even went so far as to devote a page to explaining the difference between a blueberry grunt, crisp, and buckle.

As one of the few fruits native to North America, the berries have always meant summer to those in Maine, British Columbia, and other growing regions. In the last few years, however, their popularity has soared. Americans now consume more than half a pound annually of blueberries each, up from less than a fifth of a pound 20 years ago. With research showing they have the highest antioxidant activity of any fruit, blueberries have been linked to such benefits as lowering cholesterol and improving eyesight. Now they're even the official fruit of New Jersey.

But we still like them for their flavor, and fortunately, so do many local chefs. Aside from popping up on menus all over town (and not just on the dessert page, either), blueberries are becoming a hot trend in beverages. **Stolichnaya's** newest vodka is **Blueberi**, giving mixologists everywhere an excuse to experiment with a flavor other than cranberry. Blueberries are big in beer, too. Smaller breweries, such as **Sea Dog**, started the trend, but now even **Anheuser-Busch** is test-marketing its own blueberry brew.

For those who prefer their beverages non-alcoholic, **TrueBlue** (trueblueberry.com) blueberry juices, a blend of both wild and cultivated blueberries, are definitely worth a sip. The Canadian-based company bills it as "the best thing since cranberry juice," although we would say they might be better. Since TrueBlue's juices have no high-fructose corn syrup, they aren't cloyingly sweet, so you can enjoy the flavor instead of the sugar. The line includes blueberry juices combined with pomegranate, raspberry, and even green tea. Tasty indeed, although we found TrueBlue even more delightful when combined with a bit of vodka, a splash of soda, and a twist of lemon.

4-7-7 **Stolichnaya Blueberi** is available at select liquor stores; **Sea Dog Blueberry** is sold at Trader Joe's, traderjoes.com; **TrueBlue** juices are available at Albertsons, albertsons.com.