

Eating local never tasted so good

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Berries are quite possibly Mother Nature's summer gift.

Naturally sweet and rich in vitamins and minerals, the miniature orbs are some of the most versatile fruits available; delicious in jams, pies, pastries, juices, dietary supplements and sauces, and tasty frozen or raw.

And during the summer months, these delicious fruits are ubiquitous in the Pacific Northwest, making the consumption of in-season local produce easier than ever.

The most common varieties of berries grown commercially in the Northwest are "caneberries," such as the blackberry, Loganberry, Boysenberry, Marionberry, red and black raspberry, and other berries like the strawberry and blueberry, according to the Oregon Berry Commission. Most of these varieties are available directly from the grower or at local farmers markets in the area.

Nearby Nanneman's Farms, located at 5682 Silverton Road, offers customers a wide variety of these local goodies during the summer harvest months. The family business, which has been operating since the early 1960s, grows and sells their own strawberries, blueberries, Marionberries, Boysenberries, Loganberries, Kotata blackberries and Triple Crown blackberries, and sells raspberries from Albany.

While Nanneman's does not offer You-Pick berries, the farm sells their produce at the farm's stand, open from Memorial Day through August, said Nanneman's Farms owner Marty Nanneman.

"What's special about local berries, like ours, is that they're grown ready to eat," Nanneman said. "They're not like other products in grocery stores where they're picked green and put into carbon atmospheres to ripen on trucks. The fresher berries have all the sugars and fibers in them that they're intended to have."

The 350-acre farm devotes 50 acres solely to the production of berries, with strawberries — an Oregon favorite — as Nanneman's main berry crop, and one of the few products that the farm sells to consumers.



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Nine-year-old Olivia Hyslop pours the flour into milk while making fresh blueberry muffins as Dustin Meyer, 9, left, and Wyatt Arrington watch.

EZ Orchards, just outside of Silverton at 5504 Hazel Green NE, Salem, also markets on the local berry crop, by not only selling ripe, local fruits, but also with their unique Shortcake Stand in front of their indoor market, which is popular among customers. The Orchards begin their shortcake season Memorial Day with local strawberries, moving to a berry medley shortcake (with Marionberries, raspberries and blueberries) and finally peach shortcake featuring fruit from their own 130-acre orchard. Shortcakes cost about \$4, and visitors can also indulge in seasonal smoothies, milkshakes, sundaes and granitas.

“We try to promote supporting local farmers because the area is so rich with wonderful produce,” said EZ Orchards Retail Manager Debbie Robinson. “We’re unique because we buy from all local growers within season.”

“You’re supporting the local farmer,” Nanneman said of their produce, “and our business allows us to connect with the customers; it lets people know where their food comes from. I wear blue jeans and a white T-shirt every day. Our produce doesn’t come from Joe Albertson’s.”