

SENIOR SCAPE: Praise the King! (Louis XIV)

By Sylvia Dickens

Were it not for King Louis XIV, we might not be enjoying strawberries today.

He was the first to take up serious cultivation of this mouthwatering fruit in the 1600s. Although sporadic attempts began in the 1300s in home gardens and on a grander scale by King Charles V, who adorned his Parisian gardens at the Louvre with them in 1368, King Louis XIV really got the ball rolling.

By 1560, English ladies were enjoying strawberries and cream from strawberries planted in their own gardens. Meanwhile, North American natives were cultivating a wild strawberry that was superior in size and flavor to the European variety.

In fact, the Native Americans introduced the Colonists to their baked bread made of cornmeal and crushed strawberries. The Colonists then applied their English baking skills and created their own version, strawberry shortcake.

Imagine how different things could have been if 12th Century abbess, Saint Hildegard von Binger had succeeded in her scare tactics. Because strawberries grow along the ground, she spread fear of the dangers posed by snakes and toads crawling over them. For several years, the Europeans adopted this belief and swore off eating the berries.

Strawberry Legend and Facts

Since ancient Roman times, strawberries have been used to alleviate inflammation, fever, kidney stones, bad breath, gout and a wide variety of other ailments. But that is just the tip of the iceberg.

Strawberries are nutritional powerhouses. They are one of the most popular, refreshing and healthy treats on the planet. They are rich in essential nutrients: Vitamin C, potassium, folic acid and fiber. Just one cup of fresh strawberries contains 160% of your daily Vitamin C needs.

They also contain powerful antioxidants which are shown to help protect against certain types of cancer. The benefits of consuming all kinds of fruits and vegetables including strawberries are infinite. They have a positive effect on heart disease, diabetes, strokes, high blood pressure, allergies, asthma, constipation, depression, healthy skin and hair, increased energy, lower weight and a general extension of life.

Frozen are just as good

Strawberries maintain their nutritional values when frozen which means we can enjoy them year round. Nothing beats fresh, so whenever they are available choose those, but eat them quickly. Once picked, they don't survive long.

Is your mouth watering yet?

On June 22, starting at Noon, the Aurora Seniors' Centre (ASC) is holding a Family Picnic and Fun Fair for the entire family. It will include a picnic, but you need to bring your own food. The youngsters can enjoy face painting, 3-legged race, bocce, table tennis, clown, storytelling, tarot cards, raffles and much more. (25 cents per activity)

The topper is the strawberry shortcake and cream dessert with hot and cold drinks and a musical comedy entertainment for a great low price of \$2.50 per person.

Juicy peaches alternative

If you don't like strawberries, you're sure to enjoy the Niagara Peach Festival on August 9. This trip begins at Magnotta Winery where you can ask all the questions you want during this winery experience. You will go behind the scenes where grapes from the vineyards are crushed and pressed, and end with a sampling of some of Magnotta's world class wines.

Then, it's on to the Peach Festival which includes fife and drum procession, live jazz, Celtic, honky-tonk, and other music. See antique steam tractors in a celebration of farming history, a classic car display, fresh steamed corn on the cob and, of course, a peach pie baking contest.

More information is available at the ASC Reception Desk.

Bocce Ball

Nutrition is good, but you need to exercise, too. Bocce is the perfect solution because it's suited to seniors. If you can push a mop, you can push a ball down the court. It's that easy. Besides, you are sure to have a great time just mingling with the other players. You

don't even need to know how to play. Someone will be glad to show you the simple rules. If playing this game interests you, sign up on the appropriate sheets pinned to the bulletin board in the lobby.

Election Results

The Centre recently held its 2014-2015 ASA Board of Directors elections. Congratulations to Frank Leone, Jim Abram and Jan Freedman on being chosen to serve a three-year term on the ASA Board.

For more information on the Aurora Seniors' Centre, drop by 90 John West Way, visit www.auroraseniors.ca, email auroraseniors@rogers.com or call 905-726-4767 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday to Friday.