Berry Well!

What do-wine, green tea, and blueberries have in common? ANTIOXIDANTS

by Dr. Samuel N. Grief, MD

Berries contain large quantities of antioxidants. Studies have implicated these antioxidants in slowing the aging process and lowering one's risk for many diseases, including certain cancers and heart disease. Antioxidant-rich berries are now being recommended to treat specific medical conditions, including bladder infections, arthritis, and visual problems.

Recent studies confirm that dark red and blue berries help stabilize the collagen in the cartilage of major joints. Cartilage is better known as the "cushion" of the joint. Thus, improving the integrity of the cartilage will most likely reduce pain, swelling, and inflammation that often accompany the ravages of arthritis.

There are many different varieties of berries in the United States. The most commonly

jam and jelly. In cooking studies done with raspberries, baking or jam making, which involves high temperatures, does not seem to deactivate the antioxidant ability of raspberries. Enjoying one to two tablespoons with your favorite toast, muffin, or scone will provide an excellent source of anthocyanins.

Juice made from berries is not as rich in antioxidants and should be consumed in modera-



used include blackberries, black currant, blueberries, boysenberries, cranberries, lingonberries, raspberries, and strawberries. It is known that the darker the berry, the more antioxidant it contains. These berry antioxidants, also known as anthocyanins, are specific pigments found abundantly in plants. Blueberries have the most anthocyanins of all the berries.

In addition to antioxidants, fresh berries contain significant amounts of fiber, vitamin *C*, and folate. Vitamin *C* is a well-known antioxidant. Fiber is good not only for colon health, it also helps maintain low levels of cholesterol and stabilizes blood sugar. Folate, known also as folic acid, is well known for its use during pregnancy in preventing spina bifida. More recently, folate has been shown to lower the level of homocysteine, a protein by-product now thought to increase your risk for heart disease and stroke.

A surprisingly good source of antioxidants is

tion given its sugar load. People with diabetes should take extra care in monitoring how juice affects their blood sugar.

When buying berries, choose fresh berries in season when possible since these fruit are among the most perishable. Keep berries no longer than 2-3 days as their taste and antioxidant potential will decrease rapidly thereafter.

Berries are truly Mother Nature's gift to us. Enjoy in good health! Visit our online chats and blogs at www.radthemag.com

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