

Indigenous Food Hubs

2026 Harvest of the Month



APRIL: BLUEBERRIES

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Indigenous peoples have gathered and cared for wild blueberries for thousands of years. They dried the berries for winter, mixed them into corn dishes, and used the leaves, stems, and roots as medicine. Early colonists wrote about Native families sun-drying blueberries and making “sautauthig,” a simple pudding of dried berries and cracked corn that may have been served at early harvest feasts in New England. Along the Northeast coast, lowbush blueberry fields — called barrens — formed naturally and were later maintained through Indigenous controlled burns. These fires helped clear old plants, enrich the soil, and increase berry growth and biodiversity. Today, tribes such as the Micmac and Passamaquoddy continue this work with government and private partners, helping preserve these important coastal landscapes.

STAR BERRIES STORIES

Many retellings across Anishinaabe/Ojibwe and Northeast tribes say the Creator sent blueberries — called “star berries” for their five-pointed calyx — to help protect and feed children during times of scarcity. Families dried the berries and stirred them into corn dishes, honoring the berries as healthy gifts. Themes of gratitude, protection, and sustenance are consistent across regional stories that view blueberries as food, spiritual gifts, cultural connectors, and sustained symbols of continuity and respect for the land.

RESPECTFUL FORAGING

In the Pacific Northwest, some native *Vaccinium* (huckleberry) patches are on lands where tribes have treaty-protected gathering rights; be sure to follow local rules and avoid commercial raking that damages shrubs.

NUTRITION AND FUN FACTS

- Blueberries have more antioxidants than most other common fruits.
- Scientists say blueberries are one of the top antioxidant fruits — even more than strawberries or apples.
- Just 1 cup of blueberries has the same antioxidant power as eating:
 - 5–10 servings of many other fruits and vegetables
 - A whole bowl of apples or carrots
 - Nearly 2 cups of green grapes
- Blueberries are “brain berries.” They contain natural plant colors called anthocyanins, which help protect your brain and keep it healthy as you grow.
- Blueberries have “belly fiber.” One cup has about 4 grams of fiber, which helps digestion and keeps tummies happy.
- Blueberries are small but mighty. A kid-sized handful (½ cup) has:
 - Fewer than 50 calories
 - Vitamin C for strong immune systems
 - Vitamin K & manganese for growing bones
- Per 100 grams of raw blueberries:
 - Calories: ~57
 - Fiber: ~2.4 g
 - Vitamin C: ~9–14 mg
 - Vitamin K: ~19–29 µg
 - Manganese: ~0.3–0.5 mg



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RECIPE FOR WOJAPI (BERRY SAUCE)



COOK TIME

20-25 Minutes



SERVINGS

6-8

INGREDIENTS

- 4 cups blueberries (fresh or frozen)
- ¼ cup water (add a bit more if using fresh)
- 1-2 Tbsp cornstarch or arrowroot (optional, for thicker sauce)
- Maple syrup or honey, to taste



DIFFICULTY:

EASY MEDIUM HARD

DIRECTIONS

A beloved Plains (Dakota/Lakota) sauce traditionally made with wild berries; this version uses blueberries for a simple, family-friendly topping.

1. Simmer: In a saucepan, combine blueberries and water over low heat; cook until berries break down into a sauce.
2. Thicken (optional): Whisk a spoonful of berry sauce into the cornstarch, then stir back in and simmer 1-2 minutes.
3. Sweeten: Add maple syrup (or honey) to taste.
4. Serve: Warm over cornbread, yogurt, pancakes, or ice cream.

COOKING TIPS

Frozen wild blueberries have intense flavor and are perfect for sauces and baking; fresh highbush berries shine in salads and snacks. Wild (lowbush) blueberries from Maine/Eastern Canada are widely available frozen in grocery stores year-round, and are often labeled “wild.”



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