



By Peggy Crum, MA, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

Fresh blueberries could be the blue in your Fourth of July picnic! Independence Day marks the beginning of blueberry season in Michigan which continues through the end of August. It's a busy time for Michigan blueberry growers since our state produces one-third of all blueberries consumed in the United States. The combination of moderate climate and acidic soil makes western Michigan a blueberry haven.

If you're looking for a summer outing, blueberry picking is fun and easy. The most popular blueberry varieties grow on shrubby plants of the highbush varieties. This means you can just walk along, not even bending over to pick the little blue orbs. Just touching them will cause the ripest berries to fall right into your hand! Notice the many shades of blue covering the bushes. Berries ready for picking will have a dusky appearance caused by a thin white coating called bloom, a waxy shield that protects their skin from the elements.

When you get your buckets of berries home, refrigerate what you will use within two weeks. Blueberries keep best if you wait to wash them until just before use. For the rest of your berries, dry pack freezing is the easiest method for setting them aside for the winter. Simply spread your unwashed fresh berries on baking trays and slide them into the freezer. Once they're frozen firm, transfer the berries to containers or zipper-lock bags. Give them a rinse when you remove them from the freezer before use.

Blueberries are often used in sweet dishes such as pies, muffins, scones, and—of course—pancakes. Their sweet-tart flavor combines well with peaches and nectarines for cobblers and crisps. Rich sauces and chutneys made with a squeeze of lime or other tart ingredient adds a spark to their natural sweetness. Serve alongside savory dishes such as grilled chicken, turkey, or pork.

RECIPE for health

JULY 2015

featured food:

BLUEBERRIES

Blueberry Shallot Sauce

Recipe developed by Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski.

- 2 T. olive oil
- 1/2 c. shallots, julienned
- 1 clove of garlic, minced
- 1 c. Marsala wine
- 1 1/2 c. frozen blueberries
- 2 T. balsamic vinegar
- 1/4 c. diced tomatoes
- 3 T. unsalted butter
- 1 T. minced fresh thyme
- Salt and pepper to taste

Heat oil in sauce pan over medium heat. Add shallots and sauté for 4 minutes. Add garlic and sauté for an additional minute.

Deglaze pan with wine, then add blueberries, vinegar, and tomatoes. Bring to a simmer and reduce until the sauce coats the back of a spoon and leaves a line when you drag your finger across the spoon.

Remove from heat. Add butter and thyme. Taste sauce and season with salt and pepper as needed.

Try **Blueberry Shallot Sauce** for lunch at Brody Square and Riverwalk Market at Owen Hall on **July 15**.

- Join us in person at Brody Square Demo Kitchen. Sign-up at health4u@msu.edu.
- Watch online: alumni.msu.edu/livestream.