

Eat Blackberries!

The blackberry season spans the end of summer and the beginning of autumn and their usage can be adapted accordingly. During August we like to enjoy blackberries served simply with a little sugar and a lot of cream. They're also great muddled into a cold martini on a balmy evening. Later, we inure ourselves to the onset of autumn with deliciously comforting hot pies and puddings made by combining blackberries with the first apples of the season, to devastating effect.

HISTORY Blackberries have grown across Asia, Europe and the Americas for tens of thousands of years. Archaeological records show that European inhabitants ate them as long ago as 8,000 BC. During World War One, children in England were given time off school to collect blackberries for the production of juice that was sent to soldiers to help maintain health. Today there are over 2,000 varieties found throughout the cooler regions of the world. Blackberries are more highly prized as a food in Britain and Northern Europe than anywhere else in the world.

BIOLOGY *Rubus fruticosus* is the Latin name for the European blackberry, also known as bramble. Like the raspberry, it is an aggregate fruit and relative of the rose. It is a highly adaptable and fast-growing shrub, found in hedgerows, woodland, meadows and wasteland. It is a good *pioneer species* (early coloniser of a habitat) as it can grow in poor soil and its prickly stems help protect other plants' young shoots from being eaten.

NUTRITION Blackberries are packed with antioxidants, including vitamin C and ellagic acid, which may provide protection against cancer and chronic disease. Their many tiny seeds make them a good source of fibre. They also contain *salicylates*, a group of analgesics that include the active substance in aspirin.

BUYING TIP If possible, don't - wild berries have a depth of flavour rarely rivalled by cultivated varieties. Take a container and an umbrella (for hooking branches) and search out brambles near you, avoiding roadside or polluted spots. Even in cities you can find blackberries growing on scrubland, canal-side paths and in wooded areas.

COOKING - Scan the code below to view the recipe for 'Apple and blackberry frangipane crumble' on the seasonal recipes blog.



or visit: qmulsustainability.wordpress.com/recipes