

Strawberries and cilantro: Try it, you'll like it!

By Anne Harvey

Cilantro, is easily one of my favorite flavors. Many cuisines, including Mexican, Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese and Indian, embrace cilantro. Coriander is the aromatic and slightly sweet seed of Cilantro.

Cilantro is central to Caribbean seafood recados, Indian curry mixtures, Middle Eastern stews and European breads. It is one of the oldest known culinary herbs. Use of cilantro, or at least its seeds, has been traced back as far as 8000 years ago.

Not everyone loves cilantro

Cilantro is an herb with a unique flavor. Some people find it offensive, initially. There is a really funny "ihatecilantro.com" website for these folks and other malcontents. Some researchers hypothesize there is a genetic

link to this strongly negative perception.

For most people cilantro can add an inexplicable, pleasant zip or zing to many dishes and can become a vital ingredient in a cook's battery of herbs.

It is a member of the carrot-parsley family. Add its tangy fresh leaves to salads, soups, stews and stir-fries for an aromatic touch. Add cilantro just before serving to retain its fresh flavor and color.

Choosing cilantro

Look for bright, fresh, perky, tender leaves. Avoid bunches of tired, limp, brown or slimy leaves. Wrap cilantro in a damp towel if the roots are still intact or stand cut stems upright in a container with an inch of

water. Cover loosely in plastic and refrigerate for up to four days.

Despite the commonly muddy state of cilantro at the market, do not wash the leaves

pale shoulders indicate under ripeness. A dull dark red finish indicates bruised or overripe fruit.

Avoid baskets with berries that are shriveled, mushy or where the container is stained or leaking juice. Strawberries do not continue to ripen after picking

Nothing is so sweet as ripe organic berries.

prior to preparation for use. Cilantro quickly loses its flavor in storage or after washing. So, buy it often and use it with abandon.

Wonderfully, this is also Strawberry season. It is hard to believe, but strawberries weren't cultivated in Europe until the 13th century. Then strawberries were embraced as a symbol of perfection, peace and prosperity. Now Americans consider the strawberry as the All-American harbinger of summer. Nothing is so sweet as ripe organic berries grown by small farms, and nothing is so disappointing as those grocery store large operation commercial berries that taste like wet paper towels.

and bruise easily.

Store them unwashed in the refrigerator, with a loose cover that does not touch the berries. Rinse gently just before using. Strawberries will keep three to four days in the refrigerator.

Serve whole or sliced. Add a little powdered sugar and orange liqueur, if you must 'gild' their natural perfection.

Enjoy!

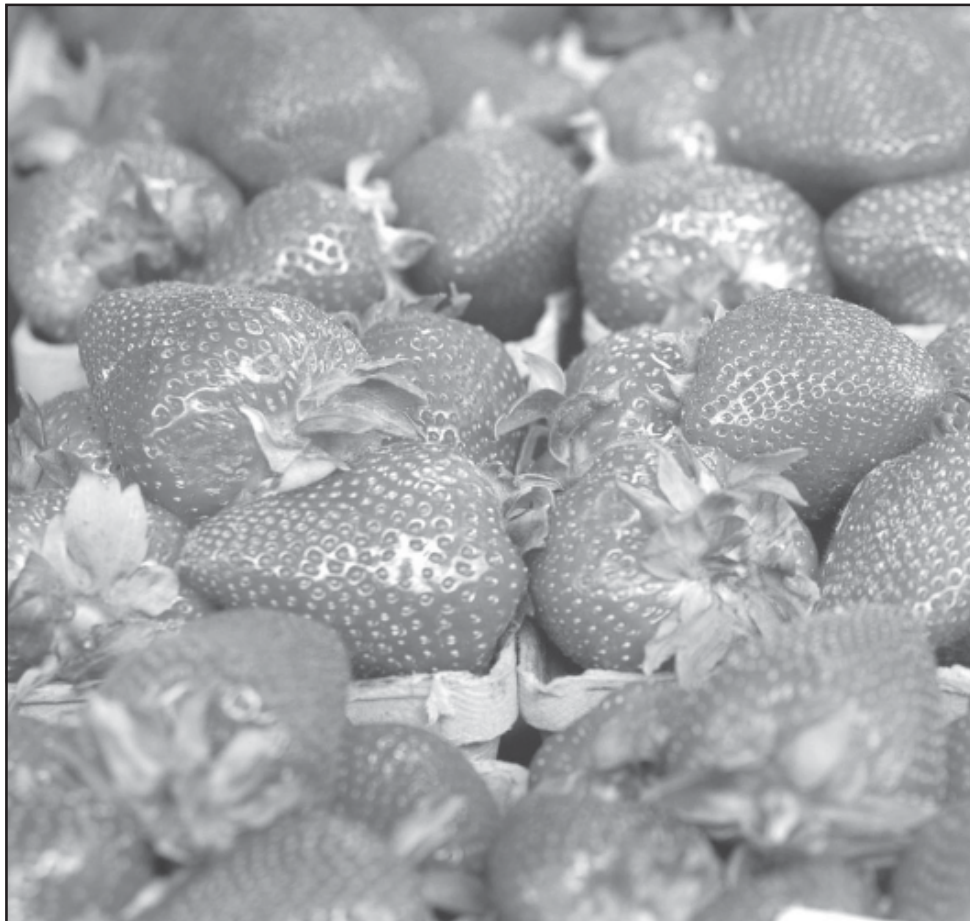


Photo: Bradley Enghaus

Buy organic strawberries

Strawberries are a smart choice for buying local and organic. The mainstream supply chain chooses varieties that hold up to handling and shipping at the sacrifice of flavor and cultivates strawberries with heavy pesticide treatments to increase tonnage. These chemicals can get trapped in the nubbly, seeded surface and are difficult to completely wash off at home.

Local Organic farmers grow more flavorful varieties and can more closely care for and pick their berries at peak ripeness with the perfect balance of sweetness and aromatic oils for that unsurpassable berry flavor.

These specially handled berries are well worth the extra expense.

A member of the rose family, Strawberries have more vitamin C than citrus and are very high in anti-oxidants. It is also the only fruit to wear its seeds on the outside of the fruit.

Pick berries with firm and fresh caps and a sweet scent. The berries should be plump and firm with a nice red finish. White or very

Matthew Ivey's Cilantro and Strawberry Salsa

Here is a favorite preparation of cilantro and strawberries that combines these two great crops. It is a perfect and unexpected accompaniment to plain tossed green salad greens or grilled fish. I prefer to substitute fresh limejuice for the cider vinegar.

- 1 large basket strawberries
- 1 small purple onion, finely chopped
- 1 large mango, peeled and chopped
- 1 bunch cilantro, cleaned, stemmed and finely chopped
- 1 small jalapeño, seeded and finely chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- 2 teaspoons apple cider vinegar
- 2 teaspoons canola oil

To make the salsa, reserve six strawberries for garnish. Stem, hull and chop the remaining berries to make small cubes. Add the purple onion, mango, cilantro, jalapeño, sugar and vinegar to chopped strawberries. Gently toss to

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