



Strawberry Picking and Preserving

Waupaca County UW-Extension

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How to Pick Strawberries

Strawberries look better and keep longer when they are picked and handled correctly. Because they are a very tender fruit, they will bruise and discolor any time they are squeezed. Handle them gently, at all times, whether you are picking them, placing them in the container, or handling the filled containers.

Some strawberry varieties are much easier to pick than others. For example, when they are mature, The surest way to pick fruit with a minimum of bruising is as follows:



Grasp the stem just above the berry between the forefinger and the thumbnail and pull with a slight twisting motion.

With the stem broken about one-half inch from the berry, allow it to roll into the palm of your hand.

Repeat these operations using both hands until each holds 3 or 4 berries.

Carefully place - don't throw - the fruit into your containers. Repeat the picking process with both hands.

Don't overfill your containers or try to pack the berries down.

Picking berries without the cap will result in some bruising but is satisfactory for berries that will be processed soon after picking.

1. Grasp the stem between the thumb and forefinger just behind the cap.
2. Squeeze slightly against the cap and apply slight pressure against the berry with the second finger. The berry should pull loose, leaving the cap on the stem.

● Tips for Strawberry Pickers

Whether you pick strawberries from your own garden or at a Pick-Your-Own farm, here are a few tips to keep in mind:

1. Be careful that your feet and knees do not damage plants or fruit in or along the edge of the row. At a Pick-Your-Own farm, it is important that you pick only on the row assigned to you.
2. Most growers furnish picking containers designed for strawberries. If you use your own container, remember that heaping strawberries more than 5 inches deep will bruise the lower berries.
3. Pick only the berries that are fully red. Part the leaves with your hands to look for hidden berries ready for harvest.
4. Pick the row clean. Remove from the plants berries showing rot, sunburn, insect injury, or other defects and place them between the rows behind you.
5. Berries to be used immediately may be picked any time, but if you plan to hold the fruit for a few days, try to pick in the early morning or on cool, cloudy days. Berries picked during the heat of the day become soft, are easily bruised, and will not keep well.
6. Avoid placing the picked berries in the sun any longer than necessary. It is better to put them in the shade of a tree or shed than in the car trunk or on the car seat. Cool them as soon as possible after picking. Strawberries may be kept fresh in the refrigerator for 3 or more days, depending upon the initial quality of the berry. After a few days in storage, however, the fruit loses its bright color and fresh flavor and tends to shrivel.
7. Give the harvested fruit a soft ride home.

● Take Good Care of Strawberries

You can preserve their food value and quality by treating the berries gently. When you get home, sort but do not clean them until just before you use them. Store the berries uncovered in the refrigerator in the original or a shallow container. When you are ready to use the berries, wash them quickly in cold water if berries are room temperature; warm water if berries are refrigerator cold. Run water through berries in a colander so they do not soak. Allow to drain, then hull.

● How Many Berries to Purchase

Here's a quick rule of thumb to help you decide how many berries to pick or purchase!

- 1 quart of strawberries makes 1 pie
- 1 quart of strawberries makes 1 1/2 to 2 cups crushed berries
- 2 quarts strawberries makes 4 cups mashed berries for batch of jam made without pectin
- 3 quarts strawberries makes 5 1/2 cups mashed berries for batch of jam made with powdered pectin
- 2 quarts strawberries makes 4 cups mashed berries for batch of jam made with liquid pectin
- 1 1/2 quarts strawberries makes 3 cups mashed berries for uncooked freezer jam