

## Strawberries

“Doubtless God could have made a better berry, but doubtless God never did”

Such is how 17<sup>th</sup> century writer Dr. William Butler described the strawberry. From smoothies to shortcakes and jams to jellies, the strawberry is a versatile accessory fruit grown on every continent except Africa and Australia.

It is known that ancient Romans cultivated strawberries and that in 13<sup>th</sup> century France the strawberry was harvested for use as a medicinal plant to treat gout and to aid digestion for instance, but also to remedy sunburns and discoloured teeth. It is also at this time that it was first claimed that strawberries are an aphrodisiac, a claim that still persists today...

More recently and closer to home, Europeans found strawberries upon their arrival in Virginia in 1588. In Europe, the wild strawberry remained the dominant variety until cultivated strawberries became popular late in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, gardeners began breeding strawberries for size, shape and flavour. Today the strawberry is the most popular berry fruit in the world.

There are several theories as to how these tasty treats came to be known as “strawberries”. The most popular belief is that the Anglo-Saxon verb “to strew”, or a variant thereof, was used to describe the runners that spread outward from the strawberry plant. In time, the fruit assumed a number of monikers such as streabergen, streberie, straibery, straubery, and as it is known today, “strawberry”.