

Strawberry Fields Forever

By John Rizzo

It's that time of year again, baseball season is underway, spring bulbs are blooming and California grown strawberries are at their peak. This is the best time for strawberries; sugar levels are high, fruit size is large, and the texture is firm.

Strawberries make a great snack for both children and adults; there is more vitamin C in a serving of strawberries than an orange, they're a great source of folic acid and fiber. Not too mention the antioxidants that aid in fighting cancer cells.

While strawberries are abundant and many of the retail stores have them on sale, it might make sense to freeze some for a later date. Although the texture will be softer than fresh, there are many applications for these berries. Use them with ice cream, smoothies, pureed for beverages, mixed with simple syrup to top a cake or pie, to name a few.

Freezing Strawberries

The easiest way to freeze strawberries is to IQF (individually quick frozen). Simply wash the berries in cold water, hull (remove outer leaves and white flesh) and remove any damage to the fruit. Drain well. Place on baking sheet pans and refrigerate for at least an hour then transfer them to the freezer for at least 6 hours. Remove the frozen berries from the sheet pans and transfer to plastic containers or freezer bags. These will hold up nicely for at least 3 months, after that they may begin to dehydrate.

For a longer freezer life, try slicing or crushing the strawberries, cover them with orange juice and freeze in airtight containers. This will double or even triple the life of the frozen berries.

Strawberry Salsa

Yield: 3-4 Cups

Red or Sweet Onion	1/2 Cup	Jalapeno Pepper	1/4 Cup
Red Bell Pepper	1/2 Cup	Green Bell Pepper	1/2 Cup
Fresh Cilantro	1/4 Cup	Fresh Strawberries	1 Cup
Orange Juice	1/4 Cup	Lime Juice	2 TBL
Olive Oil	2 TBL	Salt & Black Pepper	Taste

Mince the onion and Jalapeno Pepper. (Jarred Jalapeno work too.) Dice the strawberries and the red and green bell peppers into 1/4 inch cubes. Shred the cilantro. Combine all ingredients and mix well. Chill for several hours before serving to give the flavors time to blend. Serve with Chips, Grilled Chicken, fresh grilled swordfish, tuna, or marlin steaks, eggs or one of your own favorite dish.