



Chantelle Tanguay of Andrew's Scenic Acres finds just about everyone loves strawberries while below owner Bert Andrews samples a strawberry wine from the farm's Scotch Block Winery.

When the sun is bright and high in the sky, and the day is hot and clear, people head off to strawberry fields in crowds. And yet, the best time to pick is in the morning or on cool, cloudy days. This isn't just because it allows you to avoid the crowds. Rather, it's because strawberries picked in the heat of the day quickly become soft and bruise easily.

Never pile berries more than five inches deep, as you'll bruise the lower ones, and never put them in plastic bags. Also, avoid the temptation to over-purchase because strawberries rot quickly in room temperature.

There are a couple of ways to keep your strawberries fresh longer. Store strawberries, unwashed, in the fridge; washing the fruit can lead to spoiling. Before serving, bring them to room temperature. Lightly rinse the berries and then serve. Never soak strawberries; they absorb the water and the flavor is spoiled.

You can also freeze any berries you won't be using right away. Once thawed, they taste almost as fresh as when first bought. To freeze, simply clean the berries, remove the stem, and place them in an air-tight bag. Your berries will last for months.

"Who doesn't like strawberry jam? That's a great use of fresh strawberries, because the jam will be more flavourful," says Andrews, noting that Andrew's Scenic Acres is a one-stop shop for jamming, with all the necessary supplies and equipment.

"And of course, if sealed and stored properly, the jam will last for years."

Strawberry jam. Strawberry pie. Strawberry tarts. They remind us of lazy summer days under the warm sun. They're ways to celebrate the season.

Though harvests might not last long, strawberry season is always looked forward to as a highlight of the summer. Why not take full advantage and experience picking this tantalizing fruit yourself at one of Halton Hills' local pick-your-own farms?

• See list page 19



SUMMER • 2010



18



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