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# FLORIDA STRAWBERRY culinary corner

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A publication from the Florida Strawberry Growers Association

## » Coming Soon!

There's still time for Florida chefs and chefs-in-training to enter a competition designed exclusively for them. Ten lucky Florida-based chefs

will each receive a gift card worth \$500. Winners will be featured on the new [www.strawberrysue.com](http://www.strawberrysue.com) blog and included in a news release.

We call this our Restaurant Recognition & Rewards® Program.

The deadline to enter is March 31, 2011. All Florida chefs have to do is send an email to [sue@strawberrysue.com](mailto:sue@strawberrysue.com) stating in 25 words or less why they love serving Florida winter strawberries. How easy is that? Enter now. The clock is ticking. Fingers crossed!

## The Main Thing

The Florida strawberry harvest season is winding down. Hopefully, you'll still be able to find Florida strawberries at your favorite supermarket for a few more weeks.

We continue to be surprised at how many people don't know that Florida is the dominant supplier of domestic strawberries in the winter months. The message is getting out, however, and we continue to hear from excited consumers day-after-day. There's just nothing that compares with fresh, sweet and scrumptious Florida strawberries.

We hope eating strawberries becomes a habit and they are on your weekly shopping list all year long. At the first possible chance, however, reach for Florida fresh. There's no more flavorful strawberry on the planet. We appreciate your support and for thinking of us all year long. Maybe there will come a time when Florida strawberries are available anytime, for any occasion or for no special occasion at all.

## Fresh & Fabulous

*Florida Strawberries – Easter is April 24.*

*Monthly celebrations and observances this month include Customer Loyalty Month, National Humor Month and National Smile Month.*

Dear Florida Strawberry Lover,

The Florida Strawberry Growers Association (FSGA) [www.Flastrawberry.com](http://www.Flastrawberry.com) is encouraging chefs and restaurant managers to serve Florida strawberries more often.

This initiative supports the national movement by many foodservice professionals, supermarket executives and consumers to buy local when possible. We appreciate your loyalty to Florida's incredible and bountiful agriculture industry.

Thanks for your support of our strawberries in April (Customer Loyalty Month) and throughout our winter season. Oh, and keep smiling—especially this month. Remember April is National Smile Month.

In case you missed visiting our booth at the Festival this year, you might be interested to know that it was a winner. We took first prize. Make sure you come by next year. And keep your fingers crossed that we'll win in 2012, too.

The Strawberry Festival in Plant City ran from March 3–13. We were there. If you've never attended this event, it's well worth the trip. It's hard to describe. You have to see it to believe it.

Happy cooking with Florida winter strawberries!

*Sue Harrell*

FLORIDA STRAWBERRY  
GROWERS ASSOCIATION

Visit our blog!  
[www.strawberrysue.com](http://www.strawberrysue.com)



*Florida Strawberries – a taste of summer all winter long!*



## Sue's Bytes

**I know you stay frantically busy** with stretched schedules at work, managing kids on the run and what seems like a million other tasks that make up each and every day. What seems to be an impossible "To Do List" somehow gets done or we learn to prioritize. It's a challenge sometimes.

For us, February and March are the peak of production. Our growers are tending to the harvest 24/7. Sometimes they take Sunday off, but not always. There are so many behind-the-scenes tasks required of farmers.

We participate in the Florida State Fair and the internationally-recognized Strawberry Festival each year. Both events are huge and represent great opportunities for us to tell our story to thousands. In the middle of all of that, there are meetings, conferences, and this year, a special tour of our fields and farms for chefs.



## Go Ahead...Enjoy Florida Strawberries All Year Long!

**G**et 'em while you can. Since our season is just about over don't forget to explore some easy ways to enjoy Florida strawberries all year long. There are many methods for preserving the goodness of fresh strawberries. I recommend you search for ideas on the Internet to determine the best method(s) for you. Here are a few tips I ran across that might be helpful...

- ❖ Make sure the berries are dry before freezing. Otherwise the water will freeze on them and make them more difficult to enjoy when thawed.
- ❖ Thawed strawberries may be used for making jam, added to fruit salads or dessert sauces. They can be used for making cakes and incorporated into cheesecakes. And don't forget strawberry smoothies.

- ❖ Sorbets and ice cream are great ways to enjoy strawberries and they may not even need to be thawed first. Find a recipe that works for you.
- ❖ Before freezing, remove as much air as possible from storage bags and seal as tightly as possible. This will help prevent freezer burn and keep berries tasting fresh.
- ❖ Freeze strawberries using a baking sheet lined with waxed paper, paper towels or parchment paper. Stand berries on their bases on the tray, making sure they don't touch. Put in freezer. When they are frozen, remove from the baking sheet and store in containers.
- ❖ One more storage idea—Wash, dry, remove caps and slice strawberries into halves directly into a mixing bowl. Sprinkle 1/4 to 1/2 cup sugar over each quart of strawberries. Stir gently until the sugar is dissolved, being careful not to crush the delicate berries. Pack into freezer containers, seal tightly and freeze.



## What's New?

**F**SGA hosted a small group of Florida-based chefs and culinary instructors on a harvest tour through the strawberry fields, farms, cooling and shipping facilities in Hillsborough County.

Meeting executive chefs, research and product development chefs and chef instructors who are teaching the chefs-of-tomorrow is the best way possible to spread the word about our scrumptious strawberries and to increase future demand from foodservice operators and chefs.

Based on the positive feedback from our guests, we hope to expand this program next year. Even these highly educated and experienced culinary pros told us they learned a lot about strawberries that they never knew before.

Chef instructor Jennifer Denlinger, CC, CHE, teaches at the Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts



Photo Above: Mike Lott, Chef Martinelli, Chef Jennifer Denlinger, Chef Lesa Helms, and Chef Sandy Gibilisco.

in Orlando. She was one of the chefs on the tour. Within hours of having visited the farms and other facilities, she invited FSGA to give a presentation to her students. We look forward to each and every opportunity to educate professionals and consumers about our industry.



## *The Berry Best — Recipe of the Month*

### Quick Strawberry Jam

Inspired by *Gourmet Magazine*, May 2001

Here's a recipe that's so easy. I found it in a search on [www.Epicurious.com](http://www.Epicurious.com). I'm suggesting you savor the goodness of our strawberries even when they're not in season. This uncomplicated strawberry jam is one way to do just that.

- 1 pound Florida strawberries, washed, caps removed and halved
- 2/3 to 3/4 cup sugar
- 2 tablespoons powdered fruit pectin
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice

Mash strawberries in a large bowl using a potato masher or fork. Add sugar, pectin and lemon juice. Stir well. Pour mixture into a 12-inch nonstick skillet and boil until slightly thickened, about 5 minutes. Remove from skillet and pour into a bowl to cool. Once jam is at room temperature, cover tightly and refrigerate until ready to serve. Makes about 1-1/4 cups. Jam will keep, chilled in an airtight container, for 2 weeks.



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