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CELEBRATE BLUEBERRY SEASON WITH CUPCAKES AND POPS

What a wonderful coincidence that blueberries—the all-American fruit—are at their bountiful best at the same time we celebrate the best of America: freedom, family and the slow-down days of summer. It's no coincidence that blueberries, with their beautiful color and fruity flavor, are a traditional part of our best summer celebrations. And now, with so much good health news about blueberries, we can enjoy them even more!

“Wave the Flag” Cupcakes could easily become a summer tradition. These delightful blueberry cupcakes are not only a visual celebration, their fat and calorie counts are lower than back-of-the-box recipes because applesauce is substituted for oil, and egg whites for whole eggs. With their patriotic colors, they're perfect for a Memorial Day or Fourth of July picnic, or anytime you feel like “waving the flag.”

On a hot day, when the family could use a cool treat, surprise them with frozen **Blueberry-Fruit Pops**, real fruit snacks made with layers of pureed blueberries and canned fruit. Make 'em once and you'll make 'em again because they're a zip to whip up and simple to vary by alternating the blueberry layers with different canned fruits—try peaches, apricots, pears or fruit cocktail. Even better, you can make them with fresh, frozen or canned blueberries.

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Enjoy blueberries throughout the year for their flavor and their nutrition boost. The health benefits of blueberries are all the buzz these days. What's the excitement about? When researchers tested 100-plus fruits, vegetables, nuts and other foods for their antioxidant activity, blueberries topped the list. Antioxidants are the feisty little cell protectors that may help ward off cancer, heart disease and age-related decline of brain function. These "power berries" are also a source of vitamin C and fiber, are virtually fat free and contain only 40 calories and 10 grams of carbohydrate per half-cup serving.

Your go-to source for blueberry nutrition information and more great recipes is www.blueberry.org.

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“WAVE THE FLAG” CUPCAKES

- 1 package (18- to 19-ounces) yellow cake mix
- 1/3 cup applesauce
- 3 egg whites
- 3 cups fresh blueberries, divided
- 1 package (8 ounces) reduced-fat cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 roll red-colored rolled fruit snack (from a 4.5-ounce box)

Preheat oven to 350° F. In a large mixing bowl, beat cake mix with applesauce, egg whites and 1-1/4 cups water for 30 seconds on low speed, then 2 minutes on medium speed. Spoon batter into 24 (2½-inch) aluminum or paper lined muffin cups. Evenly divide 1 cup of blueberries onto tops of batter; do not stir. Bake cupcakes following package directions; remove to a wire rack and cool completely. In a small bowl, beat cream cheese, confectioners' sugar and vanilla until smooth. Spoon onto cooled cupcakes; spread to the edges. Unroll fruit snack and, with a sharp knife, cut into strips 1/8-inch wide by 2-inch long. On half of each cupcake, arrange strips, trimming each to fit. Arrange remaining 2 cups blueberries on the frosting on other halves of the cupcakes, about 10 blueberries per cupcake.

YIELD: 24 cupcakes

Per cupcake, including frosting and toppings: 135 calories; 3 g protein; 24 g carbohydrate; 3 g total fat (1.8 g saturated fat)

Per cupcake, if made with oil and whole eggs, including frosting and toppings: 177 calories; 3 g protein; 24 g carbohydrate; 8 g total fat (3 g saturated fat)

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BLUEBERRY FRUIT POPS

- 1 can (15 1/4-ounce) fruit in heavy syrup* such as pears, peaches or apricots
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 cup fresh, frozen or canned drained blueberries

In a blender, puree the canned fruit with all the syrup and lemon juice. Transfer to a large measuring cup or pitcher. Return 1/4 cup of the fruit mixture to the blender; add blueberries; blend until pureed. Holding a 6- or 8-ounce plastic cup at an angle, spoon in a layer of fruit puree then a layer of blueberry puree; repeat to make 4 layers filling the cup about two-thirds. Set cup upright and insert a plastic spoon or wooden ice cream stick in the center. Repeat to use all the pureed fruit and blueberries. Place cups on a baking pan for support and freeze until firm, 4 to 6 hours. To serve, place pops at room temperature for 5 minutes then twist from cups.

YIELD: 8 pops

Per pop: 50 calories; 0 g protein; 13 g carbohydrate; 0 g total fat; 1.4 g fiber

* Note: Fruit canned with less sugar will produce frozen pops that are more solid.

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[CAPTION]

Celebrate summer with “Wave the Flag” Cupcakes! Blueberries inside and out—and less fat—make these cupcakes a light, delicious treat.

PHOTO # BC-36

Please credit the U.S. Highbush Blueberry Council

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