May 12 Strawberries---Pick'em, Buy'em, Store'em, Eat'em.MP3

Gary Crawford: [00:00:00] And now to introduce our subject for today we're going to go back to yesterday. Well sort of yesterday 1973 seemed like yesterday when this Tony Orlando and Dawn song was a hit. Although I can never figure out why. "Who's in the strawberry patch with Sally" Well anyway today strawberries are hugely popular in spite of that song the Americans spent this past year over three billion dollars on strawberries at grocery stores and pick your own farms and add at farmers markets like the one we're here at right now. The Agriculture Department's market right off the Mall here in Washington we're here talking with the Agriculture Department strawberry expert Olivia banks. And Olivia you say that if we're going to spend some of that three billion dollars on Strawberry you might as well get some good ones. And you say there are some tricks of the trade doing at first. I got to ask some rather intimate question Does does size matter. I don't know. I mean about the strawberries you see I've seen those really big ones that you see in stores and all. But you say big in this case not necessarily better.

Olivia Banks: [00:01:06] The smaller berries generally have better flavor. And. They have a firmer texture that the smaller berries.

Gary Crawford: [00:01:13] OK so go for the smaller ones then so what other tips have you got for us.

Olivia Banks: [00:01:18] When you're going to pick strawberries whether you're picking them from the grocery store or your fresh picking them in the field. What do you want to look for it's a red ripe shiny any berry that's got a little bit of white coloration around the calyx of the green cap or even around the tip. Isn't going to be completely ripe strawberries. Strawberries do not ripen them once they are picked. So you want to ensure that you pick your strawberry at the peak ripeness which is that bright red shiny color.

Gary Crawford: [00:01:46] Now you say strawberries are not the most long lasting foods either they can be subject to mold or just go out of condition. Most of us probably buy them at a store in those plastic clamshell things.

Olivia Banks: [00:01:58] When you're selecting your clamshell from the grocery pick it up and look at the bottom and sniff in the holes because if there is something going on there. Bacteria or mold wise you will smell it in the packaging itself.

Gary Crawford: [00:02:10] And also Olivia says if there's a lot of water at the bottom of a clamshell the berries are probably on their way out already. So once, she get them home what then.

Olivia Banks: [00:02:20] If they're damp dry them off because moisture will cause them to deteriorate it. Faster and then store them in their refrigerator.

Gary Crawford: [00:02:27] But even in the fridge we may have only two or three days to use them before they get to rather mushy she says whatever we do we should not wash them before putting them in the fridge. Their porous that water just would get inside of there make them mushy and only a few hours for us some great strawberry recipe ideas and such. You can go online to watch cooking at USDA that's what's cooking USDA in Washington. This is Gary Crawford reporting for the U.S. Department of Agriculture