



## Berries As Antioxidant Foods

*Nature's Colorful Gifts of Nutrients and Phytochemicals*



Here's Part 2/3 of our essays on berries as antioxidant foods.

Remember to think the Color Code!

### **Phytochemicals and Antioxidants: *Why are they important to health?***

Consumers are witnessing a new era in how foods are identified. New nutrients, not commonly understood for their health benefits, seem to be popping up on our grocer's shelves everyday.

Omega fatty acids, newly defined sources of dietary fiber, and antioxidant phytochemicals are examples of healthful plant elements creeping into public media reports and water-cooler debates.

These are potentially confusing terms that will need time and further reading about how they are important to health.

That's a major reason why The Berry Doctor's Journal was created!

**If berries are such good antioxidant foods, then what nutrients in them provide these benefits, and do they vary from berry specie to specie?**

Laboratory and preliminary human clinical studies are revealing anti-disease properties of

some phytochemicals as “antioxidants”.

Extensive food and medical research underway presently will eventually translate the chemical properties into consumer understanding and terminology we all will grasp and use in everyday conversation.

With such potential significance to public health, *the consumer education process should begin now in a way that members of the public, from teenagers to grandparents, can readily understand antioxidants as easily as we now understand calories, carbohydrates, fat percentage, and vitamin C.*

The scientific and regulatory bodies for food labeling have a great challenge ahead of them.

There are *thousands* of plant food sources with suspected health benefits having complicated chemical names that are unfamiliar and can be intimidating.

In one berry might be *dozens* of phytochemicals and antioxidants.

**The challenge at hand is to decipher this blizzard of names, making shopping choices easier and promoting better nutrition for our families and ourselves.**

I'll present some of these more common names in the next essay. And I'll introduce a *classification scheme* that might help to keep simple these categories of nutrients and phytochemicals aiding antioxidant health.

For now... note the berries on this list

#### Berries on the Color Code for Antioxidants

This is a general scheme of example foods that can fit into each color class. Keep in mind that there are no firm lines between the classes, allowing for overlap.

1. Red - **cranberry**, tomato, pink grapefruit, watermelon, **strawberry**, **red raspberry**
2. Blue/Red/Purple/Black (BRPB) - **blueberry**, cherry, prune, blackberry
3. Orange/Yellow - **wolfberry (goji)**, carrot, pumpkin, orange, papaya
4. Green - broccoli, kale, spinach, pea
5. White - garlic, onion, cabbage, turnip
6. Brown/Gray - spices, nuts, seeds, endogenous sources

In Part 3, we complete this introduction to antioxidants by applying the color code to various classes of antioxidant chemicals in our bodies and in the foods we choose.

We finish off the discussion by proposing a novel naming system - a nomenclature that allows recognition of antioxidants present in the foods of our diets.

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The Berry Doctor

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