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CAPPY TOSETTI'S FRESH NEW IDEAS

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A berry a day is good for business

Imagine having customers call and drop by with a prescription from their doctor advising them to eat more berries, especially black raspberries (blackcaps).

That's what Don Sturm, owner of Sturm's Berry Farm in Troutdale, Ore., has noticed since April.

"Most of the people are cancer patients coming in with actual notes from their oncologists and other physicians with specific instructions to eat more blackcaps, along with ample helpings of other berries. The darker the pigment, the better," he said.

The news comes from a new study published by biologist Gary Stoner of Ohio State University that shows a 60 to 80 percent reduction in colon tumors in rats fed high levels of black raspberries. In the study, rats that were injected with a cancer-causing agent and then fed a berry-rich diet had 80 percent fewer malignant tumors compared to those without berries in their diet.

We've know for years that the healthiest diets are rich in fruits — especially berries — and vegetables, but lately there's new scientific research being done on all sorts of foods like the black raspberry, blueberries, tart cherries and more.

"It's obvious this latest study and other reports have made an impression on many cancer doctors because my phone

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continues to ring with folks asking for black raspberries,” he said. “We’re very grateful and thrilled that the medical community believes in the merits of wholesome foods, especially our black raspberry. It’s been great for business.

“Previously, we sold the bulk of our black raspberries to processors to make purple dye that’s used to stamp meat and also hard cheese.

“Consumers weren’t particularly interested in this berry before, but ever since Stoner’s report came out, we’ve seen increased sales in both fresh and frozen berries. It’s simply amazing, so it makes good sense to keep up with the research and keep our consumers informed of the health benefits.”

Don Sturm is smart. He realizes the potential of marketing his berries in a new light, and that means providing more information on the health benefits to his customers at the farm and on his website. www.sturmsberryfarm.com

He outlines the various nutraceutical benefits from caneberries and explains things that are becoming more familiar in our daily conversation, like ORAC Values (Oxygen Radical Absorbance Capacity) — a measure of the antioxidant activity in foods. Antioxidants inhibit oxidation, which is known to have a damaging effect on tissues. When tested for ORAC value, caneberries have very high levels.

Sturm’s page on nutritional information also explains how caneberries have high levels of ellagic acid, quercetin, anthocyanins, salicylic acid, catechins, Vitamin C and phyto-estrogen. These are all properties that help fight cancers (with particular emphasis on colon and esophageal cancers).

They also lower blood cholesterol levels and the corresponding risk of heart disease, and facilitate the body’s ability to slow the aging process. He goes into more detail on each of these properties, with additional information on other medical studies.

Today’s consumer is savvy and cares about this information, especially individuals turning 50 and older. They’re interested in good health and their well-being, so they’re bound to buy more when the person behind the counter or on the phone is knowledgeable and enthusiastic.

Don also believes it’s important to make it easy and convenient for customers to shop, especially when it comes to ordering on the Internet. There’s plenty of competition out there, so providing good service is vital for success.

“That’s why we have a toll-free number, (866) 402-9058, and have an easy-to-use “Shopping Cart” right there on the website for our frozen black raspberries, red raspberries and blueberries. People can simply click the button and purchase their berries with PayPal, which makes it convenient for them and cost-effective for us.”

Depending on where a person lives, the FedEx shipping charges are already figured out. They simply click on the region and up pops the price chart. It's fast and easy.

Don also provides more information on berries and health benefits with links to the Oregon Raspberry and Blackberry Commission, the Washington Red Raspberry Commission, Ohio State Research News, the Blueberry Commission, Oregon Department of Agriculture, USDA and other pertinent websites.

It's handy and another great way of providing good customer service that we all appreciate.

So, think of what you grow, whether it's apples, plums or cherries or berries, broccoli or beans. Read up on the nutritional research. Find out more about the health benefits and let your customers know more the merits of eating fresh and local produce.

It's a prescription that's good for everyone!



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